



National Commission of Audit Corporate hostile take-over

Anna Pha and Tom Pearson

The report of the National Commission of Audit was released last week in the lead-up to next week's federal budget. The title of the report, "Towards Responsible Government" is a lie as are the foundations of the report. A more apt title would be "Towards Corporate Takeover" or "Towards Corporate Government". There is nothing responsible about destroying the social foundations of a society, or throwing the most disadvantaged to the wolves and abandoning almost all responsibility for the well-being of the people of Australia.

The report is based on the neo-liberal agenda, as dictated by global capital, for privatisation of government, deregulation, competition policy, dismantling the social security system and a takeover of the state by big business. The model is similar to the British conservative government's Big Society. (See *Guardian*, "Abbott's 'Big Society' - democracy under attack", #1615, 23-10-2013)

The report takes up where the Howard government left off. Its main aims are to carry out a massive redistribution of wealth; to slash the living standards of working Australians; bring about a radical change in the role of government; provide the private sector with new sources of profit-generation; and enhance the powers and domination of big business over government and all aspects of life.

In addition to gutting the public service, the process includes privatisation of remaining public assets, user pays for everything, deregulation on a grand scale, opening up to "competition" and self-provision for all needs.

Treasurer Joe Hockey says, "The age of entitlement is over". By entitlement he means anything provided to the people by government and collectively funded through general revenue.

Predetermined outcome

The membership of the Commission and its terms of reference predetermined the political and economic line of the audit.

The Commission was headed by the then big Business Council of Australia (BCA) president Tony Shepherd. The BCA's chief economist and director of policy Peter Crone led the Secretariat. Shepherd, at the time of appointment, was also president of Transfield Services and Crone is a former adviser to the Howard and Victorian Kennett governments. (See *Guardian*, "Abbott's audit: By big business. For big business", #1616, 30-10-2013)

The terms of reference call upon the Commission "to make recommendations to achieve savings sufficient to deliver a surplus of 1 percent of GDP prior to 2023-24."

The government deliberately restricts the Audit's scope to government spending, to making "savings". The terms of reference exclude the review of government income.



May Day 2014 - Sydney. (Photo: Tom Pearson)

This effectively leaves one option for balancing the books and producing a surplus - cuts to spending.

The report claims that its proposals would result in annual savings of \$60-70 billion a year within ten years. That would not be an exaggeration! The cuts are relatively small over the next two (pre-election) years but then take off after that with vengeance.

Whitewash and spin

"In recent years, Commonwealth spending has outpaced revenue collections ... This is the sixth consecutive budget deficit. We have spent beyond our means for too long," the report says.

The Commission makes wild, simplistic and unsubstantiated claims about the unsustainability of present spending. Its alarmist portrayal of government spending is unfounded. It is nothing more than a smokescreen - a manufactured crisis - to justify sending in the undertakers.

Anyone seriously reviewing a budget would look at spending and income, not just spending, and examine the benefits of each item and other factors such as capacity to repay or raise additional income. The Commission does

not do this. That is not the real agenda. It is about cuts and the role of government.

In a speech last week in Melbourne, Hockey spoke of "redefining the role of government in society" and "the long term sustainability of the system". At the same time in Sydney Prime Minister Tony Abbott was speaking about a "change in how Federation works".

However, the word "cut" is not used once in reference to the jobs and services that are to be axed or the pensions and other incomes that are to be reduced. Instead, cuts are deceptively referred to as "savings", "improving sustainability", "containing future growth", "improving access to equity", "improve targeting to those in need", a "set funding envelope", and so on. The language, however, will not soften the heavy blows that it attempts to cover up.

In for the kill

The insurance companies and big banks stand to make a killing from the privatisations and the private health insurance companies as millions of Australians are forced to take out private cover for medical services.

Small pharmacies will go by the wayside as the two big retailers are allowed in, just one of

a number of consequences of deregulation and opening up to competition.

The likes of Serco and Transfield are set to reap a windfall from outsourcing of government functions, including payment of pensions, unemployment and other benefits and private management of centralisation of government data.

99 percent hit

The report sets the agenda for a massive assault on living standards.

While it is an abundance of riches for the one percent, the 99 percent will be hit from all directions. Workers, the unemployed, students, age pensioners, aged care, the sick, people with disabilities, single parents, families, small business, small farmers, flood and fire victims, etc ... are on the receiving end of the cuts.

The recommendations are skewed, so that the more disadvantaged a person is the larger the hit. Not only will wages, pensions, grants and other entitlements be cut but user pays will kick in. The Commission went beyond its brief to propose cuts to the minimum wage.

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Guardian

Issue 1637

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Victory Day

May 9, 1945: the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics had roared into Berlin, marking the defeat of the worst scourge the world had ever seen. Fascism was defeated. World War II came to an end in Europe with the unconditional surrender of the German armies. The most ferocious war in history, with an estimated 50 million dead, was drawing to a close.

The world had been saved from the nightmare of fascism which would impose dictatorship and slavery on the world.

The victory was a turning point in world history and was won by the cooperation of the forces of many countries. The people of Britain, the Soviet Union, France and other European countries, Australia, India, Canada, the US and others forged an anti-fascist alliance during the course of the war, an alliance that was essential for the victory.

But it was principally the armed forces of the people of the Soviet Union who bore the brunt of the war and the casualties. Then Red Army destroyed hundreds of German divisions on the eastern front but at enormous cost. The Soviet Union suffered about 25 million military and civilian casualties. In addition to enormous human loss, the war resulted in the devastation of almost 2,000 Soviet cities and towns, 70,000 villages and hamlets.

Leningrad's horrific siege was one of the most lethal in world history. The blockade of Leningrad lasted for 900 days. Almost three million civilians refused to surrender and endured extreme hardship in the encircled city.

The defeat of fascism had consequences of world-wide importance and ripples from the victory are still being felt today.

The defeat of fascism, the rise of socialism and the ideas of liberation, accelerated the struggles of then people of the colonies for freedom from colonialism. Since the victory over fascism nearly all the former colonial countries have won political, if not, economic independence.

The defeat of Japanese militarism in the Asia-Pacific region had opened the doors to the defeat of colonialism in Asia. Then followed the victory of the Chinese revolution and the establishment of the People's Republic of China.

The national liberation movement in Vietnam drove out the French colonialists and later was victorious over the US aggressors. The Indonesian people threw out the Dutch colonialists and established Indonesia as an independent country.

India won independence from British colonialism after a long struggle. The racist apartheid regime in South Africa has been defeated and the wars in Angola and Mozambique ended in favour of progressive forces.

These are the reasons why the defeat of fascism in World War II is commemorated as one of the most important victories in all history. It is why we honour those who took part in the struggle and gave their lives.

But the struggle continues. There are attempts to revive fascism in several European countries, most notably at the moment in Ukraine following the US/EU backed coup, underpinned by various fascist forces in Ukraine. Victory Day parades in Ukraine have been cancelled.

Where fascists are in control, they have even erected a memorial to a wartime German SS unit. In Latvia, where the Communist Party is forbidden to take the name communist, Soviet war memorials have been destroyed and pro-fascist terrorists honoured instead.

And while Nazi Germany's aim of world domination was defeated a new aspirant with the same objective arose – the USA. This is expressed more openly today with the dictatorial actions being taken by the US leaders.

The US Pivot to Asia, with the full and willing cooperation of the Australian government is nothing less than preparation for war.

Nonetheless, the trend of the world today, despite of the terrible conflicts being imposed by imperialism, is to the Left: 40 percent of the world's people already live in countries where Communists either comprise the government or take part in government.

As the current global economic capitalist crisis shows, capitalism as a system is already on its way to the rubbish heap of history. We must hasten its journey.

PRESS FUND

The recent National Commission of Audit report that was released by the Abbott government contains appalling recommendations which, if implemented, would constitute a rampant attack on crucial welfare conditions, and on some of our most important public institutions. The government certainly won't introduce the recommendations all at once. That might result in some people saying "Well, it could have been worse", but in fact every one of the recommendations should be dumped immediately, along with the government itself. We intend to play a part in that process, but we need your help, so please send us a contribution for the next issue if you possibly can. Many thanks to this week's supporters, as follows:

Eric Austin \$10, Harry Corbett \$20, J Doyle \$100, K M \$10, Mark Mannion \$5, "Round Figure" \$15

This week's total: \$160 Progressive total: \$2,920

For independence and peace

The statement below was unanimously endorsed at the conclusion of the Independent and Peaceful Australian Network national conference in Canberra attended by over 100 participants, representing 50 different peace and community organisations from around Australia. Participants came from many different walks of life and ages ranging from 20 to 93 year old.

National Conference

Towards an Independent and Peaceful Australia, Canberra – 21-22 April

Concluding Conference Statement

"This first national conference of Independent and Peaceful Australia Network affirms our support for an independent Australian foreign policy as the most effective path for our country to build peace in the region.

"It is our view that Australia's successive government policies of willingly following the US to wars, the stationing of US bases and troops on sovereign soil and the deeper integration of Australian foreign policies and military into the US war machine is a major threat to peace in the region.

"We're concerned that Australia is complicit and

actively involved in the US wars of aggression. We're concerned with successive Australian governments' subservience to foreign powers' economic and military interests. We're concerned that the financial costs of militarisation and engagement in foreign wars is a burden on our country that comes at the expense of people's lives, welfare and the environment.

"Through recent decades we have witnessed a steady increase in the level of Australia's military involvement with the US. We are concerned that Australian governments' subservience and complicity in the US military Pivot into Asia-Pacific is increasing the threat of war, rather than building peace and security in the region.

"We are opposed to foreign military bases and the deployment of foreign troops and military in Australia and the Asia-Pacific. We are opposed to the integration of Australia's foreign policies and military into the US plans.

"We want to live in Australia with an independent foreign policy, under which our country is free to choose what is truly in the best interest of peace in the world. We also recognise that a truly independent and peaceful Australia cannot be fully realised without a just treaty with Australia's Indigenous people." ✪

National Commission of Audit

Corporate hostile take-over

Continued from page 1

The cost of living will rise with co-payments for Medicare (what remains of it), higher charges for medications, user pays for roads, higher uni fees, etc.

Apart from the incredible hardship that will be inflicted, the impact on the economy will be contractionary. The cost of living will go through the roof with deregulation, privatisation and users pays at the same time as incomes of millions of Australians are reduced, including those of thousands of sacked public servants. This will result in more bankruptcies and sackings.

Environmental programs are amongst those for the chop and the impact will be compounded by deregulation of mining companies' and developers' activities.

Redefining the role of government

The report's estimate of 15,000 public service jobs going appears to be on the conservative side. Sixty-five percent of government agencies and bodies are set for abolition, merger, rationalisation or consolidation. Most government advisory councils will be abolished.

The Departments of Education and Health, in particular, will be gutted as responsibility will be handed over to the states and in the case of Medicare much of it to the private health insurance industry.

The cuts are so savage that, if implemented, they will result in far more than a one percent surplus. The longer term aim is to wind back company and personal income taxes, especially on high incomes.

The areas that remain untouched or are seen as a responsibility of the federal government are the making of laws, law and order, security, border protection, asylum seekers, defence, ASIO and other intelligence outfits.

Federalism 1901

The report calls it "competitive federalism". In reality it is a

regressive proposal to break the nation up into competing "sovereign states" in a race to the bottom wooing global investors.

They will be able to compete by offering different income tax rates, lower minimum wage rates and other concessions in a completely unregulated environment.

Federal spending on health, education and other government responsibilities and services will be handed over to the states (or private sector), to do as little or as much as they like – as Queensland Premier Campbell Newman put it, "to sink or swim". The carrot to the states is that a share of income tax that will be at their disposal without any strings attached. This is just a first step, with no guarantees that the states will have adequate income.

The question of the GST and taxation is the subject of another government review.

10-year blueprint

Sydney Morning Herald columnist, Ross Gittins, passes the report off, with references to previous Coalition governments and their audits. He claims it is only a tactic to blame a previous Labor government and so justify a horror budget. "Don't worry", he says, "Don't believe it."

The recommendations "go so far over the top", says Gittins, "today is the last you will hear of most of its 86 recommendations."

Gittins has got it horribly and dangerously wrong. The report is not a scare tactic, it is intended for implementation and as the word "towards" in its title suggests a stage in a long-term process of a hostile take-over by big business. It is a 10-year plan for big business, by big business.

The government has already indicated it accepts the majority of recommendations.

Abbott and Hockey will no doubt make good use of the report to soften up the public when next week's budget is released and

many of the report's horrors do not appear. The major recommendations are scheduled to hit in three years time. They will no doubt make some minor changes such as to parental leave.

Labor leader Bill Shorten and shadow treasurer Chris Bowen have yet to seriously oppose the report's contents. Instead they have focused on whether or not Abbott is breaking any election promises. Their failure to take a strong stand, or even a stand, against the key elements of the report or government's agenda adds to the perception created by Gittins that there will be a few nasties but "don't worry."

The extent to which this agenda can be implemented will depend very much on the strength of the movement outside of Parliament to defeat it and the role of the independents and Palmer's United Party in the Senate. The outcome of the federal elections in 2016 (or possibly earlier) will also be critical. The other element that could impede its implementation is failure to gain consensus amongst the states. The minority Labor government in South Australia could prove critical, it should be a major target of public pressure.

The Australian Greens are the only parliamentary party to take a strong stand. Greens leader Christine Milne said the report should be "a call to arms that we begin the process of kicking this mob out."

It should also be a call to arms to begin building the broadest movement possible to not only defeat the Coalition but to elect a government which is prepared to govern in the interests of the people.

The claim that "we can no longer afford" to provide the social welfare programs and services as in the past in the midst of record levels of wealth is an indictment of the capitalist system. It is a timely reminder that capitalism is well past its use-by date and socialism is long overdue. ✪

National Commission of Audit Report

Destruction of Medicare

Anna Pha

The National Commission of Audit's report on health set out in detail a blue-print for the destruction of Medicare and privatisation of public health services, claiming but not providing an iota of evidence that the present health system is unsustainable. The Liberals are and always have been philosophically opposed to the pillars of Medicare and our public hospital system: universal access, comprehensive cover, bulkbilling and no-fee public hospitals. These are the Commission's main targets.

Universal access abolished

Medicare provides cover for primary health care and public hospitals. The Commission recommends giving private health insurance funds (PHI) coverage of these areas with people on higher incomes (\$88,000 pa singles, \$176,000 pa families) denied access to Medicare and required to take out private health insurance for coverage. This would deny many workers access to Medicare.

"Expanded private health insurance plans would, at a minimum, cover all services provided by Medicare and public hospitals and would have to pay for all health care expenses of the insured, including the cost of treatment in a public hospital," the report says.

The tax surcharge for those who do not take out PHI cover will be increased from the present 1.0-1.5 percent to 3.0-3.5 percent, depending on income, as an incentive to take out PHI for primary care.

Bulkbilling abolished

"As well as those on higher incomes, the Commission considers it is important that steps are taken to provide a signal to people about the consequences of the use of the health care system," the report says.

"This should begin with a proposal for all consumers to make a small contribution towards the cost of their health care through a

co-payment for all items listed on the Medicare Benefits Schedule.

"Co-payments send a clear price signal to all consumers that medical services come at a cost, which may reduce demand for unnecessary or overused services." Again, not an iota of evidence of unnecessary services or over-use by patients, but clearly designed to reduce access for those on lower incomes.

There is a compulsory co-payment of \$15 or \$5 for concession card-holders, for all services under Medicare for those still eligible to Medicare. The safety-net threshold kicks in after 15 visits, when the co-payment is then reduced to \$7.50/\$2.50 (conc) for each item. How many bulkbilling doctors will want to deal with the costly administrative costs of such a small co-payment? It is a recipe for much larger patient contributions or faster through-put of patients.

The Commission recommends that the government encourages states to introduce co-payment for hospital emergency departments, cutting off access to free treatment.

Those who still qualify for Medicare cover may be required to do so through a PHI fund.

Safety net shrinks

At present there is a Medicare safety net which kicks in after \$1,248.70 out-of-pocket (not bulkbilled) medical expenses, after which patients receive 80 percent out-of-pocket costs. The report proposes raising this to \$4,000! The safety net is left in tact for concession card-holders for now.

It also proposes that a number of items be removed from Medicare coverage.

There are no recommendations to curb the unsustainable price-rorting by specialists, pathologists and other private sector operators. The audit just accepts their charges will keep rising at well above the rate of CPI.

The above proposals are in a section of the report titled "Short to medium term reforms". They are the thin edge of the wedge. The means testing for Medicare eligibility could be adjusted very easily downwards at



Sydney May Day 2014. (Photo: Tom Pearson)

a later date, again using the argument that it is unsustainable and like-wise the co-payment will be increased.

Abbott might initially opt for the \$6 co-payment being touted in the media.

Once the basic principle is broken, it is only a matter of time before the net shrinks and costs rise. The outcome will be loss of access to services, a hefty rise in costs, for families in particular, and down the track the development of more serious preventable medical conditions when monitoring and early checks are not carried out.

Deregulation of PHI

The report also recommends deregulation of the price of premiums and a "relaxing" of the community rating to provide for higher premiums – initially based on "lifestyle choices".

Community rating is a system where premiums are based on the

risks associated with a community as a whole, not on individual factors as is the case with car or home insurance. It might start with reference to "life-style factors" but won't stop there – later it could be based on medical conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, genetic factors, mental illness, etc. It would become completely unaffordable for those in most need.

Health care would become a privilege, not a right.

As for the future of public hospitals, that will be up to the states to develop their own policies – fees, privatisation, limit access ...

The Commission leaves open the question of the PHI rebate which is one of the fastest growing, uncapped areas of the budget. Already around \$5 billion per year, it would grow even faster if extended to primary health cover.

Americanisation

The report sets the scene for an Americanised managed health care system. It bemoans the fact that private health insurers are excluded from covering services provided through Medicare. "This limits the health funds' ability to assist in improving the health outcomes of the elderly and chronically ill at the point of diagnosis, which is usually when they initially visit their local doctor," says the report.

"In many cases health funds are not made aware of when their members develop medical conditions and find out only after the member has been treated in a hospital and seeks reimbursement from the fund. Allowing health funds to cover primary care settings would make it possible for them to be more aware of members' health risks.

"Funds could assist members to manage chronic conditions in out-of-hospital settings. This change is also needed to underpin the requirement for higher-income Australians to take out private health insurance."

Or, to put it more bluntly, PHI funds could intervene before someone was treated in hospital and decide whether or not they would

be covered by insurance if they went ahead with the treatment. Welcome to the US system of managed health care where bean counters in an insurance company determine surgery and other medical treatment or tests.

Health care a commodity

So how does the Commission defend such a massive assault on Medicare and public hospitals? It takes a blanket approach to cutting costs, privatising and deregulating the 15 most costly and rapidly rising areas of budget – well not quite, defence doesn't get the same treatment!

"The Medicare Benefits Schedule currently costs around \$19 billion and is expected to grow by 7.1 percent per year until 2023-24 and continue growing," the report says. "Health care spending represents the Commonwealth's single largest long-run fiscal challenge ..."

The report does not look at the benefits of this spending to the health of the nation, or one of the key and containable reasons costs are rising – the rorting of the system by specialists, pathologists and other private sector practitioners. The public health system is seen as nothing more than a "fiscal challenge" and potential source of profit-gouging if privatised.

Using true neo-liberal spin, it states without an ounce of humanity, "Putting health care on a sustainable footing will require reforms to make the system more efficient and competitive... More deregulated and competitive markets, with appropriate safeguards, have the greatest potential to improve the sector's competitiveness and productivity."

Treasurer Joe Hockey might think "the age of entitlement is over", but as far as the people of Australia are concerned, basic human rights, including health care, are not up for sale. The Audit Commission report must be defeated and with it the Abbott government. The section on health exposes the bankruptcy of capitalism. Time for real change. ☼

Pete's Corner



Vale Peter Nicholls 1932-2014

Long-serving local councillor and CPA Port Branch member, Peter Nicholls, passed away recently following a stroke. Many comrades and friends attended a wake at the Semaphore Workers Club on Sunday where his efforts in support of the community were toasted and celebrated. The following is one of the contributions made in memory of Peter by Party General Secretary Bob Briton:

Friends, I was honoured to be asked by my Party comrades to say a few words about Peter Nicholls. Firstly, on behalf of the Central Committee of the CPA, our deepest sympathies go out to Peter's family.

We assumed, probably like you did, that Peter would keep up his many commitments and contributing at our meetings for many years to come. We're going to miss him.

This is quite an emotional time for our State Committee. I just came from the dedication of another name on the Workers Memorial. It was strange not to see Peter there. The name being put on the memorial was Dr Alan Finger, a legendary member of our movement who passed away in 1985. There are many other Communists on that memorial.

The monument honours the contribution of local people to the interests and well-being of workers

of Port Adelaide. The fact that there are so many of our comrades' names up there is a recognition of the great qualities that they brought to their work. I would be very surprised if we don't see comrade Peter's name up there in the years to come, in recognition of his efforts and many great qualities.

As a member of the Port Branch of the Party with Peter for many years I saw these strengths of character first hand. Peter was loyal. The most obvious and outward sign of this was his very vocal support for the Port Adelaide Football Club but that wasn't the end of it.

He swam against a very strong

ideological tide in the community and overcame it. When he was elected and re-elected to Council, in the declaration of political affiliations printed in the *Portside Messenger* every year he would proudly declare his membership of the Communist Party. This gave all his comrades a boost in morale, as well.

When he was able to direct a donation from Council to a community organisation, he would often give it to the Semaphore Workers Club, which is well known in the community as having a very close association with our Party and the more militant sections of the labour movement.

Peter's patient, reasoned approach was greatly appreciated on the Council. He was an internationalist but a great patriot at the same time. He was an avid reader of Australian history. He was opposed to grandstanding and fads in politics. He followed in the tradition of the late Ron Connolly and Jim Mitchell in this regard.

He was a practical person and utterly reliable. To the last week of his life he delivered the *Guardian*, the weekly paper of the CPA, to customers in the district and to the public libraries. These will be my lasting memories and impressions of Peter; those of a loyal and committed person. ✪

May Day Adelaide SA

Numbers on the May Day march in Adelaide were up on last year. Seven hundred very colourful and vocal marchers followed the band's truck from the Torrens Parade Ground to Light Square. Brief showers didn't dampen the festive gathering, which boasted increased numbers of information and food stalls along with live music from local band Babylon Burning. Guest speaker SA Senator Penny Wong talked about the need for unity in the face of attacks from the Abbott government.

The May Day dinner was packed out again. This year's guest speaker was national secretary of the Textile, Clothing and Footwear Union, Michele O'Neil. She recalled the anniversary of the Rana Plaza tragedy in Bangladesh last year where over 1,000 garment workers died when the building they were working in collapsed. She warned listeners to brace themselves for the ongoing onslaught on workers' rights and conditions by the federal government and to use the international connections of the labour movement in the fight back. She received a cheque for \$1,000 from the SA May Day Collective to be forwarded to the affected Bangladeshi workers. When the hat was passed around, another \$1,300 was raised.

"Spanner" awards for service in the spirit of May Day were awarded to CPA stalwarts Beryl and Alan Miller (right) and (posthumously) to the Sue Baldy, long-time delegate and SA Branch president of United Voice. Beryl and Alan were greatly moved and surprised by the richly deserved award.

On Sunday, union members were joined by local activists to honour the late Dr Alan Finger, whose name was added to the Workers' Memorial monument at Black Diamond corner. In Port Adelaide CPA General Secretary Bob Briton spoke about comrade Alan's long record of activism from the 1930s and the enlightened work in his profession as a doctor. He contested 16 elections for the Communist Party during his time in SA – 11 at federal level and 5 state seats with notable results. He passed away in 1985.

The usual May Day event at the Semaphore Workers' Club was devoted to the memory of Peter Nicholls, long-serving Communist councillor in Port Adelaide and member of the Port Branch of the Party (see above article).



May Day Fremantle WA

Richard Titilius

With a background of the National Audit Commission Report and the looming federal budget it was the perfect time for workers to make a statement about the need to organise and the value of collective action.

The 4,000 people who turned up this year was down on last year; however those who turned up were the most enthusiastic representatives of the working class. The march was led by the Community and Public Sector Union/Civil Service Association with a theatrical theme involving Emperor Colin Barnett being pulled along on his chariot by his "slaves" i.e. public servants.

The CPSU/CSA is locked in negotiations with an intransigent Liberal government for an improvement of their wages and conditions.

The CPSU/CSA contingent was followed by members and supporters from other white collar unions which make up the bulk of the membership of unions in the state.

However, by the sheer weight of numbers, most of the rally was made up of members of the blue collar unions including the CFMEU, AMWU, MUA and ETU whose members on the day are easily identified by their black shirts with their SOLIDARITY logo.

At The Esplanade in Fremantle, Unions WA secretary, Meredith Hammat, spoke of the attacks on workers, their unions and communities by conservative governments led by federal Liberal leader Anthony Abbott and locally under Premier Colin Barnett.

Hammat emphasised that action by community and workplace groups was not enough and that unions and their members also needed to take political action in support of their demands for a fair go and a decent life.

The main speaker, assistant secretary of the ACTU, Tim Lyons, spoke on the ethical and historical messages of May Day, of working people coming together as a collective to defend and promoting the need for a decent life and on how the Commission of Audit initiated by the Abbott government to promote the interests of capital, sought to trample on the hard fought rights and conditions of workers.

Lyons also spoke of the Commission of Audit's recommendation to cut the Minimum Wage every year for ten years to reduce it by \$136 from \$622 to \$486, making it one of the lowest amongst the developed countries.

Lyons said the solution was for workers to come together as a collective to bring about a better society for all.

Members of the Communist Party of Australia were present at May Day, manning a stall and selling *Guardians* and merchandise as well speaking with a number of people about the history and purpose of the Party.



May Day in Cuba

Keith Headland

The International Brigade for 1st of May was held at CIJAM, International Camp Julio Antonio Mella, close to Caimito about 50 kilometres west of Havana, with 250 people from 30 countries taking part.

The camp was named after Julio Antonio Mella, 1903 to 1929, a revolutionary student activist and foundation member of the Cuban Communist Party who was assassinated in Mexico in 1929 by the repressive regime's secret police who followed him there where he had fled for his safety.

The leaders of the Cuban revolution could see very well the need for international solidarity and so ICAP (Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples) was formed in 1961 in response to imperialism's attempt to isolate the young Cuban revolution in order to destroy it. The camp was established by ICAP in 1972 and since then has hosted numerous brigades from all over the world, with thousands of people taking part over the years.

A number of the workers in the Camp have interesting stories to tell of their personal experiences in the struggle to defend the gains of the revolution, including Professor Ezequiel Morales, who has been the ICAP coordinator of the Southern Cross Brigade for many years and is well known by the

Australians who have been on Brigades.

There are approximately 15 different Brigades held at the Camp each year including the Southern Cross Brigade from Australia and New Zealand, which has been taking part since 1983, with people going to the camp to express solidarity with Cuba in their three main struggles which are:

Firstly, the liberation of The Cuban Five (see story page 9).

Secondly, the lifting of the cruel blockade.

Thirdly, the US vacating the illegal base at Guantánamo.

The highlight of the Brigade was going to the Plaza of the Revolution to see the huge May Day march in which over a million people took part from their places of work and also as individuals with trade union banners, red flags and hand-painted signs expressing support for the revolution and against imperialism and colonialism. The march was led by workers from Cuba's first class health system.

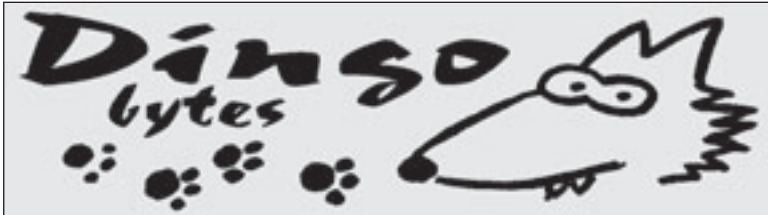
We went in different groups to schools, museum of fine art and the museum of the Revolution in Havana where there are many exhibits on the history of the brutality and repression imposed on the people prior to the revolution.

I would encourage anyone who has the slightest desire or interest to take part in a brigade to see first hand the gains of the revolution and



express solidarity for their future success, either in the Southern Cross Brigade held at the end of December, or one of the International Brigades.

For more information on the Solidarity Brigades see the Cuban site www.icap.cu or the ACFS website at www.cubabrigade.org.au ☘



Big business is urging the government's taskforce on the future of Australian agriculture to relax the investment threshold for foreign purchases. The demand is against the Coalition's pre-election promise of more scrutiny of foreign bids for farmland and agribusinesses. According to Australian Bureau of Statistics data, about 1 percent of agribusinesses are wholly or partly foreign-owned, as is about 11 percent of farmland. Foreign investment is more obvious in certain sectors, with about half the milk and 40 percent of red meat in Australia being processed by foreign-owned firms in 2011.

Australian governments, diplomats and spies have known for more than 30 years that Israel has nuclear weapons. Declassified Foreign Affairs' files reveal that Australia has been monitoring Israel's nuclear program since its inception in the 1950s. But officially it still denies the fact. The Abbott government decided last year not to support a UN General Assembly resolution on nuclear proliferation in the Middle East and abstained from voting. One hundred and sixty-nine countries voted for the resolution with only five against it – the US, Canada, Israel, Palau and the Federated States of Micronesia.

Consumer and environmental groups are outraged by the government's decision to axe a scheme designed to eliminate dangerous chemicals from food and other agriculture production. Some chemicals which are banned in the USA, the European Union and Canada are still being used in Australia. They have never been tested to see if they meet current Australian safety standards and some of them have been used for more than 40 years. The axed scheme was to re-approve and re-register agricultural chemicals currently on the market. The aim of the scheme was not to stop the use of chemicals but to ensure that they were safe for humans and pose no risk either to farmers, consumers or the environment. Over 30 countries have a re-registration system for old chemicals. Australia won't be one of them.

Figures from the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research show that domestic violence reached its highest level in 15 years. On average, 94 domestic violence assaults were reported to police each day. It is also believed that up to half of all incidents go unreported. The problem is much worse in regional and rural NSW where rates of domestic violence are up to 11 times higher than those in Sydney. Homeless women fleeing domestic violence or suffering severe mental illness will be left without specialist support because of the radical overhaul of homelessness services in NSW. The overhaul aims to push homeless people out of the city and back to their communities. Critics of the move say that cutting funds for Sydney will mean that the most vulnerable will be most affected. Some services have already closed for lack of funds.

Party for the Pilliga

S Sorrensen

Musicians, comedians and NSW dancers recently volunteered their time for Maria's Party for the Pilliga. Maria Rickert, owner of Pilliga Pottery near Coonabarabran in central NSW, organised the show to draw attention to and raise money for the fight against coal seam gas (CSG) in the region.

Goomeroi man Kevin Bennett, the front-man of roots outfit The Flood, performed because he's concerned about what CSG mining will do to the Pilliga.

"I've seen the devastation in America that (fracking, one of the methods of mining for nonconventional gas) causes," he said when the *Koori Mail* caught up with him after the gig. "And this place here is right on top of the Great Artesian Basin. If we wreck that, we're bugged."

The Pilliga is Goomeroi country. And Bennett, who turned 60 this year, is a Goomeroi man – but he didn't know that until nine years ago. "There were rumours in our family about being blackfellas but we had pale skin and, perhaps because of the stigma, perhaps because of the Stolen Generations, we lived like white people," he said.

"I was born at the sawmill where Dad worked about 50 kilometres from Barradine in the Pilliga scrub. When I was 10, I went to school in Sydney and lived with my grandmother. It was really a culture shock. I became a city boy; forgot all about my country roots."

He immersed himself in music and the music industry.

Then in 2005 he discovered he had Goomeroi heritage, thanks to some investigation into his family history by a relative. So, he returned



Kaakaa Wakakirri dancing at Maria's Party for the Pilliga. (Photo: *Koori Mail*)

to his country for the first time since leaving. "When I came back I was gobsmacked at just how beautiful it is," he said.

Last year Bennett was unexpectedly welcomed to his mob by local Goomeroi Elders. "They came to a gig I was doing at Tamworth and did a ceremony. It was a beautiful moment and it meant a lot to me," he said.

"The crowd went nuts. The place was suddenly overrun by blackfellas with spears." On the night of the gig, as the sun set over the Pilliga forest, Kaakaa Wakakirri emerged from the creek bed and prowled like warriors to a dance circle near the stage. There they danced. The crowd was enthralled by these ancient and vibrant performances.

At one stage Kaakaa Wakakirri – which means "Brothers Dancing" in Ngemba language – invited the audience to join in the dancing – an invitation taken up by many. Later that night, the *Koori Mail* caught

up with two Kaakaa Wakakirri performers, Martin Gordon and Laurance Magick Dennis.

"We dance to keep our culture alive and keep it strong," Mr Gordon said. "Dancing is how we share our culture with the world."

Mr Dennis, 41, a Yuin-born man who grew up on Goomeroi country, reckons that Kaakaa Wakakirri has given him spiritual nourishment during his 10 years with the troupe. "It has grown my spirit and made me committed to my family and to my country," he said.

Both men performed at Maria's Party because they are concerned at the threat CSG mining poses to country. "I feel good a lot of people are here against CSG mining," Mr Gordon said. "I want my son to be able to walk up to a spring and drink from it safely."

"Yeah," Mr Dennis added. "I want my kids to go to a river and have a swim – like our ancestors." *Koori Mail* ☘

Save The Sundarbans

Steven Katsineris

The Sundarbans is a huge tidal mangrove forest and is the largest such salt-tolerant mangrove forest in the world. It is situated on the swampy delta of the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna Rivers on the vast Bay of Bengal, in India and Bangladesh. The Sundarbans moist tropical mangrove forests are intersected by a complex network of tidal waterways, mudflats and many small islands.

About 300,000 people are directly dependent on the Sundarbans forests for their livelihood, while also providing some basic necessities for over a million other people. The interconnected system of waterways makes almost every corner of the forest accessible by boat. People frequent the swamps and waterways to catch fish, while others traverse the area to gather firewood, timber for building, honey, bee wax, crabs, medicinal plants, snails and other items. Due to the delta's fertile soils much of the region has been converted to intensive agriculture, with enclaves of dense remnant forest left intact.

Over the last 200 years, over 65% of the Sundarbans mangrove forests have been lost. Although the region only covers 6% of the land area of Bangladesh, it contains almost half, (45%) the nation's remaining natural forest and is a haven for numerous animal species.

The Sundarbans forests, together with the mangroves, are known for their incredibly rich bio-diversity and wide range of fauna, including important habitat for the Royal Bengal Tiger, the Estuarine Crocodile and the Indian Python and other threatened species of wildlife. Additionally, the Sundarbans serves a crucial function as a protective barrier for the 2.5 million people living further inland in villages surrounding the Sundarbans against the floods that result from cyclones and storms.

The remnant Sundarbans mangrove forest covers over 10,000 kilometres, most of which, about 60%, is situated in Bangladesh and the remaining part, around 40% is in India. The Sundarbans forest became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1997. In India, the Sundarbans wetlands encompass a National Park, Tiger Reserve and a Biosphere Reserve located in the Sundarbans Delta in the Indian state of West Bengal. While in Bangladesh, the Sundarbans swampland are protected within three forests reserves.

The name Sundarban can be literally translated as "beautiful forest" in the Bengali, Shundorbon (*Shundor*, "beautiful" and *bon*, "forest"). The name may have been derived from the *Sundari* trees (a mangrove species) that are found in Sundarbans in large numbers. It has also been proposed that the name is a corruption of *Samudraban*, *Shomudrobôn*, meaning Sea Forest. Though, the generally accepted view is the one associated with *Sundari* trees.

Wildlife of the Sundarbans

The wild forested areas of the Sundarbans are critically important habitat for endangered Tigers and support one of the largest populations of Royal Bengal Tiger with an estimated 450 individuals. The Royal Bengal Tigers have thrived in the Sundarbans wetlands and adapted well to its watery environment, becoming skilful at swimming in its saline waters.

Other rare and threatened species that live in the Sundarbans are the Saltwater Crocodile, River Terrapin, Olive Ridley Turtle, Ground Turtle, Hawks Bill Turtle, Ganges River Dolphin, Eurasian Otter and Mangrove Horseshoe Crab. The Ganges River Dolphin is quite common in its rivers.

The Sundarbans has 49 species of mammals, including Spotted Deer (Chital), Sambar Deer, Hog Deer, Rhesus Macaque Monkey, Wild Boar, Pangolin, Fox, Flying Fox, Indian Grey Mongoose, Leopard, Fishing Cat, Leopard Cat, Jungle Cat, Bengal Civet, Capped Langur, Irrawaddy Dolphin, Black Finless Porpoise and Smooth-coated Otter, Oriental Small-clawed Otter. Barking Deer are also found on Holiday Island in the Sundarbans.

The aqua fauna of the Sundarbans includes a great variety of fishes, Red Fiddler Crabs and Hermit Crabs. There are crocodiles as well, which can be often seen along the mud banks. The Sundarbans National Park is also

especially noted for its vital conservation of the Ridley Sea Turtle.

There is as well an incredible variety of reptiles found in Sundarbans, which includes King Cobra, Spectacled Cobra, Rock Python and Water Monitor Lizard.

The Sundarbans also has more than 260 bird species. It is a paradise for birdwatchers; the list of birds includes such rare birds as the Masked Finfoot, Mangrove Pitta and the Mangrove Whistler.

Proposed power station

Unfortunately, the governments of Bangladesh and India are now planning to develop a coal-based power plant very close to this environmentally sensitive region. And it looks likely the Forestry Ministry in Bangladesh will approve this project unless public pressure can make the government reverse its position or the UNESCO World Heritage and Ramsar Secretariat steps in to voice strong objections to this destructive plan.

This proposed coal-powered plant in Rampal is going to be built on over 1,834 acres of land just nine kilometres away from many reserved sections of the forest. This will definitely have a great impact on the Sundarbans, its wildlife, ecology and biodiversity. For this proposed 1,320 megawatt power plant, Bangladesh will need to import about 4.72 million tons of coal each year. Ships will take this massive amount of coal freight coal to Monga port which is 40 kilometres away from the site of the planned plant at Rampal. And during the plant's operation the coal will be transported through the Sundarbans rivers and canals.

The proposed Rampal power plant will have a disastrous effect on animals, environment and local people, with 7,500 families being displaced. A large number of people are to be evicted, valuable croplands will disappear and there will be negative impacts on the delicate mangroves environment. Over time more of the Sundarbans wetlands habitat will be fragmented, degraded and ruined.

The Bangladesh government fixed the project area without any real economical benefit, technical feasibility, or social and environmental impact study. The power plant would result in drastic changes to the surrounding natural environment, including pollution of the water, air and soil and destruction of more of the mangroves and forests. The scale and adverse impact of this development has motivated the local community and environmental activists to organise protests to stop this dangerous project going ahead.

Many various organisations, political parties and national leaders have spoken against the Rampal plant. The save the Sundarbans message has been simple - "There are many alternatives to generate power, but Sundarbans has no alternative".

Sundarbans so important

The Sundarbans is the largest single block of tidal mangrove forest in the world. It contains at least 334 plant species and 453 recorded species of animals. And it is a vital sanctuary for numerous wild animals, including many threatened species. As the mangroves forest habitat of the Sundarbans is fragmented and disappears, so will the Royal Bengal Tigers and other endangered wildlife. The Sundarbans mangrove forest is a crucially important habitat for the Bengal Tigers and one of the largest reserves for these tigers.

It is estimated that about 450 Bengal Tigers live in the Sundarbans region, with over 100 in the Indian part and an estimated over 300 in the Bangladeshi section of the Sundarbans. According to the 2011 tiger census, the Bangladeshi Sundarbans have about 275 tigers. Although previous estimates had suggested a much higher figure closer to 300 Bengal Tigers in the area. This is a very significant number considering the population of all Tigers species remaining in the wild in the world is less than 3,200.

The Sundarbans is home to many different species of birds, mammals, insects, reptiles and fishes. Over 120 species of fish and over 260 species of birds have been recorded in the Sundarbans. About 50 species of reptiles and eight species of amphibians are known to occur. The Bangladeshi Sundarbans now support the



The Sundarbans is the largest single block of tidal mangrove forest in the world.



The wild forested areas of the Sundarbans are critically important habitat for endangered Tigers and support one of the largest populations of Royal Bengal Tiger.

only population of the Estuarine, or Salt-Water Crocodile in Bangladesh; the population is estimated at less than 200 individuals. While the Estuarine Crocodile still survives, its numbers have been greatly depleted through hunting and trapping for skins. The Mugger Crocodile is now extinct in the area, probably as a result of past over-exploitation, but it still occurs in one location nearby.

A 1991 study revealed that the Bangladeshi part of the Sundarbans supports diverse biological resources including at least 150 species of commercially important fish, 270 species of birds, 42 species of mammals, 35 reptiles and 8 amphibian species. This represents a significant proportion of the species present in Bangladesh (i.e. about 30% of the reptiles, 37% the birds and 34% of the mammals) and includes a large number of species which are now extinct elsewhere in the country. Two amphibians, 14 reptiles, 25 birds and 5 mammals are presently endangered. The Sundarbans is also an important wintering area for migrant water birds and is an exceptional area for watching and studying birdlife.

Mangrove forests face threats from deforestation and habitat fragmentation through human developments and are rapidly disappearing around the world. The Sundarbans mangroves are already threatened by industrial pollution, the clearing of the mangrove forest to expand agriculture, to construct canals and ports, oil spills and forest clearing for timber and firewood.

Also, mangroves are an important transition from the marine to freshwater and terrestrial systems, and provide critical habitat for numerous species of small fish, crabs, shrimps and other crustaceans that adapt to feed and shelter, and reproduce among the tangled mass of roots, known as pneumatophores, which grow upward from the anaerobic mud to get the supply of oxygen.

Nature tourism is also a developing activity in the Sundarbans. The varied and colourful birdlife to be seen along its waterways is one of the Sundarbans' greatest attractions. There are some 315 species of waterfowl, raptors and forest birds including nine species of kingfisher and the magnificent White-bellied Sea Eagle. And four species of marine turtle have been recorded from the area.

The Sundarbans provides a unique ecosystem with a rich diversity of habitat and abundant wildlife.

The Sundarbans magnificent mangroves forests are one of the most distinctive and captivating places remaining on earth, truly a natural treasure to be cherished. And any additional human intrusions risk the health of the mangrove forest ecosystem, its wildlife and the livelihoods of the forest dependent communities. Join the struggle to stop the Rampal plant, demand alternative energy and preserve the beautiful forests and ecosystem of the Sundarbans.

The Sundarbans are one of the few remaining natural forest areas to support a large number of tigers. So the Sundarbans it is critically important for the survival of endangered Bengal Tigers and other rare wildlife. To ensure the survival of the Royal Bengal Tigers more human encroachment into the Sundarbans must be stopped. The Sundarbans is truly of national and international importance. Raise your voice to protect the Sundarbans mangrove forest and save this unique habitat from being destroyed by further developments.

For more information on Sundarbans look up: <http://news.mongabay.com/2013/1111-hance-rampal-coal-plant.html>

There are petitions you can sign to support the campaign to stop the proposed power plant and protect the Sundarbans: https://secure.avaaz.org/en/petition/Save_Sundarbans_Stop_Rampal ✪

But then it was too late

An excerpt from *They Thought They Were Free – The Germans, 1933-45* by Milton Mayer

What no one seemed to notice was the ever widening gap, after 1933, between the government and the people. Just think how very wide this gap was to begin with, here in Germany. And it became always wider. You know, it doesn't make people close to their government to be told that this is a people's government, a true democracy, or to be enrolled in civilian defence, or even to vote. All this has little, really nothing, to do with knowing one is governing.

What happened here was the gradual habituation of the people, little by little, to being governed by surprise; to receiving decisions deliberated in secret; to believing that the situation was so complicated that the government had to act on information which the people could not understand, or so dangerous that, even if the people could understand it, it could not be released because of national security. And their sense of identification with Hitler, their trust in him, made it easier to widen this gap and reassured those who would otherwise have worried about it.

This separation of government from people, this widening of the gap, took place so gradually and so insensibly, each step disguised (perhaps not even intentionally) as a temporary emergency measure or associated with true patriotic allegiance or with real social purposes. And all the crises and reforms (real reforms, too) so occupied the people that they did not see the slow motion underneath, of the whole process of government growing remoter and remoter.

The dictatorship, and the whole process of its coming into being, was above all diverting. It provided an excuse not to think for people who did not want to think anyway. I do not speak of your "little men," your baker and so on; I speak of my colleagues and myself, learned men, mind you. Most of us did not want to think about fundamental things and never had. There was no need to. Nazism gave us some dreadful, fundamental things to think about – we were decent people – and kept us so busy with continuous changes and "crises" and so fascinated, yes, fascinated, by the machinations of the "national enemies", without and within, that we had no time to think about these dreadful things that were growing, little by little, all around us. Unconsciously, I suppose, we were grateful. Who wants to think?

To live in this process is absolutely not to be able to notice it – please try to believe me – unless one has a much greater degree of political awareness, acuity, than most of us had ever had occasion to develop. Each step was so small, so inconsequential, so well explained or, on occasion, "regretted," that, unless one were detached from the whole process from the beginning, unless one understood what the whole thing was in principle, what all these "little measures" that no "patriotic German" could resent must some day lead to, one no more saw it developing from day to day than a farmer in his field sees the corn growing. One day it is over his head.

How is this to be avoided, among ordinary men, even highly educated ordinary men? Frankly, I do not know. I do not see, even now. Many, many times since it all happened



I have pondered that pair of great maxims, *Principiis obsta* and *Finem respice* – "Resist the beginnings" and "Consider the end." But one must foresee the end in order to resist, or even see, the beginnings. One must foresee the end clearly and certainly and how is this to be done, by ordinary men or even by extraordinary men? Things might have. And everyone counts on that might.

Your "little men," your Nazi friends, were not against National Socialism in principle. Men like me, who were, are the greater offenders, not because we knew better (that would be too much to say) but because we sensed better. Pastor Niemöller spoke for the thousands and thousands of men like me when he spoke (too modestly of himself) and said that, when the Nazis attacked the Communists, he was a little uneasy, but, after all, he was not a Communist, and so he did nothing; and then they attacked the Socialists, and he was a little uneasier, but, still, he was not a Socialist, and he did nothing; and then the schools, the press, the Jews, and so on, and he was always uneasier, but still he did nothing. And then they attacked the Church, and he was a Churchman, and he did something – but then it was too late.

You see, one doesn't see exactly where or how to move. Believe me, this is true. Each act, each occasion, is worse than the last, but only a little worse. You wait for the next and the next. You wait for one great shocking occasion, thinking that others, when such a shock comes, will join with you in resisting somehow. You don't want to act, or even talk, alone; you don't want to "go out of your way to make trouble." Why not? – Well, you are not in the habit of doing it. And it is not just fear, fear of standing alone, that restrains you; it is also genuine uncertainty.

Uncertainty is a very important factor,

and, instead of decreasing as time goes on, it grows. Outside, in the streets, in the general community, "everyone" is happy. One hears no protest, and certainly sees none. You know, in France or Italy there would be slogans against the government painted on walls and fences; in Germany, outside the great cities, perhaps, there is not even this. In the university community, in your own community, you speak privately to your colleagues, some of whom certainly feel as you do; but what do they say? They say, "It's not so bad" or "You're seeing things" or "You're an alarmist."

And you are an alarmist. You are saying that this must lead to this, and you can't prove it. These are the beginnings, yes; but how do you know for sure when you don't know the end, and how do you know, or even surmise, the end? On the one hand, your enemies, the law, the regime, the Party, intimidate you. On the other, your colleagues pooh-pooh you as pessimistic or even neurotic. You are left with your close friends, who are, naturally, people who have always thought as you have.

Now, in small gatherings of your oldest friends, you feel that you are talking to yourselves, that you are isolated from the reality of things. This weakens your confidence still further and serves as a further deterrent to – to what? It is clearer all the time that, if you are going to do anything, you must make an occasion to do it, and then you are obviously a troublemaker. So you wait, and you wait.

But the one great shocking occasion, when tens or hundreds or thousands will join with you, never comes. That's the difficulty. If the last and worst act of the whole regime had come immediately after the first and smallest, thousands, yes, millions would have been sufficiently shocked – if, let us say, the gassing of the Jews in '43 had come immediately after

the "German Firm" stickers on the windows of non-Jewish shops in '33. But of course this isn't the way it happens. In between come all the hundreds of little steps, some of them imperceptible, each of them preparing you not to be shocked by the next. Step C is not so much worse than Step B, and, if you did not make a stand at Step B, why should you at Step C? And so on to Step D.

And one day, too late, your principles, if you were ever sensible of them, all rush in upon you. The burden of self-deception has grown too heavy, and some minor incident, in my case my little boy, hardly more than a baby, saying "Jewish swine," collapses it all at once, and you see that everything, everything, has changed and changed completely under your nose. The world you live in – your nation, your people – is not the world you were born in at all. The forms are all there, all untouched, all reassuring, the houses, the shops, the jobs, the mealtimes, the visits, the concerts, the cinema, the holidays. But the spirit, which you never noticed because you made the lifelong mistake of identifying it with the forms, is changed. Now you live in a world of hate and fear, and the people who hate and fear do not even know it themselves; when everyone is transformed, no one is transformed. Now you live in a system which rules without responsibility even to God. The system itself could not have intended this in the beginning, but in order to sustain itself it was compelled to go all the way.

You have gone almost all the way yourself. Life is a continuing process, a flow, not a succession of acts and events at all. It has flowed to a new level, carrying you with it, without any effort on your part. On this new level you live, you have been living more comfortably every day, with new morals, new principles. You have accepted things you would not have accepted five years ago, a year ago, things that your father, even in Germany, could not have imagined.

Suddenly it all comes down, all at once. You see what you are, what you have done, or, more accurately, what you haven't done (for that was all that was required of most of us: that we do nothing). You remember those early meetings of your department in the university when, if one had stood, others would have stood, perhaps, but no one stood. A small matter, a matter of hiring this man or that, and you hired this one rather than that. You remember everything now, and your heart breaks. Too late. You are compromised beyond repair.

The Beacon ✪

Each step was so small, so inconsequential, so well explained or, on occasion, "regretted," that, unless one were detached from the whole process from the beginning, unless one understood what the whole thing was in principle ...

Israeli Hypocrisy

Robert Fantina

On Sunday, April 27, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appeared on US television, denouncing progress made in reconciliation talks between Fatah, which ostensibly controls the West Bank, and Hamas, the democratically-elected government in the Gaza Strip.

According to CNN: "Netanyahu said he and Secretary of State John Kerry recently applauded that some progress was being made toward a peace agreement. 'And then the next day, we were both shocked, there's no other word, we were absolutely stupefied that President Abbas embraced the terrorist organisation Hamas that seeks Israel's destruction,' he said on *Face the Nation*."

We will ignore for the moment the idea that the Prime Minister of Israel feels free to speak for the US Secretary of State; when the puppet master pulls the strings, anything can happen.

Rather, we will focus on Mr Netanyahu's apparent horror and repugnance at the idea that the governing body of one nation, or part of a nation, seeks the destruction of another.

Israel plays lip service to the US's ineffectual and disingenuous attempts to achieve a two-state solution between Palestine and Israel, despite the fact that Israel continually, even during talks about said solution, destroys Palestinian homes, farms and villages, to create Israeli-only settlements. The borders of Palestine have shrunk to almost nothing since the establishment of the nation of Israel, which resulted from the violent eviction of over three quarters of a million Palestinians during the period of 1947-1948. Those genocidal practices have continued now for nearly seven decades.

Mr Netanyahu refuses to deal with anyone who wishes the destruction of Israel, yet he is actively pursuing the complete annihilation of Palestine. This murderous pursuit, in violation of numerous international laws, is financed almost fully by the United States.

A comparison of financial aid to Palestine and Israel by the US shows the complete dishonesty of the latter two countries.

Since the mid-1990s, according to the Congressional Research Report, "US Foreign Aid to the Palestinians", dated September 30, 2013, the US has committed (note: the report does not say "sent") US\$5 billion to Palestine. That, of course, sounds like a great deal of money, but that sum must be put into context. Since 1987, the US has sent over US\$3 billion to Israel, *every year*. So if we assume that "the mid-1990s" means 1995, Palestine was scheduled to receive an average of US\$158 million each year, or about US\$433,000 a day. Israel, receiving US\$3 billion a year, averages about US\$9 million a day, most of it in military aid. During fiscal year 2013, while the US was busy giving Israel its nearly US\$9 million a day in military aid, the sum given to Palestine for military aid was \$0.

As a result of this generous largess by the US, Israel has the most sophisticated weapons of offence and defence that exist in the world today. Palestinians, on the other hand, are occasionally able to cobble together sufficient supplies to make a few bottle rockets.

At least partly because of this unspeakable inequality by the US since 2000, 1,109 Israelis have been killed in conflicts with Palestinians, yet 6,862 Palestinians have been killed. Among the population of children, 129 Israeli children have died, and at least 1,523 Palestinian



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu refuses to deal with anyone who wishes the destruction of Israel, yet he is actively pursuing the complete annihilation of Palestine.

children have been killed by Israel. In that time period, 8,550 Israelis have been injured. This is compared to 54,761 Palestinians injured in that same time. Palestine currently detains no Israelis, yet 5,224 Palestinians are incarcerated in Israeli prisons. Going back further, since 1967, at least 27,000 Palestinian homes have been destroyed by Israel. No Israeli homes have been destroyed by Palestine.

So Mr Netanyahu's "shock" that Fatah and Hamas are in reconciliation talks, and that he can't possibly deal with an organisation that seeks Israel's destruction, is a bit difficult to swallow. But this is typical for the Israeli Prime Minister and, by extension, the US. Both countries talk about negotiations with Palestine, when Israel, with the US's blessing, can take whatever it wants from Palestine with impunity.

They discuss the need for Palestine to respect the sovereignty of

Israel's borders, but are content to allow Israel to violate Palestine's borders on a constant basis. They decry the occasional bottle rocket launched from the Gaza Strip that reaches Israel, but then allow and support the carpet-bombing of Gaza. They condemn any resistance by the occupied against the occupier, but perpetrate horrific acts of terrorism by Israel against the Palestinians.

And now, to "reward" Palestine for attempting to reconcile its government, the US is threatening to cut off the paltry sum it currently sends that beleaguered nation. So the annual aid, now proposed at US\$400 million (although Israel's displeasure with anything Palestine does is sufficient to cause all or part of that to be withheld), what Israel receives from the US in about 50 days, is now in jeopardy. In order to prevent this loss, a unified Palestinian government must renounce violence and recognise Israel.

Where, one might ask, is the demand that Israel renounce violence and recognise Palestine? Where is the threat that any part of the billions of dollars the US sends Israel every year will be withheld until that nation does so? Why, one asks, is ineffectual resistance to brutal occupation considered terrorism, yet the occupation itself, which takes a horrific toll on all Palestinians on a daily basis, considered acceptable?

It has long been known that the US government, the so-called elected representatives of the people, has been bought by the American

Israel Political Affairs Committee (AIPAC). Can there be any other reason that unspeakable human rights abuses are not only allowed, but actually funded, by the US government? In the US, government officials pay homage to the lobbyists, and the lobbyists with the deepest pockets get the most reverence. And few of the US's representatives will bite the hand that so generously feeds them.

There are only two things that can ease the burdens of the Palestinians, and give them hope for an independent nation of their own. The first is the recognition by the global community of Israel's apartheid practices, and the resolution to do something to end them. The second is a lobby group in the US that is larger and more powerful than AIPAC to come into existence. This does not appear to be on the horizon.

The former option appears to be making progress, however; the BDS (Boycott, Divest and Sanction) movement is ever-growing and is gaining international support. Palestine has a greater presence in the United Nations than ever before, and is recognised by 132 UN members, about 68% of that world body (Israel is recognised by 160 countries, about 83%), and that number is slowly growing. Mr Netanyahu may not like it, and may deny it, but world opinion is moving away from him and Israel and their lies. And that can't happen soon enough for Palestine.

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Network Rail cuts bosses' bonuses

Peter Lazenby

BRITAIN: Network Rail (NR) caved in to trade union pressure last week by announcing it is to cut huge bonuses to top bosses. Bonuses for five senior executives have been reduced from a potential 160 percent of salary to 20 percent.

Rail union TSSA general secretary Manuel Cortes said: "We welcome the sinner that repenteth, even at the eleventh hour.

"We have been arguing the case against double-your-salary bonuses for ten years and now, after taking

£10 million in such unmerited bonuses, Network Rail's top bosses have finally listened."

The union demanded the payouts be stopped after the Commons transport committee criticised NR for a spate of deaths on level crossings.

Its record was highlighted again during the inquest into the death of four-year-old Emma Lifsey. And Mr Cortes said they should not have taken any bonuses – let alone the six-figure sums pocketed in recent years.

"We hope that this is not just a PR move to appease their

critics. Whilst cutting bonuses, base salaries are to be quietly hiked to compensate for bonus losses. That would be sharp practice," he added.

"Network Rail is a public company funded by the taxpayer to the tune of £4 billion a year. Safety should be its number one priority, not imitating the 'get rich quick' mentality of bonus-driven wide boys in the City."

Chief executive Mark Carne still stands to net a £135,000 top-up to his £675,000 basic salary if the part-publicly owned company meets its performance targets.

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Venezuelan opposition attack Cuban health workers

WT Whitney

Cuban doctors working in Venezuela since 2003 epitomise Cuba-Venezuelan mutual solidarity. Joined there by 20,000 other Cuban health workers, 11,000 doctors are caring for patients and teaching medical students.

Longstanding objections from Venezuela's medical establishment are minor irritants in the face of recent violent assaults against Cuban health workers. They occur as part of anti-government protests that since early February have taken lives and damaged infrastructure.

Speaking recently on the 11th anniversary of Venezuela's primary health care initiative Barrio Adentro, Vice President Jorge Arreaza reported that 162 Cuban health care personnel had been attacked. Two suffered serious burns. José Manzaneda, coordinator of Cuba Information TV, blames "a gigantic campaign against Cuba created in the private Venezuelan media, [and] amplified by the international media." As a result, "[M]any people firmly believe either that the Cuban government makes big political decisions in Venezuela or that Cuban health workers are really agents or spies."

A Spanish news service, for example, commenting on President Nicolas Maduro's election victory in April 2013, cited the role of "around 46,000 Cuban collaborators who officially live in Venezuela, all with the mission of guaranteeing the Chávez revolution." At the time, defeated opposition forces were engaged in destabilisation, and the report served as a context for attacks on 25 health centres staffed by Cuban doctors.

According to Ecuador's *El Comercio* newspaper recently, "[M]ilitary personnel represented the darkest side of that contingent of

professionals – teachers, doctors, engineers – involved in the social programs." They are "like gods [in Venezuela]; no one can see them [in] army barracks, government ministries, intelligence offices, and petroleum agencies." Quoted by the BBC, opposition leader María Corina Machado promised, "We are going to liberate Venezuela and liberate the Venezuelan army from the humiliating presence of Cuban functionaries and Cuban military personnel."

The reality, of course, is otherwise. On March 12 in Caracas President Maduro hosted 2,585 young people at the Presidential Palace. They had finished a six-year medical school course that focused on "comprehensive community medicine" at no personal cost and were now receiving medical diplomas. They will be providing free, accessible care for underserved Venezuelans in cities and rural areas throughout the country.

By 2013, over 14,000 such physicians were already on the job in clinics and hospitals. That year 20,000 students were working toward their own graduation. Projections are for 60,000 students to have graduated by 2019. Their program, entirely separate from traditional Venezuelan medical education, involves study and practical experience in the very communities where they live and will eventually serve. Crucially, their teachers are Cuban doctors.

Those doctors also care for patients and have engaged in half a billion patient encounters since 2003. Their presence accounts for doctors in Venezuela rising from 18 per 10,000 inhabitants in 1998 to 58 in 2012. Infant deaths fell from 20 per 1,000 live births in 1999 to 13 in 2011.

The program of educating Venezuelan doctors to replace Cuban counterparts resulted from a

bi-national agreement in 2005. Under the plan Cuban health care workers serving in Venezuela would receive their regular pay plus bonuses. In return, Venezuela guaranteed a predictable supply of oil for Cuba at reduced prices, at least 70,000 barrels per day.

The fact of Cuban doctors in Venezuela is no anomaly: since 1963, over 130,000 of them have provided health care in 108 countries. In early 2013, 17,000 Cuban doctors were working in 60 countries. Since then 6,000 more have undertaken missions in Brazil.

Elsewhere in the world Cuban doctors don't face charges of political interference backed up by physical attacks. And for doctors to be capable of spying while teaching tens of thousands and caring for millions more verges on the superhuman.

Journalist José Manzaneda offers perspective on this situation. The Cuban doctors "contribute to the long-term construction of systems of public health throughout the global South, health systems that by and large were abandoned or disregarded during decades of neo-liberalism and anti-state policies. That's the basically ideological background for slander campaigns against Cuban solidarity work worldwide."

Joining this battle of ideas, the US government has long bedeviled Cuban doctors working abroad. The US State Department and Department of Homeland Security introduced the US Cuban Medical Professional Parole program in 2006. That program offers incentives for Cuban health workers on international missions to defect and move to the United States. The object, presumably, is to undermine a medical outreach program appreciated throughout the world.

People's World ✪



A Cuban doctor checks on a pregnant woman at a Barrio Adentro clinic in Naiguatate in the state of Vargas, Venezuela. (Photo: Jorge Silva)



Region Briefs

On April 29, people in Manila protested US President Obama's two-day visit to the Philippines. During his visit, Obama signed the US-Philippines Enhanced Defence Cooperation Agreement at the Defence Ministry. This agreement allows US fighter jets, ships and troops to be based in the Philippines on a "temporary rotational basis". The Philippines Senate had voted in 1991 to close US bases there. Protesters burned the US flag and an effigy of Obama to show their opposition. They consider the agreement as violating Philippines' constitution and independence.

Protesters demanded the Taiwanese government stop the construction of a fourth nuclear plant. Thousands of demonstrators blocked a main traffic route in Taipei on April 28. Police fired water canon to disperse the crowd. Ruling Kuomintang Party leader Ma Ying-Jeou temporarily suspended construction of the nuclear plant. The fourth plant is being built near the populous Taipei city which sits near the "ring of fire" region of seismic activity in the Pacific Ocean, adding to safety concerns.

Tibetan farmers have benefited from the Agricultural Bank of China's (ABC) new project. Chief of the ABC's Tibetan office Migma Wongdu said on April 28 that the ABC planned to establish 5,200 outlets in Tibetan autonomous regions to help the local Tibetans access financial services within their villages. Most Tibetans live in remote villages away from any bank, and have to travel a long distance to withdraw or deposit money. Kadrom, a Tibetan herder, used to walk 30 kilometres to the nearest bank; now with the ABC's new project, she can deposit or withdraw money by swiping her debit card at her village's local store. One thousand four hundred similar outlets have already been established with 700 more to come this year.

On April 30, Chinese President Xi called members of the Communist Party of China (CPC) to lead by example and identify themselves more as the country's workers. He made this remark on an inspection to Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. Xi greeted farmers and the working people ahead of May Day. He praised workers as the pride of the people and the force of socialist modernisation.

Letter to Obama Free the Cuban 5

Greg Landau is an award-winning music/video producer, educator and music historian with a doctorate from University of California San Diego's prestigious School of Communication. Over the last 20 years he has produced six Grammy nominated CD's and among the over 50 CDs, numerous film sound tracks and videos.

His musical productions have been featured in films and television including the new Benjamin and Peter Bratt film, *La Mission*, Oliver Stone's, *Comandante*, *Survivor: Nicaragua*, *CSI Miami*, *The Family Guy*, *Dexter*, *Burn Notice*, *Nash Bridges*, *Punk*, HBO's *Hemingway and Gelhorn*, and several PBS documentaries. He teaches at University of California Santa Cruz, and San Francisco City College and has served as a Governor of the Nation Association of Recording Arts and Sciences.

Dear President Obama,

I am writing to you to ask you to review the case of the Cuban Five. These men acted to stop the terrorist activities being carried out in Florida by Cuban exiles against their homeland. My father, Saul Landau, gathered abundant evidence of the activities of these groups that operated with impunity in Florida with tacit support from local government officials who

looked the other way at their illegal conspiracies to carry out armed attacks on Cuban soil.

The Cuban Five men were convicted in 2001 and have served lengthy sentences. The time has come to let them go, to end the cold war mentality that has shaped the United States-Cuba policy for decades despite huge shifts in the geopolitics that created them.

The release of the remaining

prisoners would signal a shift in US policy to Cuba and a desire to heal past wounds opened decades ago in a world that does not exist anymore. The Soviet Union has disappeared, we now have normal relations with China and Vietnam, Cuba poses no danger to the United States, except as an example of the irrational policies of the past.

I have taken many student groups to Cuba over the last decade and they are amazed at the difficulty that the US government policies have created for ordinary Cuban citizens and their desire to end this senseless blockade of our neighbouring island. Free the Cuban Five as a gesture to end this political barrier to friendship between the United States and Cuba,

Sincerely,

Greg Landau
Music Producer

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Surry Hills NSW 2010

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and pervasive use of drugs to keep horses running when they shouldn't be.

Right here at home, horses are put at risk. Raced too young and too hard when their bones are not up to the pounding and stress, horses used in racing suffer greatly from injuries, lameness, and exhaustion. Horses are whipped and forced to run at break neck speeds.

Horses routinely suffer catastrophic injuries while racing and either drop dead on the track or are euthanised after their broken bodies are dragged out of sight. This is no rare event. It's business as usual.

For those horses who manage to survive, few will be retired to grassy pastures. The vast majority of owners are unwilling to bear the

costs of horses that aren't making them money. Unwanted horses typically are shipped to slaughter.

People who care about horses must steer clear of the track if they don't want to contribute to the misery.

**Claire Fryer
Campaigns Coordinator
PETA Australia**

Guns before butter

It is clear that we are in for a guns-before-butter budget. There will be cuts to health, education, pensions and other social services. But we are getting new strike fighters for \$12 billion.

The Prime Minister has told us

that we never know what's round the corner. Well it should be easy enough to work out. If Abbott bought himself an atlas he would see that apart from New Zealand, Australia is surrounded by third world countries, none of whom have the industrial infrastructure to maintain military forces in a war situation. It is most unlikely that New Zealand will attack us, so who is left? Could any of the Pacific Islands, themselves threatened by climate change, be a threat to Australia? Hardly; what about Papua New Guinea. Again most unlikely.

People have been talking about Indonesia attacking Australia for the past 60 years, but this attack has never eventuated. Indeed they have expressed fear of us because of the presence of US Marines in Darwin.

Why would China want a war with Australia? Probably its most valued trading partner? I'm sure Gina Rinehart would wonder where her next billion will come from if there was a war with China, considering that most of our exports to China are what are termed strategic materials.

If military spending was cut by 50 percent we would still be spending some \$40 million a day on the military. This is surely more than adequate for our needs. But would that give us some \$15 billion for health and education? It would be a good idea to revive the peace movement and relate it to these most pressing social issues.

**Ron Barrett
Sydney**

A racehorse's life

People for Ethical Treatment of Animals US recently broke an investigation into horse racing that documented the profound suffering of horses used in the industry, including the routine

Culture & Life

by Rob Gowland

Scientology, Doctor Zhivago and other weirdness

Scientology stopped being a science-fiction based cult and became a church when its founder, sci-fi author L Ron Hubbard, discovered that churches did not have to pay tax. Although Scientology's status as a church no doubt helped its bottom line, it did nothing to increase anyone's perception of it as scientific. It was and remained a cult.

Although Justice Lionel Murphy, in a High Court decision not long before he died, put forward the view that an organisation was a church if its members *believed* it to be a church, it was a view shared by few other people. And no wonder: the decision gave greater weight to people's subjective beliefs than it did to objective reality.

Now the Scientologists are back in the news, seeking approval from local government to open two new drug and alcohol rehabilitation centres, one in Warburton in Victoria and one in the Yarramalong Valley on the NSW Central Coast. Residents in both locations are opposed to the move.

The irony of trying to wean people off drugs or alcohol through the medium of a cult has not been lost on the residents, although their main arguments relate to adverse police reports about security problems associated with the Warburton facility and zoning breaches in Yarramalong.

The two centres would be run by a Scientology front organisation, ABLE or the "Association for Better Living and Education". ABLE has run the Narconon centre in a rural Victorian guest house owned by the Victorian government, but now they want to upgrade and expand.

Acknowledging that ABLE's and Narconon's drug and alcohol programs are based not on medical science but on Scientology's pseudo-scientific "psychological" methods, a spokesman for ABLE told *The Sydney Morning Herald* that "Narconon has operated in Australia for over 20 years with over 10,000 successful graduates without any of the problems traditionally associated with medical-based drug and alcohol programs." So that's all right then.

Let us now travel back in time to the 1950s, when a Soviet writer named Boris Pasternak who believed he was insufficiently appreciated by the literary establishment of the USSR decided to write a novel "exposing" the Revolution and the Civil War. In the resulting novel, *Doctor Zhivago*, Pasternak depicted these seminal events in the history of the USSR not as a time of extraordinary heroism and sacrifice by ordinary workers and peasants, but as a time of opportunism, betrayal, disappointment, tragedy and loss.

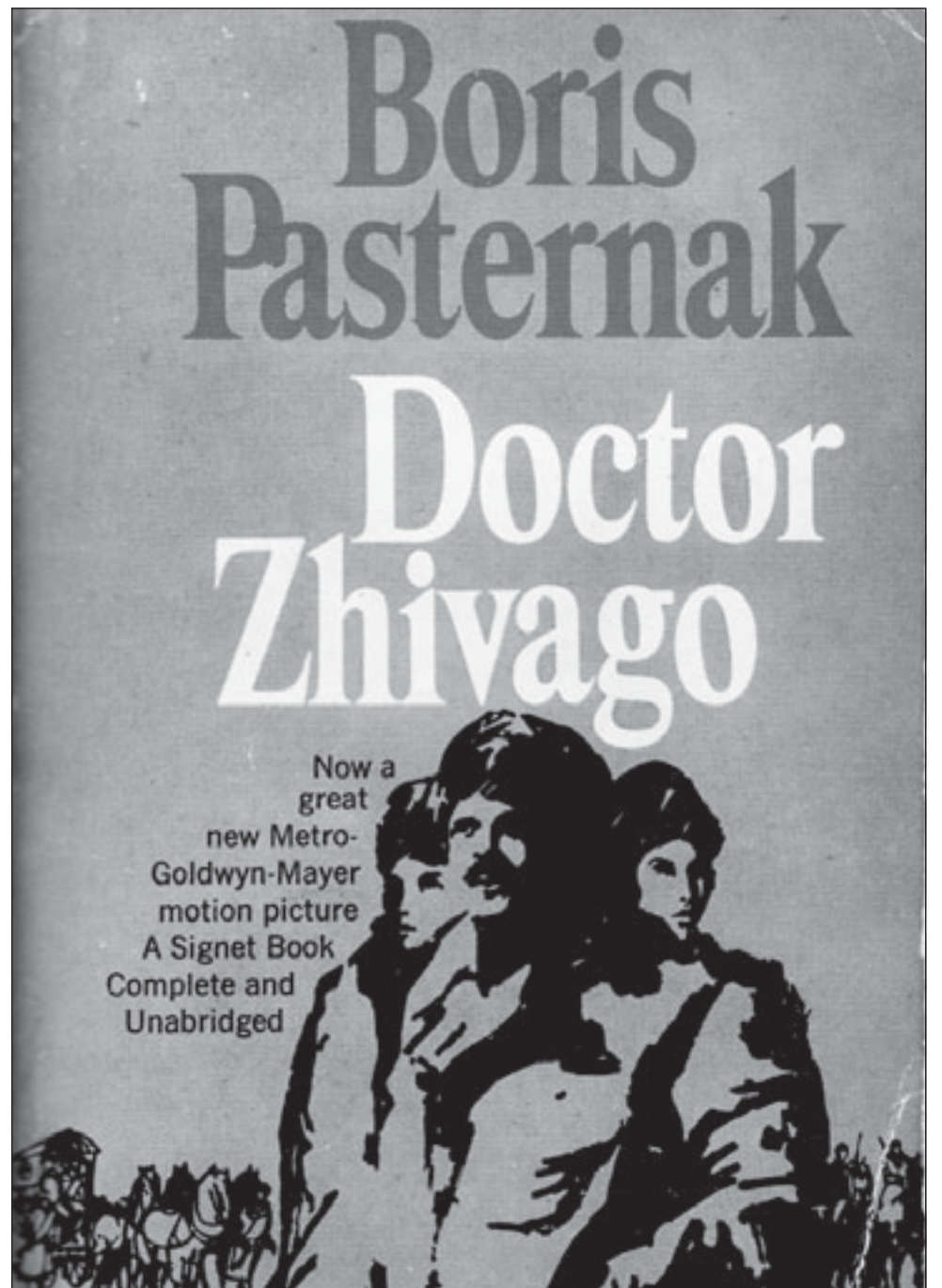
Pasternak saw no honour, no glory and no nobility in the Revolution. His jaundiced view was deeply offensive to the Communists of the USSR and the Soviet government was understandably disinclined to spend state funds on publishing his diatribe. Pasternak, however, had no qualms about offering his rejected manuscript to anti-Soviet agents from abroad, specifically from British Intelligence.

They microfilmed the Russian text and sent it out to the CIA, who in turn collaborated with Dutch Intelligence to use a small academic publishing house in The Hague in order to publish copies for distribution as a "banned book" to Russians attending the 1958 Brussels Expo. The Americans were keen to hide their involvement, so they could pour scorn on claims that the CIA was backing Pasternak. Accordingly, they enlisted the help of the Vatican – never loath to support anti-Soviet activities – who distributed the book through a group of anti-Soviet Russian emigrés ensconced in the Vatican pavilion.

The Vatican had been involved in helping numerous Nazis and other anti-Soviet elements escape retribution at the hands of the Red Army at the end of the War, including many collaborators. Now they were put to work.

The CIA was primarily concerned with smuggling the book into the USSR, as a "subversive" work. But Pasternak had successfully sent the text, no doubt with the help of yet another intelligence agency, to a Milan-based publisher Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, who kicked up a fuss over the CIA publishing a Russian edition without seeking his permission.

Even without the CIA's faux pas, Soviet intelligence authorities were well aware of the CIA's involvement in the affair, despite US



denials. The release of some 130 declassified documents has recently allowed a book to be written about the whole sorry project: *The Zhivago Affair: The Kremlin, The CIA and the Battle Over a Forbidden Book*.

As soon as the Russian edition appeared, speculation was rife that the CIA was behind it, first in literary circles and then in the multitude of current affairs journals. The right-wing *National Review Bulletin* openly lauded the CIA for producing the book. Not surprisingly, it was not long before the CIA abandoned the use of front publishing houses for *Zhivago* and instead published its own "black" edition, a miniature paperback, for smuggling into the USSR.

It is unlikely that the overthrow of Socialism in the USSR nearly 30 years later can be attributed to the subversive influence of *Doctor Zhivago*. In fact, I think that most of those who have actually read the book will agree with me that it is a tedious read. It is not a patch on Alexei Tolstoy's *Ordeal* trilogy or Serafimovich's *The Iron Flood*.

Finally, did you see where the report of the official enquiry into Britain's involvement in the "rendition" of people accused of involvement in terrorism into the none-too-gentle hands of the US government exonerated the operatives of British foreign intelligence agency MI6 on the grounds that they were under no obligation to report breaches of the Geneva Convention. Accordingly, they could with a clear conscience turn a blind eye to the torture of detainees in foreign jails.

Commenting on the report, the English *Guardian* newspaper noted that that "even when individual MI6 officers expressed concerns about the abuse of detainees, they did not pass on their thoughts for fear of offending the US".

Now isn't that a feeble reason for not speaking out about torture? But then, British intelligence and counter terrorism officers would have much the same class and moral outlook as their American counterparts. They are unlikely to get on in their careers by displaying humanitarianism. ☘



Sunday May 11 –
Saturday May 17

A crowded line-up this week, but not necessarily a better one. The second episode of *Inspector George Gently* (ABC1 Sunday May 11 at 8.30pm) deals with the death of a female staff member at one of those holiday camps that were popular with British people in the years of post-war shortages but by the late sixties were losing their appeal in favour of the Costa Brava.

In the case of the Bluebird Holiday Camp the management had found a cheap way to augment their income while expanding the range of their attractions. A subplot involves a very disillusioned sergeant Bacchus who has decided to quit.

Scottish rappers Billy Boyd and Gavin Bain were laughed at when they auditioned for a record contract in London. Who ever heard of Scottish rappers? So they returned to Dundee and re-invented themselves as Californian hip-hop duo Silibil n' Brains. They learnt their American accents from MTV – they had never even been to America. Incredibly, Sony signed them for a recording deal and over a period of two years they lived the dream, touring with D12, hanging back stage at the Brits, playing Brixton Academy, writing, recording and living up to the image of the loud mouthed rap stars they told everyone they were.

“Living the dream” appears to have meant being as loud, obnoxious

and uncouth as you wished because the crowd of groupies that hung around with you thought it was all just hilarious. Lying 24/7 took its toll, however, and Billy and Gavin’s music career and friendship was eventually destroyed. *The Great Hip Hop Hoax* (ABC2 Sunday May 11 at 8.30pm) tells the story of their extraordinary “career” which just makes you marvel at the greed and naiveté of the London music scene. Gavin eventually returned to Scotland, married and became an oil worker on a North Sea oil-rig.

After World War II, 70,000 of the Indigenous Sami people of northern Norway were “evacuated” southwards and settled in Oslo, leaving their Sami heritage behind. Australians will recognise the “assimilation” thinking behind this policy. In *Suddenly Sami* (NITV Monday May 12 at 8.30pm) Norwegian filmmaker Ellen Astri-Lundby whose mother was one of those evacuees tries to rediscover her Indigenous Sami roots.

SBS this week launches a new six-part Australian series *Unplanned America* (SBS2 Mondays from May 12 at 9.30pm) which follows three Aussie mates, Gonzo, Nick and Parv, as they “explore” some of the weirdness that thrives in the USA’s mix of paranoia, individualism, lack of confidence in the future and need for escapism from the overwhelming bleakness of the present. Needless to say, the series is only concerned with the weirdness, not the underlying reasons for it.

In the first episode they go to Seattle where they go on street patrol with Phoenix Jones and his rag-tag crew of real life crime fighters, known as the Rain City Superheroes, to learn the motivations behind the masked vigilantes’ much ridiculed actions. Later the guys pay a visit to the Real Doll factory in Southern California, where frighteningly life-like sex dolls are made to order for “discerning” customers. (And some US leaders claim the whole world wants to be like America!)



Tim Flannery and John Doyle at Port of Tianjin, Beijing – *Two Men In China* (ABC1 Tuesdays from May 13 at 8.30pm).

The original *Star Trek* series became popular in part because its view of the future was basically a positive, optimistic one. More recent sci-fi series, however, are marked by a more dystopian outlook, full of zombie uprisings, human cloning experiments, and the over-running of television at least by vampires, werewolves and demons. A disproportionate number of these seem to be on SBS.

One such is the clone drama, *Orphan Black*, the second series of which starts this week (SBS 2 Tuesdays from May 13 at 8.30pm). As such series go it isn’t too bad, but why they should go to the trouble of “fast-tracking” it to us from the USA is anyone’s guess.

The three-part series *Two Men In China* (ABC1 Tuesdays from May 13 at 8.30pm) is John Doyle and Tim Flannery’s “journey of discovery through China to peer into the future of the Australia-China relationship”. It looks and sounds like

it was sponsored by DFAT, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. In the first episode, most of the interviews are with business people of one sort or another.

There is a lot of interesting information being tossed around in the course of the program and the overall impression is a positive one, but it is also clear that the makers of the program are hopeful that the Communists will soon realise that socialism is a pipe-dream and give up.

Nevertheless, it is refreshing to see a program about China that talks about how the Chinese government is trying to drag its people out of poverty, and putting up – in the short term – with undesirable side-effects like heavy pollution.

A new 13-part series of the Golden Globe-winning zombie drama *The Walking Dead* begins this week on SBS (where else?) (SBS2 Tuesdays from May 13 at 9.25pm).

The new series sees Sheriff Rick

Grimes, played by Andrew Lincoln, continue to lead a group of survivors in a world ravaged by a zombie apocalypse. “Amidst dire conditions and personal rivalries, the survivors try to hold onto their humanity as they fight to live in this terrifying new world and ultimately survive one another.” What more can I say?

In Marylebone Town Hall, one of Britain’s busiest and most iconic registry offices, a team of 21 registrars and a superintendent handle up to 30 birth and death registrations and conduct up to 14 marriage ceremonies per day. The two-part series, *Births, Deaths And Marriages* started last week but episode two is worth catching in its own right (ABC1 Thursday May 15 at 9.30pm).

This is genuine reality TV. I was particularly struck by the effort put in routinely by the council official who follows up the deaths of people who die alone. ☘



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Washington intends Russia's demise

Paul Craig Roberts

Washington has no intention of allowing the crisis in Ukraine to be resolved. Having failed to seize the country and evict Russia from its Black Sea naval base, Washington sees new opportunities in the crisis.

One is to restart the Cold War by forcing the Russian government to occupy the Russian-speaking areas of present day Ukraine where protesters are objecting to the stooge anti-Russian government installed in Kiev by the American coup.

These areas of Ukraine are former constituent parts of Russia herself. They were attached to Ukraine by Soviet leaders in the 20th century when both Ukraine and Russia were part of the same country, the USSR.

Essentially, the protesters have established independent governments in the cities. The police and military units sent to suppress the protesters, called "terrorists" in the American fashion, for the most part have until now defected to the protesters.

With Obama's incompetent White House and State Department having botched Washington's takeover of Ukraine, Washington has been at work shifting the blame to Russia. According to Washington and its prostitute media, the protests are orchestrated by the Russian government and have no sincere basis.

If Russia sends in military units to protect the Russian citizens in the former Russian territories, the act will be used by Washington to confirm Washington's propaganda of a

Russian invasion (as in the case of Georgia), and Russia will be further demonised.

Keeping Ukraine intact

The Russian government is in a predicament. Moscow does not want financial responsibility for these territories but cannot stand aside and permit Russians to be put down by force. The Russian government has attempted to keep Ukraine intact, relying on the forthcoming elections in Ukraine to bring to office more realistic leaders than the stooges installed by Washington.

However, Washington does not want an election that might replace its stooges and return to cooperating with Russia to resolve the situation. There is a good chance that Washington will tell its stooges in Kiev to declare that the crisis brought to Ukraine by Russia prevents an election. Washington's NATO puppet states would back up this claim.

It is almost certain that despite the Russian government's hopes, the Russian government is faced with the continuation of both the crisis and the Washington puppet government in Ukraine.

On May 1 Washington's former ambassador to Russia, now NATO's "second-in-command" but the person who, being American, calls the shots, has declared Russia to no longer be a partner but an enemy. The American, Alexander Vershbow, told journalists that NATO has given up on "drawing Moscow closer" and soon will deploy a large number of combat forces in



Eastern Europe. Vershbow called this aggressive policy deployment of "defensive assets to the region."

Puppet states

In other words, here we have again the lie that the Russian government is going to forget all about its difficulties in Ukraine and launch attacks on Poland, the Baltic States, Romania, Moldova, and on the central Asian states of Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. The dissembler Vershbow wants to modernise the

militaries of these American puppet states and "seize the opportunity to create the reality on the ground by accepting membership of aspirant countries into NATO."

What Vershbow has told the Russian government is that you just keep on relying on Western good will and reasonableness while we set up sufficient military forces to prevent Russia from coming to the aid of its oppressed citizens in Ukraine. Our demonisation of Russia is working. It has made you hesitant to act during the short period when you could pre-empt us and seize your former territories.

By waiting you give us time to mass forces on your borders from the Baltic Sea to Central Asia. That will distract you and keep you from the Ukraine. The oppression we will inflict on your Russians in Ukraine will discredit you, and the NGOs we finance in the Russian Federation will appeal to nationalist sentiments and overthrow your government for failing to come to the aid of Russians and failing to protect Russia's strategic interests.

Washington is licking its chops, seeing an opportunity to gain Russia as a puppet state.

No good will

Will Putin sit there with his hopes awaiting the West's good will to work out a solution while Washington attempts to engineer his fall?

The time is approaching when Russia will either have to act to terminate the crisis or accept an ongoing crisis and distraction in its backyard. Kiev has launched military airstrikes on protesters in Slavyansk. On May 2 Russian government spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that Kiev's resort to violence had destroyed the hope

for the Geneva agreement on de-escalating the crisis.

Yet, the Russian government spokesman again expressed the hope of the Russian government that European governments and Washington will put a stop to the military strikes and pressure the Kiev government to accommodate the protesters in a way that keeps Ukraine together and restores friendly relations with Russia.

This is a false hope. It assumes that the Wolfowitz doctrine is just words, but it is not.

The Wolfowitz doctrine is the basis of US policy toward Russia (and China). The doctrine regards any power sufficiently strong to remain independent of Washington's influence to be "hostile." The doctrine states:

"Our first objective is to prevent the re-emergence of a new rival, either on the territory of the former Soviet Union or elsewhere that poses a threat on the order of that posed formerly by the Soviet Union. This is a dominant consideration underlying the new regional defense strategy and requires that we endeavor to prevent any hostile power from dominating a region whose resources would, under consolidated control, be sufficient to generate global power."

The Wolfowitz doctrine justifies Washington's dominance of all regions. It is consistent with the neoconservative ideology of the US as the "indispensable" and "exceptional" country entitled to world hegemony.

Russia and China are in the way of US world hegemony. Unless the Wolfowitz doctrine is abandoned, nuclear war is the likely outcome. globalresearch.ca ☘

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