Australia’s military role

Bob Briton

Foreign Minister Julie Bishop joined press columnists recently in pointing out 21st Century parallels to the build up to World War One. She noted that seemingly random events could unleash a calamitous chain of events – a reference to the assassination of Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo by Serb nationalist Gavrilo Princip on June 28, 1914. She warned that territorial claims in the region need to be handled carefully to prevent them ending in armed confrontation.

Fine sentiments but the looming anniversary of the outbreak of WW1 has many other lessons about the prevention of war: lessons about the militarisation of societies, the launching of the militarisation of societies, the launching of armed confrontations. The reports were usually handled carefully to prevent them ending in armed confrontation. The Abbott government will give full support for the increasingly bellicose language Indian ministers are using about cross border tensions with China. The Indian government claims China is continuing to make incursions into Indian administered Kashmir. In 1962, the Indian government’s propaganda about “human waves” of People’s Liberation Army soldiers storming across India’s north-eastern border. The reports were usually filed from the distant vantage point of Delhi.

Bellicerence from Indian officials is back. “Next time the response will not be fudge or denial,” chief spokesman for Mr Modi’s Bharatiya Jana Sangh Party said recently for the attention of his Chinese neighbours. “You are playing chess, but the knights are fully armed.” In defiance of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, India is a nuclear weapons-armed state. Seeing that a military alliance is in the offing, the US and Australia are happy to ignore this violation of international law. This will be made clear during Mr Modi’s visit. Moves for Australian uranium sales to India are well under way.

Playing the generous host

Australia is not a two-bit military power. It is now the seventh largest importer of major arms in the world. Purchases of large scale weapons such as warships, fighter planes and tanks jumped 85 percent in the five years to 2013. Australia buys 10 percent of US military production and is a good customer for killing machines from the UK, France, Germany, Spain, Sweden and Israel. Defence was the only area of government spending spared from cuts in Hockey’s horror budget in May – in fact it got a six percent boost.

Australia’s military will purchase an extra 58 F-35 Joint Strike Fighters from the US at a cost of $12.4 billion and hopes to provide a service hub for other countries in the region committed to buying the aircraft. Abbott is keen to “expand cooperation on ballistic missile defence”, as a White House statement put it following Abbott’s recent visit to the US. The installation of advanced ballistic missiles around the nary’s new air warfare destroyers is no longer a taboo subject.

The list of other items made to order for the Pentagon goes on and on. The new US Marines base at Darwin will host more rotations. There will be more frequent visits from US bombers and refuelling aircraft to RAAF bases Learmonth and Tindal. Julie Bishop mentioned new measures for “working closely on our joint aims in space” during her address to the Alliance 21 conference held in Canberra last month. As well as further cooperation for intelligence gathering to combat “terrorism”, there will be new assets built in Western Australia for the use of US military planners – a radar station and a space surveillance telescope.

War fighting allies

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe will visit Australia this week. Abbott will return the hospitality he received during his visit to Japan in April. A new defence cooperation agreement will be signed taking the growing US-Japan-Australia alliance to a new stage and the “free trade” agreement signed during Abbott’s tour of Japan will be ratified. Economic and military bonds between imperialist countries go hand-in-hand.

As a result of discussions with Abe, a trilateral dialogue may take place on the sidelines of the East Asia Summit to be held in November in Jakarta. Discussions about “defence” technologies will be progressed. Submarine building will be on the agenda including the sharing of innovations from the 4,200 tonne Soryu class submarine. Australia is projected to have 12 new generation submarines in service by 2030 at a cost of $36 billion. And Mr Abe will receive all the sympathy he could in service by 2030 at a cost of $36 billion. And Mr Abe will receive all the sympathy he could.

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DEFENCE CLEANERS

Class attack

Kevin Andrews, the former Howard Minister who brought in the horrendous anti-worker, anti-union WorkChoices, has carriage of the Coalition government’s “end of the age of entitlement” agenda. He is now the Minister for Social Services – a job without a future if the government’s policies are implemented. The Murdoch and other media are heralding the policy as “inclusionary, offensive, attempting to demonising welfare recipients as bludgers, slackers, retreating on society (not “lifters”), as uninteresting and to blame for their own position of discomfort.”

The 2014-15 budget began the government’s offensive on the “leaners” but revealed its true, ruling class colours, when it came to more corporatist cuts. In the maw of the rich, the Coalition’s new preventive package, a boost in military spending from around $30 billion to $40 billion and continuation of the fossil fuel rebate for mining companies.

Innes noted in a speech to the National Press Club last week that, “The case for a welfare system that is paid for, and that is a cause for...” Again, creating a smokescreen for reducing social welfare costs. McClure speaks in terms of a “strong emphasis on work, work, work,” which fails to back them with details on funding and staffing. After all, one of the main aims of the government in holding the review is to reduce social welfare spending. In terms of “Chipping away at benefits” and emphasis on incentives to work”, reinforcing the blinder or rorter image.

It looks at how to reduce the number of people on the disability pension payment or its replacement. “Thirty percent of people on a disability support pension are people with mental health conditions and these conditions are often episodic in nature, for example severe depression and anxiety disorders. They will not be able to sustain a job. A huge inequities between different types of benefits as carers, unemployable, ageing pensions, etc. The age pension would remain for those still eligible. There would be a “tiered working age payment”, “different tiers of payment could take account of individual circumstances, such as partial capacity to work, parental responsibilities or limitations on availability for work because of caring.” It could also widen the gap between different recipients as people moved up or down the tiers. A “Disability Support Pension would be reserved only for people with a permanent impairment and no capacity to work.” Those, such as with psychological or psychiatric illness whose episodes and incapacity to work are discreet. People who are episodically will be thrown into the nightmare of Job Search, loss of income, compounding their already existing disabilities, hardly speeding up entry to non-existence jobs.

“The measure has the potential to save $3.3 billion over the forward estimates. It is aimed at people with a permanent child psychiatric disability.” A payment structure could bring together Family Tax Benefit Part A, Youth Allowance, ABSTUDY and other payments for dependent children. A “Disability Support Pension” is proposed as a replacement. “A child psychiatric disability payment structure could bring together Family Tax Benefit Part A, Youth Allowance, ABSTUDY and other payments for dependent children...”

The launch of the National Disability Discrimination Commissioner. The sacked Commissioner Graeme Innes noted in a speech to the National Press Club last week that, “Forty-five percent of us live in poverty, we rank last among OECD countries on this score...” And while the recent budget makes welfare harder to get for us... there is no plan to get off welfare and into work. “The worst of the weekend is over, by Monday there will be点钟 down people with episodic disabilities on a different – probably harder to get for us...” There is no plan to get us off welfare and into work.

Cleaners of Defence buildings under the Garrison Support contract are waiting to find out if they will lose their jobs or have pay cuts because of the federal government’s dumping of the Commonwealth Cleaning Services Guidelines.

The fate of the 50 cleaners is in limbo following a decision by Defence to not renew the cleaning contract of their employer. The cleaners are employed in the ACT and parts of NSW. Under the Guidelines their jobs and pay rates would have been protected at change of contract times.

The Catholic Archbishop of Canberra and Goulburn, the Most Rev. George Harrer, has asked the government to protect the pay and working conditions of government cleaners, describing them as “new Aussie Battlers”. (Canberra Times 06-07-2014)

Employment Minister Eric Abetz rejected the Archbishop’s request on ABC TV’s Insiders program. Lyndal Ryan, ACT branch secretary of United Voice, the cleaners’ union, said: “On Sunday Eric Abetz repeated Tony’s Abbott’s Question Time statement of June 17 that cleaners’ wages have not been cut.”

“Now it’s time for Eric Abetz to confirm the jobs of these 50 Garrison Support contract cleaners will be secure when the cleaning contract changes hands on October 1 and that their pays will not be cut.”

“It’s cruel to leave these hard working cleaners hanging, not knowing if they will have jobs or if they will be able to afford their rent and mortgages when the contract changes. Eric Abetz must tell them what will happen to their jobs and wages.”

“I urge the Minister to heed the advice of experts and to reconsider his government’s opposition to the Guidelines. They provide a practical framework for fair jobs for Government cleaners.”

“Without them the Minister is guaranteeing standards will nosedive in this industry which has a documented history of dodgy operators and widespread exploitation of cleaners.”

“The Minister has extolled the virtues of a level playing field. The Guidelines’ level playing field government, contractors and cleaners better off. Unfortunately, Eric Abetz’ level playing field leaves people worse off and on poverty wages. It shouldn’t be like that,” says Lyndal Ryan.

UN POLICIES FLAUNTED

The Minister for Education Christopher Pyne has dismissed modelling of the impact of deregulation of university fees and imposing real interest on student debt undertaken by the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling (NATSEM).

A spokesman for Mr Pyne said the NATSEM modelling suffered from the “same terminal flaw” as previous modelling by the Greens and the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU), among others. Mr Pyne has now dismissed modelling of the impacts on student fees and student debt as result of his proposed deregulation of university fees and the imposition of real interest on student debt undertaken by the NTEU, the Greens, Universities Australia, the National Centre for Student Equity at Curtin University, and now NATSEM as being flawed.

It seems that Mr Pyne and his advisers are trying to discredit any modelling that show his new policies will lead to increasing fees, mounting student debt and the iniquitable impacts on students and others that take career breaks. Maybe, just maybe, the modelling is actually correct and it is Mr Pyne’s policies that are fatally flawed and which should be discredited.

That the increased fees used in the modelling were at the ‘high end’ of any likely increases, despite the fact that they had claimed they had not undertaken any modelling of likely fee increases.

While the NTEU cannot speak on behalf of modelling undertaken by other organisations including the Greens or NATSEM, we can reassure readers that these criticisms of the NTEU modelling are totally unfounded. The NTEU modelling makes it glaringly clear that all of the estimates are undertaken in current 2014 dollar values. That is the modelling is realistic and not unrealistic at all. This would be especially the case if the modelling was based on 2020 prices.

The NTEU would suggest that it is the Department’s modelling which assumes that some will graduate with debts of $30,000 or $40,000 which is flawed and unrealistic. Even allowing for the current capped fees and expected inflation (three percent) between now and 2020 there are likely to be expenditures which the degree would cost in excess of $30,000. If you allowed for the 20 percent reduction in public funding then there would be very few degrees that would cost less than $30,000. 

PRESS FUND

The whereabouts of 150 Tamil asylum seekers, whose last message was received from the middle of the Indian Ocean last week, is still unknown. The Abbott government refuses to confirm or deny they were transferred by Australian Navy ships to another vessel rather than being transferred back to the asylum seeker boats that will like 41 others who were returned last week. Their disappearance at sea reflects what Tamils fear in Sri Lanka, i.e. being abducted at night by military personnel and systematically tortured and killed to bring them over. This story, and particularly the shocking role of the Abbott government in a coming letter, is the more horrifying, we badly need your support by way of Press Fund contributions, so please send us something for the next issue. Many thanks to this week’s contributors, Lyndal Ryan.

JULY 5 FOR THE CUBAN FIVE

On the fifth of each month supporters of the Cuban Five come together to call for their release from their unjust incarceration in the US. Last Saturday supporters in Sydney came together outside the US Embassy in Martin Place.

JULY 9, 2014

The Catholic Archbishop of Canberra and Goulburn, the Most Rev. George Harrer, has asked the government to protect the pay and working conditions of government cleaners, describing them as “new Aussie Battlers”. (Canberra Times 06-07-2014)
Burying Sydney’s public rail network

Peter Mac

The Baird government has offered to use the proceeds of the sale of the NSW electricity infrastructure (the “poles and wires”) to extend Sydney’s rail system by 60 per cent, if the Coalition is returned to office next year.

However, the proposal would involve privatising not only the crucial energy infrastructure but also the nation’s most extensive urban rail network, which operates with remarkable efficiency compared with privatised rail in Victoria.

The Minister for Transport Gladys Berejiklian, has declared: “The government will set and control fares.”

But the government set the fares to Sydney’s privately-operated airport stations at a scale that suited the private operator, not the public, and it now costs about five times more to travel between Central and the international airport station than to private operator, not the public, and to Bankstown, about 16 kilometres west of Sydney. Those lines would also be privately-operated and would only carry single-deck carriages. The existing lines to Bankstown and Hurstville, 14 kilometres south west of the city, would also be privatised and converted to single-deck carriages.

According to the Fairfax press, Transport for NSW is “struggling to work out how to allow freight trains to continue running on tracks it wants to convert to the new metro-style trains.”

But the North-West Line has been deliberately designed so that only the single deck carriages can use them, and the new privately operated lines would undoubtedly be designed the same way.

If so, passengers on the new lines would be forced to disembark, change platforms and wait for a double-decker train at stations where the new and old systems meet – just as they will have to do at Chatswood if the government’s plans for the North-West line are implemented. Passenger congestion, delays and confusion would snowball.

That’s not all. The government clearly believes that the entire system must eventually be privatised, so the it is already discussing closure of some inner-city stations on economic grounds, regardless of inconvenience for local residents.

Moreover, maintenance of the complex rail network would become a different problem, to facilitate privatisation of the nation’s biggest rail network to a foreign corporation, as the Fairfax press quipped the NSW rail system must be separated Sydney Trains and NSW FerryLink services and the Eastern suburbs and Illawarra lines.

If the electricity poles and wires are sold off, it looks as though the government will use the proceeds to transfer control over the major part of the nation’s biggest rail network to a foreign corporation, as the first stage in privatising the entire system.

The Sydney rail system should definitely be extended to unserviced areas and peak hour congestion should be reduced, but only by extending the current publicly-owned network, not by organising a corporate takeover and rebuilding the entire network.

To avoid a public transport catastrophe the NSW rail system must remain in public ownership, and the Coalition government must be dumped.

Peter’s Corner

Therefore have to change platforms and wait for one of the existing double-decker trains at Chatswood, instead of being able to simply travel all the way in a double-decker.

However, under the government’s proposal, new below-ground lines would be built from the city to Chatswood and to Bankstown, about 16 kilometres west of Sydney. Those lines would also be privately-operated and would only carry single-deck carriages. The existing lines to Bankstown and Hurstville, 14 kilometres south west of the city, would also be privatised and converted to single-deck carriages.

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Planning WA heritage changes condemned

The Western Australian Greens have joined forces with peak Aboriginal representative bodies in condemning proposed changes to the Aboriginal Heritage Act, which sets out the way in which sacred places and objects in the state should be preserved.

Mining and Pastoral Region Greens MLC Robin Chapple called on WA Aboriginal Affairs Minister Peter Collier to withdraw the draft Aboriginal Heritage Amendment Bill. And the Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC), the native title body representing claimants in the Pilbara, Murchison and Gascoyne, says the WA government has “wound a huge swathe of uncertainty to address the deep inequities embedded in the Aboriginal heritage protection regime”.

YMAC chief executive Simon Hawkins said the current Act was more a licence to destroy heritage than a mechanism to protect it, and the proposed amendments only reinforced this view.

“YMAC supports changes that can increase efficiency in the approving process, however not at the cost of quality,” he said. “These amendments focus squarely on approving activities for industry and will do little to improve processes for effective consultation and long-term protection and management of Aboriginal heritage.”

Mr Chapple said there had been enough community backlash for the Minister to see people were “vehemently opposed” to the Bill.

“The Minister needs to scrap this outrageous piece of legislation and enter into proper negotiations to ensure there is community involvement in the protection of Aboriginal heritage sites,” he said.

The amendments were released for comment on June 11, with Mr Collier claiming they offer “a balanced suite of reforms that will satisfy the needs of those who work within the boundaries of the Act, and that they will deliver an environment of certainty, fairness and consistency”.

The Kimberley Land Council (KLC) is hopeful that increased penalties and prosecution procedures will encourage industry to work with Aboriginal people to ensure there is no damage to heritage sites from the very start.

“We hope that these new laws will work in practice as they are intended on paper; that means if companies and the government genuinely engage with Aboriginal people from the start they will be rewarded with a speedier process, but if they don’t they will be penalised,” deputy CEO Frank Partim said.

Another controversial change sees control of major decisions handed from a committee to a single chief executive Greens MLC Lynn MacLaren said the amendments made significant and disturbing changes to the function and power of the Aboriginal Cultural Materials Committee (ACMC), which used to assess all Aboriginal heritage site reports.

“Every instance of the word ‘committee’ in the old legislation, in reference to the ACMC, has been replaced with the word CEO. They have also removed the requirement for at least one member to have anthropological expertise in the area of Aboriginal heritage,” she said.

Ms MacLaren said the ACMC would now exist only on a consultancy basis at the whim of the CEO.

YMAC has echoed concerns about abridging the right of unions to conduct political activity that it would actually benefit shareholders.

“We have more than enough conventional gas in eastern Aus- tralia to meet domestic needs but instead of using our gas supplies to benefit manufacturing and to bring down the cost of living to domest- ic consumers the government is spending money on political campaigns,” Webb said.

“Unconventional gas mining is simply not safe. It’s a risky busi- ness, and our land, our water and our health are more valuable than this high-risk polluting industry which has already driven up our cost of living,” she said.

Flint said it was concerning that the government was attempting to push CSG mining at the expense of other viable industries like agriculture and then attempt to spin a line that it would actually benefit house- holders by bringing down prices.

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Mr Chapple is urging people to write submissions before the August 6 deadline on what he called an “appalling piece of legislation”.

Koori Mail

Newman surrenders a win

Queensland unions have had a huge win – the Queensland gov- ernment has withdrawn laws which would have sabotaged union activity. The state Austral- ian Manufacturing Workers’ Union (AMWU) was hailed it as a confirmation of the right to free- dom of speech.

Union members in Queensland will also be spared the need for an expensive High Court challenge after the Newman government repealed its own laws intended to force unions to ballot all members before spending money on political campaigns.

AMWU Queensland state secre- tary Rohan Webb said the union had fought hard over the issue of the right of unions to conduct political campaigns, including those against the draconian industrial laws of the Newman government.

“This law was brought in to destroy the ability of unions to organise and conduct large-scale campaigns against changes to the laws which affect our members’ industrial rights, their health and safety,” he said.

“The Newman government wanted to silence its critics by tying our elected officials up in another lengthy electoral process every time we wanted to mount campaigns against government policies such as privatisation.”

Webb said that unions had legal advice that the Newman law would be deemed unconstitutional, and were prepared to take the matter as far as the High Court.

In the end, that wasn’t necessary as similar NSW laws struck down by the High Court last year made the law redundant.

“Our members know we have the constitution on our side and we will continue to expose the uneth- ical hypocrisy of this government trying to avoid proper scrutiny of its big business links,” Webb said.
Medicare
For-profits cash in on co-payment

Anna Pha

The concept of a co-payment and abolition of bulk billing for medical services has been on the Coalition’s agenda for some time. It is part of the drive for the complete privatisation of Medicare and Americanisation of Australia’s health care system.

Woolworths and a new outfit called Doctus have not waited for the actual introduction of a co-payment to make their moves to pick up the most disadvantaged who cannot afford a co-payment. Such schemes have the potential to lay the foundations for a second class, second tier of health services for the poor and those on lower incomes.

The Woolworths scheme which began trials last October in selected Queensland and NSW stores, offers free health checks for customers. The company claims it uses qualified nurses to carry out its supermarket-aisle tests for cholesterol and blood pressure. The texts and discussion of results are literally done in the aisle—no privacy.

There is controversy around the qualifications of those doing the medical check-ups. The media has pointed to XPO Brands ads (www.xpt.com.au), but Woolworths has now denied that they are their ads or that they are employing pharmacy students or graduates. There was a pharmacy job advertisement which has been removed from the seek.com.au website but the one for nurses remains at the time of writing. XPO Brands website does boast Woolies as one of its clients but it is impossible to obtain further information as its website is under reconstruction.

One advert says an unnamed employer is looking for “final year pharmacy students, graduate pharmacists and entry level nurses” to conduct checks such as blood pressure and cholesterol, and “engage in general health discussions”.

The ad also describes the person they are seeking to be “passionate about complementary health and general wellbeing” and be “a real people person, and is happy to talk with shoppers passing by.” What Woolworths denies any link. It has not revealed where or how it advertised for nurses.

Woolworths also says the staff providing health checks do not offer medical or product advice. It is “just another thing we can do for our customers.” If any customers have readings outside a normal range, they will be directed to a doctor or pharmacist for medical advice.

The supermarket or complementary medicines aisles are not the place for medical checks.

Deregulation
Woolworths has been fighting for some years for deregulation of the pharmaceutical industry so that it can dispense prescriptions there. If the free check-ups become popular, especially for people unable to afford a GP, it could strengthen the hand of the giant retailer for deregulation. That would spell the end of many local pharmacies, unable to compete.

The pharmacists have so far thwarted attempts by the major supermarkets to “increase competition” and enter the pharmacy market. Their entry would spell the end of local pharmacies and result in monopoly control of the industry by two or three major retailers.

Are major retailers who rely on tobacco, alcohol, soft drink, sweet biscuits and other products loaded with sugar, fat and salt, really going to give the sort of advice required and hurt their profits? Of course it could be used to promote “weight reducing products”, recipe books, etc.

Supermarket medicine could mislead shoppers into thinking they could get their medical advice and products from a supermarket. It could replace or delay patients seeing their doctor.

The core of the Australian health system is the GP who has access to the patient’s history, knows the patient, knows what medications they are on, carries out the initial examinations, carries patients and can prescribe appropriately or refer to other professionals. The GP is central to preventative and primary health care.

There is a risk that in the future, if a co-payment is introduced then people who cannot afford to see a GP will go online. They may have even been told they have high blood pressure or high cholesterol in the supermarket.

The online doctor means no one is on-line doctors or self-diagnosis in the supermarket scheme, including the nurse in the supermarket is sufficient. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Online doctors
Another dangerous development is on-line doctors or self-diagnosis with the supply of scripts without a physical examination by a qualified professional or the patient’s history.

Doctus promotes itself on its website. “A novel concept from an Australian GP, Doctus wants to become Australia’s premier online doctor, providing advice on contraception, digestion, erectile dysfunction, osteoporosis and cholesterol.”

It also offers prescriptions and supply of medications for these conditions as well as for asthma, emphysema, blood pressure, gout, inflammation, chlamydia, hayfever and pain relief.

“Australian-based online medical practitioners, such as Doctus, are stronger than supermarkets because they deal with health professionals who have been trained in medical schools as well as their pharmaceuticals as well as their medications or a script through its pharmacy partners.”

Doctus charges patients a flat $5-$15 for each online “consultation” enabling patients to avoid the proposed $7 co-payment! They are not Medicare eligible – no refund from Medicare. They clearly realise that the conditions surrounding the proposed $7 co-payment will result in many doctors charging much more than that. They also know that the co-payment would not stop at $7 once established.

Doctus prescribes PBS medications and offer the choice of sending the medications or a script through its pharmacy partner.

The Australian registered doctors as well as their pharmaceutical partners are not named on the website. There is no phone number or email address on the site. The only way in for more information involves supplying personal details, including your Medicare number.

This online “consultation” and dispensing of medications without a physical examination by a qualified health professional is potentially even more dangerous than supermarket medicine.

When these developments are looked at in the wider context, they represent one facet of the Americanisation of Australia’s health system, its privatisation and deregulation. The rich will continue to have access to the highest quality services, but the most disadvantaged will increasingly rely on second class health services – a two tier system based on wealth, not need.

That is why it is so important to defend and strengthen Medicare and the public health system, in particular bulk billing and universal access. PBS charges should be reduced and medications free for pensioners, the unemployed and others on low incomes.

At the same time there is an urgent need to strengthen health regulations so that medical advice and care are only carried out by qualified professionals.

Supermarket medicine could mislead shoppers into thinking they could get their medical advice and products from a supermarket. It could replace or delay patients seeing their doctor.

Part of the BUST the Budget rally in Sydney on Sunday. (Photo: Tom Pearson)
I acknowledge that we are meeting on Nunga land, always was, always will be, and I pay my respects to their elders past and present.

"Writer and fighter in one human heart"

This was how Vic described Katherine Susannah Pritchard in the poem he wrote for her. The words equally describe Vic himself.

Vic was born on June 28, 1914 and died on April 19, 2011, living almost 97 years as an inspiring example of a passionate and committed comrade. He was born and raised on a farm, developing a deep love for the land which is reflected in his poetic imagery.

His poems constantly describe the workers in the streets, in the fields and factories, and the need for unity and a socialist future.

In “Hold To Your Course” he wrote: “Hold to your course, my Party, the shield of workers. Nor courts, nor police, nor war could stop their flow, A river of men from gangway to the shore.”

Vic was involved in many campaigns – for workers’ rights, for peace, Indigenous rights, women’s rights, against racism, for the environment, in the anti-apartheid movement, for refugees and for socialism.

In “Harvest Time” Vic describes peace: “Peace was a particular concern for Vic and Joan. In “Harvest Time” Vic describes peace: “Peace is the fruit of certainty That fills our skies with stars the one word peace!”

Vic was an environmentalist. He wrote that “the struggle for peace is a vital and essential one – especially today where peace must not only be with man but also this planet.”

Vic contributed much to the policies of the developing Greens WA in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Acknowledging this, the Greens included a special clause in their constitution to allow Vic to be a member of both the Greens and the Communist Party. He was also the Greens (WA) first honorary life member, one of only four people to have achieved that honour.

And skulls of men are rolled to be their dice, And in their greed to load, old ship, frayed ropes And rusted gear; and speed, speed, speed Is screaming in their whirlies.

Time once again to show them we are men. And one by one they turned, slow and decided; Nor courts, nor police, nor war could stop their flow, A river of men from gangway to the shore.

In “Hold To Your Course” Vic wrote: “Hold to your course, my union, the shield of workers. My mind walks firm on all I know And reaps into the coming years. I see my land tread out its path Strong with the freedom our horizons give Flowing to beauty like our sudden spring: Born of the sun, she drinks its warm delight: Her eyes a warmer brown than a boronia bell. Her hair wave freely as the windswept wheat, Her wave freely as the wind sweated wheat, Her eyes a warmer brown than a boronia bell.”

Vic was made a life member of the Waterside Workers’ Federation, was essential for the working class and all those marginalised, discriminated and exploited sections of society to win a democratic and socialist future.

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Vic’s poems could be full of anger about poverty, injustice, poverty and suffering. He expresses this in his poem “Human Drought”:

I’ve seen the green hopes wither in young eyes, Work-heavy days drag on the eager hands, I’ve seen the sapling brains, fresh with surmise, Grove gnaw and barren in these barren lands. I’ve seen the old staunch settlers shrink and shake As dabs tread down the sap from every root: Dead leaves, dead wood; then they decay and break; Drought upon men, when will they come to fruit? And again in “To My Own People”:

I cannot sleep for the crying of your heart, for all the dead are speaking through the earth, burdening my ears with dreams they could not live, calling me fill their hunger with the dead.

Vic Williams

A tribute by Dr Hannah Middleton

28 June 2014

An Undivided

An anthology of poetry

And those who would rob us and goal us swept back from the whirlwind.

How could we shoulder in ash in the great gust of freedom? No longer the exiles, not spurned as the slag of nations, We were Australians, the wryness, the drought, the endurance.

Vic was an environmentalist. He wrote that “the struggle for peace is a vital and essential one – especially today where peace must not only be with man but also this planet.”

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Vic’s auline, craggy face hid a man filled with love for his family, his comrades, his class.

In “Gabrielle With A Blue Opal” his love for his daughter shines from the lines:

So much of sky is starless, we forget How little love can set a life ablaze.

My love for you moves like the Cross, around you Constant behind the cloud or through the haze.
My little warm one laughs
as flowers of red
nod to her searching hand
and toss their head.
Our people run with joy
and call us when
the red flags toss like flowers
on streets of men.

Vic was all of these things, and more but today we are
launching an anthology of his poems to commemorate the 100th
anniversary of his birth.

We hope that this anthology collects together all Vic’s
poems. However, we did not have access to his private papers
so there may be some we have missed. Vic often revised
his poems and where a poem was published more than once, we
have used the latest version.

Vic belongs in the mainstream school of Australian literature
from Henry Lawson to the present day realists. Writer and actor
Peter Ustinov noted that Australian realist writing reminded him
most forcefully of Maxim Gorki.

Vic said: “I set myself the task of writing the poetry of the
working class, their total experience in industry and the class
struggle – not just verses, but poetry, sensuous, personal and
emotional, that could take its place in the class and political
struggles.”

In a speech in May 1988 Vic said: “Socialist poetry written
by workers in capitalist society is part of the struggle for socialist
ism and has the function of helping the emotional feeling and
understanding when facing the difficulties of the class struggle.”

He saw writing socialist poetry as Party work, and set out to
make his poems express the suffering, the anger and the will
to struggle of working people. He expressed this in his poem “Into
Battle with a Song”:

“I am going into battle with a song!”
But they told me, “No, you’d better watch your step.
We are going into war with profit. Art is too frail.
And beautiful to face the mud and lime.
Here’s a petition, a pamphlet, or a strike.
But you mustn’t go into battle with a song!”

But a man with a spade came by and called to me.
“Give us a song to lift our laden feet.
Sparks on our lips to leap across the dark!”
I will go into battle with a song,
I will make a song to hurt in Profit’s face.
We will march into battle with a song.

But Vic also had a wry sense of humour. In “The Practical
Poet” he writes:

I am a practical poet:
When I go to friends and relations
They ask me to set mousetraps,
They ask me to mend wire door screens,
They ask me to make coffee,
They demand I fix the furniture,
I’m left to darn my socks.
But not to read poetry!
I am a practical poet:
When I go to work
They ask me about the award,
They want me to chat the foreman,
They ask me what will win the fifth race,
They ask me about metals and rocks.
But why doesn’t anyone ask me to read poetry?

Katharine Susannah Prichard wrote:
“There is, I think, a high, rare quality in Victor Williams’
poetry. He fuses a passionate and sensuous vision of the
earth he knows and loves with thought, direct and forceful,
about the everyday life and work of men and women. He
does this with a condensed imagery and a rhythmic facility
which gives an impression of the dynamic vitality and the
broad humanism inspiring most of his poems.”

Vic’s poem “By the Avon” is an example of this sensuous
vision and of the lyrical quality of many of Vic’s poems:

Do you remember by the Avon,
where the oranges nestle among the river gums?
Where the red soil swells between the rounded rows
And the bee at the blossom hums?

Did you see them ripen,
Fleck the green with gold, when the river Beckles with foam?
When the bough bends, offering to the moist earth,
The fruit fulfilled by the rich red foam?

Did you help to gather them?
Feel their risen amber, firm on fingertips?
You must know the taste of them, bursting down the thirsty
throat;
Warm as sun, sweet as rain, with fire of human lips.

We hope that you will buy copies of the anthology for
yourselfs and your friends, not just to help us recoup the printing
costs, although we do need the money! But much more so that
you have always beside you these poems to move, to strengthen,
to encourage, to inspire you to love and action.

Vic Williams was a man who stood true to his beliefs.
He was compassionate, intelligent, thoughtful and insightful,
a fighter, a worker, a thinker and a poet. In a way he is best
summed up in his poem “The Undivided Heart”

“I would not trust in a divided heart;
A last bird Fluttering between yes and no,
A flame in the wind twisting from lust to horror;
Salt tears on seeds will never let them grow.

I will not write from a divided heart;
One love, one aim, one class my loyalty.
Salt tears on seeds will never let them grow.

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Glenn Ford

ISIS is the superpower and the caliphate

When American’s Egypt stool Mubarak was pushed from power, threatening an “Arab Spring” that might depose the oil monarchies, US policy makers had no idea how to reposition themselves in the region.

The Americans cannot replace the jihadists as foot soldiers of imperialism. Thus, a period of ad-libbing begins, which will surely involve ostentatious displays of US military prowess, as the Americans remind themselves and everyone else that a superpower outranks a caliphate.

Israelis deaths matter much more than Palestinian deaths. This has long been a distinguishing feature of Western news media reporting on the Middle East. The recent blanket coverage afforded to the brutal imperial strategy of the aggressors highlights this immutable fact.

Channel 4’s Alex Thomson offered a rare glimmer of dissent: “Curious to watch UK media living down to the Palestinian claim that one Israeli life is worth 1,000 Palestinian lives.”

Major broadcasters, such as BBC News, devoted headlines and extended reports to the deaths, and included heart-rending interviews with grieving relatives in Israel. The Western media’s disproportionate coverage of the funerals for more than nine hours. But when has this ever happened for Palestinian victims of Israeli terror?

A reader challenged the Guardian journalist handling the Western coverage: “I’m not an editor so don’t take my words at face value. Several nudges elicited the standard display of hand-washing: ‘I’m not an editor so don’t take my words at face value.’”

An extensive list of news stories, reports and videos appeared on the BBC website describing how ISIS in its new parameters is the embodiment of Islam at war.

The jihadist die is cast, a point of no return for the US strategy of projecting imperial power in the region through armed Islamic fundamentalist surrogates. The international jihadist network, which did not exist before the CIA, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan joined forces to undermine the leftist secular government of Afghanistan in mid-1979, has become a movement that can no longer be controlled.

The physical contours of the ISIS caliphate, the movement’s dynamic new focal point, may prove indefensible, especially if the Americans decide they cannot avoid an all-out assault on their former asset. But, whatever the US military response, the game plan that was hatched in 2011 for Libya, Syria, Iraq – for the whole region – is kaput. Based as it is on the reliable deployment of jihadists as surrogates for NATO and Arab royals.

Worse, the Arab oil potentates understand full well that their own regimes are now in grave danger due to the rise of ISIS. Their monarchical, anti-imperialist structures are inimical to imperialism. But, chaos is not empty; it is a cauldron of contradictions which can become explosively acute. The jihadists are, at root, anti-imperialists – inalterably opposed to domination by the Crusaders of the West and Zionists.

But the disproportionate coverage given to Israeli and Palestinian deaths is symptomatic of a deep-rooted, pro-Israel bias. Why is it so extreme? Because of the intense pressure brought to bear on the media by the powerful Israeli lobby, and by allied US-UK interests strongly favouring Israel. As one senior anonymous BBC editor once put it, “We wait in fear for the phone call from the Israelis.”
Turkey mine disaster:
Privatisation made it inevitable

**Chevron cancels
Bulgaria fracking
Shell postpones
Ukraine plans**

Richard Smallteacher
Fracking for oil and gas across Europe has suffered a series of setbacks with Chevron closing its fracking plans in Bulgaria, whilst Shell postponing plans in the Ukraine by at least two years. Meanwhile the French government is standing firm in its opposition to fracking.

Fracking — which is short for hydraulic fracturing — is not entirely new. Governments have attempted to drill the deep underground reserves of gas and oil reserves. Advances in technology during the 1980s led to new horizontal hydraulic drilling techniques, which involves boring a mile deep into the earth and then pumping in millions of gallons of water, sand and hazardous chemicals to fractur e rock and extract gas contained inside.

Shell announced that it would take a respite from drilling for gas in the 8,000-square-kilometre Yuzovska field in the eastern Ukraine in early June. The company was awarded the concessions by the government of Viktor Yanukovych in January 2013, a year before he was ousted from office by violent protests this past February.

Since then, clashes between government forces and pro-Russian militias have caused Shell to reconsider, not least because Shell has other lucrative energy deals in Russia.

“Obviously we need to assess the future security situation as it develops because the safety of our own people is our first priority,” Simon Henry, Shell’s chief financial officer, told Bloomberg TV. “Russia is a major holder of hydrocarbon reserves, possibly the largest in the world. So in the long term it really does matter.”

Chevron, which was awarded a permit to drill for shale gas in the 4,000-square-kilometre Novi Pazar field in western Bulgaria in June 2011, has faced an uphill political battle. Just six months after the initial contract was signed, a moratorium on drilling was declared from around US$120-130 per tonne under public ownership to just US$23.3 per tonne.

Impressive numbers, sure, but what actually facilitated this “miracle of market success” was the determined evasion of the security measures and safety standards. When asked what had changed at the mine, Soma’s CEO, Alp Gürkan, said: “The answer is ‘nothing’. We simply introduced methods of the private sector.”

While the oil companies blame politicians for cancelling their projects, new studies are emerging that suggest that many of the shale gas estimates are overblown: Shell’s initial explorations in Kharkiv, Ukraine, came up dry and contrasted to the private sector average of 11.50 deaths. Workers in a privately owned mine in Turkey appear to die ten times more likely to die on the job than their Chinese counterparts.

Yet, amid all this justified local anger one should not miss the global context. The tragedy in Soma is a clear manifestation of “peripheral capitalism” at its best or at its worst as the most polluting and hazardous industries are shipped to global sweat-shops with poor regulation and fragmented, informal working conditions.

The Conversation

**Wave of protests**

People are increasingly recognising this tragedy cannot be written off as a “working accident”. Workers in Turkey have called a one-day strike, and miners across the world have sent messages of solidarity.

The contrast with the half-heart ed and tone-deaf speech by the Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, is clear. Erdoğan compared the tragedy to mining accidents in England and US in the late 19th century, arguing that “explorations like this in mines happen all the time”. His words have sparked a wave of protests all around the country.

On June 30, Japanese Prime Minister Abe’s moves to introduce new “collective self-defence right” triggered a protest outside the Prime Minister’s house in which thousands of people participated. Cabinet bills passed with the changes. Article 9, the Constitution forbids Japan sending troops to foreign wars when it is not under direct attack. A well-known translator, Ikeda Kayoko, said that “the pacifist Constitution lives in our heart and mind, there is no room for the collective self-defence right”. Izutsu Takao, a former officer of the Self-Defence Forces, added that “it is a serious mistake for the government to turn Japan into a fighting machine”. Chair of the Japanese Communist Party SHI Kazuo claimed that Abe’s plan would ultimately mobilise Japan’s young people to join wars launched by the US. According to latest polls, only 28 percent people support Abe’s plan, and the support rate for Abe’s government fell to 45 percent, its lowest since 2012.

On June 28, more than 1,000 people from 32 Vietnamese ethnic groups attended a dancing and singing show to celebrate Family Day at the Vietnam National Village for Ethnic Culture and Tourism which is four kilometres from Hanoi. Audience members included Communist Party General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong and Chairman of Vietnam Fatherland Front’s Central Committee Nguyen Thienn Nhan, military personnel, foreign guests and youth union members. Nhan noted that “the country is the cultural and political foundation for all ethnic groups”, and he encouraged the country’s 54 ethnic groups to share more of common cultural values including family values.

On July 2, 50 garment workers from Cambodia’s Banteay district were injured in a truck accident, a local traffic police chief confirmed. The truck, carrying 76 female workers, rolled over and then hit a tree due to a brake failure on its way to a garment factory. Workers on board were thrown onto the street and the driver escaped after the accident happened. Fifty people were injured and five were in critical condition. It is common in Southeast Asia for workers to travel to work in an open-air truck. In February, a truck also overturned, injuring 86 people.

On July 2, the Communist Party of China (CPC) launched a five-year nation-wide ideological education program intending to strengthen members’ faith in the Party and to vitalise the Party through promoting its spirit and principles, according to the General Office of the CPC Central Committee. This program will educate Party members from rural areas, ethnic groups, non-public sectors, new recruits and low-level cadres. It will teach socialist theories and the Party’s Constitution, policy and principles. Members from ethnic and border areas will study Marxism and the rule of law. The low-level cadres will be trained on improving abilities to serve the people.
A friend loaned us an interesting book the other day. I say “book”, but in fact it was in three volumes in a special case. Printed on glossy art paper, they weighed what felt like three volumes in a special case. Printed on glossy art paper, they weighed what felt like three volumes in a special case.

The Duke of Windsor was the former British monarch Edward VIII. Prior to becoming King, as the Prince of Wales, he had become) remarked that “there is no recognition in Australia’s Constitution of this majesty of Kingship.”

Later in life, the Duke of Windsor (as he had become) remarked that “there is no recognition in Australia’s Constitution of this majesty of Kingship.”

Rob Gowland
July 9, 2014
Letters / Culture & Life
The Guardian
74 Buckingham Street
Sydney NSW 2010
email: tpserson@cgpa.org.au

Year round pursuit

NAIDOC week is being celebrated nationwide from July 6 to July 13. Its focus is to celebrate the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

NAIDOC week is an ideal starting point to what I believe should be a year-round pursuit – Australians learning, understanding and recognising the history and culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. I want to remind Australia that Aboriginal people still aren’t recognised in Australia’s Constitution and that they remain marginalised nation-wide.

This year, Youth Off The Streets has pledged its support to the Recognise campaign – we have made the commitment to hire more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and to raise awareness of this lack of recognition.

Recognition would mean connecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to Australia’s history and country, which is incredibly important to their culture. Through the programs we run for disconnect-ed, behaviourally-challenged and problematic Aboriginal youth, we are able to help create a connection to country, which is an integral part to young people living happy and fulfilling lives.

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Royal parasites

Walls Simpson and Edward VIII at their wedding in 1937. Photo: (Hulton Getty)

A friend loaned us an interesting book the other day. I say “book”, but in fact it was in three volumes in a special case. Printed on glossy art paper, they weighed what felt like a ton. And the subject of this tome? It was the 1997 catalogue from Sotheby’s for the sale of the possessions of the then recently deceased Duchess of Windsor.

The catalogue, in two large volumes and a separate index, originally cost US$90 if bought at the gallery, but substantial postface if bought by someone outside the US.

The Duke of Windsor was the former British monarch Edward VIII. Prior to becoming King, as the Prince of Wales, he had enjoyed the life of the idle rich (the very idle and very rich). Soaking up the Mediterranean sun on a luxury yacht, visiting the casino, going to Scotland to shoot, all the usual pursuits of the wealthy class in Britain. After his coronation, his life continued in the same vein. (This was the period of the Great Depression for most people, but not for the likes of Edward and his friends.)

In the course of his social jaunts he met an American woman, Mrs Walls Simpson, and they began an affair. Simpson was her second husband (she’d divorced the first one) and they lived in Europe as wealthy social butterflies. Petie, with a slim figure, she was frequently photographed by the likes of Man Ray wearing the latest fashions in Harper’s Bazaar. Edward wanted to marry her and Simpson was willing to give her a divorce, but the British establishment was outraged. She was not only a commoner, but an already once-divorced, American commoner. As Queen of England? Under tremendous pressure, Edward decided to abdicate. He naively thought that his brothers would all stand up with him at his wedding and that his wife would be given royal honours commensurate with his own Royal status. Instead, he was bundled out of the country and his wife was never more than a Duchess. They were however well provided with the ready and although they had fewer servants than he would have had at Buckingham Palace, they still managed to live in luxury.

Of course he lived in luxury – look who he was: “My twelve godparents, all related to me in varying degrees, included Queen Victoria [my great-grand-mother], my grandparents the Prince and Princess of Wales [later Edward VII and his Queen], my great-uncle the Duke of Cambridge, the Czarevich, soon to become Czar [Nicholas II], my maternal grandparents the Duke and Duchess of Teck, and, by proxy, my great-grandparents the King and Queen of Denmark, the Queen of the Hellenes, King William of Württemberg, and the Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha.”

Later in life, the Duke of Windsor (as he had become) remarked that “there is no occasion that rivals the solemn magnificence of a Coronation, when Church and State unite in the glorification of the majesty of Kingship.” That’s certainly how they want the common man to see it, at any rate. In truth, the imposition on to the backs of the mass of the people of a parasitic “Royal Family” and all their hangers-on is simply an expensive but very effective means of ensuring the continuing privileged position of the ruling class.

Once in exile as the disappointed and presumably disgruntled Duke of Windsor, Edward was pursued by the Nazis, to whom he – like so many other members of the British ruling class – had been sympathetic for years. They hoped to get him to agree to be Head of State for a Nazi-controlled Britain after a successful German invasion, putting him into the same position as Marshall Petain in Vichy-France and Quisling in Norway.

Churchill and British Intelligence being on to this manoeuvre, they shipped the Windsors off to the Bahamas as Governor (and wife), to keep them isolated for the duration.

After the War, the Windsors continued a meaningless life of idleness, pursuing every fad that came society’s way; attending balls and garden parties, and trying not to be bored. As the catalogue shows, the Duchess filled in some of her time buying clothes, such as item 2393: “A fine and important Christian Dior Lahore evening gown. French, Autumn-Winter, 1948-49.

“The Duchess was at all times aware of the exalted position in society into which she had been catapulted by her marriage and was always at pains to ensure that she dressed the part. Her mania for neatness and her immaculate presentation were a reflection of this.”

The auctioneer’s guide price for this particular gown was US$10,000 – 15,000. There are pages and pages of nothing but gloves: “A group of thirteen fine pairs of gloves and gauntlets for evening and daytime” (guide price US$700-1,000); “A group of eleven pairs of gloves, mostly for evening wear”; a group of five pairs of gloves; a group of six pairs of gloves; a group of eleven pairs of gloves; a group of thirteen pairs of gloves. And that’s just one page. What could one woman do with so many gloves?

There are also pages and still more pages of jewellery, much of it “costume” jewellery but expensive costume jewellery by name designers.

Regardless of what her three husbands did, Walls’ life seems to have always been devoted to pleasure. Of her first marriage (to Navy Pilot Winifred Spencer Jr) she recalled: “Win and I received many invitations – polo at Del Monte, beach parties at La Jolla; weekends at Santa Barbara.”

It was a way of life that she (and her husbands) continued for the rest of her life. This huge catalogue is a glossy, sometimes mouth-watering record of a life spent in the earning pursuit of baubles and diversion, its protagonists desperate to stay in the public eye, to seek validation of their empty lives in the reproduction of their escapades in the daily press.

And this sorry bunch hold themselves up to be our social superiors? Give me a break!
The Imposter, screening as part of the Sunday Best season of feature length documentaries (ABC2, Sunday July 13 at 8.30pm), is a very strange experience, mainly because of the bizarre behaviour of the main protagonists. Blonde-haired, blue-eyed Nicholas Barclay disappeared without a trace from San Antonio, Texas in 1994. Three and a half years later, a 23-year-old French con-artist with dark hair and brown eyes and a heavy French accent who specialized in impersonating youngsters much younger than himself convinced the FBI that he was Nicholas. To his amazement, when Nicholas’ sister came to meet him she immediately accepted him too! Even more bizarrely, she immediately began virtually coaching him to recognize family photographs, so future FBI investigators could not trip him up. Arriving back in the USA, he found that the curious behaviour of the main protagonists.

In the first episode he follows two Australian “Steem Cell Tourists” overseas on their desperate search for a miracle cure. Large numbers of incurable or terminally ill Australians are heading overseas to countries like China, India and Mexico in a desperate bid to find miracle cures from Stem Cell doctors who charge large sums for experimental and unproven treatment.

Paul's facial tattoo – My Tattoo Addiction (ABC2 from July 16 at 9.30pm)

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Sabour meets controversial Indian doctor Geeta Shroff who claims remarkable (and remarkably quick) improvements to paralysis, as a result of her embryonic stem-cell therapy. He also meets an American specialist who roundly castigates Shroff’s claims: where is the scientific evidence, where is her published research, why does she refuse to allow access to her lab? When Sabour puts these questions to Shroff herself she pleads commercial confidentiality, and that certainly seems to be her over-riding concern. Securing her financial future clearly means much more to her than benefiting mankind.

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For the love of cars...

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Jeremy Seabrook

July marks the centenary of the First World War and a campaign has been under way in Britain and a number of other countries to project this war between rival imperial powers as a necessary and just war.

War has strange psychological effects on those who commemorate it. The desire by some in Britain to revise the significance of the First World War and make the war against Hitler is still overpowing. Films, reconstructions, documentaries, memoirs, fiction, newswires of the Blitz, evo- lution of the nation-state is complete even in Britain, since the war had not yet extended to all adults.

The enduring fascination of Brit-ain’s role in the war against Hitler is now being severely circumscribed. The image of the Second World War, however tardily) continue to draw new generations into a struggle from which there has been little dissent from the accepted narrative. The clearly just war showed this country in such a favourable light that we have relived it ever since; casting all new foes, real and imag-ined, in the role of Hitler – Nasser, Nikruma, Kenyatta, Saddam, Gad-afi, Bashar al-Assad, Ahmadinejad, and now Putin. Perhaps it is a sense of righteousness that is now being projected backwards, so that 1914-18 can be shown as a fight for civi- lisation against barbarism, a war for democracy and freedom; even though at the tine of the fighting, democracy was incomplete even in Britain, since the franchise had not yet extended to all adults.

The story that German imperial- ism had to be stopped would have been more credible if the empires of Britain and France had not still been only just past their floral noon, and clung to with such tenacity: impe- rialism in Europe was obviously an unaccepteable form of domination compared to that in the spaces of Asia and Africa, where the suppression of lesser peoples not only enriched the Britain and France it was impossible even in Britain, since the franchise had not yet extended to all adults.

Indeed, the victims of imperial- ism were pressed into a war where freedom and democracy, if they did figure in its objectives, were certainly not for them. People in Britain marveled at the readiness with which India’s “martial races” were able to serve for that cruel and just war, despite the fact that the words “never again” of the repentant belligerents of the earlier conflict were negated less than a generation after they were uttered.

Rehabilitating a contested con- flict by covering it with the mantle of which one was not only unavoidable but also ecologically principled has been wonderfully effective. We have been so saturated in the past 70 years in the iconography of the brutalities of Nazism and the stoical response of a Britain under aerial bombardment, that they would be rewarded by their greater glory of Brit-ain. It is a pit of that commemoration should take precedence over remem- berning, and the voiceless dead are re- viled, this time not for a remorseful looking back on gratuitous slaughter but for a tendentious rewriting of the cruel, unequal and bloody conflicts of the 21st century, in which the “body count” of US and British soldiers is known but the number of Iraqi and Afghan people who perished is in a dark indifference.

There is no limit to the shameful tribute of flesh and blood demanded by those who call themselves the supremo representa- tives of civilisation, and their appropriation of the innocence and enthusiasm of new generations, whose lives, illuminated by the thunder of glory and honour, are abducted for causes that have less to do with love of country or justice than with the maintenance of the supreme- city of wealth and power. No wonder it has been judged expedient to replace memory with commemoration.

War: commemoration against remembering

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Sydney District Committee:
Wayne Storer
74 Rowan St, Sunny Hills, 2010
P: 02 9659 8844 F: 02 9659 9833

Central Committee:
General Secretary: Bob Britton
Party President: Vinicio Molina
74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010
P: 02 9659 8844 F: 02 9659 9833
Website: www.cpa.org.au
Email: cpa@cpa.org.au

Guardian

Communist Party of Australia

Website: www.cpa.org.au/guardian
Email: guardian@cpa.org.au

Guardian

Melbourne Branch:
Andrew Irving
viccpa@netspace.net.au
3 Box 3 Room 0 Trades Hall
Lycan St Carlton 3053
Ph: 03 9639 1550 Fax: 03 9639 4199

SA State Committee:
Bob Britton
HS17, Port Adelaide BC, SA 5015
Ph: 0419 812 872
Email: sa@cpa.org.au

West Australian Branch:
Vinicio Molina perth@cpa.org.au
PO Box 99 North Perth WA 6005
Ph: 0419 812 872

Brisbane Branch:
P2/P2 23, Camp Hill Qld 4152
Ph: 0409 202 189
cpaqueensland@live.com

Tasmania Branch:
Bob Britton
sa@cpa.org.au
Ph: 0418 894 368

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