

DANGER

More police state powers

Bob Briton

Since 11 September 2001, more than \$2 billion has been spent and more than 100 examples of what have been called "protective measures" have been taken so far as part of the Federal Government's contribution to the "war on terror". The states have also spent up big and gone into legislative overdrive in response to the highly publicised terror threat.

During this time, ASIO has been transformed into a secret police force with powers to detain and interrogate individuals effectively without any time limits and without any right to contact anyone on the outside. The individuals need not be suspected of any terrorist activities. There are now jail terms of up to two years awaiting anyone revealing details of these ASIO activities or any of the broadly defined "operational information" involved in the cases of the detained persons. A detainee may be jailed for five years for refusing to answer questions.

Earlier this month, The Attorney-General (AG) was handed the power to brand any organisation as "terrorist" allowing Philip Ruddock to transform the members of proscribed associations into criminals. The Senate's approval of the *Criminal Code Amendment (Terrorist Organisations) Bill 2003* means that members and supporters of organisations singled out by the AG could face between 10 and 25 years in jail. Ruddock will not even be restricted to the UN-prepared list of terror organisations under the new legislation. He will act on the advice of ASIO alone.

The Federal Government has made the most of the media attention on the murderous attacks on the

people of Spain to signal that they are still not finished with curtailing civil rights in Australia – not by a long way!

Senior government figures joined with their state counterparts on the occasion of the recently concluded summit of Australasian and southwest pacific police commissioners to drive home the same message. Howard pledged another \$400 million worth of Commonwealth funding for security measures to be shared between security agencies and the Australian Federal Police.

The carefully stage-managed public relations event did not go off without a hitch, however. Drawing a parallel between Australia's situation and that of Spain, Australian Federal Police Commissioner Mick Keelty made the observation that our military assistance to the US in invading and occupying Iraq has made us a greater target for anti-"coalition" terrorists. This is an obvious conclusion and is, no doubt, a belief held widely in the community and even in the upper echelons.

The problem with the remark is one of the unstated possibilities it opens up: that we could reduce our terrorist risk by ceasing to be such a lackey of the US. Foreign Minister Alexander Downer, accused Keelty of being duped by al-Qaida propaganda. Prime Minister Howard said that he disagrees with Keelty's assessment and that Australia has been a target of al-Qaida since the time of the intervention of Australian peacekeeping forces in East Timor in 1999.

Most Australians supported that UN-sponsored deployment. They had great sympathy for the suffering of the East Timorese people during the Indonesian occupation



and came to understand the shameful role of successive Australian governments in the tragic events of recent decades. Howard craftily tried to advance the peacekeeping mission as the source of our security problems.

Elsewhere, he suggested that we have long been targeted not because of what we do, but "who we are". This seems to reflect the Bush line that the US has been attacked because "evil doers" hate their pros-

perity and near perfect democratic institutions.

At the Sydney gathering, the police commissioners united to produce a wish list: wider use of forensic science and DNA for investigation and intelligence gathering; increased spending for security of critical infrastructure; new regulations for the management, storage and transportation of dangerous goods including fertiliser; and so on.

And while Australian Special Forces created some "atmosphere" with their night-time counter-terrorism exercises on Sydney Harbour, Victorian Police Commissioner Christine Nixon was canvassing how long the states should give themselves to detain and question people without charge. Given the Federal powers that already exist in this area, 24 hours should do it, she concluded.

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Among the 50 recommendations is one to allow the police and the CMC to conduct covert searches WITHOUT a warrant. This, supposedly, would only be used in cases where those authorities feel premises are linked to past or potential future terrorist acts.

Grab Bag of Anti-People Powers

- ☠ Full-blown show trials
- ☠ Secret trials
- ☠ Restrictive anti-defamation laws
- ☠ Broad "consorting with terrorist" laws
- ☠ Laws permitting state police to detain without arrest
- ☠ Searches without warrant for Qld police

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Let the liars feel the backlash

The electoral defeat of the Aznar Spanish Government and the election of a Socialist Party government pledged to withdraw Spanish troops from Iraq has direct links to Australia, manifested most recently in the dispute between Prime Minister Howard and Federal Police Commissioner Mick Keelty.

The change of government in Spain is a direct result of that country's involvement in Iraq through the same lies and deception that have been used by the Australian Government. Following the terrorist bombings of commuter trains in Madrid the Aznar Government immediately blamed the Basque separatist movement ETA. This was a move calculated to win votes for Aznar and his colleagues and to dampen down the perception of the people that the bombings were a result of Spain's involvement in Iraq.

The people were not deceived and far from the Spanish elections being a victory for terrorism, as was being claimed by the warmongers, it is actually a great victory for Spanish democracy. The voice of the majority of the Spanish people, who were overwhelmingly opposed to Spain's participation in the occupation of Iraq, was heard in the election result.

It is because of the obvious connection between the ousted Spanish administration and the current Australian Government – support for the US war on Iraq – that the Howard Government is attempting to gag comment that would lead people to conclude that Australia's backing of for the war has made them a more likely target of a terrorist attack. If the Australian people also make the link, the Howard Government may also be thrown out when the Federal election comes around later this year.

Thus the Government has basically discredited the head of the Federal Police by accusing him of scaremongering when he stated that Australia was now a more likely terrorist target because of the Iraq war. Howard attempted to stand over Mick Keelty, to the point of forcing him to claim that he had been misquoted, which any reading of his remarks would show was not the case. Foreign Minister Alexander Downer even accused Keelty of giving aid to terrorists because of his statement.

In the Government's attempt to silence dissenting voices – even incidental ones such as Keelty – they argue that any opposition to the war in Iraq means support for terrorism and that to oppose the Government is to be unpatriotic.

Terrorism is a scourge and is a weapon of political reaction. For this reason the change of government in Spain is not a victory for terrorism but a defeat for terrorism. Terrorism will find it much harder to work in Spain following this election. Terrorism is not a weapon used by progressive political organisations or by national liberation movements who are fighting for freedom, for the sovereignty and independence of their country.

Nor did it emerge as a new political tactic only after the bombing of the World Trade Centre in New York. It has been used for hundreds of years by the colonialist powers, and in the past 100 years by imperialism in its crusade to try and dominate the world.

The most powerful imperialist state in history, the USA, has sponsored terrorism to overthrow governments and assassinate political leaders. It props up the terrorist state of Israel and funds mercenaries in various parts of the world. Al-Qaida was itself created by the CIA and financed by the US.

The result of the latest terrorist act by the US is the slaughter of tens of thousands of innocent Iraqis.

The attempted manipulation of the attacks in Madrid by the then incumbent conservative government to try to assist its return in the elections was rejected by people incensed that their demands were not only arrogantly dismissed by the government but that also they were lied to in the process.

It is this backlash that the lying Howard Government fears as an election looms.

Len Fox (1905-2004)

John Gardener

Len Fox, the well-known writer and activist, died on January 3. He was 98 years old.

Len was born into a middle-class family in Melbourne in 1905. He was educated at private schools, and later graduated from Melbourne University with a Science degree and a Diploma of Education. After leaving university, he taught at the exclusive Scotch College, in Melbourne, where he developed an interest in progressive education.

In 1933, he travelled to England, to study progressive educational practitioners like Alexander Neill, founder of the Summerhill School, and Dora and Bertrand Russell, who had established a progressive boarding school in Sussex. Whilst in England, seeing first-hand the Hunger Marches and the effects of the Depression, he began to question and re-examine his beliefs on politics and education. Coming into contact with Communist Party (CP) members – and hearing British CP leader Harry Pollitt speak at a rally – led him to a developing interest in socialism and the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin.

Whilst in England, he was also increasingly concerned with the growing fascist influence of Oswald Mosely's Blackshirts, whose growth was steered by sections of the bourgeois media of the day. As he recounts in his autobiography, *Broad Left Narrow Left*, the *Daily Mail*, one of the largest circulation newspapers of the day, even ran a competition – as unbelievable as it sounds today – to find "... Britain's most beautiful woman blackshirt ..."

He clearly saw, very early, the class links between capital and fascism, and between fascism and war. A visit to Nazi Germany in 1934 opened his eyes still further, and he became convinced that fascism posed a great danger to humanity.

On his return to Melbourne later that year, he joined the Movement Against War and Fascism (MAW&F), quickly becoming the Secretary of the Victorian Branch. He immersed himself into the anti-fascist struggle: and in so doing, he increased his contact with CP members, many of whom were active in the MAW&F. The following year, 1935, he joined the Communist Party. Throughout the rest of the decade, the MAW&F helped to build a broad peace movement, that included many church, civil and trade unions groups: and Len was active at every step in the process.

After the beginning of the Spanish Civil War, Len became seriously involved in the Victorian Spanish Relief Committee and helped mobilise support for the Spanish Republic. Alongside Vance and Nettie Palmer, amongst others, he was involved in organising public meetings, often with returned Civil War veterans and nurses as speakers.

It was a difficult process: Australia was a long way away from the fighting, and the support

for Franco's fascist forces was overwhelming amongst the bourgeoisie. Amongst Franco's supporters were the UAP – the United Australia Party, the forerunners of today's Liberal Party – and many right-wing sections of the Labor Party: particularly those sections who had close links with the Catholic Church, which stood closely allied with Franco against the Spanish people.

Early in 1940, Len was asked to travel to Sydney to edit the journal *Soviets Today*, published by the Friends of the Soviet Union. He quickly discovered the delights of wartime censorship: just after he arrived, it was announced that the journal had to submit all issues to the censor for approval. A number of editions were banned in their entirety – even the journal's name was banned, alongside every article and photo! – and in May, 1940 it was formally placed on the Government's banned list. Little more than a month later, the CP was itself declared an illegal organisation, and operated under conditions of illegality for a number of years.

After this, Len spent the remainder of the war years writing for a weekly left newspaper based in Sydney, *Progress*. *Progress* was published under the aegis of the State Labor Party until 1946, and at its height it had a circulation of more than 20,000. It was distributed widely throughout Sydney.

When the *Tribune* was printed and distributed illegally during the first part of the war, *Progress* remained legal the entire time, and managed to openly print left

including Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyen Giap. Ho Chi Minh – in particular – made a considerable impression on Len.

After returning to Australia, he resumed work at *Common Cause*. Concurrently, Len and Mona became active in the NSW Australian-Aboriginal Fellowship, an Aboriginal rights organisation. The organisation was active in building a campaign to repeal the reactionary and discriminatory legislation that still enslaved Indigenous people: the campaign included around 30 affiliated trade unions and Aboriginal advancement bodies.

It built a campaign that the bourgeoisie could not withstand: in the early 1960s, the worst of the NSW Protection Acts – the legal cornerstone of the Aborigines Protection Board – were repealed. The Fellowship continued its work, and was a leading element in the victorious 1967 constitutional referendum, that removed formal discrimination against Aborigines. Len personally designed the famous "Right Wrongs" poster, that featured a child's face.

In 1966, after Edgar Ross was commissioned by the mining union to write *The History of the Miner's Federation*, Len took over the editorship of *Common Cause*, which he maintained until his retirement in 1970.

After his formal retirement, Len certainly didn't cease work: instead, he embarked on what was possibly one of the most creative periods of his life. Two of his autobiographi-

Len wrote more than 100 books or pamphlets – on topics as diverse as economics, politics, windmills, the Eureka Flag, Australian culture, Aborigines and poetry

and progressive news, despite the stringent wartime censorship restrictions.

A number of other well known Party figures contributed material to *Progress*: Rupert Lockwood and Edgar Ross, amongst others, Edgar regularly writing the editorial.

At the end of the war, Len began working on *Tribune*, and for a number of years edited the newspaper's four-page magazine section. Later, he moved to *Common Cause*, the Miner's Federation weekly newspaper, at the behest of then editor Edgar Ross.

He took time off from the paper in 1956-57 to travel to North Vietnam – which had by then freed itself from French colonialism – with his wife, well-known playwright Mona Brand, to help the North Vietnamese Government with English language education and translation. During this period he met many legendary Vietnamese political and military figures,

cal works written during this time, *Broad Left, Narrow Left* (printed in 1982) and *Australians on the Left* (published in 1996), have become cited sources by historians and researchers of various political persuasions.

His well-known book on the economic domination of the Australian economy by transnational corporations – *Multinationals Take Over Australia* – is still of great benefit.

All in all, Len wrote more than 100 books or pamphlets – on topics as diverse as economics, politics, windmills, the Eureka Flag, Australian culture, Aborigines and poetry – during his long life. His life and work were a mirror of his times. He was particularly proud, and justifiably so, of his writings and activism for Aboriginal people.

He remained committed to socialism, as he understood it, until his death.

He is missed by many. ✪

PRESS FUND

It's good news when the Howard Government starts to fall behind at the polls. But it sure is bad news when *The Guardian* Press Fund falls behind. We've now slipped behind where we need to be to meet our annual target, which this year is \$14,000, and our supporters this week are few in number. Come on members and supporters, we need your help in the struggle to defeat Howard and his kind, so get those contributions rolling in for the next issue, please! Our grateful thanks go, as ever, to this week's stalwart contributors, as follows:

Bert Appleton \$40, MH \$50.

This week's total: \$90. Progressive total: \$2590



The CPA on the WEB

For more information on the Communist Party of Australia, documents, *Guardian* archives, campaigns, links to other parties, papers and organisations and much more, visit our websites:

Central Committee: www.cpa.org.au

Blacktown Branch: www.agitprop.org.au

Maritime Branch: www.geocities.com/cparitime

Sydney Central Branch: www.red-sydney.com

"All troops out of Iraq!"

The "superpower of the people" was in action around the world on March 20 against the invasion and occupation of Iraq. Demonstrations took place in all Australian capital cities.

Around 500 people gathered in Adelaide on the steps of the South Australian Parliament House. Mike Khizam of NOWAR told the rally about Australia's role in advancing the interests of "the world's sole remaining superpower" before introducing the guest speakers.

Ruth Russell spoke about her memories of the horror of the bombing and invasion of Iraq during the time she spent in that country as a human shield last year.

She has been encouraged by the outrage of the people around world at the lies used to justify the war.

Former Office of National Assessment (ONA) analyst Andrew Wilke commented on politicisation and intimidation in the intelligence agencies and the public service in general.

He referred to the treatment last week of Australian Federal Police Commissioner Mike Keelty as an example of the pressures used by Howard and his cronies to have their political agenda backed up by nominally independent agencies.

Five hundred marched through Perth streets recording their continued opposition to the war on Iraq.

Their banners called for "All troops out of Iraq". Others declared for "Medicare not warfare". The banner on the platform called for "Regime Change at Home".

Speakers condemned the war that was launched under cover of lies about weapons of mass destruction and allegations that Iraq was helping terrorism. Tens of thousands have died as a result.

The spokesperson for Refugee Rights Action Network demanded the closure of the refugee camp. Scott Ludlum of the Fremantle Anti-Nuclear Group said the US Empire was based on a network of

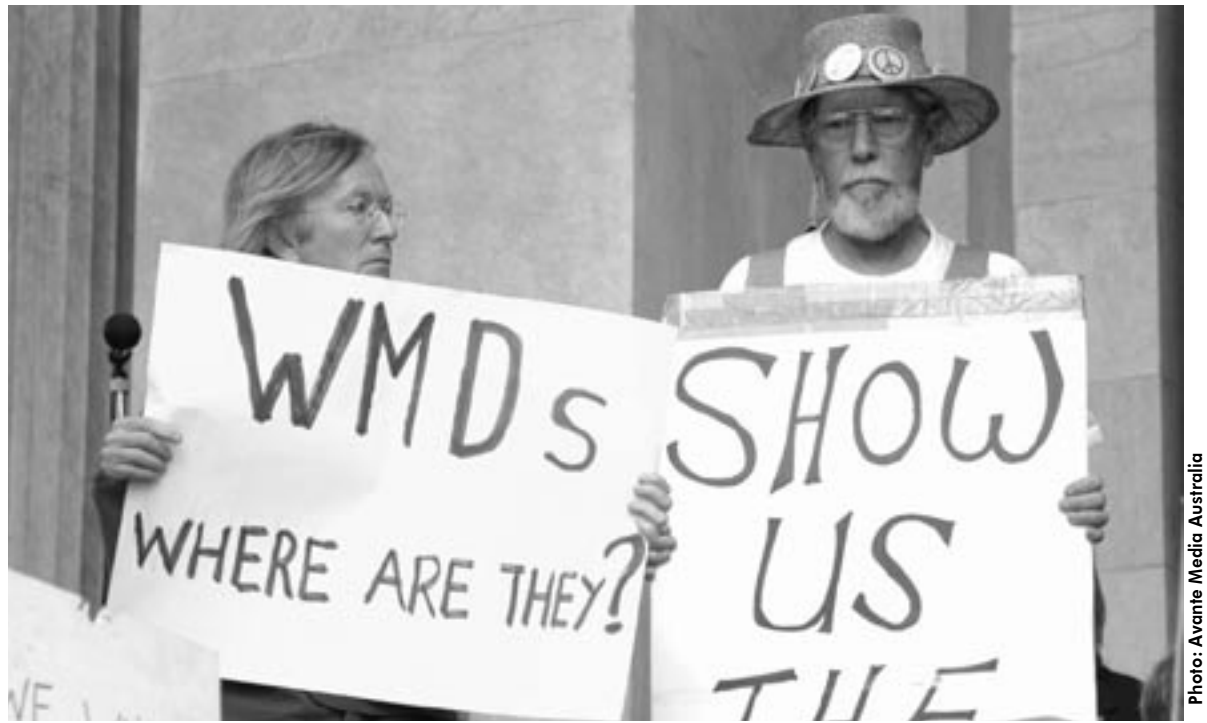
bases and that we must demand our government get rid of the US bases in Australia.

Labor MLC Ruth Webber praised the Spanish people who used their votes to reject violence.

In Melbourne around 3000 people rallied to hear speakers, including Terry Hicks, the father of Guantanamo Bay prisoner David Hicks

In Sydney around 2000 people marched displaying John Howard as a war criminal. The action began with a vigil and collection for medical aid for Iraq at the Sydney Town Hall, followed by a community memorial service and a march and rally at Hyde Park.

Speakers included John Pilger, Andrew Wilkie and Greens Senator Kerry Nettle. ☺



Protestors express their views at the Adelaide rally

Photo: Avante Media Australia

East Timor betrayed again

As The Guardian went to press the Howard Government was again attempting to ram through legislation that would take away East Timor's rightful ownership of petroleum development and revenue in the Timor Gap. The legislation, the Greater Sunrise Unitisation Agreement Amendment Bill, is also opportunistically being supported by the ALP.

The Howard Government has bullied East Timor and held their maritime sovereignty and economic future to ransom at every turn of the Timor Sea issue. Now the ALP and a possible future Latham Government will be complicit in this betrayal and bullying.

Thanks largely to the efforts of the Greens Senators, the

Government's legislative ambush was stalled last week and the Bills were sent to the Senate Economics Committee. But the Committee is only requesting submissions on the

Timorese will not even share in the same employment and economic development benefits that Indonesia had under the previous Timor Gap agreement with Australia.

All Australians of good will should speak out against this unfair treatment

minor customs tariffs Bill and not on the main Unitisation Amendment Bill, which poses the primary risk to East Timor's economic rights.

Under the legislation East Timor will essentially be locked into a commercial and revenue sharing arrangement that will be almost impossible to change. The East

The Australian Government has also withdrawn from Law of the Sea negotiations through the International Court of Justice and the International Law of the Sea Tribunal in order to force this unjust deal onto East Timor.

An estimated \$US38 billion will be Australia's share of the oil and

gas revenue that rightly belongs to the people of East Timor, who will receive just \$US8 billion.

"This is but one of a series of betrayals by an Australian Government of the world's newest nation", said Andrew Alcock of the Australia East Timor Friendship Association (AETFA). "The East Timorese have been betrayed by Labor and Liberal Governments since before their country was illegally invaded and occupied by the TNI [Indonesian military] in 1975 and for many years until now."

The AETFA is calling "on all Australians of goodwill to speak out against this unfair treatment of the East Timorese, our nearest neighbours and courageous WWII allies." ☺

Danger: more police state powers

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States hop on bandwaggon

From the sidelines, NSW Premier Carr reiterated his support for a US-style department of homeland security to unite the various police forces and spook agencies in the country. However, the Labor proposal would actually create a body with more powers than the US model. Carr also vowed to toughen all NSW anti-terror legislation like the *Terrorism (Police Powers) Act 2002*, even though the existing post-Bali bombing laws have not been used once since their adoption.

In Queensland the Crime and Misconduct Commission (CMC) handed over its report on security matters to another "tough-on-terror" Premier, Peter Beattie. The CMC has recommended sweeping new powers for itself (!) and the state police including ones to tap phones, though subject to a warrant. The police and the CMC would be able to install hidden cameras and other surveillance devices, also after obtaining a warrant.

However, among the 50 recommendations is one to allow the police and the CMC to conduct covert searches WITHOUT a warrant. This, supposedly, would only

be used in cases where authorities feel premises are linked to past or potential future terrorist acts. Terry O'Gorman of the Australian Council of Civil Liberties protested the unprecedented move: "There are already powers for emergency searches in a terrorist situation."

Beattie has undertaken to give serious consideration to the CMC report.

Philip Ruddock was the first to put his hand up for new powers following the Madrid massacre. He wants an amendment to the *1978 Foreign Recruitment and Incursions Act* to make it illegal for Australians to train or fight with terrorist organisations on behalf of foreign governments that the Australian Government does not approve of.

While the legislation being sought would not be retrospective, it is clearly a response to the cases of David Hicks and Mamdouh Habib who, it is alleged, were preparing to fight alongside forces of the Taliban government of Afghanistan.

He also wants the Law Reform Commission to examine ways of keeping secret even more of the details of trials of individuals caught by the various "anti-terror" laws enacted by his government - i.e. full blown secret trials.

Ruddock is calling for new legislation similar the old law against

"consorting with criminals" to catch even more people in the "anti-terror" net. There has been comment in the media that he wants this in his armoury to use against outspoken critics of US foreign policy like Australian Muslim leader Sheik Taj el-dene Elhilaly who met representatives of Hezbollah during a recent trip to the Middle East.

Reports of the cleric's trip have it that he had made inflammatory anti-US statements of the sort that appear to support al-Qaida. The new laws could have been used to punish him for the comments on his return to Australia.

No doubt the AG would love to stand over the Muslim leader. However, the intention of the proposed legislation is to extend the reach of the *Criminal Code Amendment (Terrorist Organisations) Bill 2003* passed earlier this month. A much lower burden of proof in these "consorting" cases would make it that much easier to imprison people accused of having any sort of contact with organisations on the government's list of terrorist organisations. Civil libertarians have decried this crude assault on the fundamental freedom of association.

On Norfolk Island, where the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General had gathered last week,

Ruddock was keeping up the momentum. He wants money-laundering legislation standardised across the states to prevent terrorist organisations moving funds around the country.

"Defamation" laws

He expressed his impatience with his state counterparts over their failure to agree on uniform defamation laws after 25 years of debate. The Federal AG has chosen this year, at the height of the "war on terror", to do something about it. He wants the states to follow the lead of NSW, which has the toughest laws on media comment and which allows the fewest defences. However, Ruddock wants to go even further.

He is threatening to override state legislation if his state colleagues have not agreed on a standard code by July. His discussion paper released on Norfolk Island is full of proposals, some of which have been welcomed by the Australian Council for Civil Liberties.

Some suggested changes would make it easier for less wealthy individuals to obtain a prominent retraction from a media source if they were to be defamed. They might also prevent wealthy individuals "forum shopping" the various

state and territory courts for the easiest damages against publishers of national media.

But these are side issues, there is a sinister side, which is far more reaching and in keeping of the spirit of the times.

The common law defence of "fair comment" in defamation cases would be replaced by a narrower one that the accused person was expressing a view that a "reasonable person" would hold. Truth would not be a complete defence - "public benefit" would have to be demonstrated as well. Mr Ruddock wants to stop the media carrying what he calls "prejudiced, biased and grossly exaggerated opinions".

Clearly, this push on defamation laws is not an exercise akin to the standardising of rail gauges across the states. Its timing is no accident. It is an attempt to muzzle public opinion with the public broadcasters, the ABC and SBS, in the direct line of fire. The former Federal Communications Minister Richard Alston has already shown how intolerant this government is of what it deems to be unfavourable media comment with his pursuit of the ABC for its coverage of the build up to the war on Iraq. The last thing this government of fanatics should get is more legislation to throw against its critics. ☺

Blackouts from lack of funding

Sydney is being plunged into darkness, suburb by suburb, as faulty substations blow up, showering debris up to 50 metres away and blacking out homes. Electricians blame Energy Australia's "penny pinching" for the "shocking" state of the network, and say dangerous incidents have already struck Paddington, St Peters, Chatswood and Milperra. They warn of an Auckland-style crisis unless maintenance is stepped up.

Energy Australia has been accused of hiding behind media spin

and ill-informed platitudes instead of addressing the real problems facing Sydney's electricity network.

The Electrical Trades Union (ETU) has placed a ban on working "live" at the affected substations until the problems are fixed.

Affected suburbs where sub-standard substations are in operation includes Chatswood, Mosman, Lane Cove, Manly, Beacon Hill, North Head, Lindfield, Pymble, Turramurra, Cronulla, Leichhardt, Mason Park, Drummoyne and Randwick.

Some substations have had tar-

paulins placed over equipment to protect it from the elements.

One of these tarpaulins gave out at Crows Nest on Ash Wednesday this year, throwing North Sydney into gridlock as traffic lights failed and hundreds of homes and businesses were left without power. Energy Australia employees had notified management of the leak at the Crows Nest substation over two years prior to the incident.

Sydney CBD was thrown into darkness last September when Energy Australia gave the city a "spring gift" blackout courtesy of what the ETU has labelled as a "hugely overburdened electricity network".

"Members know the Central Business district is overloaded", said ETU Organiser Steve Butler. "The triple banked system cannot handle the strain that is being placed on it. The system was gold plated for the '70s and '80s but was allowed to deteriorate due to economic rationalism.

"When bean counters are in charge of an electricity network then the beans these bastards count become more important than employees or customers." ❖



"I didn't say it was your fault. I said we'd ACT like it was your fault."

Smith Family wants martyrs, not workers

Workers at The Smith Family would be forced into unpaid overtime and lose all penalty rates for weekend and shift work under individual contracts being pushed by the charity. The workers have called on people who donate to the charity to suspend their donations until the individual contracts are withdrawn.

The Australian Services Union (ASU) is urging all Smith Family workers to reject non-union contract – the Howard Government's Australian Workplace Agreements – as one of the worst examples of charities expecting their workers to become martyrs.

The proposed agreement, which has been circulated to The Smith Family's 200 staff nationally would abolish:

- ✕ Annual leave loading;
- ✕ Overtime payments;
- ✕ Weekend and shift penalties;
- ✕ Payment for working public holidays.

Workers would also give up the

right to be consulted on workplace changes, could be directed to work outside their rostered hours for no extra payment and could be stood down without pay as a result of industrial action – whether or not they are participating.

All these conditions are being traded off for a three percent pay rise – even though the next minimum wage increase would deliver 2.9 per cent without any trade-offs.

The ASU's Sally McManus said the Smith Family's AWA is one of the worst examples of a charity cashing in on the goodwill of a dedicated workforce.

"Workers enter the community services field aware that they will not make a fortune, but at least they can have the protection of a union and some decent conditions.

"It appears that The Smith Family wants to embrace the very workplace policies that lead to the social breakdown it puts so much hard work into redressing." ❖

Telstra tries to derail pay deal

Striking Melbourne and Sydney technicians have pointed to the "grubby" hand of Telstra when Foxtel took a \$400 a week interim payment off the negotiating table.

"It looked like we might have been able to reach an interim settlement but someone intervened and we suspect it was Telstra", the Secretary of the Communications Division of the CEPU, Len Cooper said. "It had Telstra's grubby fingerprints all over it."

He said the payment would not have got technicians back in their vans but, prior to its withdrawal, the parties had been close to an interim agreement that would have allowed digital installation to proceed while contractual arrangements were being finalised.

Telstra is Foxtel's largest shareholder. It owns Australia's dominant pay TV network in partnership with Rupert Murdoch's News Ltd and Kerry Packer's PBL.

Mr Cooper said Telstra technicians received messages on their mobile phones during the week,

requiring them to make themselves available for Foxtel work.

"Telstra corporate managers have been complaining that the action by Foxtel technicians is a direct threat to their contracting out strategy", Mr Cooper noted.

NSW union official, Shane Murphy, agreed: "Telstra is up to its neck in this."

The withdrawal prompted 800 sub-contractors around Australia to vote to extend their strike "indefinitely".

The withdrawal prompted 800 sub-contractors around Australia to vote to extend their strike "indefinitely".

Mr Murphy led a convoy of 200 vans all the way from Chester Hill in Sydney's western suburbs to

Foxtel's inner suburban corporate headquarters where technicians staged a raucous protest.

There were van blockades of other corporate offices around the city and similar actions in Brisbane after Melbourne techs had blockaded the company's Victorian headquarters, then headed to state parliament for a protest rally.

Foxtel forked out \$15 million to spruik its digital revolution but take-up has been thrown into disarray by newly-unionised contractors who have seen their earnings tumble in recent years.

Technicians claim that around seven years ago the average contractor was grossing \$160,000 but that repeated rate cuts have shaved that figured back to around \$43,000, from which technicians have to pay expenses and tax.

Len Cooper says the re-unionisation of contractor technicians is highly significant for the labour movement.

"We are seeing subbies getting organised and returning to the family", he said. ❖

LABOUR NOTES

South Australian Nurses have launched an enterprise bargaining campaign focusing on family friendly initiatives to increase recruitment and improve retention. The claim includes greater access to childcare, family friendly rosters, and improved access to further education and training. It also seeks a special 10 per cent recruitment and retention payment in addition to a four percent pay rise every year for the next three years. Australian Nursing Federation Branch Secretary Lee Thomas said, "If we don't attract more nurses, by 2006, figures suggest that there will be a nursing shortage of 1500, which equates to the current nursing complement at the Royal Adelaide Hospital."

The ACTU is seeking a determination from the International Labour Organisation as to whether the Howard Government's *Building and Construction Industry Improvement Bill* contravenes Australia's international human rights obligations. "The Howard Government is proposing a new law that would infringe on the basic freedoms of Australian workers by seriously restricting the ability of building workers to bargain collectively for improvements to wages and conditions", ACTU President Sharan Burrow said. "

The Textile Clothing and Footwear Union has taken action against the Saba fashion label in the Federal Court. According to the union Saba failed to comply with out-worker provisions in the federal Clothing Trades Award. The union visited the fashion warehouse in late 2002 and found that Saba had failed to register with it and to prove its out workers received award pay and conditions. The union has also taken action against 30 other companies, including Rip Curl, Laura Ashley, Lotus Clothing, Puma and Teena Varigos with all but Saba and Lotus Clothing settling.

Airline staff confront air rage

Qantas staff who have been racially abused, spat on, punched and kicked are bracing for more of the same with the introduction of budget airline Jetstar.

Workers representatives suggest airline passengers used to more comfortable and flexible arrangements will react badly to restrictions imposed by the low-cost start-up airline.

One worker had a passenger follow her to the toilets and try to assault her after she failed to provide a window seat, while a Melbourne colleague has described abuse as an everyday occurrence in the baggage services area.

"We are expecting we are going to cop that", says Linda White, Assistant Federal Secretary of the Australian Services Union (ASU). "Qantas employees are expecting

unhappy passengers because of the fairly strict conditions in Jetstar.

"We are expecting air rage to go through the roof."

The issue of increased air rage because of Jetstar was a big talking point amongst airport workers at meetings across the country, according to Ms White.

"We have demanded that Qantas deal with us on this issue. The procedures they have in place are not good enough to deal with this problem."

Qantas' response has been to notify a dispute in the Industrial Relations Commission.

The ASU has a website on air rage, including the results of its national survey on the effects of air rage on airport staff. Among other things ASU members report being grabbed by the throat and having

briefcases and mobile phones thrown at them.

The site can be visited at www.zeroairrage.com.au ❖



"Sir, you can fly with us without worry. We're a union airline."

NSW public transport up for sale

Peter Mac

Sydney's critically understaffed rail service has suffered major disruptions within the last two months. And now other matters appear likely to cause further problems for Sydney's hapless public transport commuters.

Privatisation looming

The long-awaited Unsworth report on NSW public transport, which is due out shortly, will probably recommend that the Carr Government privatise some areas of public transport.

A previous report recommended that consideration be given to handing over certain services to private operators. One Sydney pleasure cruise company said they'd be delighted to operate ferry services, but only on the most profitable routes, and only in peak periods!

The area most likely to get this treatment is the bus service. In contrast to the rail service, which tends to operate as a single integrated system, some of the separate depots and bus routes would be relatively simple to hive off to private operators.

The Carr Government already favours private bus operators. Within the last ten years rail works programs have seen the frequent shutting down of parts of the rail service. Buses used as replacement services during these periods are invariably supplied by private contractors, at huge public expense.

The NSW Minister for Public Transport, Michael Costa, has refused to rule out partial privatisation of bus services. This could involve, for example, the public transport system bidding through competitive tendering against private corporations to run the well-patronised eastern suburbs routes.

This is bad news for commuters. Private bus operators will demand "level playing field" tender condi-

Private operators will expect to be guaranteed certain profit levels regardless of their performance or patronage. This will be through higher fares and the odd bale out by government.

It's also bad news for bus drivers and other bus workers. They'll have a fight on their hands to hold onto their jobs, their wages and conditions, enterprise agreements, relative job security as public sector employees and their right to belong to and be represented by their trade union.

Huge fare hike

Not surprisingly, the Carr Government has indicated it favours a huge rise in public transport fares, as recommended in an earlier report. This could be as much as 50 percent for ordinary fares.

The Transport Minister has already publicly canvassed increasing fares for pensioners and senior citizens by some 230 percent!

This discriminatory approach would treat elderly passengers very much as second-class citizens, and would abandon the humane principle adopted in many of the developed world's major public transport systems, of allowing the elderly very low fares on public transport.

These low fares are a life-line for many people who would otherwise have little social life or ability to retain much of their independence.

Post-Madrid terrorism fears

The Prime Minister has made much of the threat of terrorist attacks against Australian public transport in the wake of the Madrid bombing. However, he refuses to accept the blindingly obvious conclusion that the major terrorist threat arises from his government's servile

It also highlights the tendency for conservative leaders to lump the responsibility for dealing with the threat they have created onto the shoulders of the general public.

As one commentator declared enthusiastically last week, "People are the most important weapon against terrorism ... commuters can be encouraged to be observant and informed about what they should do if they see something out of the ordinary."

At the same time, however, the numbers of public transport staff are being cut and hence the level of security also falls. As the same commentator acknowledged, "Machines provide tickets to commuters and stations are often not staffed..."

And even in the matter of national security, the issue of privatisation rears its head. One item discussed at last week's meeting of the National Counter-Terrorism Committee was the employment of private security firms to carry out anti-terrorism work.

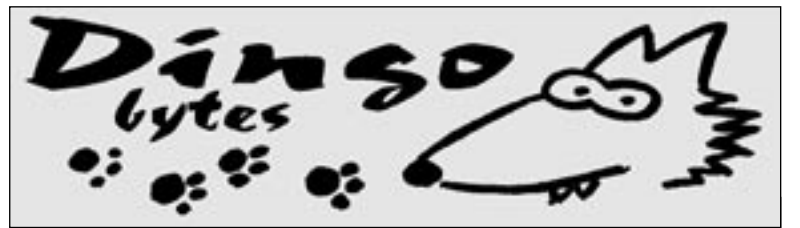
This has enormous legal and security implications. Private firms have a commercial interest that may conflict with responsibilities entailed in national security work. Moreover, there are serious questions as to whether private firms should have access to the intelligence information at a national level.

Industrial relations plummet

Ignoring its failure to employ adequate numbers of drivers, the Carr Government recently blamed the refusal of train drivers to work overtime indefinitely for a disastrous string of service cancellations and late runnings. And now relations between the Carr Government and rail unions have entered a new low phase, with the use by the government of the draconian Workplace Relations Act, Section 127, to force striking maintenance workers back to the job.

Five years ago, when Michael Costa was NSW Labour Council Secretary, he sponsored an angry resolution demanding to know why the then State Rail Authority was contravening the Carr Government's policy of not using these viciously anti-worker laws. Costa himself has now used the same laws against workers, with the blessing of the government.

On this and many other issues the line between the ALP and the conservative coalition is becoming blurred or indistinguishable. The end result could well be that NSW voters look beyond the choice of the two major parties for a political alternative that truly seeks to meet the needs of ordinary working people. And that would be no bad thing. ✪



There's some good news for the multitude out there who support Medicare, and it comes from Health Minister Tony Abbott's office. In a press release Abbott quotes recent research revealing, horror of horrors, that without the \$3 billion a year rebate to the private health insurance companies, the proportion of Australians with private health cover would drop to 19 percent. The rebate was always a false economy – a taxpayer-funded incentive to prop up the insurance companies in the face of overwhelming public support for Medicare.

The ideological commitment to big business by the Labor and Liberal parties is nicely demonstrated in NSW where both major parties have rejected a bill that would have banned political donations from developers. The proposed legislation, put by Greens MLC Lee Rhiannon, sought to break the link between donations by property developers and the politicians who make planning decisions. "By voting against this bill Labor and the Coalition have delivered a slap in the face to communities who are sick of seeing developers get their way with councils and the State Government", said Lee Rhiannon.

The ongoing struggle to defend the national broadcaster is taking place in all areas of its operations. The most recent is the ABC's broadcast of local sport, with ABC management dropping local coverage. The public is expressing its anger through protests at the ABC's Southbank offices in Melbourne after ABC management replaced Victorian television coverage of sport with a national package produced in Sydney. The national broadcaster's Australia-wide support group, Friends of the ABC, warns that local news coverage is also under threat. "Importantly, it is about maintaining localism, ensuring the ABC continues to be a national broadcaster, catering for all Australians."

Still on the ABC, last year the then Minister for Communications, Richard Alston, carried out a vendetta against the ABC with claims that its reportage of the attack and invasion of Iraq was biased. The Independent Complaints Panel, set up as a watchdog on the national broadcaster, eventually dismissed 51 of Alston's 68 complaints and fully upheld only two. The investigation of and responses to the complaints cost the ABC \$195,000. The Australian Democrats are calling on the Government to fully compensate the ABC, and for it to pay the \$12 million in outstanding debts for the cost of redundancies forced on it by the Government.

CAPITALIST HOG OF THE WEEK: is the Cole Royal Commission into the Building Industry. Set up by the Howard Government as a means to attack building unions, the Royal Commission was itself attacked last week by a former federal industrial relations commissioner, John O'Connor, who said it had accepted "false and distorted allegations" from employers. In addition, he said the Government's proposed Building Construction Act would in practice see the Government "take over and run" the industrial relations "problems" of the employers.

"Machines provide tickets to commuters and stations are often not staffed..."

tions that won't necessitate them operating in periods of low patronage or on unprofitable routes.

As Raul Baonza, Assistant National Secretary of the Rail, Tram and Bus Union commented, "If people want the same quality (of transport services) in Bondi as in Parramatta, of course we can tender and compete with private operators, but they will end up paying 15 percent more in fares and with no buses after 10 pm or before 6 am."

backing of the US in its war against Iraq.

The Federal Attorney-General, Phillip Ruddock, has been quoted as claiming that preventing terrorist attacks makes Australia more vulnerable as people become relaxed and less vigilant.

If accurately quoted, this amazing statement implies that it is better to let some attacks actually happen, as this will make the public more vigilant on behalf of its own safety.

Everything Must Press

War is not unspeakable.
It is singing its mortal song,
its searing shrapnel
an aria of torn flesh,
its cluster bombs
a string section
of mutilation.

(Everything must press
upon your consciousness –
a rivulet of water
becomes the slick
thickness of blood)

War is utterable.
It is the unstoppable

wail of grief,
the barrage of defiance
as sovereignty
is slaughtered.

(Everything must press
upon your consciousness –
a flush of dark flowers
becomes bruised flesh)

War is deeply
articulate:
Deploy
Assassinate
Collateral
Blame

Disease
Terror
Profit
Market
Exchange
Recession
Crisis

(Everything must press
upon your consciousness –
like heat emanating
from a bomb crater
the warmth radiates
from your son's body)

Tom Pearson

Cuba prepared for renewed US aggression

Juan Pozo is presently touring our region as a representative of the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP). He addressed meetings organised by the Australia Cuba Friendship Society in several Australian capitals before flying out for a visit to New Zealand. While he was in Adelaide he took time out of his schedule to speak with Bob Briton from *The Guardian* about some of the challenges facing the Cuban revolution today.

Bob: There are currently many reports circulating of the destabilisation of progressive governments taking place in the Latin America and the Caribbean – in Haiti and Venezuela, for example. This activity appears to be directed from outside, by the US and others. Do the people of Cuba worry that the US Administration might increase its attacks on their country and revolution?

Juan: From my point of view, the situation now taking place in Latin American countries is a result of the neo-liberal policies that have been applied in those countries for many years. They have been directed against the social possibilities and the social development of the population in those countries. This is a moment of great importance in Latin American countries because they can't stand any more this difficult and confronting situation.

We know at the same time that the US Administration is very concerned about developments. First it was the revolution in Venezuela that has been achieving very good results. At the same time, they are receiving great support from the people who can see that there is a government that has the capacity and will to take care of their social problems.

The same has also taken place in Brazil with the election of Lula. There Lula has also taken some measures, made some radical, social changes in Brazil. Brazil has the largest population in Latin America and many, many Brazilians live in poverty.

Unexpectedly, the situation in Argentina has also produced one of the striking moments in Latin America. This is because the Argentinean people could not stand any more the neo-liberal policies being applied in that country. Today there have been great changes made with great acceptance on the part of the population. Of course, the US Government does not accept the changes because they dislike what is taking place in Venezuela, in Brazil and in Argentina.

Quite different is the scene in Haiti. I think the situation in Haiti is a step back to the difficult situation that the country had been facing for so many years. Haiti is one of the poorest countries in the world. We don't know what is going to happen. The population is very confused. Aristide was trying to do his best,

though wasn't able to put into practice all his ideas due to the pressure coming from the US Government.

Finally, the events [the coup] took place that require us to pay particular attention. It was something that we didn't expect to happen – it didn't correspond to the situation in Haiti. It did not correspond with the social movement that is taking place in this hemisphere.

With regard to your question, we Cubans are really not worried, we are relaxed in the face of this situation. Why? Because we have been preparing ourselves from the psychological point of view for any type of military aggression. It doesn't mean that we are looking for this eventuality to take place.

Our preparation goes, as I said, to avoid any kind of possibility that US could one day commit the mistake of invading Cuba. In case this does take place, we Cubans are prepared to demonstrate to the world that it would be the last aggression the US Government is going to carry out against any third world nation.



Juan Pozo

were some changes but they did not last long. Moneyed people started to see that Carter was carrying on a different kind of policy towards the Cuban Government. Finally, he was not re-elected.

So things were restored to their prior position. The blockade has kept on tightening. Terrorist actions against Cuba – sabotage of all kind including biological war – have continued. To give you some idea of the scale: from 1963 to 2003,

that the blockade is going to be lifted any day soon.

Miami 5

Bob: What is the latest with the situation of the Miami 5 political prisoners in the US? Could you give our readers some background on this situation and could you tell us what we can do to help from here in Australia?

Juan: This situation of the Miami 5 has been one of the great-

enough argument to see that this was a political trial. This was the first violation in this trial and from that time a great campaign began to ensure that these five men would end up in prison. They were sentenced for different crimes – which they really didn't commit – for conspiracy to murder, conspiracy to carry out espionage. None of these crimes were proved during the trial that was carried out in Miami.

The defendants gave enough arguments and enough proof to establish their innocence but, given that this was a political trial, these were not taken into consideration and they were sent to jail. During this time, they have been put several times into isolation.

Those that are put into isolation are normally there because they have shown some sort of indiscipline in the prison. These five young Cuban men have never committed any kind of indiscipline during their stay in prison. But, because they are Cuban and they have been trying to create pressure, the authorities have been trying to blackmail these Cubans to go back on their principles and their ideas. However, the Cubans have been maintaining their pressure.

Their relatives have been suffering, too, because they have not been allowed to visit the prisoners. They are held in different prisons, in different places in the United States. Furthermore, the Cuban diplomatic mission in Washington has not been able to make contact with the prisoners. Many obstacles have been put in the way by the political process being directed against these five Cuban men.

We Cubans decided, because of the great risk they were taking and because of the importance of the information they gave to Cuba, to award them the medal of Hero of the Cuban Republic.

What we are asking now from the solidarity movement is to let people know and make them understand all the arguments to do with the reality of this case. We're looking for a campaign to free the Miami 5 because we have to break the silence. This situation is not well known. The US Government does not want people overseas to know what's taking place in the case of these five Cuban men. ☺

The situation now taking place in Latin American countries is a result of the neo-liberal policies that have been applied in those countries for many years.

US elections

Bob: The US is due for Presidential elections in November. Do you think the situation for Cuba would improve under a President Kerry rather than a re-elected President Bush? Do you think a change could affect issues like the economic blockade of Cuba?

Juan: If you look at the history of Cuba concerning the blockade during these ten administrations that the Cuban people have had to face over the past 45 years, you can see that nothing has changed. When you view the whole history and you go into the details, you find that the blockade has been strengthened from one administration to another.

Once there was some flexibility in the situation between Cuba and the US – when Jimmy Carter took over the presidency of the US. There

direct damages to the Cuban economy have totalled US\$72,000 million.

At this moment, with the ultra-right administration of President Bush, the situation with regards to Cuba is even worse. So we cannot say that because another President is going to take up his position in the US Government that the situation for Cuba is going to change. There are too many pressures.

There is a great counter-revolutionary movement in the US that plays a very important role in the decisions and the votes of the presidential campaign in the US. I would say they are the ones who are going to decide what is going to take place.

At the same time, as I was telling you, we are prepared. We are going to continue with our social progress. We don't have any hope

est violations of human rights ever committed in the US. These are five young Cuban men that have been in prison for five years. They have been accused of acts they did not commit.

What really happened? These five Cuban men had infiltrated the counter-revolutionary organisations in Miami, organisations that are responsible for taking terrorist actions against Cuba, carrying out sabotage against Cuba, and making biological war.

These Cuban men infiltrated these organisations with only one purpose: to give information to the Cuban Government so as to find the most effective possibility to diminish the effects of these terrorist actions, prepared and financed on US territory.

As soon as these five young men were discovered, the mafia in Miami began to exert its influence so as to create a political threat – and that's really what happened. There were 150 candidates to participate in the trial in Miami and, in order to be considered, they were asked only one question. They were asked whether they were in favour or against the Cuban revolution. Those that said that they were in favour were automatically sent away and not taken into consideration to be part of that trial.

You can understand that this is

So we cannot say that because another President is going to take up his position in the US Government that the situation for Cuba is going to change.

The Return of Spanish Democracy

Rene L Gonzalez Berrios*

The surprise election of Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero and the Socialists (social democrats) in Spain, following the March 13 train terrorist attacks, has been disconcerting for some, a joy to others. The real question is what does Spain's election represent – a victory for the terrorists (as argued by right-wing spokesmen in America, [and Australia]) or the return of Spanish democracy?

One aspect of the whole election is uncontroversial – the conservative Popular Party (the party of outgoing Prime Minister Aznar) was headed for a win at the polls prior to the March 13 attacks. Virtually all informed opinion in Spain and abroad agrees that the bombings (and the subsequent attempt by Aznar's government to ascribe blame to ETA, the Basque Separatist group) had important consequences for Spanish politics.

First, the bombings produced divergent reactions from different sectors of Spanish society. Clearly, a large portion was mobilised to either change their previous support of the Aznar Government and vote Socialist, or leave their usual apathy and vote.

It wasn't the dedicated Socialist base that gave the election to Zapatero; it was either "independents" or members of other parties changing their vote. The Socialists were slated to lose handily to the Popular Party a few days before the bombings, which proves that a major population-electoral shift was produced by the bombings.

Aznar has much to take blame, regarding the lost election. First, it was his support of Bush's Iraq War, opposed by 90 percent of the Spanish population, which produced the highly volatile social divisions making the Socialist victory possible and the political incentives by otherwise "apathetic" voters to come out and vote Socialist.

simply not congruent with an ETA attack.

Later evidence began to surface of an Al-Qaida admission of responsibility, and the participation of several individuals, some with Al-Qaida ties. The doubt produced by the inconsistencies of the Aznar Government's claim engendered a back-lash. In some reports, several voters were quoted as stating that they had not planned to vote, but that Aznar's deception regarding the March 13 bombings inspired them to get out and vote.

More intelligent

Aznar played his poker hand thinking he could convince the Spanish population to be indignant with ETA, and cater to patriotism, much like Bush had done after 9-11. To Aznar's horror, the Spanish people proved themselves more intelligent than their American counterparts. The appeal to patriotism quickly became hollow, and cost the Popular Party the election.

Which leaves the question to be answered: What does the Spanish election of 2004 mean, in more historical terms? The positions can be concretised (with some necessary simplification) into two opposing camps – those that view the Spanish election as a capitulation of the Spanish population to terrorism, and those that view the Spanish election as the logical endgame for regimes who survive and thrive on the manipulation of information and deception of their populace.

Popular "right-wing in the closet" TV show host Bill O'Reilly has emerged as one of the early proponents of the first theory, calling the Spanish election a "great victory for Al-Qaida". For him and others, the Spanish election sent the message to Al-Qaida that terrorism could have rewarding consequences. The implied message was that the Spanish population



Protestors in Madrid – the Spanish people recognised the reality

For opponents of the "prior assumption" of the current, confrontational foreign policy approach to Al-Qaida terrorism, the logic did not run that Spain needed to adopt Bushist unilateralism. Thus, alternatives were possible, alternatives proposed, presumably, by the Socialist Party of Spain. The Spanish election was not a capitulation of the Spanish people, nor a victory for Al-Qaida. Quite the contrary.

Victory for democracy, openness and truth

The Spanish election was a victory for democratic rule, openness, and truth, and a setback for Al-Qaida. Al-Qaida thrives on violent confrontation. It renews itself through the recruitment of disaffected individuals in various parts

neo-colonialism and support of Israeli apartheid in Palestine, Al-Qaida ideologues would be a rag-tag group of loonies, shouting hatred of the West, but powerless to convince their peers to join their "Jihad".

This theory has often been referred to as "fighting the mosquitoes through draining the swamp". The Bushist foreign policy was rightly condemned, under the perception that it would increase Al-Qaida terrorism, hatred of America, and further violence. In simple terms, it was to help "fill the swamp" rather than drain it.

The evidence is pretty conclusive. Iraq, an otherwise secular Muslim nation without much incidence of the type of social divisions plaguing countries like Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and other Arab/Muslim nations, is now fraught with daily terrorism. Bush's war brought that terrorism to Iraq. It destabilised a social order that hindered Islamic fanaticism without proposing a workable alternative, a fear prophesied by anti-war opponents.

The Spanish people recognised this reality, and voted accordingly. Although American imperialism is long a factor of world politics, the last three and a half years have made it brash, brazen, and "in your face". The need to oppose it resolutely has never been greater.

The Spanish people, faced with the reality of increasing terrorism, a deceptive and unresponsive government, and the possibility of further years of Spanish collusion in a failed, neoconservative-imperialist foreign policy course that would be destined to lead to new "Madrid bombings", gave the Popular Party a kick in their behinds.

The Spanish election was the return of Spanish Democracy, a precious commodity that had been sidelined, shamefully, at the time of Aznar's commitment to Bush's war (despite 90 percent opposition). From that moment on, Aznar's government had become illegitimate and surviving only on the manipulation of information and deception of the populace.

The deception simply ended with the Spanish election, when the Spanish people decided the "prior assumption" of Bushist unilateralism did not explain Al-Qaida terrorism, that the war on Iraq had not "drained the swamp", that violence and force were not defeating terrorism, and that the government's

actions from its commitment to the war and on, were manifestations of a deceptive government, intent on perpetuating its control at the cost of Spanish lives, treasure, and reputation.

Faced with this realisation, the Spanish people opted to bolt the Bush imperialist boat, and chart a new course toward a more sane foreign policy. It was at the same time a rational decision, but also a cathartic new beginning. Spain need not follow Washington's rule anymore.

The hope of this author is that the people of Britain, Australia, and America come to similar realisations, hopefully without the need of another "Madrid bombing". The logic of the "prior assumption" (that terrorists hate us, not for political reasons, but simply because we exist) is faulty, the neoconservative-Bushist-imperialist "medicine" to confront this "reality" has been faulty and a failure, and its continuation will not stop terrorism.

The Spanish election could be recorded in history as the moment where Spain "capitulated" to Al-Qaida, while the West, almost romantically, fought on, or it can be recorded as the moment that one of the "coalition of the bribed" came to the sober and rational realisation that the foreign policy it had been following had failed miserably.

The coming elections in England, Australia, and the United States will tell whether or not the British, Australian, and American publics have had enough of their own ideologues, or if they wish further useless, hopeless, and unending confrontation.

For their part, the Spanish people have already decided how to confront Al-Qaida: by emphasising to the Arab and Muslim world that they do not wish harm on their peoples, and that they simply wish to live in peace with them, a tactic sure to make recruitment of terrorism against Spain more difficult for Al-Qaida. Simply put, the "90 percent" is back in power, and that's a return to true Spanish democracy. © 2004

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Disenchantment

Much like Bush in the US, Aznar has shaken the otherwise calculable electoral logic of his society. Those that could be counted on to be Popular supporters no longer could be, and those counted on never to vote, could be the real spoilers of the new election. Secondly, the vote also reflected last-minute disenchantment and repudiation of Aznar's attempt to ascribe blame of the March 13 bombings to ETA.

The claim was a rather transparent attempt to cater to the usual Spanish indignation with usual ETA attacks, and was made hollow by subsequent denials of responsibility by ETA, and by the circumstances of the bombing.

The general feeling in Spain was that ETA picked military or government targets, attempting to avoid civilian casualties. March 13's wanton massacre of civilians and its intended targeting of them was

lacked "backbone", that the proper stance would have been to adopt the internationally-abhorred arrogant unilateralism of President Bush's "War on Terrorism".

The theory could only be made logical if one believes the necessary "prior assumption": that the terrorists hate us, not because of social, political, religious, or cultural grievances and contexts, but because they hate our very existence, society, traditions, and way of life.

If that was the "prior assumption" of the theory, then the logical conclusion is that one could not "back-down" and "capitulate" to Al-Qaida terrorism, by supporting the "softer" party in Spain, the Socialists. The only remedy to Al-Qaida "hatred of our very existence" was to adopt the Bushist doctrine of "bringing terrorism to the terrorists", and voting for the Spanish party that would continue a policy of confrontation – the Popular party. Negotiation was not an option. Case-closed.

of the world, necessitating violence from its enemies to effect further recruitment.

In simple terms, a "Great Satan" that does not place armed forces in Third World nations, exploit the natural resources of those nations, and implement an imperialist foreign policy, does not make a persuasive case for Al-Qaida recruitment.

It simply would not be worth it for regular people to join Al-Qaida, give up their lives and families, and join a "holy war" against a country that did not perpetuate any meaningful harm to them.

Much like the Nazis, Al-Qaida is headed by ideological, religious fanatics that prey on the fears, anger, and resentment of regular individuals. However, the ideologues, like the Nazis without the German nation, would be powerless to mobilise their ideology and fanaticism in the absence of a socio-political context which engendered fear, hatred, and resentment.

Without Western colonialism,

Assassination condemned

In a statement on Tuesday, March 23, the Secretariat of the Communist Party of Australia said:

We condemn in the strongest terms the assassination of the Islamic and Palestinian leader, Sheik Yassin. This act of state terrorism is a clear indication, if any is needed, that the Israeli Government and its Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon have no intention of working towards a peaceful settlement with the Palestinian people. Palestinians are being systematically driven off their homelands into exile or killed.

The assassination is yet another act of provocation and incitement inviting retaliation from the Palestinian side which will then be used for more repression, a wider war in the Middle East and to incite religious and racially based responses.

It could also be used by the US and Israel, who are working hand in hand, to justify an invitation to station US troops in Israel and to establish bases on Israeli territory to be used against Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iran and Egypt.

The Israeli and US leaderships have no policy other than oppression, war and occupation. State terrorism and war are their weapons of choice while condemning others who dare to resist a new colonialism and call for peaceful solutions.

It is also clear from its responses that the Australian Howard Government supports the criminal policy of deliberate assassinations now being systematically used by the Israeli leadership, policies which will fuel hatred, endless conflict and do not serve the long-term interests of the Jewish people.

We call on the United Nations to not only condemn this latest assassination but immediately send a peacekeeping force to protect the rights of the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip territories. A separate Palestinian state should be proclaimed as a matter of extreme urgency. Lands seized from the Palestinian people must be restored to their rightful owners and Israeli military forces and occupiers withdrawn to Israel's pre-1967 war borders as has been demanded in numerous UN resolutions.

For far too long Israeli and United States leaders have conspired to thwart any and every attempt to achieve a just settlement of this Middle East conflict. It is time for member nations of the United Nations to collectively stand up against the criminal policies of these two governments and take the necessary steps to bring an end to what will otherwise be a continuing cycle of violence and killings and a possible wider war. ✪

Leading Israeli academic, Uri Avnery, in condemning the assassination of Sheik Yassin, said: "This is worse than a crime, it is an act of stupidity. The fate of the State of Israel is now in the hands of a group of persons whose outlook is primitive and whose perceptions are retarded. This group of bankrupt political and military leaders, who have failed in all their actions, try to cover up their failures by a catastrophic escalation."

Albanian fascists on the rampage – again

The ethnically charged demonstrations, killings and burnings of Serbian homes and churches by Albanian extremists in the Serbian province of Kosovo have led to over 30 deaths and many more injured. The dead and injured include some UN (KFOR) troops.

The renewed violence is a further step in the attempt of the Albanian terrorists (KLA) to achieve their objective of forcing the separation of Kosovo from Serbia and creating an "ethnically pure" greater Albania.

Kosovo's Albanian leaders do not accept UN Security Council Resolution 1244 which declared Kosovo to be an inalienable part of Serbia.

Following the 1999 NATO aggression against Yugoslavia, Kosovo was de facto taken out of Serbian territory and power. Control of the province passed to Albanian extremists. At least 200,000 Serbs, as well as Gypsies, Jews and representatives of other ethnic groups, have been expelled from Kosovo over the past few years.

A Greater Albania, in addition to Kosovo, would include areas of Macedonia, Montenegro and parts of Northern Greece populated by Albanians.

These mad plans would lead to a serious revision of national borders

and the explosion of the situation in the Balkans, which are called the "powder keg of Europe."

Return Serbian troops to Kosovo

Last week the Russian parliament unanimously passed a resolution saying that Serbian-Montenegrin military forces should be allowed to help defend the Kosovo Serbs.

The resolution condemned the failure of international organisations [the UN and NATO] to stem the ethnic violence.

The Russian Duma, said a new UN resolution on Kosovo should be passed to reaffirm the Serbian Government's sovereignty over Kosovo and that "the military units of Serbia-Montenegro should take part in defence of the Serb population of the region, of Orthodox churches and guarding borders."

Serbia's Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica stated that "events in the northern part of Kosovo-Metohija reveal the true nature of Albanian separatism, its violent and terrorist character". The terrorist actions of the Albanians are aimed at forcing out the remaining Serbs and the UN so that the core business of the KLA – drugs, arms and human trafficking – can proceed without disturbance. ✪



Sheik Ahmed Yassin's coffin is carried through Gaza City

Millions protest Iraq invasion

Marking the first anniversary of the invasion of Iraq demonstrators took to the streets in almost every major city in the world.

From 50 people in East Timor to 175 people in Fayetteville Arkansas, from 100,000 in Madrid to one million in the streets of Rome, millions of people around the world have demonstrated their opposition to George Bush's war and the continued occupation of Iraq.

The call went out for the people of the United States, Britain, Australia and all the other member countries of the "Coalition of the Killing" to work on "regime change" in their countries.

There were protests in Belgium, Portugal, Switzerland, the Czech Republic, Greece (15,000 in Athens), Poland, Germany, Hungary, Cuba, Egypt, Seoul, Tokyo, Jordan, Syria, Turkey, Brazil and many other countries.

At least a million people marched through Rome. "Your War is Dead", said one placard.

From San Francisco to Sydney, Tokyo and the Philippines, demonstrators accused the Bush administration of making the world a more dangerous place.

In London 25,000 activists marched through the city with slogans such as "Anti-Bush, Anti-Blair, Anti-war!". Anti-war protestors climbed the Big Ben clock tower with the message "Time For The Truth".

In Madrid people continued to point the finger of blame – for the train bombing that killed more than

200 people on March 11 – at the ousted conservative Government and its commitment to the US war. A Barcelona protester said: "The government took the country to war, but it was ordinary people who got hurt and killed by the terrorists."

In the US demonstrations took place in up to 200 cities across the country, including New York (50,000), Chicago, Los Angeles and San Francisco. One placard summed it up: "Bush Lied, Thousands Died, Bring Our Troops Home". ✪

From San Francisco to Sydney, Tokyo and the Philippines, demonstrators accused the Bush administration of making the world a more dangerous place.

Thanks for coming to vote

Russia's presidential elections held on March 14 resulted in a clear win for President Putin. Although Putin received 71.27 percent of the votes cast, giving him a massive majority, his vote was lower than expected in pre-poll predictions.

What is not being reported is that all the candidates of Putin's "United Russia" Party were defeated in the election for the Moscow City Duma and that a number of "United Russia" candidates for Regional Governors, in the 11 regions in which elections were held, were also defeated.

Although Putin remains without a serious challenger his Party's defeat in Moscow suggests that his power base is rather unstable.

There was widespread voter indifference which can be partly explained by the way parliamentary (Duma) elections were conducted in December last year. Media manipulation, ballot rigging and a host of other dirty election techniques were used to give Putin's "United Russia" Party a clear majority.

The runner-up to Putin in the Presidential elections was Haritonov the candidate of the Agrarian Party. He was supported by the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) and polled over 14 percent which is a higher vote than that obtained by the CPRF's leader Gennadi Zuganov in the December 2003 Duma elections.

Glaziev, who broke away from the Communist Party and created his own "Motherland All Russia" Party, polled only 3.8 percent which is lower than his vote in the December 2003 Duma elections.

Taken together the two left candidates polled just over 18 percent.

Another interesting result was the 3.5 percent vote for the category – "None of the above".

Why Putin got such a high vote remains a mystery to many overseas observers. According to Putin himself one third of the population is now living in poverty after the break-up of the Soviet Union, Russia's international influence is minimal, the armed forces have

been decimated and the Russian Federation now has NATO troops on its borders. US bases are being established in former southern republics of the Soviet Union.

Once again Putin promised to work towards making life better for people and improving Russia's standing in the world.

A joke doing the rounds in Russia before the elections went like this:

A crow is sitting on a tree branch, holding a piece of cheese in its beak.

A fox appears and asks: "Will you vote for Putin?"

The crow holds on to the cheese and does not say anything.

The fox asks again: "Will you vote for Putin?"

The crow remains silent.

The fox asks again and this time the crow says "yes". The cheese falls to the ground; the fox snatches it and runs away.

The crow thinks: "Would it have been any different had I said 'no'?" ✪

One year on, still no weapons of mass destruction Is the US now shipping them in ...?

A year ago the US, Britain and Australia invaded Iraq. The pretext for the illegal invasion was their insistence that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and was ready to use them against the West.

Despite numerous and thorough weapons inspections both before and after the war, nothing has been found.

Hans Blix, former chief UN weapons inspector has emphasised that the US and British intelligence agencies issued false reports on Iraq leading to the attack.

The Bush administration continues to defend its decision to go to war against Iraq despite the demand from David Kay, the man who led the CIA's effort to find WMD, that the Bush administration should "come clean with the American people" and admit that it was wrong about the existence of the WMD in Iraq.

Now come reports that the US has shipped in weapons of mass destruction, no doubt ready to be "found" by "inspectors".

The *Tehran Times* reported on March 13 that US forces had unloaded a large cargo of parts for construction of long-range missiles and weapons of mass destruction in the southern ports of Iraq.

The information is said to come from a "reliable source" in the Iraqi Governing Council who was speaking on condition of anonymity. He said that US forces, with the help of

British forces stationed in southern Iraq, had made extensive efforts to conceal their actions.

Unloaded at night

Cargo was unloaded during the night while the attention of the media was concentrated on the signing of the Iraqi Provisional Constitution.

The source said that in order to avoid suspicion, ordinary cargo ships were used to transport the cargo which consisted of weapons produced in the 1980s and 1990s.

He pointed out that the US facilitated Iraq's WMD program during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq conflict.

The source claimed that the weapons were "probably" transferred to locations somewhere in the vicinity of Basra.

The *Tehran Times* reports the source as saying: "Most of these weapons are reportedly of Eastern European origin and some parts are from the former Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc. The US obtained them through confiscations during sales of banned arms over the past two decades".

An official of the US forces in Iraq said he had not received any information about the unloading of weapons of mass destruction in southern Iraqi ports.

Another article in the *Daily Times Monitor* published in Pakistan reports retired US Navy Lt Commander Nelda Rogers, who is a veteran of the Defence Department,

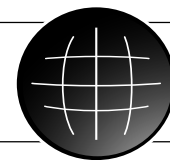


as saying that the CIA planned to "plant" WMDs inside Iraq but that the plan was blown.

CIA bungle

Ms Rogers revealed that there was a covert military operation that took place both preceding and during hostilities in Iraq. She said that "it was really the CIA that bungled it".

What are the chances of these weapons being "found" just before the US elections? ☛



Global briefs

CHILE: The US is hiring mercenaries in Chile to replace its soldiers on security duty in Iraq. A Pentagon contractor has begun recruiting former commandos, other soldiers and seamen, paying them up to US\$4000 a month to guard oil wells. Last month Blackwater USA flew about 60 former commandos from Santiago to a training camp in North Carolina. Many of them had trained under the military government of Augusto Pinochet.

BRITAIN: War on Want reports that Britain's aid to some of the world's poorest countries is conditional on governments privatising services, such as water and electricity, and giving multinational companies the option of buying them. The result, says the report, is "poor quality work and lack of input by the local community". Colombia, Indonesia and Mozambique are amongst the countries suffering the cruel effects of these policies. The evidence is irrefutable, the private sector has consistently failed to deliver good quality, affordable services to the world's poorest people.

JAMAICA: The Jamaican authorities have announced that they do not recognise the new interim government in Haiti – still in the process of being assembled. It was installed following the departure of elected president Jean Bertrand Aristide. Through a communiqué the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade stated that the question of whether to recognise the new Haitian authorities should be put on hold until the CARICOM summit of heads of government, which takes place in St. Kitts and Nevis this month.

VENEZUELA: Likewise, President Hugo Chávez has stated in Caracas that Venezuela does not recognise the new Haitian government. Chávez emphasised that the doors of his country are open to Jean Bertrand Aristide, the constitutional president of Haiti. He underlined the fact that Aristide was elected by his people and kidnapped by US troops under orders from the US ambassador in Port-au-Prince.

ISRAEL: Five young Israeli citizens were sentenced on January 4, to one year's imprisonment, in addition to approximately 14 months spent in detention and in military prison. The five refused to enlist in the occupation army. Army authorities are openly threatening that at the end of their sentence, the five would be called again once more to the induction centre to be drafted. Noam Bahat, Matan Kaminer, Adam Maor, Haggai Matar and Shimri Zameret belong to a group of young men and women, who in September 2002, wrote to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon stating that they would not take part in the oppression of the Palestinian people by serving in the Israeli army. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention declared that the repeated penalties imposed on the five are arbitrary and called for the immediate release of the conscientious objectors.

To the people of Spain

Fidel Castro Ruz

Message from the President of the Councils of State and Ministers of the Republic of Cuba to Mr José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero on the occasion of his election as President of the Spanish Government

Distinguished Mr José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero:

The Spanish people, decidedly opposed to the cruel and unjust war of conquest in Iraq, likewise

opposed by yourself, and outraged by the crude electoral manipulation of the unjustifiable terrorist aggression suffered on March 11, has decided to entrust you with the leadership of the Spanish Government. On the occasion of this important event, which will have repercussions in the international sphere, we express to you our recognition.

I would also like to extend, and in a special way, our most profound admiration and a tribute of respect to

the people of Spain for their nobility and heroism, demonstrated so many times throughout history.

I congratulate you on your decision to withdraw the Spanish troops from Iraq by June 30.

Bearing in mind this decision, I beg you not to forget that, by virtue of actions and pressures on the part of Mr Aznar as President of the government of Spain, more than 1000 young men from small and impoverished Latin American nations were sent as cannon fodder to Iraq under the command of the Spanish Legion. Thus, the possible death of any of those young people is the responsibility of the Spanish state.

The peoples of Latin America thus have the right to expect the immediate return of those young people. They do not have a duty to wait until June 30. The death of any one of those young Salvadorans, Hondurans, Dominicans and Nicaraguans would be doubly sad if, being immediately preventable, it is not prevented, given that the political responsibility of the principal author of that measure has been swept away by the Spanish people.

The world, and particularly the peoples of our hemisphere, would greatly appreciate anything that you are able to do before assuming the presidency in order to avoid any more Latin American lives being added to those lost in the unjustifiable holocaust that took place in Madrid on March 11.

I hope that you understand the spirit of this message and transmit to you my most sincere sentiments of respect and consideration. ☛

Poland "taken for a ride"

The Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski said last week that his country had been "taken for a ride" regarding the alleged existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. "That they deceived us about the weapons of mass destruction, that's true", he said.

If this is true of Poland it is also true of Australia. In both cases the Polish President and the Australian Prime Minister went along with the lies of Bush and Blair and their respective intelligence organisations.

They both set out to deceive their peoples and drag them into the Iraq quagmire. Illustrative of the stupidity and faulty reasoning of the Polish President, he went on to say that it made no sense to pull Polish troops out of Iraq.

He claimed: "What would be the point of pulling the troops if it meant a return to war, ethnic cleansing and conflict in neighbouring

countries. If we protest against the US dominant role in world politics and we withdraw our troops knowing they will be replaced by US soldiers, what would be the point of such a move?"

These dire consequences that the Polish President anticipates are already occurring and are the direct result of the US, British and Australian invasion and the role by the leaders of some other countries who have joined in the dirty game of keeping their military boot on the heads of the Iraqi people. The Polish President has proved to be just as subservient to the interests of the United States as is the Australian Prime Minister.

The Polish President claimed that "passiveness will lead us nowhere". How about trying some honesty and extend the right of the Iraqi people to determine their own affairs, i.e. the occupiers get out of Iraq? ☛

Letters to the Editor
The Guardian
65 Campbell Street
Surry Hills NSW 2010



email: guardian@cpa.org.au

Phoenix arising

Recent Israeli incursions into Gaza with deaths of a dozen "Palestinian militants" continuing two years of targeting "terrorist leaders", reminds me of the now forgotten US Operation Phoenix in Vietnam.

I recall standing on the deck of the USS BENAWA on the Mekong-Cambodia border in mid-1970, looking for a good dawn photo. In my viewfinder a half dozen armed men emerged from the bush. I snapped a few shots as they approached the gangway. As they passed me I noticed their unusual machine guns, issued only to special forces, their black pajama uniforms, hair tied back with muddy sweat

rags, a look of fatigue, indifference to the civilian with the camera.

Later in the officers' mess, a freshly washed US SEAL joined me at my table. I recognised him as one of the men I had photographed – a first lieutenant with a curious medallion hanging from his dog tags. It was shaped into the outline of a B-52 bomber with the word, "KILL" engraved in the polished silver.

He leaned over the table, asked me who I was and what I was going to do with the photos I'd taken of his team. I assured him I was on the BENAWA as a guest of the US Navy; that I had agreed to send my photos to Saigon for clearance. He was not satisfied with my answer. "I want those photos destroyed", he said. "It's DOD policy not to identify our personnel." I agreed to pull the film. It was no big deal.

Still later, as I watched the night war from the ship's helicopter flight deck, I was joined by another officer who was my "minder" as I covered the Brown Water Navy. "Sorry about the trouble with that SEAL officer", he said. "But he is correct. We can't

acknowledge these Phoenix incursions our teams are making here and into Cambodia, Laos and even into North Vietnam. So forget about it, enjoy the war from here."

When I returned to Washington I heard more about Phoenix. Launched after the disastrous Tet offensive under CIA direction, the goal was to target persons sympathetic to the NVA (North Vietnamese Army) and Viet Cong and in discrete operations by small teams to eliminate them on their home turf. I had stumbled on one such incursion.

Apparently there had been scores of similar operations by SEALs during the ill-fated Vietnam war. US Democratic candidate Senator John Kerry could probably attest to their heroism and to the many medals they won taking the war to individual "terrorists" wherever they could be found. Among veteran journalists they were called the Navy's "paid killers".

Operation Phoenix is now history. But in Palestine are we seeing it again rising?

Rasjad Moore
Muceha, WA

The Passion of the Christ

Thank you for Andrew Jackson's review of *The Passion of the Christ* and letting us know of Mel Gibson's affiliation with the unsavoury Opus Dei. I would never go to see such a disgusting production.

But I was pleased to see *The Melbourne Anglican* this week printed mainly negative reactions to the film – on the front page.

The only positive one was – no

surprise – from Billy Graham: "I was moved to tears. I doubt of there has ever been a more graphic and moving presentation of Jesus' death and Resurrection".

We all know the "Hot Gospeller" is a lunatic.

Gwen Goedecke

Shock and Awe in Madrid

Terrorist massacres produce much talk of "counter-terrorism" but no mention of "counter-war" and yet who would deny that war is terrorism? William Blum reflects this when he says that a terrorist "is someone with a bomb but who does not have an airforce".

The governments of Australia, Britain and Spain enthusiastically enlisted in the Coalition of the Willing against popular opinion. They used every trick in the book to justify the unjustifiable and the people saw through their lies, half truths and dissimulations.

The Aznar Government sensed that if al-Qaida was behind the Madrid bombing then it would bear the brunt of popular anger. Blaming the Basque separatist movement ETA for the bombing, only compounded the disgust and anger of the people who took their revenge at the ballot box.

Unsurprisingly, John Howard is running scared that he too will be ousted for his uncritical, even blind support, for US adventurism in Iraq.

This is why he denies al-Qaida involvement in Madrid and denies that his policies continue to place Australians in jeopardy.

The end is coming soon for him and for all the other participants in the Coalition of the Willing.

President Mubarek remarked at the commencement of the war that for Arab nations it would mean "the opening of the gates of Hell" but events have drawn us all into this awful prospect. The only good that can result from acts of bloody terrorism is the realisation that Clausewitz was wrong. War/terrorism is not "nothing but the continuation of politics by other means".

Gareth Smith
Byron Bay, NSW

Yechury & the value of ideas

If Eddie Clynes were to re-read Yechury's speech, it must be obvious that it's a rehash of the same revisionist nonsense that led to the demise of the CPSU as well as the old CPA.

After the destruction of the Soviet Union at the hands of such people, I cannot believe you are still debating the value of their ideas, not to mention agreeing with them.

They called it the distortions of bureaucracy, totalitarian rule, Stalinism, the dead hand of centralism etc, etc. In fact it was Soviet Power; the rule of the most advanced sections of the working class in the world.

So that this power will rule in Australia, I think the Central Committee of the CPA has a responsibility to debate and discard the never-ending appearance of revisionist ideas. They should not just appear in *The Guardian* without official comment, otherwise many others of good intent, like Eddie, will be misled.

Rick Hendry
Helensburgh, NSW

Sydney – Public Meeting

Human Rights Activist from Colombia

Genocide In Colombia

Nilson Dávila – Colombian Human-Rights defender

On tour in Australia Speaking on:

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- Supporting social change through organisational development

Saturday APRIL 3 7:30pm till late
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Traditional food and music available

Meeting organised by the Colombian Solidarity Committee
More information on 0400 525 512 (Eli)

Culture & Life

by Rob Gowland

Drugs, coups and FRAPH

It is becoming increasingly clear, even to the patriotically myopic US media, that the recent coup against President Aristide of Haiti was made in the USA.

But there can't be too many people who can, like Aristide, say that they have twice been unlawfully ousted from their democratically elected position by a US-engineered coup.

The first time the Yanks showed their dedication to democracy by getting the tiny Caribbean island's duly elected President forcibly removed from office was in 1991. Aristide had only been in office a few months, after being elected by a landslide in the country's first free elections.

The US had earlier acquiesced in the departure of its tame dictator on the island, "Baby Doc" Duvalier, to go off to France to live on his looted millions stored in French and Swiss banks. A rising tide of opposition in Haiti and elsewhere to the Duvalier dictatorship had made this move inevitable.

Showing an arrogant contempt for the aspirations of the Haitian people (but a fine regard for the aspirations of the ruling elite), the US backed – of all things – a former World Bank official, Marc Bazin for President. Just who exactly did they think would vote for him?

After all, "Haiti is the poor-

est country in the [Western] hemisphere. About 80 percent of the country's population lives in poverty", writes Justin Felux in *Dissident Voice*.

"What little wealth Haiti has is highly concentrated among the country's ruling elite. The richest one percent of the population owns nearly half the nation's wealth.

"Most of the ruling class consists of light-skinned 'mulattos' who share partial ancestry with the [former] French colonisers.

"These ruling elites, many of whom are multimillionaires, have always been friendly to the major world powers and the various Haitian despots, including the regimes of 'Papa' and 'Baby' Doc Duvalier.

"It is easy to understand why these people harbour a pathological hatred for Aristide, a former priest who preached liberation theology and whose strongest supporters inhabit the slums of Port-au-Prince", Justin Felux said.

Also to help Bazin's chances, the CIA ran a terror campaign against supporters of Aristide, using a terrorist outfit known as FRAPH (Haitian Front for Advancement and Progress) which they funded and whose leader, Emmanuel "Toto" Constant, was subsequently shown to be an actual CIA "asset".

The US Government channelled money to the opposition using the same agencies that they used this time, those outstanding democratic institutions the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and the Agency for International Development (AID).

In the event, however, Bazin received only 14 percent of the vote (to 67.5 percent for Aristide).

The Haiti elite, like their equivalents elsewhere, will do anything for a large chunk of money or to protect their access to same. And Aristide in



office tried to curb the powers of the Duvalier-era military leadership and the Duvaliers' former death squad gangs.

Clearly he had to go, before he interfered with the lucrative drug trade (transshipment and money laundering), the country's main industry.

Significantly, as soon as Aristide had been sent into exile, the drug trade boomed better than ever, which no doubt distressed the US government terribly.

A 1993 article by Dennis Bernstein and Howard Levine, tellingly titled *The CIA's Haitian Connection*, in the *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, quoted an internal memo of the US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) from earlier that year entitled *Drug Trafficking in Haiti*.

"The wholesale value of Haiti's

drug industry on the US market is now [in 1993] equal to US\$1 billion a year, which equals the entire revenue of Haiti's population of six million", said the memo.

"Haiti has become the second most important trans-shipment point, after the Bahamas, for cocaine shipments from Colombia to the US." The DEA's document also states that "Haiti is believed to be a main centre for laundering drug money".

DEA agents constantly run foul of CIA agents, the one lot trying (however ineffectively) to uncover and shut down the drug trade, the other deeming it probably their most valuable and important tool. Not to mention most profitable.

During the three years of Aristide's exile, while Haiti was under a military dictatorship (with which the US maintained good

relations, needless to say), FRAPH carried out a murderous campaign of terror against supporters of Aristide's Lavalas movement.

Between three and five thousand people were slaughtered in this period. Despite this, FRAPH leader Constant was later able to settle in the USA, without fear of charges relating to his murderous campaign of terror.

Today, FRAPH is once again one of the main supporters of the recent coup and its goons are again dealing with "hard line" Aristide supporters and trade unionists.

And no doubt the CIA still regards the leaders of FRAPH as among its best "assets" in Haiti. Especially if they are able to keep the all-important drug trade going strong.

After all, where would the CIA be without it, eh? ☹



Sun March 28 ~
~ Sat April 3

One of the sources of real pride for my colleague Edmund Allison and I, when at Quality Films in Sydney, was the breadth of our collection of films by the outstanding Japanese filmmaker Akira Kurosawa.

For Kurosawa was truly one of the greats of cinema. A progressive humanist, he stands up there with Renoir, Rossellini, Eisenstein, Dovzhenko, Satyajit Ray, Ichikawa and others of that ilk.

We were the first to obtain the full length *Seven Samurai* outside Japan. Beside the original, the Hollywood remake *The Magnificent Seven* pales into insignificance.

Many of his films were remade by Hollywood, usually by directors interested in the explosions of action or violence in the films. Kurosawa's attitude, the ideology of his films, was ignored or simply not understood.

Thought of in Japan as "Western influenced", his films are in fact quintessentially Japanese.

Kurosawa (ABC 2.00pm Sunday) attempts to show what an important filmmaker Kurosawa was by quoting various Hollywood filmmakers claiming to have been influenced by him.

And it's true, George Lucas for example did lift part of the plot for *Star Wars* from Kurosawa's *Hidden Fortress*. But Lucas also largely missed the point of the original film.

Henry VIII was a king who kept changing wives. Everyone knows that.

But he was also the king who

consolidated the power of the central monarchy over the nobles, work his father had begun following the Wars of the Roses, and effectively ended feudalism in Britain.

He removed Britain from under the thumb of the Catholic Church, thus freeing it to eventually make war on His Most Catholic Majesty the King of Spain, for the gold that was flooding into Europe from the Americas and the East.

That gold, plus the wealth appropriated by the suppression of the monasteries, was essential for the development of capitalism.

Henry's reign saw the extension of English power over Ireland and Scotland as well as the rise and culmination of the Reformation in England.

The new two-part drama series **Henry VIII (ABC 8.30pm Sundays)** is a well acted, well scripted and well dressed production about a king who kept changing wives.

According to the four part "observational documentary" series **Selling Success!**, screening in the **Reality Bites** slot (ABC 8.00pm Tuesdays), "success seminars have become one of the 21st century's growth industries."

"Many Australians now feel that a much better life could be just a seminar away – and they are willing to pay big money to be put on the fast track to success. It is estimated that more than 250,000 Australians have attended wealth creation events alone."

The lesson of this week's episode, **Brad Sugars: Building Billionaires**, seems to be that the way to wealth (which here equates to success) is to start a series of success seminars!

In 1964, Soviet director Mikhail Romm made a brilliant film about the Nazis called *Ordinary Fascism*. Near the end of it he showed footage of the US army training young recruits to be as unthinkingly brutal as the young Nazi soldiers.

"They are at it again", said Romm, "turning boys into beasts". In **Army Of One – Life In The US Army**, on **Cutting Edge** this week (SBS 8.30pm Tuesday), they not



A well acted, well scripted and well dressed production (*Henry VIII*)

only don't deny it, they actually celebrate the fact in a marching song!

*We are beasts.
You have made us beasts.
With cold hard steel
we will stab between
the second and third rib
and twist.*

The only difference is that now they are turning boys and girls into beasts. This sad program follows three recruits with very different results.

Bedtime (ABC 10.00pm Tuesdays) concludes this week, but fans of Andy Hamilton's splendid little series need not despair: a new series, retaining Sheila Hancock and Timothy West but sadly not Stephen Tompkinson and Claire Skinner, starts next week.

In this week's final episode of the current series, Sheila Hancock reveals a hitherto unsuspected talent

for headbutting, which her husband finds useful but a little daunting.

The ABC's publicity for the new three-part series **The Big Picture: Rommel (ABC 8.30pm Wednesdays)** refers to Rommel as "an exemplary general". But this European-made series shows that in fact he was anything but exemplary.

A died-in-the-wool militarist, cold and aloof – even callous – towards his men, he was a poseur who lapped up Goebbels' publicity about him. No great shakes as a military strategist, he threw his troops against the fortress of Tobruk without even properly reconnoitering the battlesite. The result was a massacre.

One of his aides comments that the German army had plenty of other generals who were as good as or better than Rommel. Another, a former foe, comments that Rommel was fortunate in that he made his reputation in Libya and Tunisia, a comparatively easy theatre, unlike the meatgrinder of the Eastern front, for example.

The program makes the extraordinary claim that the German army was "non political" and therefore

was neither for nor against Hitler. But "no politics", as Lenin pointed out, means "bourgeois politics", and the German High Command had very definite ideas about the conditions on which they would support Hitler.

Only when Hitler had eliminated the leaders of the radical "Brownshirts" who still railed against the banks and the "bloated capitalists" would the military give Hitler its support. So he had his former bully boys assassinated in the "Night of the Long Knives", and the rest of the Brownshirts conscripted into the regular army, thus ensuring the military's full support.

But Rommel was an enthusiastic supporter from early on, entranced by Hitler's promise of guns, tanks and planes. A few years later Rommel wrote to his wife "Isn't it wonderful that I am able to serve the Fuhrer, the people and the new idea?" The new idea was Nazism, of course.

I have no doubt that by the end of the three episodes they will have transmogrified Rommel into an anti-Nazi saint, but the first episode at least is largely free of this. ☺

PALM SUNDAY – 4th April

War costs us all – Don't pay the price

Sydney – March and Rally For Peace

Belmore Park 1pm

Palm Sunday service (NSW Ecumenical Council) and multi-faith prayers for peace followed by march with music to rally at Hyde Park North

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Every Friday night 6pm – 7.45pm

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Dinner afterwards in the Royal Exhibition Hotel across the road

March 26

Reining in Economic Inequality

Louis Haddad: Economics, Uni of Sydney
Frank Stilwell: Prof. Economics, Sydney Uni

April 2

It's Our ABC – What Do We Do To Save It?

Prof Ken Inglis: Visiting Fellow, History Program, Research School of Social Sciences, ANU, author of *Aunty at Seventy – A Health Report on the ABC*;

Robyn Williams: Science Program ABC;

Gary Cook: President Friends of ABC

April 9

Good Friday

April 16

The Australian Health System – The Hot Issues

Con Costa: National President, Doctors' Reform Society;
Ged Cowin: Assistant Federal Secretary, Australian Nurses Federation

Inq: Pat Toms 9358 4834 pbtoms@bigpond.com; Janet Fischer 9398 8891;
PO Box 325 Rozelle NSW 2039; Win Childs Fax 9660 6554

www.politicsinthepub.org

Aunty' Hilda's story

Delsey Tamiano, in the Northern Territory for *Koori Mail* newspaper, talks with Aunty Hilda Jarman Muir, who has recently published the story of her life as a stolen child.

From the Hollywood Hills in the United States where the rich and famous play, to the gates of Buckingham Palace in England, long-time Darwin resident Aunty Hilda Jarman Muir has experienced more of the world than most of us could ever imagine.

This delightful soul has tasted the cultural delights of many exotic places, from the islands in the Pacific to New Zealand, and she even tried her luck amid the bright lights of Las Vegas.

But things might have been very different had it not been for a cruel twist of fate that was to change her life forever.

Taken from her beautiful Yanyuwa country (near Borroloola), Aunty Hilda Muir's incredibly moving life story of being separated from her mother and homeland at the tender age of eight is captured in her book, *Very Big Journey: My Life As I Remember It*.

Supported with funding from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) and the Aboriginal Arts Board (AAB), the book was launched by the Northern Territory's Chief Minister Clare Martin.

The ceremony was attended by many family and friends, including AIATSIS Chairman Mick Dodson and Centrelink deputy chief executive officer Pat Turner.

Addressing the audience, Aunty Hilda said: "I am proud to stand in front of you all today. It's another great milestone of my journey. The title of my book was chosen to highlight the long journey I took as a child from my country in the Borroloola area to Larrakia country here in Darwin. The book too was a very long journey, taking nine years to complete.

"I hope this book will bring greater understanding of the cruel government policies that sepa-

rated Aboriginal children from their families in my time of growing up. I want to urge everyone to write their memoirs. It is very important to tell our stories and to pass them on to future generations."

Aunty Hilda acknowledged the love and support of family, the work of Isaac Brown, Barbara Cummings and the AIATSIS staff, particularly Stephen Larkin, Melissa Lucashenko, Rhonda Black and Jackie Huggins.

The idea for the book developed when eldest daughter Cecilia suggested that her Mum write her own story and in a style of traditional storytelling that is so much a part of her cultural identity.

Aunty Hilda carefully began to recount the many events that have shaped her life.

"Oh, look, the memories just flashed back – like you know, happened just not so long, the memories just stored there, wonderful memories. When I wanted to write about it, it all just flashed back like happening yesterday or last week, I couldn't believe it."

Aunty Hilda was born in a "proper bush birth" to a Yanyuwa woman and an unknown white father in 1920. She was raised as a bush kid and clearly remembers those early years with her mother and family.



Aunty Hilda Jarman Muir with her family at the launch of her book

"Oh, I still got strong memory of how we travelled around in the bush and hunting and looking for sugarbag. I used to love that and camping beside a billabong where there's lily there, we travel and always camp where there's a billabong or creek or something where there was water. That's the lifestyle that I lived with my

taken away and then you going into this home there", she said.

"You haven't got your Mum or Dad there, and of course all these other little children, they all come crowding around you and then you get into little groups and as a little family together, that's all, you are happy now, you in a little group and like sisters and brothers.

(Billy) Muir, becoming a mum, the tragedy of Cyclone Tracy and the hardships that followed.

During one of the more happier times, Aunty Hilda recalls seeing a Harriet jet (in London, England) for the first time and thinking, "They'd be a good plane for the Flying Doctor I reckon, they can land anywhere", she said.

Aunty Hilda described the mixed emotions she felt upon returning to her country 45 long years after she was first taken and the sad news that awaited her.

"They said that my mother would look at that road every day, just looking for me to come back ... no, I never got to see my dear old Mum", she said.

Despite so much sadness in her life, Aunty Hilda's courage in the face of adversity is an inspiration to all.

She is the first to say that although she often wishes to have been able to see her dear old Mum again and perhaps have had the chance to experience growing up with her natural family, she has no regrets.

If she hadn't made the most of the cards that life had dealt her, then she may not have experienced the same joys of family which make her so treasured and adored today.

Towards the end of our interview, the monsoon rain was absolutely bucketing down outside.

Aunty Hilda looked out the window and said to me with a smile: "Oh isn't it beautiful that rain?"

As I looked back at her, I realised what a remarkable spirit this incredible woman had and I finally understood what it was that had gotten her through all of the trials and tribulations of her life.

I just nodded and said, "Yeah, it is Aunty. It's really beautiful."

*** Very Big Journey retails for \$29.95 and can be found in (or ordered from) most bookshops.** ☺

"They said that my mother would look at that road every day, just looking for me to come back ... no, I never got to see my dear old Mum"



with Northern Territory Chief Minister Claire Martin

family", she said.

Speaking about being collected by the policeman from Borroloola along with several other fair-skinned children and travelling by horseback to Mataranka before going by train to Darwin, she said: "I didn't know what's happening because I still had my countrymen travelling with me, I thought maybe I'm still going on another walkabout."

It was only when she had reached her destination and began to experience the isolation and mistreatment by the Kahlin "half-caste" home's managers that the terrible realisation of what was to come began to dawn on her.

Identity lost

"Once we were taken away we were made to forget our identity and our Aboriginal family and our language... oh, that was the cruel part of it. You just ignorant or whatever or got no knowledge of what's happening, just accepted that you been

"That was just one of those things, you didn't sort of still feel lost or sad or nothing because you have these other little children.

"If somebody went and get bit of scraps out of garbage and your friend was there or if you was on your own and you went and get bit of scraps from garbage next door, or people used to throw bit of scraps for the chooks – but I think we used to beat the chooks sometimes – potato peel, onion, cabbage, and other kids, whoever saw you (said): 'Hey come on, what you got, I'm gonna call Matron'.

"All right, you start sharing these bloody peels to shut them singing out to Matron because when we got flogging, oh, we didn't get little flogging ... big cane, you know, so sad to remember but that's how it was with us, you know. Just for a bit of survival, you even scratch the ground for wattle seeds."

In the book, Aunty Hilda tells of her life in the Kahlin compound, meeting future husband William



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