



Dispossession, disempowerment

The Forrest "solution" for first Australians

Anna Pha

Mining magnate Andrew Forrest's "Creating Parity" report is a recipe for wiping out Native Title, clearing outback Indigenous communities off their land, private sector control of their lives and assimilation. It is a simplistic, paternalistic, racist strategy for the dispossession and further disempowerment of Indigenous Australians, produced by a mining magnate and his head office team for the sole benefit of mining corporations.

The report goes far beyond its terms of reference – Indigenous jobs and training – proposing a radical overhaul of the whole social security system. In particular, income support "payments" for working age Australians would no longer be made in cash but through a "Healthy Welfare Card". TAFE would be replaced by employer-driven training provided by private companies.

The government-commissioned review was released by the Prime Minister on August 1. It purports to be a strategy to "finally end the cycle of entrenched Indigenous disadvantage" and there is a great deal of rhetoric about "empowering people in remote communities to end the disparity themselves." But nothing could be further from the truth.

Forrest's report is based on the myth that Australia is becoming welfare dependent, mostly due to the failings of those receiving government payments, who do not want to work and cannot manage their financial affairs. This is pure fiction on all counts.

An examination of the figures shows that over the past decade income support payments have shrunk as a proportion of gross domestic product (GDP). Newstart (dole) payments cost the government \$7.49 billion or 0.5 per cent of GDP annually. (See www.solidarity.net.au/abbott/the-myth-of-soaring-welfare-costs)

Forrest likes to be seen as a philanthropist, who loves and respects Aboriginal people and promotes Aboriginal jobs. He has actually established programs for Indigenous employment.

At the same time his company has a reputation for the lowest payments in Western Australia for land access agreements with the holders of native title.

"No individual has benefited more from this mining boom than Andrew Forrest, whose personal wealth derived from massive iron ore deposits on his company's mining leases in the



Andrew Forrest.

Pilbara is well into the billions," Kerry O'Brien said, on the ABC *Four Corners* program. ("Iron and Dust", 18-07-2011 – transcript available at abc.net.au/4corners/content/2011/s3272125.htm)

Since then his iron ore operations have been expanding at a rapid rate. But Forrest has proved very reluctant when it comes to recognising the rights of Indigenous people as illustrated by Forrest's Fortescue Metals Group's divisive war of attrition against the Yindjibarndi people in the Pilbara in WA. FMG took out 43 exploration tenements covering half of the 13,000 square kilometres of Yindjibarndi land.

"Andrew Forrest is replacing government welfare with mining welfare, which in effect creates native welfare all over again. This is because Aboriginal people will still not have the sovereignty over their land and the autonomy over their communities and destinies," Michael Woodley, CEO Yindjibarndi Aboriginal Corporation, told the *Guardian* in an interview with Richard Titelius ("Yindjibarndi

Aboriginal people take on WA FMG mining magnate", *Guardian*, 03-08-2011)

"Welfare dependency"

Chapter 5 is titled "Building capability, dismantling the cash barbecue and eliminating disincentives". This "cash barbecue" (income support payments) according to billionaire Forrest, acts as a disincentive to work and training, so must be removed. Never mind the loss of dignity or independence that this inflicts on its victims. All government income recipients are tarnished with the same brush of being incapable of managing their own affairs and having no desire to work.

"Our all-cash welfare system hypocritically encourages continuance of poor short-term choices, steering a person further way from the workplace and a healthy lifestyle," writes Forrest attempting to defend his report. (*Australian*, "We have a mutual obligation to end the welfare trap", 02-08-2014)

Income management

"Regrettably, a proportion of first Australians have been left behind and suffer circumstances similar to those of many other disadvantaged Australians. These outcomes are not caused by their Indigeneity, but result from unemployment, welfare dependency, poor choices, limited capacity, remoteness, and a lack of education, prenatal care and early childhood development."


Forrest ignores the obvious – genuine job creation programs, more schools, better health services, Indigenous people managing their own affairs, etc. He also does not recognise the importance of languages and culture, and attachment to land.

Instead he would "empower" them and "increase their capacity", with a new "healthy welfare card".

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Guardian

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Gutter politics, gutter media

For several months now *The Australian* newspaper has been running a scare campaign, with horror stories of Australian Islamists fighting with the terrorist group Islamic State (formerly ISIS).

"Homegrown jihadists are an affront to our tolerance" runs one of many such headlines of *The Australian's* warning of jihadists (24-06-2014). The line in this one is the need for Muslim and non-Muslim Australians to work together. Of course we should work together. But there was a bit more to it than that. "... the reality of Australian-born jihadists is one that must be of deep concern to domestic policy makers and citizens concerned about our unifying national values."

The constant flow of such stories and constant warnings of the risk to Australia of Australian Islamists training and fighting overseas with banned terrorist organisations has been building up to something. It all became clear on August 5, when Tony Abbott and the Attorney General George Brandis announced a new batch of draconian "counter-terrorism" measures. They include requirements for internet service providers to retain data for two years; give intelligence organisations the power to trawl through the data without warrants; increase the powers of the Federal Police to seek control orders on returning foreign fighters; and require Australians returning from overseas to prove (reversal of onus of proof) their trip was for "legitimate" purposes.

In trying to sell the new laws Brandis made a complete fool of himself, demonstrating that he did not even understand the legislation that he had been given. His attempts to explain the meaning of metadata became the object of ridicule as they were repeatedly replayed for several days. There was little support for the new measures which were still lacking detail, despite all of the Murdoch media's efforts to pave the way for them.

So on August 11, Murdoch's *Australian* sunk to new depths in gutter politics, deflecting attention from Brandis by running with the gruesome image of a young boy appearing to be holding a decapitated head. The authors Paul Maley and Greg Bearup using a child as a political pawn, did their best to justify the need for more repressive legislation. "That's my boy: Sharrouf kids witness war's horror" was the headline this time. "Khaled Sharrouf's son, a child raised in the suburbs of Sydney, struggles with both arms to hold up the decapitated head of a slain Syrian soldier," the article claims. Not surprisingly there was an angry response to the image, which brought those who published it down to the level of those who posted it.

Three days later, a rather defensive editorial appeared, attempting to justify the publication of the image. We are told that the decision to publish was a difficult one, but after considerable discussion they reached the conclusion that "As a newspaper, our first duty is to present the truth."! No doubt, the same truth that the Murdoch media have fed its readers with in relation to Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Iran, Ukraine, asylum seekers, trade union struggles, the CFMEU, etc, etc.

The Editorial continues: "To comprehend the Abbott government's response to the conflict, including its proposed new counter-terrorism laws, requires a clear understanding of the atrocities being perpetrated overseas. Even more unsettling, it requires an appreciation of the involvement of Australians and the threats that they have made against people here in Australia." There-in lies the real reason, to rally support for the proposed new laws.

Duncan Lay, in an article titled, "Why I fear the severed heads are fake" in *The Sunday Telegraph* (17-08-2014) puts forward very plausible arguments as to why the images of severed heads are fake. He says this after looking at unpixellated (nothing hidden) images. If they are fake it is yet one more example of fabricated media stories to support what a government is about to do. Who would be surprised!

PRESS FUND

Last week Fairfax Press sacked veteran journalist Mike Carlton for writing a passionate article criticising Israel's brutal attack on Gaza. Carlton himself was criticised for taking his readers to task for apathy over the attack, but it's obvious his real "crime" was to oppose the Israeli government's Zionist policies. After the article was published Zionist sympathisers accused Carlton of being a Nazi, even though the article was anti-Zionist, not anti-Jewish. A number of cartoonists who satirized Israel's actions got similar treatment. The *Guardian* vigorously opposes Israel's policy of land theft and illegal settlements in Palestinian territory. However, we need support for the Press Fund, so please send us a contribution for the next edition if you possibly can. Many thanks to this week's contributors, as follows:

James Kiek \$20, R Girvan \$10, MH \$250, Mark Mannion \$5, "Round Figure" \$15,

This week's total: \$300 Progressive total: \$4,965

Fund R&D - unis

Associate Professor John Rice

Industry Minister Ian Macfarlane wants universities to be more supportive of industry, but without significant funding into research and development, that's a big ask.

Macfarlane let his discretion slip in a speech to the Queensland Media Club when foreshadowing an upcoming report on research funding and competition. Distancing himself from the awarding of funding based on prior researcher publications, he signalled a distinctly different approach that is likely to inform policy in the near future.

Noting that research grant funding "can work better", he suggested that:

"The current arrangements are based on the number of papers [researchers] produce, which is great if you're into producing papers, but I'm into producing jobs and producing products that are commercialised from an IP that a scientist or researcher might have developed."

It cannot be denied that the minister has a point – some academics, when they write, primarily have an audience of other academics in mind. This is probably most true in the social sciences, and increasingly less true in the physical and medical sciences. However, to suggest that this phenomenon is prevalent – in any field – is simply overstating the point.

In other respects, the minister misses the point. Current

arrangements acknowledge and reward researchers who garner industry buy-in (through the Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Projects, for example) and those that address defined national research priorities. Generally, the experts at the ARC and National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) finally decide which applications are funded (prior, that is, to any ministerial veto). They would be unlikely to fund any research that lacks relevant application.

More broadly, the minister's over-simplification of the current arrangements and his linking of patents and job creation (in the absence of more basic forms of research) does not square with much that we know about research, innovation, economic growth and job creation.

The minister has in mind, one suspects, a more innovative economy where research spurs innovation and the creation of well-paid jobs for highly skilled workers. As a vision for Australia, such an approach has much to offer.

Australia certainly lags the OECD in relation to patents, but also in relation to aggregate research and development spending. Notable among OECD nations with higher aggregate R&D spending are the Nordic nations of Finland and Sweden and other nations including Israel and Switzerland. Their governments have long adopted an activist industry policy

to support high-technology industry emergence.

Common among all of these exemplar nations is a strong commitment to government investment in research and development. This commitment is sorely lacking in Australia.

Industries in other countries have more involvement with university researchers – but they also have higher R&D spending.

The big issue, regardless of how the research pie is sliced, relates to the ongoing retreat of the Commonwealth from adequate funding of research – in universities, at the CSIRO and through funding agencies.

The processes of cutting funding started under the previous Labor government. The cuts have continued under the Coalition with gusto.

Research tends to be seen as a soft target when tough cuts are required. Researchers' contracts simply are not renewed. They head off to other work, losing for the nation the accumulated capabilities that have cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to develop.

If the minister is serious about creating jobs, his leadership is needed to ensure that these cuts are reversed and Australian investment in R&D increases. In the current political context, researchers should not hold their breath on this.

John Rice is employed by Griffith University ☺

Political Prisoner Lilianny Obando on hunger strike

Vinnie Molina

COLOMBIA: On Wednesday August 13 Lilianny Obando declared herself to be on a hunger strike to protest her illegal and unfair arrest she has been a victim of since August 8, 2008 (see interview page 6).

Reports indicate she has not received any kind of medical attention and family and friends fear for her health. She is in solitary confinement, only allowed out of her cell for one hour a day and denied access to her lawyer. A call for solidarity with Lilianny Obando has been made to local and international human rights organisations to demand her unconditional release.

On August 5 the Colombian trade unionist and political prisoner was taken from her home where she had been serving out the remainder of a sentence under house arrest.

From her cold cell Lilianny has sent an article about the Fiscalia in Paloquemao, Bogota and her six-year ordeal. Lilianny was taken by agents serving an arrest warrant in the midst of an aggressive media campaign. The arrest and the campaign is aimed at reviving the so-called "Farc Politica" where state terrorism mounts judicial and trial by media cases on academics and human rights campaigners.

Prior to home detention Lilianny spent 43 months deprived of being able to care for her children, at the El Buen Pastor women's prison in Bogota. International pressure and the end of legal terms brought about her Provisional release on March 1, 2012.



While on Provisional release she was sentenced to 70 months in prison + 707 million Colombian Pesos around (around \$400,000) which would be impossible to repay for any worker or activist let alone a single mother of two young children.

Several trade unions and human rights organisations in Australia have sent letters of support asking

Judge 7 to grant Lilianny Obando home detention to serve the balance of this unfair sentence.

The Communist Party of Australia expresses its solidarity with Lilianny Obando and her family who are also victims of this state terrorism, we will continue campaigning for her unconditional release.

For more information and updates visit: www.inspp.org ☺

What will happen to the federal budget?

Peter Mac

Last week federal Treasurer Joe Hockey defended his budget's proposed new fuel excise on the grounds that poor people either don't have a car, or don't drive very much if they do own one.

Welfare groups, motorist associations and many individual taxpayers reacted angrily, protesting that poor people tend to spend a high proportion of their income on fuel, and that people on low incomes in regional and rural Australia and the outer suburbs of major cities often have little access to public transport, and are highly dependent on their cars.

Hockey initially reacted by sneering at such "hysteria", but then made a grovelling apology, in which he claimed he had always tried to help the most disadvantaged members of the community.

That didn't work. The public is well aware that the budget would be highly damaging for ordinary Australians, including students who would incur terrible HECS debts, families who would lose the school kids' bonus, young unemployed people who would not get the dole for six months after they applied for it and patients who would face co-payment fees for visiting their GP.

Trying to shift the blame, Hockey then accused business leaders of being too slow to back the government over the budget, but they nervously replied that it's not their job to speak for the government.

Abbott tried to distance himself from Hockey's statements – "Well, I wouldn't have said that" – but despite the fractures beginning to appear in the conservatives' ranks over the budget proposals, the government is still determined to get it passed.

The big budget scam

According to Treasury figures, proposed welfare cuts would cost low-income families \$842 per annum, but high income families would lose just \$71 each year. The government has stressed that the levy on high incomes would be used to provide relief for low-income families.

However, lower income families would still pay \$327 more per annum

than higher income earners, and the levy would be temporary, lasting only a few years, whereas the welfare cuts would be permanent.

Under the budget constraints federal funding for transport concessions would be withdrawn, pharmaceutical subsidies reduced, and childcare benefit conditions made tougher.

The government is defending the \$2 billion fringe benefit tax concession for the private use of executive cars – and, of course, Abbott's paid parental leave scheme, at around \$20 billion, would reward the most wealthy parents and provide least benefit to the poorest.

The government also wants to introduce an "asset recycling" fund, under which the federal government would pay state governments an incentive fee to sell off government assets. The scheme's estimated \$5.9 billion cost would be funded by raiding the Building Australia Fund and the Education Infrastructure Fund.

The Treasurer claims that pensioners would be better off under the new budget arrangements because they would receive pension increases according to the rise in the cost of living (CPI), rather than increases in average male earnings (AME).

But pensioners are currently entitled to receive pension increases according to rises in either the CPI or average male earnings, whichever is greater. Under the budget that entitlement, for which pensioner organisations fought a terribly long and difficult campaign, would be stripped away and pensioners would only get CPI rises.

Confining rises in pensions to either the CPI or AME increases would inevitably disadvantage pensioners. But choosing the CPI as the base for increases the government has compounded the injury.

The CPI rise is currently higher than the rise in average male earnings. However, over recent decades the AME rise has been greater than the CPI increases. Unless the economy slides into deep, prolonged depression confinement of pension increases to the CPI would definitely result in a greater long-term disadvantage to pensioners than confining increases to average male earnings.



The government knows it would suffer a landslide defeat if an election was held in the current circumstances.

Politicians long ago awarded themselves the "whichever is greater" entitlement for their superannuation payments, but neither of the two major parties has granted retired public servants that entitlement, even though their case was upheld by several official inquiries.

Breaking the budget impasse

Professor Warwick McKibbin, former Board member of the Reserve Bank, has said: "I would like to see a new election and a Senate truly representative of the Australian people", but the government knows it would suffer a landslide defeat if an election was held in the current circumstances.

The government has threatened to cut expenditure by introducing a

"Queensland style austerity budget" if the current budget is not passed. However, Hockey is negotiating with cross-benchers to get their budget assent.

Palmer United Party Senator Jacqui Lambie says she would oppose any deliberate delay in providing assistance to dole applicants. But Hockey is due to meet PUP leader Clive Palmer this week, and in previous negotiations the government made a considerable number of concessions to him, after which the tax on Australia's biggest polluters was removed.

And if the government's negotiations succeed, and the co-payment and the other imposts are modified but still get passed into law, Labor may not remove them if they regain power after the next elections.

That has happened many times

in the past. The Howard government introduced the goods and services tax, but Labor did not remove it. The Howard government introduced the Northern Territory Intervention policy, and Labor left it in place. The Howard government introduced the infamous "Pacific solution" in dealing with asylum seekers, and Labor eventually replaced it with an even more cruel version of the policy.

The official unemployment rate has now reached 6.4 percent, its highest point in 12 years, and if the budget measures are passed the unemployment rate will skyrocket.

Once again it seems it's up to the public to pressure Labor and the independents to stick to their guns and reject the inhumane budget initiatives, forcing the odious Abbott government to an early election, and then out of office. ☘

Pete's Corner



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Rant sparks claim

An Aboriginal activist has lodged a human rights abuse claim against a police officer, using discrimination laws the federal Attorney General had wanted to scrap. Queensland Senior Constable Leanne Rissman used the fake Facebook account Anne T Sharia to make abusive and racially offensive remarks on Yamatji woman Joyce Capewell's page Boomerang Justice.

Senior Constable Rissman wrote "have a look at the Aust bureau of statistics of deaths in custody. Aboriginals are a tiny minority of those deaths purported to occur but are overly represented in the prison system, so why the hell all the who har over black deaths in custody when the bulk of deaths are WHITES!"

Disparaging

She also made abusive and disparaging remarks about people on welfare and Aboriginal people's abilities to look after their children. Ms Capewell told the *Koori Mail* that soon after seeing the racist rant on New Year's Day and discovering the woman was a police officer, she made a formal complaint to the

Queensland Police Service (QPS) and wrote to Federal Indigenous Affairs Minister Nigel Scullion, Queensland Police Minister Jack Dempsey and Prime Minister Tony Abbott.

"That woman has no right to be wearing a badge," Ms Capewell said. "I worked for 20 years in the prison system and I've attended deaths in custody and what she wrote affected me deeply. I'd like to see her sacked. I've no trust in her ability as a policewoman."

The QPS said the officer made "inappropriate remarks" while off duty.

"The QPS takes complaints of this nature seriously, not only as a reflection on the specific individual's conduct but also because of the potential to negatively impact on the confidence of the community in its police service," police said in a statement.

The statement said the officer underwent a number of cultural awareness training programs and was relocated to alternative duties in a larger regional centre under "direct supervision".

Ms Capewell has not received an apology.

Lawyers for Ms Capewell have lodged a complaint against the officer and the QPS with the Australian Human Rights Commission. Lawyer Peter Black said she is seeking \$250,000 in compensation for the hurt caused by the offensive remarks.

He said the comments were racially offensive and contravened section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act, one of the parts that Attorney General George Brandis had wanted to wind back after proclaiming that people had the right to be a bigot.

Before last year's election, the Coalition had promised to repeal section 18C which makes it unlawful to "offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate another person or a group of people" because of their race or ethnicity.

However, Prime Minister Tony Abbott dumped the controversial changes.

A senior police officer from the northern region and the Ethical Standards Command were also investigating "all matters relating to this officer".

Koori Mail ✪



Photo: Avante Media Australia

Dispossession, disempowerment

The Forrest "solution" for first Australians

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It would replace the present welfare debit "Basic Card" in use in the Northern Territory since the 2007 Intervention and extend it to all income support payments except for age and veterans pensions.

The card would replace cash and restrict what can be purchased with it. Forrest claims that giving unemployed first Australians cash payments has disempowered them.

Income management reflects an underlying thread of coercion rather than support and education that runs through the report.

Withholding cash

"Ramping up income management and withholding all cash from 2.5 million people is a deeply alarming suggestion and the government needs to reject it completely," Senator Rachel Siewert, Australian Greens spokesperson on family and community services said.

"The idea that all working age income support recipients would have their payments withheld is beyond excessive and cannot be justified."

The extra administrative cost of administering the Basic Card, according to the *Canberra Times* Editorial (03-08-2014) is about \$100 per week per family – an extra \$100 per week in payments and provision of essential services and housing would be far more effective in reducing hardship and improving social conditions.

Opposition leader Bill Shorten's response is quite disturbing: "Labor will not stigmatise everyone who receives a government pay of working age and just put everyone in the same category." So Labor will only stigmatise some people?!

Kirstie Parker, the co-chair of the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, described quarantining of payments (income management) as "a tool to disempower people, including the majority of welfare recipients, who do the right thing, who look after their families, who send their kids to school and do

actually look for genuine, meaningful employment.

"Taking control away from people over even the basic decision making in their lives is disempowering and will make them more 'welfare dependent' and far less job ready."

Relocation

The review sets out to provide strong incentives for Aboriginal people to relocate from remote communities to cities and towns. These include priority access to public housing, rent advances for the private rental market and assistance with accessing schools and health care.

Forrest claims that housing systems that charge low rents create incentives for people to stay in remote communities as opposed to moving to where the work is. Nowhere does he recognise attachment to land or what Indigenous Australians want.

He blames lack of private home ownership for overcrowding of homes, lack of individual responsibility for social problems, rather than the lack of affordable housing and government neglect of its responsibilities.

As for any new public housing in remote communities, this should be on land with "secure tenure" such as freehold title that can be used for business investment and private home ownership.

Higher rents

"Across Australia the lowest rents are paid in the most remote social housing tenancies. For them, the social housing system often undermines job aspirations and entrenches welfare reliance. A person can be discouraged from taking a job because state and territory housing authorities deem that an income higher than the dole means eviction from social housing."

The review proposes that priority in the allocation of social housing be given "to families in employment and meeting social obligations, such as their children regularly attending

school, over those who are capable of working but choose not to."

"Rents should be set at 80 percent of market rates or at least cover the cost of the asset," instead of a proportion of income. That would put almost all accommodation in Sydney out of reach for those on government payments.

Rent should be deducted on "a compulsory basis from income support entitlements for social housing" and the money used "to subsidise rent for people who move to take up employment and pursue a career."

Home ownership

"Home ownership is a critical incentive to keep people in jobs and out of the welfare trap," the report claims without a single shred of evidence.

"The ability to purchase and use available land for home ownership and business is the key to prosperity, empowerment and financial independence for first Australians and their families. More than 20 percent of Australia is now Indigenous-owned under various land rights regimes, or exclusively controlled under native title, but it generates very little economic wealth or independence for the traditional land owners in many areas," the report notes.

Here lies the crux of the report. Native title is a barrier to economic wealth, but not as Forrest suggests for the traditional landowners but for mining expansion and maximising profits.

Forrest continues by proposing, "That governments create the ability for traditional owners to convert their land to freehold or hold the underlying title with a 99-year lease owned by the home or business owner, so that it can be mortgaged or traded through the open market and so that traditional owners can build their houses on allotments on their own land."

The real agenda is not stated. The aim is to move traditional owners off their land to be assimilated in

the wider community. Those who remain would see communal ownership replaced by private land titles and home ownership. It is nothing more than a recipe to dispossess Indigenous Australians; an attempt to extinguish native title and wipe their culture.

The financial institutions and retailers are set to make a killing out of income management and subsidised loans for home ownership. Low interest loans would be available "for all first Australians, provided they have been employed for 12 months or more."

Training employer-directed

"That, in order to create job-specific employer-directed training, the Commonwealth, state and territory governments ... introduce vouchers for employers redeemable at education providers to replace all funding for the vocational education and training system, particularly the TAFE system." (emphasis added – Ed)

"These vouchers would only fund training that is designed by, and meets the needs of, employers" and is linked to a guaranteed job at the end. Employers and industry bodies would drive the content of courses under the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF). Payment would be based on performance, on students completing courses.

You could only study if you had a job lined up and then the course would be narrow (no education component) and specific to an employer.

Cheap conscripted labour

Remote Jobs and Communities Programs would be replaced by "demand-driven Job Centres" with training to get people into guaranteed jobs.

The government's policy of Work for the Dole would be mandatory for all unemployed people from

day one. For those who need it, training in literacy, numeracy and getting a driver's licence would be a compulsory part of Work for the Dole.

There are some practical and potentially beneficial suggestions regarding prenatal and early childhood from conception to three year of age. Whether the government is prepared to implement them is another story as they cost money.

Most other recommendations would save money and are very much in line with the government's thinking and policy direction. After all the powerful mining corporations who replaced a Prime Minister and Opposition leader, are dictating the government's policies.

"I suspect some of the things in the report will be testing for public opinion as it currently stands," Abbott said, failing to reject a single proposal. In other words, public opinion still needs shifting and the likes of the Murdoch media are going all out to do just that.

The so-called "Creating Parity" is a blueprint to drive those already doing it tough into deeper poverty, homelessness and destitution. "To address poverty and disadvantage, the government should be investing in better employment services and training opportunities and ensuring that income support payments are adequate and provide the assistance people need to live without being exposed to poverty," Green's Senator Siewert said.

In addition, the Land Title Act should be strengthened to provide Indigenous Australians with exclusive possession, the Intervention and income management cease, and the government invest more in basic services, schools and genuine job creation programs for remote communities.

Andrew Forrest, Gina Rinehart, Clive Palmer and BHP and Rio Tinto should at the least be paying significant royalties to the people whose lands they mine and resources they plunder. ✪

ANZAC Centenary and the CPA response

Bob Briton

From a report to the Central Committee August 2, 2014

I offer this as part of the discussion, an exploration of the topic of the ANZAC and Gallipoli centenary to take place next year. The centenary will be particularly important to Communists and other progressive Australians as the official commemorations will provide a backdrop to all other events in the lead up to April 25. Given current trends, the tone of the commemorations can be predicted to be reactionary and militaristic. War preparations on the part of the government will be helped by the endorsement of historic alliances. This will be presented as logically leading to the US alliance and all that entails.

The centenary of the outbreak of World War One will take place this month. It will be marked more prominently in Europe than elsewhere if only for the simple reason that the shooting war took place there. It is to be hoped, given that nation states took different sides in the conflict, that discussions will centre on the futility of the inter-imperial rivalry and the need to preserve peace. There may well be the insertion of a WW2 theme of needing to stand up to aggressors, with modern Russia being inserted disingenuously in the role of Nazi Germany. Time will tell.

I don't anticipate these messages concerning WW1 will be hammered in the Australian corporate media as much as in Britain, though I did notice Murdoch columnist Greg Sheridan took the then looming occasion to say the British and their allies were in the right and the Germans and Austro-Hungarians were in error. I don't think much enthusiasm or attention was generated by the piece and not many others have ventured into this sterile area.

The Gallipoli centenary will be a completely different story in Australia. The Commonwealth and State governments will be spending vast amounts on events and promotion and splashing grants money in large quantities to get over the sort of ANZAC message they want. In my lifetime ANZAC was an unusually humanistic war commemoration about the futility of war, the callousness of the leaders who wasted all those lives, about a sort of brotherhood between the Australians, New Zealanders

and even their respected Turkish "enemies".

There was contempt for Churchill and the British High Command. Marches and other observances were dwindling through the decades until they were absorbed by the reactionary wave that is still breaking through Australia's political and cultural life.

Young Australians are now more likely to say ANZAC is about respect for those who went and fought for our democratic rights and way of life – though that aspect was there previously when World War II was recalled. A section of young Australia is taken in by clichés such as draping oneself in the Australian (colonial) flag and going to a dawn service at Gallipoli while on a tour of Europe. This type of dumbing down of public awareness is greatly encouraged at the highest levels of the government and bureaucracy and it will be to the fore next year.

The federal government's plans have hit some snags. Private corporations were asked to contribute to a fund for the commemorations. Precious little of a projected \$380 million has turned up. No doubt, the culture warriors on the side of the ruling class will make sure there is plenty of money available to make the new, reactionary ANZAC message unavoidable next year.

Given our limited resources, what can we and other sections of left and progressive opinion do about it? Whatever we do, I believe there has to be a consistent anti-war message our materials and activities. I think we should emphasise that it is also the centenary of the anti-imperialist war movement in Australia. We should consider publications, posters and other educational material on this theme. I suggest they deal with the wide scope of resistance to imperialist war in Australia.

I'll give some examples. Australia defeated two referenda to introduce conscription during WW1 such as the scepticism on the part of the public about the inter-imperialist war. Australian soldiers were notably rebellious towards their British commanders (see Fred Paterson's writings). Australians soldiers were drawn in significant numbers to support the October Revolution.

We have the example of the volunteers to the International Brigades to go to Spain and fight fascism before it spread any further. Waterside workers refused to load pig iron on the *Dalfram* and in other ways challenged Menzies' pro-Axis

policies. Hal Colbatch, a Perth-based lawyer, has written a despicable revisionist history of the role of Australian unions in WW2 insisting they were traitors. This needs further rebuttal.

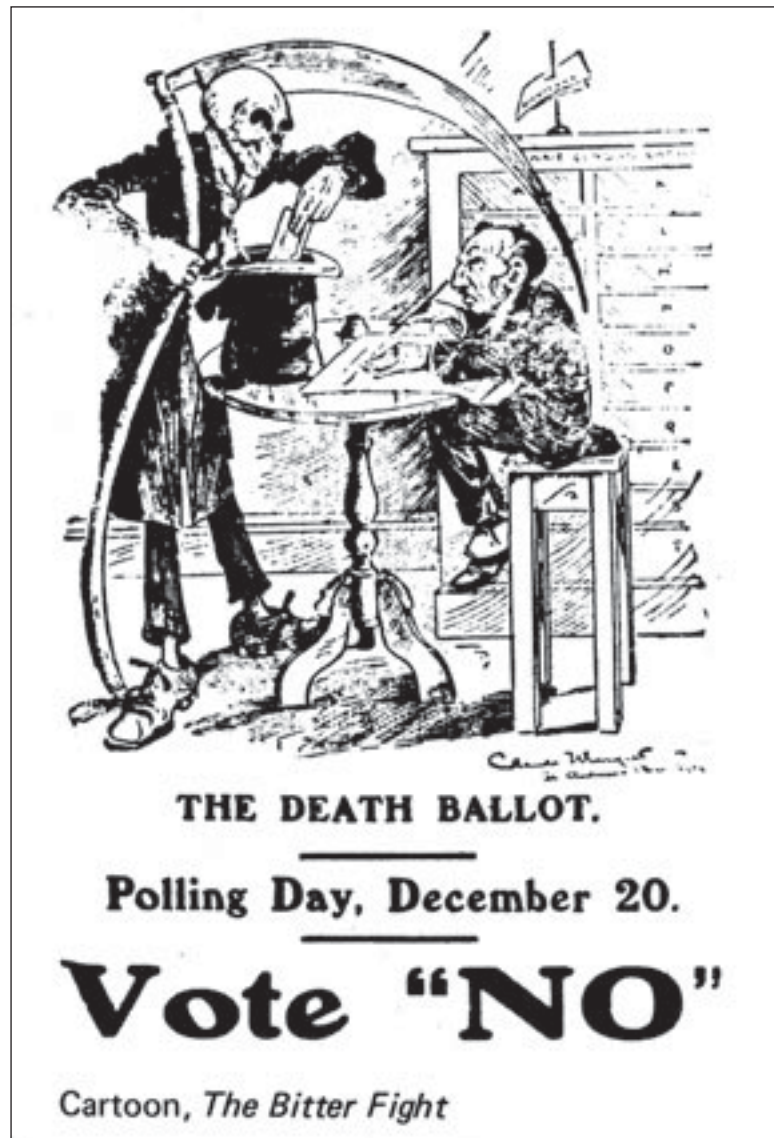
Australian workers aided the Indonesians in their struggle against Dutch imperialism. The Ban the Bomb movement during the 1950s was widely supported in spite of the cold war hysteria of the time. And, of course, there was the long history of support for the Vietnamese people – the Moratorium marches, the actions of the seafarers on the *Jeparit* and the *Boonaroo* in refusing to carry arms to the US led forces in Vietnam. That anti-war struggle politicised a generation of Australians that included myself.

More recently there were the February 2003 marches against the looming invasion of Iraq when unprecedented numbers of people took to the streets of our cities. Clearly, in the face of the US "Pivot" to our region and the war preparations based in Australia, there is much to do to re-vitalise the anti-war movement in the country.

Other wars that would be appropriate to raise on this occasion are the forgotten frontier wars waged by European "settlers" against the Aboriginal people. The official message to Aboriginal people is to "get over it" in stark contrast to the ANZAC message of "lest we forget". We should join others during the ANZAC commemoration period in recalling these wars and the fallen.

No doubt the question of gate-crashing official events next year will arise. We should have a position. I have reservations about this sort of action. I can remember in Canberra when women joined the ANZAC marches in memory of the women raped in war. A valid protest but I feel the scuffles and scenes of mayhem reinforced conservative rather than progressive points of view, in my opinion. Lets talk about this ahead of time and take a position that our participation should be very visible but not confrontational.

In summary, I believe we should use the centenary creatively to celebrate the history of the anti-war movement in the country. We will need to commit human and other resources to this and produce a range of materials about this history. It will add considerably to our work-load but I think we should not leave the field of the battle of ideas to be dominated by the right and the ultra "left". ☺



ANZAC was an unusually humanistic war commemoration about the futility of war, the callousness of the leaders who wasted all those lives.

Activists stop work on AGL fracking project

Thirty residents of the Gloucester Valley and their supporters last week set up a peaceful blockade at the site of AGL's planned coal seam gas fracking project, risking arrest to stop preliminary earth-works on the site.

The controversial fracking project was approved by the NSW government last week, less than a fortnight after it changed state planning regulations to allow approval to be given without AGL completing an Environmental Impact Statement.

AGL's Gloucester CSG project

came under fire again last week after local residents discovered that the company had failed to properly declare all the political donations it made while previous Gloucester CSG applications were being assessed. AGL has since conceded that it has breached NSW donation disclosure laws, though it disputes the details.

"Something dodgy is going on with AGL's Gloucester gas project, and we need to get to the bottom of it" said Julie Lyford, spokesperson for the protest, and former Mayor of Gloucester. "How much money has

AGL donated to political parties, and what did they receive in return?"

"Why did the Baird government change the law to allow AGL to frack for CSG just a few hundred metres from family homes without even completing a full environmental impact study?" asked Ms Lyford.

"The NSW government is failing to protect Gloucester from CSG, so we are taking action today to protect ourselves."

Some of the blockade participants have travelled from the Taree area, downstream of Gloucester, and say the water catchment of 75,000

people is threatened by the Gloucester gas project.

"Opposition to AGL's plan to turn Gloucester into a gasfield is coming from all quarters," said Chris Sheed OAM, President of Manning Clean Water Action Group (MCWAG). "Mid Coast Water and Gloucester Council are opposed to CSG and the Greater Taree City Council have formally asked AGL to withdraw CSG operations from Gloucester. Manning Valley residents will stand shoulder to shoulder with Gloucester, and other communities from across the state,

to stop this outrageous assault on our beautiful valley.

"If AGL know what is good for them, they will gracefully abandon this project and focus their attention and future investment on their renewable energy projects – based on wind and solar – of which they can be rightfully proud," he said.

AGL need to complete several weeks of site preparation before they can attempt to begin fracking. Residents and their supporters have vowed to carry out a campaign of peaceful direct action against the project. ☺

Liliany Obando - "My only crime belonging to the Colombian left"

From her latest prison cell, the human rights defender and political prisoner Liliany Obando offers a personal account of her most recent arrest.

Six years after being the first person linked to the so called "FARCPOLITICA" trial, I am now writing about my experience from an isolated and cold cell in the defunct Administrative Department for Security (DAS) in Bogotá.

Paradoxically, at the same time sinister leaders of the Colombian paramilitary, responsible for hundreds of deaths and massacres, for plundering simple families and creating widows and orphans, are now regaining their freedom after just eight years in prison. All thanks to ex-president Uribe's benevolent peace processes with the paramilitary forces.

It doesn't make sense that a mother with underage children in her care, known for her work in defending human rights, with professional qualifications and verifiable experience, should be serving an unjust sentence which would be better suited to people such as these. My only crime is to have belonged to the Colombian left-wing from a young age, having survived the genocide of the Patriotic Union, and having remained committed to human rights and the defence of the right to critical thought, freedom of thought, social justice and peace.

Today marks six years since this nightmare began, when a criminal investigation ostentatiously linked me to the "FARCPOLITICA" case. Heavily armed men, agents from the national police, surrounded and broke into my house with an arrest warrant and tore me away from my young children, from my elderly mother, from my university, my work, and my life plans.

Operation Fenix – the beginning

It was also six years ago, on the March 1, 2008, that Operation Fenix was carried out in the province of Sucumbios, Ecuador, when the FARC's second in command, Raul Reyes, died along with 26 others including students from the University of Mexico, an Ecuadorian citizen, and a number of guerrillas. Operation Fenix was coordinated by the Colombian armed forces and according to reports from human rights organisations in Ecuador and from the Ecuadorian government, they were assisted by a third country.

They clandestinely raided the Ecuadorian territory, thereby infringing legislation and international treaties. In this operation they supposedly seized parts of a computer which they believe belonged to the late FARC leader Raul Reyes.

It was later shown in court that the police involved in gathering these parts did not have the expertise or the legal authorisation to handle technical evidence, which would give the Supreme Court of Justice the right to declare this evidence as illegal and invalid for use in a legal case.

A pre-fabricated case

This supposed evidence was nevertheless used to build a case linking members of the opposition in the political left to the

"FARCPOLITICA" trial. This was at the same time as the "PARA POLITICA" scandal was exposed, so the "FARCPOLITICA" trial was the ideal creation to distract national and international attention.

Over these six years of "FARCPOLITICA" judicial and disciplinary investigations have been opened against several members of the political opposition belonging to the Colombian left, against former congressmen, former ministers, congressmen, journalists, academics, human rights defenders and there have even been attempts to implicate several democratic and left-wing personalities in other countries.

Following investigations, the Supreme Court of Justice ruled it illegal to use Raul Reyes' alleged computers as evidence, so one by one investigations have been closed and most of those linked to the case have been cleared.

However, some of us linked to the case have been persecuted, victimised and revictimised every time there is a political or judicial requirement to detract attention away from embarrassing situations for the political elite.

I was the first person linked to the "FARCPOLITICA" trial to be sentenced and imprisoned, on August 8, 2008. Two years later, after being abducted by the Mexican state's security forces in that country and deported to Colombia, the academic Miguel Angel Beltran Villegas was imprisoned and shortly thereafter, Joaquin Perez Becerra was arrested in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, handed over and jailed in Colombia.

Two years after his imprisonment in 2011 and coinciding with the Supreme Court of Justice's ruling on the illegality of the evidence used in the "FARCPOLITICA" trial, Professor Beltran was acquitted of the charges against him and released. The following year, on March 1, 2012, after being detained for 43 months without a conviction, I was granted provisional freedom and then in June 2013, after a series of irregularities, I was acquitted of one of the charges against me and sentenced to 70 months under house arrest, a ban from holding public office and a fine of 707 million pesos (about \$400,000) on charges of rebellion. In the case of the journalist Joaquín Pérez Becerra, he was acquitted on appeal and released in July 2014 after unjustly spending more than three years in detention.

Re-victimisation

In my case and in the cases of Joaquín Pérez Becerra and Miguel Angel Beltran Villegas the legal authorities resorted to a variety of tricks to try to get us convicted or to somehow revive the evidence that was declared illegal in order to prosecute other members of the opposition in the future.

It is no coincidence that a few days after the acquittal of journalist Joaquín Pérez Becerra, the Attorney General's Office announced the verdict that the teacher Miguel Angel Beltran would be banned from holding public office for 13 years and, just a few days later, a new arrest warrant was issued against me. Today I am once again deprived of my freedom and



Liliany Obando.

detained in a cell even though I was sentenced to house arrest – in recognition of the fact that I am a mother and a professional, and I do not present any danger to society.

A new stage in the trial

After I had been sentenced, my lawyer filed an appeal to the Supreme Court, the same body that had previously declared the illegality of Raul Reyes' computers.

The Court was quick to rule on April 3, 2014, a few days from the case lapsing, without any background study of the case, that the request submitted by my lawyer be declared inadmissible, and so upholding my conviction.

At the end of July 2014, my case was assigned to the Court for the Execution of Sentences and Security Measures. My defender immediately informed the Office that I should be serving house arrest - something that could easily be verified. It was then that we learned that the Office had issued an arrest warrant against me to ensure my compliance with my sentence.

We requested the immediate cancellation of this unnecessary arrest warrant since I am not a fugitive – unlike some fugitives who are clearly known in this country, the former director of the DAS, Maria del Pilar Hurtado, the former Minister of Agriculture, Andres Felipe Arias,

and the former peace commissioner Luis Carlos Restrepo, all government officials under Uribe Vélez. They are fugitives who enjoy abundant economic resources, contacts and protection. That's not my case. But the judge did not consider our request and decided instead to activate the arrest warrant.

The show once again

On Tuesday August 5, 2014, I received a call from a man who identified himself as an officer from the district attorney's office, who supposedly wanted to "interview" me. I informed the officer that I was already aware of the arrest warrant and therefore wanted to inform my lawyer and request his presence.

After consulting my lawyer I voluntarily complied with the request of the officer from the Technical Research arm of the Attorney General's office. Without further ado, the CTI (Technical Investigation Team) officials proceeded to read me my rights and led me to the vehicle that would transport me. To my surprise it was not a vehicle from the Attorney General's office but one of the Presidential Guard's with the word ARMY on its side and driven by a young man in military uniform.

I was taken to the CTI's office to fill out the necessary forms and then make myself available to the judge. A new profile was drawn up for me, photos were taken from every angle of my face with the emblems of the CTI in the background, a medical examination was carried out. Suddenly I felt a kind of déjà-vu, and memories of my first arrest gradually flooded back. So far everything had been carried out normally but suddenly the atmosphere became tense and I noticed the presence of various men in CTI uniforms and others in army uniforms waiting outside the office for me to come out.

I did not understand what was happening until one of the officers said to me – they want to take some pictures with you. A few minutes later I was being photographed with officers from the military, the Special Forces, the CTI, and then with everyone.

Again my life and my family are being put at risk but who is accountable for this?

he is
t-wing"



Breaking the wall of silence about the Cuban Five



Aili's meeting with 200 plus construction workers at the Mirvac Old Treasury building site located in Perth CBD. (Photo: CFMEU – Rob Mitchell)

Aili Labañino Cardoso is the daughter of one of the Cuban Five still imprisoned in the US after infiltrating anti-Cuba terrorist groups in Miami. The men, known as the Five Heroes in their homeland, were able to forewarn authorities in Cuba about terror attacks from the ruthless expatriate groups in spite of the US administration's unwillingness to assist. The Five were taken into custody on September 12, 1998, accused of espionage and other politically-motivated charges and subjected to a very flawed trial. It took place in the toxic anti-Cuba atmosphere created in Miami by anti-Communist Mafia groups. Appeals have been dismissed and a media blackout kept over the injustice.

Two of the Five have completed their long sentences and returned to their families but Antonio Guerrero, Gerardo Hernández and Ramón Labañino remain in separate US prisons. The CFMEU and the MUA recently sponsored a tour with the support of the Australia Cuba Friendship Society by Aili Labañino, daughter of Ramón, to six Australian cities to raise awareness of the case of the Cuban Five and to help build vital international solidarity. In Adelaide, she spoke with Bob Briton of the *Guardian*.

Bob Briton: What has it been like to have your father imprisoned in such unjust circumstances? What was it like growing up with that loss of contact?

Aili Labañino Cardoso: More than half of my life, as well as that of my sisters, has been spent in this battle for the return of my father. We are very proud to know what they did was not only for their families but for all Cubans. Anyway, it's very painful not to have them, for instance at birthday parties, on Valentine's Day, on Fathers' Day and also the fact that we had to wait for a US visa in order to be able to visit him in prison. The experience we had during our adolescence was that of prison.

BB: How have you felt the solidarity of the Cuban people with the Cuban Five?

ALC: From the very beginning, our leaders as well as the Cuban people have been the main protagonists in this campaign for the freedom of the Cuban Five. You can see throughout the whole of Cuba posters of the Cuban Five and different activities carried out in support of them. There is a slogan among the Pioneers [the youth organisation for very young Cubans] that "We want to be like Ché". Now, along with that slogan they say "We want to be like the Five". This battle

is very sensitive in Cuba because the Five are considered as family by all Cubans.

BB: How important has international solidarity been in the case?

ALC: Truly, international solidarity is vital in this battle. Cuba's efforts are reaching the world through the efforts of our friends in the world. If the mass media in the US has been able to raise a wall of silence about the injustice, international solidarity has been able to open doors in alternative media to let the case be known. The first time Fidel spoke to a gathering about this issue, one of the things he said was "They will be back but only when everybody in the world knows about the case."

BB: Has the release of two of the Heroes encouraged people in Cuba?

ALC: Unfortunately, while we are happy they are free now, they are free because they completed their whole sentence. So we won't have this same thing happening to the rest of the Five until 2017 in the case of Antonio, 2024 in the case of my father Ramón and, in the case of Gerardo, seeing he has a sentence of two life sentences plus 15 years, he has no date set for his release. Anyway, for the family, for the whole Cuban people and all of our friends it is a cause for happiness and reassurance that two of them are free already. René and, later, Fernando have both said they will never feel free as long as the other three remain in prison. That's why we will continue to call them the "Five" until the last one has returned to Cuba. René and Fernando are now leaders of the national and international campaign for the freedom of the other three.

BB: You mentioned the Pioneers but how have the youth of Cuba responded?

ALC: The fact that the youth are proud of what the Five are doing and that they want to be part of this battle is a big support to us. In every university in Cuba there are committees in support of the Five. In our universities there are not only Cubans; there's a large number of foreign students studying alongside their Cuban counterparts. This has the advantage that, once the international students return home, they take the message about the Cuban Five to their respective countries.

I study engineering at a university in Cuba. At this university there is a project called the "House of the Five" so that, every month, each of the faculties holds activities in support of the Five. When I was at university, I participated in these activities and it's very

nice to see how young people get together for this cause. We are aware that we are the future but we always take into account the experience of the people who preceded us.

Our organisation, the Communist youth organisation called the Young Communist League is very active in these activities. When the Cuban Five were younger, they were members of the Young Communist League and now their sons, daughters and nieces and nephews are also members. We are very proud to take part in the Congress of the Youth, which will take place next year in Cuba. Of course, to all the national and international congresses held in Cuba we will take the voice of the Five. Our challenge is to reach the youth of other countries to give them the message of the Cuban Five.

BB: What has your reception been like in Australia and how would you rate the level of awareness of the Australian people of issues like the Five and the Blockade [the US-led blockade on economic, scientific, cultural and diplomatic exchange with Cuba]?

ALC: First of all, I would like to extend my thanks to the Australian trade unions. They were the ones who financed my tour through six cities in Australia. Unfortunately, as in many other countries in the world, not a lot is known about the case of the Five. But this is not the fault of Australians or the friends of Cuba living here. We are convinced the unions and others who know about the case are working very hard around it.

The main problem is that the mass media have silenced the case. That is why we have to knock on every door we can to take the message to every person. I can tell you the friends we have found here are sincere.

The things they have undertaken to do, for example to write letters and postcards to the Obama Administration for the freedom of the Five, will be done.

The people we have met have fathers, spouses, sons and daughters and I know they wouldn't like to endure the sort of situation I am suffering. Gerardo, in one of the letters he sent to the international solidarity movement, said "As long as there is just one person fighting for my cause and the cause of my brothers, we will remain strong inside these prisons." In letting people here in Australia know about the case, as a daughter and member of the family of one of the Five, I am taking another step towards the day when they will return to Cuba. That is why we can say it is a success when we can let even just one person know about the case. ★

There it was again, as six years before, I was being displayed as "war trophy". The next day, on the eve of the presidential inauguration of President Juan Manuel Santos Calderon's second term in office, these images were shown in the media, alongside images of my first capture six years ago. And again it was reported that I was the lover of the late FARC leader Raul Reyes.

I was also attributed a series of aliases. And the influence of the media is so powerful that within minutes of the news being reported my custodians were calling me by one of my supposed aliases, until I asked them not to do it anymore.

Once again a "false positive" is being fabricated by the State Security in collusion with the ruling media, exposing me to public ridicule, and destroying my public image and my dignity as a woman. Again my life and my family are being put at risk but who is accountable for this? As with other cases, the media will never retract what they have said, and anyway the damage is already done.

It's shameful that the judiciary, the intelligence agencies and government media should collude to fabricate such crude set-ups. That same August 6, I was transferred to the women's prison in Bogota, El Buen Pastor, where I was to be held until the INPEC (Instituto Nacional Penitenciario y Carcelario) decided to transfer me back to house arrest. Unfortunately I was told that Buen Pastor is not taking on any new prisoners because of a strike. I was therefore transferred to the cells of the defunct DAS, and again I am in solitary confinement, enduring intensely cold conditions.

It would have been so simple to check that I was in my residence serving my house arrest sentence. None of this was necessary but perhaps someone was in need of a new media show? Who is the moving force behind the "FARCPOLITICA" trial?

Who could feel threatened by me? Or is it my conscience and love for justice the problem? Once again the phoenix will return from the ashes ... I'm free despite the bars. ★

Why Obama is bombing the Caliph

Pepe Escobar

This is the way the multi-trillion dollar Global War on Terror (GWOT) ends: not with a bang, but with a bigger bang. The GWOT, since its conceptualisation 13 years ago, in the aftermath of 9/11, is the gift that keeps on giving. And no gift is bigger than a Transformer Al-Qaeda on steroids – bigger, brasher, and wealthier than anything Osama Bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri had ever dreamt of; the IS (Islamic State, formerly known as ISIS) of Caliph Ibrahim, former Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

US President Barack Obama, before deploying his golf holidays in Martha's Vineyard, casually dropped that bombing the Caliph's goons in Iraq will take months. One may interpret it as another layer of the Obama administration's self-avowed "Don't Do Stupid Stuff" foreign policy doctrine, not so subtly mocked by prospective presidential candidate Hillary Clinton. Shock and Awe in 2003 destroyed the whole of Baghdad's infrastructure in only a few hours.

Obama also confirmed the US was showering Iraq again with humanitarian bombing "to protect American interests" (first and foremost) and, as an afterthought, "human rights in Iraq".

One could not possibly expect Obama to declare the US would now bomb "our" allies the House of Saud, who have supported/financed/weaponised IS, in Syria and Iraq. The same erstwhile ISIS that thoroughly enjoyed the marvels of US military training in a secret base in Jordan.

Obama also could not possibly explain why the US always supported ISIS in Syria and now decides to bomb them in Iraq. Oh, the perils of "Don't Do Stupid Stuff".

So a quick translation applies.

Obama's bombing of the Caliph's goons has absolutely nothing to do with US ambassador to the UN Samantha Power's much beloved R2P (responsibility to protect) doctrine – as in the responsibility to protect up to 150,000 Yazidis, not to

mention Kurds and remaining Christians, from a "potential" genocide carried out by the Caliph.

The whole fighter jets plus drones bombing exercise, lasting "months", has to do with the Benghazi syndrome. The Caliph's goons were dead set on conquering Irbil – the capital of Iraqi Kurdistan. The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) is led by the wily Massoud Barzani – a long-time US client/vassal.

The US maintains a consulate in Irbil. Crammed with CIA types. Or, as the *New York Times* so lovingly puts it, "thousands of Americans".

Enter Benghazi. This is an electoral year. Obama is absolutely terrified of another Benghazi – which Republicans have been trying non-stop to blame on his administration's incompetence. The last thing Obama needs is the Caliph killing "diplomats" in Irbil.

That would certainly raise a tsunami of questions all over again about the shady CIA weapon-smuggling racket – as in arming Syrian "rebels" with weapons from Libya – at the time Benghazi took place. As secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, of course, also knew about it all. But then, and especially now, no one should know that the CIA was weaponising the bulk of the future Caliph's forces.

Regime change or bust

Obama said this humanitarian bombing adventure could last "months", but in fact it could last only days. The price is cheap: regime change. As in former Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki blocked from having a third term.

That explains why all hell broke loose in Baghdad, as Iraqi parliamentarians clearly saw which way the wind is blowing. Haider al-Abadi was chosen by new President Fuad Masoum, a Kurd, as the new prime minister – hours after Maliki positioned Special Forces in strategic sites in and around the Green Zone and may (or may not) have tried to stage a coup. Maliki maintains that



Obama could not possibly explain why the US always supported ISIS in Syria and now decides to bomb them in Iraq.

Masoum violated the Iraqi constitution by not selecting him to form a new cabinet; after all, his State of Law bloc got the most votes in last April's parliamentary elections.

Obama, predictably, was delighted. But whatever happens next, Maliki won't go down quietly – to say the least. Even as the predominant narrative among Sunnis, a substantial number of Kurds and even some Shiite political blocs is that Maliki antagonised Sunnis all-out; and that's what drove them to support the Caliph en masse (although now many are having second thoughts).

As for the KRG and Barzani, in the Obama administration scheme of things, what matters is that they should not declare independence. As long as Barzani promises to Obama that Kurdistan stays inside Iraq, the KRG will get more bombs and drones and the "humanitarian" operation will speed up. US Special Forces are already deployed all over the huge area where the Caliphate borders the KRG, in so-called desert forward operating positions. And the US for all practical purposes is now the Iraqi Air Force against the Caliph.

Watch "the Hillarator"

This Obama administration warped R2P – protection for Americans first, refugees second – will accomplish nothing for a key reason; no bombing – "humanitarian" or otherwise – exterminates a political/religious movement, even one as demented as IS. The Caliphate prospers, somewhat, and expands, because unlike that pathetic Free Syrian Army (FSA) it's winning territory, desert and urban, in both Syria and Iraq; an area bigger than Great Britain already, holding at least six million people.

As for the much-peddled Washington myth of "good" and "bad" jihadists, the Caliphate also exploded it. Virtually every jihadi Washington – and Riyadh – weaponised and trained in Jordan and in the Turkey-Syria border is now among the Caliph's forces, wallowing in cash raised from oil smuggling, hardcore blackmail and "donations", and weaponised to their teeth after looting four Iraqi divisions and a Syrian brigade.

As for the GWOT gift, it will keep on giving in a bigger and bigger

bang because of the dream narrative now displayed for every aspiring multinational jihadi; we are now defending our Caliphate from the mighty Crusader Air Force, no less.

The US lost the war in Iraq, miserably, only nine days after the fall of Baghdad, in April 2003. No "humanitarian" bombing will turn it into a victory. And no "humanitarian" bombing will finish the Caliphate off.

As for prospective presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, she's taking no prisoners. She insists the US should have bombed Syria in the first place; then there would be no Caliphate. But now she worries the Caliph will attack Europe and even the US ("I'm thinking a lot about containment, deterrence and defeat").

Predictably positioning herself, Clinton could not but totally dismiss Obama's foreign policy doctrine, a.k.a. "Don't do stupid stuff": "Don't do stupid stuff" is not an organising principle. So the world will have to wait until 2017, when she's finally able to implement her own doctrine/organising principle: "We came, we saw, he died."

RT ✪

Undergrads face costs shocks

BRITAIN: Young people celebrating after winning a place at university will face "huge, unwelcome shocks" when they realise the cost, a charity has warned. The Money Charity said most students heading for higher education would have little idea of the colossal expenses involved – and warned that the principle of fair access to university was at risk as the cost of living soars.

On top of crippling tuition fees of up to £9,000 a year introduced by the Tory-Lib Dem coalition students now face spiralling accommodation costs while the price of life's essentials continues to rise, it pointed out.

The average annual cost of a room outside London was now £4,100 – while in the capital it was now £5,400.

On top of the "financial support" offered by the state – a euphemism for loans that are saddling a generation in debt before they even enter the workplace – students in England will need as much as £750 a month extra simply to support themselves through university, the charity's study found.

Where families are not in a position to foot such massive bills undergraduates will either need to juggle studying with a job or plunge themselves further into debt by applying for overdrafts and loans.

Government should conduct regular research into the cost of student living so that maintenance loans and grants reflected it, the charity said.

And it should ensure students were better informed about the

likely cost of living in different cities.

It also mooted doling out student finance monthly in order to better reflect what young people will face after graduation.

But National Union of Students national executive council member Aaron Kiely said the bottom line was that "living grants aren't high enough."

"Frankly this news does not come as a surprise," he told the *Star*.

"The cost of being a student is at a record high. Rents are rising, energy bills are up, travel and basic foodstuffs are getting more expensive all the time.

"Loans now barely cover the rent in many cases." *Morning Star* ✪

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Argentina takes US to World Court

Emuile Schepers

Argentina has taken the United States to the International Court of Justice in The Hague over a US federal judge's actions in a dispute about bond payments. Meanwhile, the judge in that case, Thomas Griesa of the Federal District Court in New York, has threatened to hold Argentina's government in contempt of court because of statements made about the case by President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner and other officials.

The case is about claims by US hedge fund firm NML Capital Limited, a Cayman Islands branch of Elliot Management Corporation, plus another hedge fund, relating to Argentina's 2002 default on payments of its sovereign debt. Since the original default, Argentina had reached agreement with 93 percent of its original creditors whereby they would be reimbursed, via a bond swap, for about 30 percent of the value of the original bonds. This allowed Argentina to re-enter the bond market and protect its poorest citizens.

Long after the original default, the two main holdout hedge funds, not part of the original group of creditors, bought up some of the bad debt at fire sale prices, and then sued Argentina for their whole original value plus interest. Thus the hedge funds and the main investor in Elliot, US billionaire Paul Singer, stand to make a killing of 1,600 percent of their investment.

In 2012, Judge Griesa awarded the holdouts the full value of the original bonds, US\$1.3 billion, plus

interest. The Court of Appeals backed Griesa. This year the US Supreme Court declined to hear Argentina's appeal, and also gave Elliot Management permission to find out where all Argentina's assets, and those of senior Argentine officials, are held, so it could move to seize them.

If Argentina were forced to pay the holdouts, the bondholders who had accepted the reduced payments could then demand payment in full on the basis of the original value of their bonds, destroying Argentina's entire debt restructuring and jeopardising half of the country's reserves.

Griesa ruled that Argentina cannot continue to pay the non-holdouts without paying the full sum to the holdouts. Argentina has just deposited US\$539 million to pay the non-holdouts with Mellon Bank in New York.

Judge Griesa has forbidden Mellon to pass this money on to the creditors, threatening to find the bank in contempt, and has now threatened the Argentine government with contempt of court if it continues to state that it is not in default. So Argentina can't pay anybody unless it pays the holdouts the amount Griesa awarded them. Efforts to negotiate an agreement have so far failed, which led the Standard and Poors bond rating agency to declare Argentina in default as of July 30.

Argentine President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner calls the holdout hedge funds "vulture funds", and has bought ads in US newspapers to explain Argentina's position. This is what led Judge Griesa to threaten Argentina with contempt of court.

Argentina argues that its timely deposit of the funds in Mellon Bank shows that it did not default, and that a US federal judge can't treat a sovereign country of 43 million like a parking ticket scofflaw.

The main investor Elliot Management is Paul Singer, a major contributor to Republican Party causes and candidates, including Mitt Romney. He has created a lobbying group whose sole purpose is to get the support of Congress for his claims against Argentina. Investigative reporter Greg Palast points out that Singer has done this to the Congo Republic ("Congo Brazzaville") and Peru.

In the Congo case, Singer's company bought toxic bonds for a song and then forced this extremely poor African country to pay him using, in part, funds that had been donated internationally to help improve its public health system. On a US\$10 million purchase, Singer realised US\$127 million.

So Argentina, as well as complaining to the US Security and Exchange Commission, has gone to the World Court. The International Court of Justice cannot act on Argentina's suit unless the United States agrees to be sued.

Many observers in the United States find this situation extremely alarming. For the sake of Mr Singer's bottom line, there is a threat of a disruption of US diplomatic relations with Latin America and of the entire world financial system, because if applied generally it would make it impossible to carry out debt restructuring in any country. If just one creditor failed to accept a restructuring



International Court of Justice in The Hague.

offer, payments to all others would be endangered.

Latin Americans are very aware of the things they share with Argentina, including its past of a US supported military dictatorship which incurred some of the original debt.

The Argentina situation gives greater urgency to the efforts of poorer countries to disentangle themselves entirely from US financial institutions. This prospect has

US banks worried, so at writing they were scrambling to find a way to appease Mr Singer.

Greg Palast states that the Obama administration, which has taken Argentina's side with an amicus brief, could stop this nonsense by simply invoking our constitution's "separation of powers" which gives the executive branch exclusive control over foreign relations.

People's World ☘



Region Briefs

On August 7, Bangladesh garment workers went on an indefinite nationwide strike protesting against the police attack on workers and the arrest of their leaders. Police fired rubber bullets and threw teargas grenades at 1,470 workers, and then arrested union leaders including Garment Workers Unity Forum President Moshrefa Mishu in front of the Tuba Group factory. The Communist Party of Bangladesh condemned the arrest and demanded their immediate release.

On August 11, China punished foreign businesses including Apple, Microsoft, Chrysler and Audi for monopoly practices. China launched an anti-monopoly investigation into foreign businesses a few months ago to enforce its Anti-Monopoly Law. Foreign companies charge more in China than in other countries. For example, the same model iPad mini costs \$399 in the US and \$499 in China. China's Ministry of Commerce spokesman Shen Danyang said that the enforcement of the law would create a fairer competition environment and benefit all in the long run. He added that the law was the inexorable requirement for a socialist market economy.

On August 11, a Chinese plane carrying US\$4.9 million-worth of medical aid left Shanghai for a humanitarian mission in West African countries, helping Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia fight against the outbreak of Ebola. This was the second batch of aid that China recently delivered to these countries.

On August 11, in an interview with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) Association for Human Rights, an official stated that a human rights report would be published soon by the DPRK government showing the real situation there. He stressed that the DPRK had a right to exist and develop according to its own domestic situation, but hostile forces fabricated stories about human rights abuse to mislead public opinion. The report would show the true picture of how the people of the DPRK enjoy a free and happy life under their socialist system. The Association was founded in 1992 to promote human rights and prevent any abuse of them.

On August 13, Vietnam President Truong Tan Sang welcomed Marxist scholars attending an international conference from countries of the South. The conference discussed the world's economic order and the impact of globalisation on the development and economic sovereignty of the countries of the South. President Sang said that although countries had their own path of development, they should gather for mutual benefits and the sake of the world.

Erdoğan's presidency is not legitimate

The election for the President of Turkey was held on August 10. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, despite the AKP government's record of murders, massacres and documented fraud, was elected as the 12th president of Turkey. The Communist Party of Turkey, reminding that the crimes he committed render Erdoğan's candidacy unacceptable and he should be immediately sent to trial, had called on the people to boycott the elections.

Thirty four million of the total electorate stood against Erdoğan. According to the unofficial election results, Erdoğan got 21 million votes (51 percent) while 34 million people either voted against him or did not go to the polls. The total absentees were 15 million people. Taking into account the low level of voter turnout, which was a record low, Erdoğan became the new president by gaining the support of only 38 percent of the total electorate.

The Communist Party of Turkey, in the statement that was made after the elections, declared Erdoğan's presidency illegitimate and called upon people to struggle against his Islamist-neoliberal dictatorship.

There were two other candidates

in the elections: Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu was the joint candidate of the two opposition parties, Republican People's Party (CHP) and Nationalist Movement Party (MHP). He is described as a softer Islamist compared to Erdoğan. Previously, he served as the general secretary of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation from 2004 to 2014 and he had been nominated to that position by the AKP government. His good relations with Erdoğan deteriorated after they had a split in opinion on the so-called Arab Spring.

İhsanoğlu, who was careful to not upset the US and Saudi Arabia, remained silent about the recent military intervention in Egypt. Erdoğan publicly attacked İhsanoğlu for his stance and did not nominate him again for general secretary.

Selahattin Demirtas, leader of the People's Democratic Party (HDP) was the candidate picked by the Kurdish movement but he did not have a prospect of winning the elections. Despite Demirtas's candidacy, the Kurdish movement was tacitly waiting for Erdoğan to be elected to continue the "peace" negotiations with the AKP government. The Kurdish movement has

appreciated Erdoğan for initiating and serving as the co-architect of the "peace process" with Abdullah Öcalan, imprisoned leader of the Kurdish movement.

The three opposition parties in the parliament, despite running candidates in the elections, did not adopt an election strategy that sincerely aiming at challenging Erdoğan. This has been also effective in the low level of participation and high number of invalid votes, some of which were protest votes. This is the first time the president was elected by a popular vote in Turkey. But there is a catch; the candidates running for the presidency were nominated by the parliament, not the people.

It is expected that Erdoğan, who became the first directly elected president of Turkey, would exploit his new post to tighten his dictatorship and further the fascist practice. It has been proved once again; this time by the electorate, that he is not elected as the president of the whole country as the election results and ongoing debates show that half of the Turkish people see his rule as totally illegitimate.

International Bureau Communist Party of Turkey ☘

Letters to the Editor
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Surry Hills NSW 2010



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Dropping the ball on jobs in Geelong

Victorian union members and community supporters were at Kardinia Park last Saturday talking to Cats fans about the jobs crisis facing Victoria.

Jobs figures released last Thursday – showing the state's

unemployment at a 10-year high – are an indictment on the Napthine government for failing to support local families.

We now have over 215,000 jobless Victorians. That is nearly a quarter of a million Victorians looking for work and worrying about their future.

What's worse is that we have a Liberal Premier that has no plan to tackle this issue. Instead, the Liberal government is sending jobs out of Victoria by procuring work overseas, and undermining Victoria's skills base with \$1.2 billion in cuts to TAFE.

That's why we had community members on the ground at the footy, talking to their friends and neighbours about the need for change.

We're spreading the message that Geelong has suffered from the neglect of the Napthine government and their failure to secure jobs for hardworking Victorians.

We need a jobs plan for Victoria. Premier Napthine needs a plan to create jobs, create opportunity for Victorian workers. It's time for the people of Geelong to stand strong and demand a better future,

**Tim Gooden
Secretary,
Victorian Trades Hall Council**

Australian Jews call to end the silence

One hundred and sixty-four Jewish Australians have signed an open letter urging their fellow Jews to "end the silence" over the "slaughter of innocents" in Gaza by Israel.

The signatories include doctors and professors, former politicians, writers, Order of Australia winners, educators, artists and academics.

It reads:

As Australians of Jewish identity and background, we are appalled at the current mass killing in Gaza by Israel. We reject the official mythology that Israel is under existential threat and acting in self-defence," the letter reads.

Since July 12, the Israeli army has killed more than 1,900 people in Gaza. Hospitals, schools, beaches, playgrounds – even UN shelters have been attacked.

The whole world has reacted with horror and outrage.

In the face of the destruction of so many lives, we cannot remain silent while the official Jewish leadership gives such active support to Israel's attack on Gaza.

Their decision to stand with the oppressor rather than the oppressed is a betrayal of our history and values, when authentic moral leadership is more important than ever.

Siege, occupation, the slaughter of innocents and collective punishment of an entire people are deeply wrong and unlawful. Yet the Jewish leadership uncritically promulgates the propaganda of the Israeli government that this is self-defence.

They are failing to represent and serve the Jewish community.

Silence is consent and evil triumphs when good people do nothing.

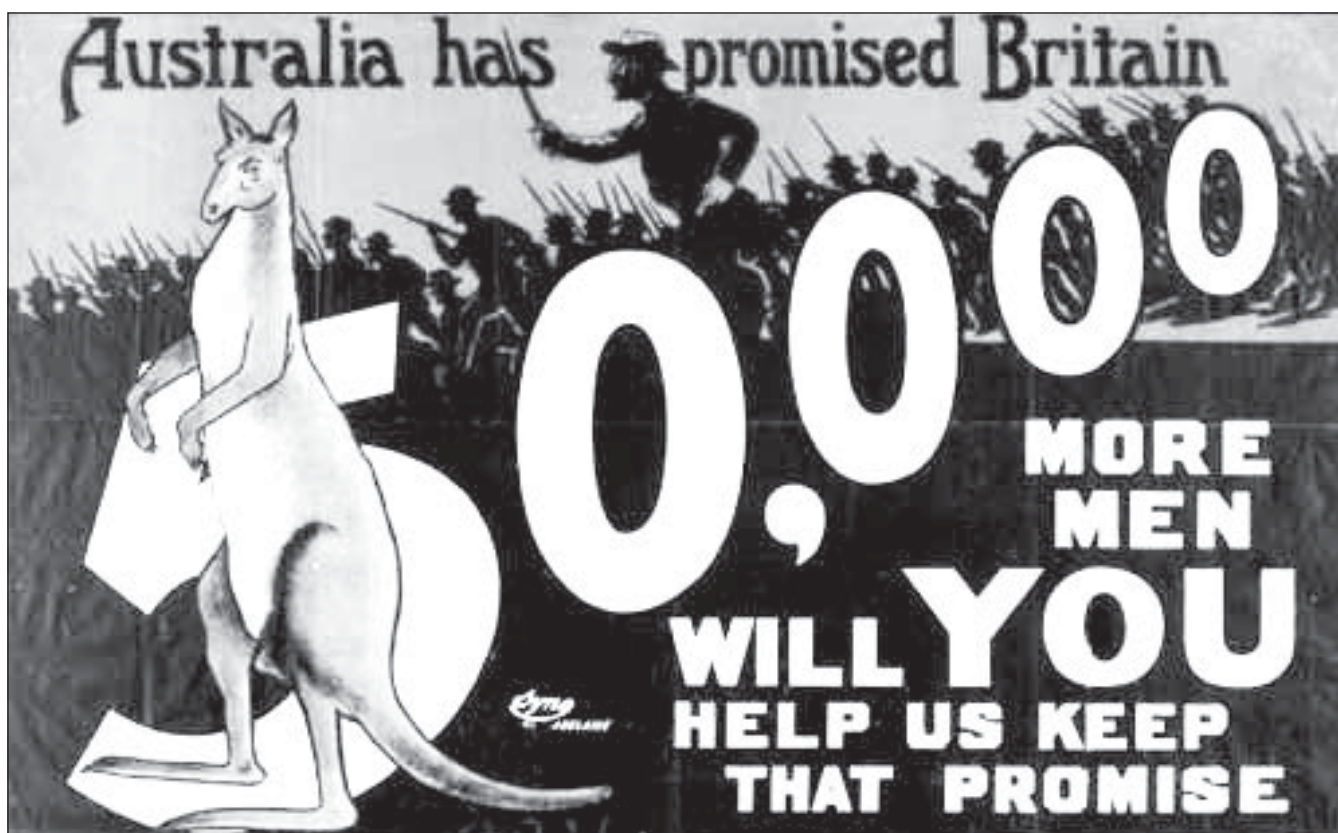
We call on our fellow Jews to break their silence, to take a public stand, not just for an immediate cease-fire, but for an end to the underlying conditions of siege and occupation which defy elementary morality, decency and humanity, as well as international and humanitarian law.

For more details – Jews Against The Occupation website.

Vivienne Porzsolt

Culture & Life

by Rob Gowland



Slaughter on the Western Front

As assorted politicians on both sides of the House wax lyrical about the supposed "glory" associated with Australia's participation in the horror that was the First World War, we should spare a thought for the poor young blighters who had been suckered into volunteering for what they thought was going to be a great adventure (from which they would soon be home again).

When, after eight months of futile killing and being killed on the Gallipoli peninsula, the Australians and New Zealanders were finally ignominiously withdrawn, instead of being sent home they were reorganised and reinforced and sent to make up losses in the British lines on the Western Front. By now, even the least imaginative of them was aware that the "great adventure" was actually nothing but a full-on dust-up between the various imperial powers to re-divide the world's colonies and markets to make them even more profitable for the biggest trusts and cartels. Freedom and humanity never entered into it.

The fighting, however, was not done by bankers or politicians but by poor put-upon Tommy Atkins backed up by Australian diggers along with Canadians, South Africans, Indians and anyone else British imperial reach could rope into the conflict in the name of "God, King and Country". The Germans, Austrians, Hungarians and Russians of course, also fought for the same ideals (different kings, but the sentiment was the same).

On Gallipoli, the fighting had settled into a stalemate of shelling and skirmishing from entrenched positions, with neither side in a position to achieve a decisive breakthrough.

The situation was even worse on the Western Front, where the trenches were longer and deeper, the reinforcements and concrete forts stronger, and the sodden fields of No Man's Land, criss-crossed by barbed wire entanglements and pock-marked by mud-filled shell holes, were even more open to the murderous fire of dug-in machine guns.

Armour and planes would break the deadlock of trench warfare, but planes had only recently been developed and armoured cars and armoured trains – both of which were used effectively in Russia during the war against imperialist intervention after the Revolution – needed made roads or train tracks flanking the battle lines to be of use. Tanks would eventually end trench warfare but they only appeared in numbers towards the end of the war.

In the meantime, the Australians were sent into battle by British officers notorious for losing thousands of troops in a day. The first Australian engagement was in the Battle of Fromelles on 19-20 July 1916. Fromelles was 80 kilometres north of the Somme where the British General Headquarters (GHQ) was determined to achieve a breakthrough by means of a frontal assault by 100,000 men. Half of them would become casualties.

Anticipating that the Germans would move troops from the Fromelles sector to reinforce their positions on the Somme, the British generals ordered their forces at Fromelles to launch an attack, to keep the Germans busy so they would not move troops south. British and Australian soldiers were sent over the top against three divisions of Germans.

"Preparations for the attack were rushed, the troops involved lacked experience in

trench warfare and the power of the German defence was significantly underestimated, the attackers being outnumbered 2:1. The advance took place in daylight ... on a narrow front which left German artillery on either side free to fire into the flanks of the attack." Australian casualties alone came to 5,533. By the second day, a German counter-attack had already forced the attackers back to their original front line.

This almost casual waste of life to create a "show" in support of an attack somewhere else prompted bitter, anti-war poems by the troops, such as this by serving war hero Siegfried Sassoon:

The General
"Good morning, good morning!" the
General said
When we met him last week on the way
to the line.
Now the soldiers he smiled at are most of
'em dead,
And we're cursing his staff for incompetent
swine.
"He's a cheery old card", grunted Harry
to Jack,
As they slogged up to Arras with rifle
and pack.
But he did for them both with his plan of
attack.

Such was the carnage at Fromelles, and the earth so torn up by artillery that of the five and half thousand Australian casualties, 1,299 were never found (or if found could not be identified) and were simply listed as "Missing". No less than 410 mutilated bodies were buried in graves marked "Unknown".

Sassoon, in the British army, served on a different part of the front, but the destruction was just the same. His younger brother had been killed on Gallipoli. "He soon became horrified by the realities of war, and the tone of his writing changed completely: where his early poems exhibit a Romantic, dilettantish sweetness, his war poetry moves to an increasingly discordant music, intended to convey the ugly truths of the trenches to an audience hitherto lulled by patriotic propaganda. Details such as rotting corpses, mangled limbs, filth, cowardice and suicide are all trademarks of his work at this time, and this philosophy of 'no truth unfitting' had a significant effect on the movement towards Modernist poetry." – Wikipedia.

The Battle of Fromelles had inflicted some losses on the German defenders (some 1,600-2,000 men killed) but gained no ground nor deflected many German troops bound for the Somme. The Australian War Memorial describes the futile battle as "the worst 24 hours in Australia's entire history". Of 7,080 BEF (British Expeditionary Force) casualties, 5,533 losses were incurred by the 5th Australian Division.

By the following year, opposition to the war had grown apace: there were mutinies in the French army, the Russians walked away from the front, overthrew their government and withdrew their country from the war altogether, Sassoon wrote a declaration that he would not participate any more in the war, a declaration read out in the House of Commons.

Despite the popular opposition, however, it would be another year before the slaughter was brought to a halt. ☹



Sunday August 24 –
Saturday August 30

The eighth series of *Dr Who* starts this week (ABC1 Sundays from August 24 at 7.40pm) with a change of Doctor (a regular feature of this long-running series). Peter Capaldi, previously seen as the foul-mouthed Malcolm Tucker in the political comedy *The Thick Of It*, makes his debut as the Doctor in a special feature-length first episode, *Deep Breath*.

When I first started watching *Dr Who* it was very much a children's series, and although I thought it was sometimes too scary, my kids loved it. They have remained fans to this day. The casting of Capaldi – hardly a romantic figure – marks a change in the writing of the modern series, which has tended to hint very strongly at a romantic attachment between the Doctor and his female companion.

With Capaldi as the Doctor, we are back on more traditional ground. After all, the first couple of Doctors were downright elderly compared to their companions, and it will be interesting to see where the scriptwriters take the series now. Whoever plays the Doctor, however, the chief appeal of the series has always been its imaginative use of Sci-Fi concepts combined with a certain light-heartedness.

The Vietnam War was so blatantly a war of aggression against a small and distant (and poor) country waged by a rich super-power that as it dragged on and intensified

it polarised public opinion and generated opposition movements around the world, but especially in the USA itself.

Among the most ardent opponents of the war were college students. Exempt from the draft themselves, they were nevertheless of the same age as those who were being sent. Organised in Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), they campaigned vigorously against the death and destruction being inflicted on Vietnam by the alliance of corporate and military America.

However, despite mass demonstrations the war not only went on, it escalated. Frustrated, a section of SDS split away, and went underground as the Weathermen, seeking "more effective" ways to attack the military-industrial complex they rightly saw as responsible for waging the war. The solution they resolved on was the one so often adopted by impatient, frustrated middle-class youth combating a repressive state – individual acts of terrorism.

That this would play into the hands of the repressive state apparatus they were trying to fight was not lost on them, but they waged their campaign of carefully targeted bombings anyway. They felt they had no alternative.

In the end, the war was brought to a halt by the determination and courage of the Vietnamese people combined with mass action by the world-wide movement against the war. The Weathermen were a side-show, but one that gave the FBI and other agencies of the repressive US state the opportunity to successfully lump all progressive radicals into the category of "terrorists".

As *The Weather Underground* (ABC2 Sunday August 24 at 8.30pm) shows, they were essentially white, privileged, middle-class youth who were starry-eyed about "Revolution", but who were viewed with disfavour by truly revolutionary movements like the Black Panthers.

Nevertheless, this is a fascinating account, from the inside, of a time when the brutality of capitalism radicalised a generation and served to remind the world that besides



Clara (Jenna Coleman) and the Doctor (Peter Capaldi) – *Dr Who* (ABC1 Sundays from August 24 at 7.40pm).

corporate America there was another, class-conscious people's America that the capitalist state could barely keep in check.

There are lessons to be learned here and I recommend the program.

A different aspect of a repressive capitalist state is on view in the three-part BBC series *Life And Death Row* (ABC2 Mondays from August 25 at 9.30pm) which looks at the practice of executing people that is such a popular official pastime in the State of Texas.

Going inside prison walls, the series discovers what it's like to live with the knowledge that you have been sentenced to the death chamber. We also meet the people the headlines generally ignore: the young siblings, sons and daughters of victims and defendants alike, each forced to confront death on an agonising journey through the USA's capital punishment system.

In the first episode, for two of the youngest men on death row in Texas, execution day has arrived. Victim

Nikki Daniels reflects on her kidnapping ordeal by murderer and rapist Richard Cobb and battles with her conflicting desires to forgive him, but views the execution solely in terms of "an eye for an eye". That there could be any other approach to crime prevention does not occur to her.

That the death penalty is not an effective deterrent is shown by the extraordinarily large number of homicides in the USA, but politicians who want to be seen as "doing something about crime" persist in trying to use harsh penalties as the answer.

In episode two of the drama/doc *The War That Changed Us* (ABC1 Tuesday August 26 at 8.30pm), the war has been running for two years.

After the failed Gallipoli campaign, Nurse Kit McNaughton is evacuated from the Dardanelles with the defeated troops and – like them – is sent to Northern France. At Fromelles, General Pompey Elliott prepares to send his men into battle

for the first time on the Western Front (See page 10 *Culture & Life*). At home, peace activist and socialist Vida Goldstein is attacked by "patriots" of every type, but especially by the government of Billy Hughes.

Vida's office is raided by the police and anti-war campaigner Tom Barker of the "Wobblies" (the Industrial Workers of the World) is jailed for publishing a seditious cartoon "jeopardising recruiting". Meanwhile, on the other side of the political divide, conservative crusader Eva Hughes does her best to rally support for the war in defence of King and Empire.

The series' narrow focus on half a dozen individuals allows it to ignore the question of who profited from the war, and to also ignore the significant matter of colonies and trade rivalry. (Even Australia became a colonial power, seizing and retaining German New Guinea.)

Despite all the killing on screen, this is a cleaned up, sanitised view of WW1. ☺

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Israel-trained police "occupy" Missouri

Rania Khalek

Since the killing of 18-year-old Michael Brown by Ferguson police in Missouri, the people of Ferguson have been subjected to a military-style crackdown by a squadron of local police departments dressed like combat soldiers. This has prompted residents to liken the conditions on the ground in Ferguson to the Israeli military occupation of Palestine.

And who can blame them?

The dystopian scenes of paramilitary units in camouflage rampaging through the streets of Ferguson, pointing assault rifles at unarmed residents and launching tear gas into people's front yards from behind armoured personnel carriers (APCs), could easily be mistaken for a Tuesday afternoon in the occupied West Bank.

And it's no coincidence.

At least two of the four law enforcement agencies that were deployed in Ferguson up until Thursday evening – the St Louis County Police Department and the St Louis Police Department – received training from Israeli security forces in recent years.

Brute force

It all started when a Ferguson police officer killed Michael Brown, an unarmed black teenager. According to witnesses, Brown was attempting to surrender with his hands up when a Ferguson police officer emptied his clip into Brown's body, shooting the teen up to ten times.

For hours police left Brown's lifeless body sprawled in the street uncovered as a growing number of residents gathered nearby, demanding answers from authorities. Police responded by deploying K-9 units and riot squads to crush the crowd, predictably inciting a riot, which police used to justify more brute force.

But the people of Ferguson refuse to submit and have mobilised every single day to demand justice for Brown and an end to the racist, undemocratic regime they live under.

"Hands up, don't shoot" has become their rallying cry, a symbol of Brown in his last moments and what it means to be black in America, where every 28 hours an African-American is killed by a self-styled vigilante, security guard or police officer.

Still, police did not relent, prompting one Ferguson protester to shout at a row of military-style tactical vehicles, "You gonna shoot us? Is this the Gaza Strip?"

"Will we as a people rise up like the people of Gaza? Will our community be bombed like last night with tear gas? That was a terrorist attack," remarked another Ferguson protester to *The Daily Beast*.

Meanwhile, journalists were manhandled and detained. Police were caught on video deliberately firing tear gas at an Al Jazeera

American film crew as they were setting up their equipment.

Even elected officials weren't spared. Missouri state Senator Maria Chappelle-Nadal was tear gassed and St Louis Alderman Antonio French, who had been documenting the unfolding police repression in Ferguson on social media since just after Brown's murder, was arrested.

As the situation spiralled further out of control, Palestinians began tweeting advice on dealing with tear gas to the people of Ferguson.

Cops become soldiers

Domestic policing in the US has a long and sordid history rooted in the violent control and subjugation of communities of colour, so the police violence directed at the predominantly black residents of Ferguson is nothing new.

But the widespread militarisation on display in Ferguson is part of a more recent trend that began three decades ago with the introduction of the disastrous "war on drugs" and dramatically escalated with the "war on terror" – leading directly to the counterinsurgency-like tactics deployed against the people of Ferguson by civilian police officers who more closely resemble combat soldiers in Afghanistan than domestic cops.

This cop-to-soldier transformation has been facilitated by the US government through mechanisms like the Pentagon's 1033 or military surplus program, which funnels excess military gear to law enforcement agencies across the country. The program's motto: "From warfighter to crimefighter."

In 2013 alone, the program showered US police departments with nearly US\$450 million worth of military equipment.

St Louis County law enforcement agencies, including the Ferguson Police Department, participate in this program and have received military-grade rifles, pistols and night vision equipment in recent years, though it's unclear if the equipment is being used in Ferguson now.

As *The New York Times* reported in June, the scaling down of US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan means "former tools of combat – M-16 rifles, grenade launchers, silencers and more – are ending up in local police departments, often with little public notice."

"During the Obama administration, according to Pentagon data, police departments have received tens of thousands of machine guns; nearly 200,000 ammunition magazines; thousands of pieces of camouflage and night-vision equipment; and hundreds of silencers, armoured cars and aircraft," the newspaper added.

Ferguson police also receive money from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) as part of a grant program that has doled out billions to US law enforcement agencies to purchase military-style equipment, like the APCs charging through the streets of Ferguson.



Ferguson no longer looks like occupied territory, though the underlying issue, Michael Brown's murder, has yet to be addressed.

In the last five years alone, Missouri has received nearly US\$70 million in DHS money for law enforcement related programs.

Emulating apartheid

While there is a wealth of scholarship on police militarisation in the US, there has been little to no examination of the ways Israel's security apparatus facilitates it.

Decades of testing and perfecting methods of domination and control on a captive and disenfranchised Palestinian population has given rise to a booming "homeland security industry" in Israel that refashions occupation-style repression for use on marginalised populations in other parts of the world, including St Louis.

Under the cover of counterterrorism training, nearly every major police agency in the United States has travelled to Israel for lessons in occupation enforcement, a phenomenon that journalist Max Blumenthal dubbed "the Israelification of America's security apparatus." Israeli forces and US police departments are so entrenched that the New York City Police Department (NYPD) has opened a branch in Tel Aviv.

In 2011, then St Louis County Police Department chief Timothy Fitch attended the Anti-Defamation League's (ADL) National Counter-Terrorism Seminar, an annual week-long Israeli training camp where US law enforcement executives "study first hand Israel's tactics and strategies" directly from "senior commanders in the Israel National Police, experts from Israel's intelligence and security services, and the Israel Defence Forces," according to the ADL's website.

Until Thursday night, the St Louis County Police Department appeared to be the largest most militarised and brutish force operating

in Ferguson. "St Louis County Police" was scrawled across the side of most of the tactical unit vehicles and appeared on the combat-style uniforms of officers aiming assault rifles at peaceful protesters.

The ADL boasts of sending more than 175 senior US law enforcement officials from 100 different agencies to the seminar since 2004, which are "taking the lessons they learned in Israel back to the United States."

The ADL is just one of several pro-Israel groups forging close ties between US cops and Israel's security and intelligence apparatus.

Another is the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs (JINSA), a neoconservative think tank that claims to have hosted some 9,500 law enforcement officials in its Law Enforcement Exchange Program (LEEP) since 2004.

LEEP "takes delegations of senior law enforcement executives to Israel to study methods and observe techniques used in preventing and reacting to acts of terrorism" and "sponsors conferences within the United States, bringing Israeli experts before much larger groups of law enforcement leaders," according to JINSA's brochure.

Former St Louis Police Department police chief Joseph Mokwa is listed as having travelled to Israel as part of a LEEP conference in February 2008.

Following nationwide outrage and embarrassment, Missouri Governor Jay Nixon pulled St Louis County Police forces out of Ferguson and placed the Missouri Highway Patrol in charge of policing demonstrators. The St Louis Police Department voluntarily removed its officers from Ferguson.

As a result, Ferguson no longer looks like occupied territory, though the underlying issue, Michael Brown's murder, has yet to be addressed.

Meanwhile, the scope of Israel's influence on US law enforcement remains virtually ignored by the media despite the troubling implications of emulating an apartheid regime actively engaged in ethnic cleansing and war crimes.

The culture of racism and impunity that has long plagued American policing is deadly enough as it is. Adding Israeli-style repression to an already dangerous mix guarantees disaster.

Information Clearing House

As the situation spiralled further out of control, Palestinians began tweeting advice on dealing with tear gas to the people of Ferguson.



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