The by-word of “reformers” in capitalist countries – health, education, pensions and aged care – is increased business activity that will corporates will be paying less tax, where will the people and to turn those services into sources of private profits. “Self-provisioning” – for health, education, pensions and aged care – is the by-word of “reformers” in capitalist countries in the current era. The “reforms” being proposed are about boosting productivity in the form of the GST is going to extend and empower the corporate sector, they won’t touch the wealthy and they will clobber workers’ incomes and other interests. They will combine with other changes, such as the implementation of the TPP (see Editorial), to strengthen corporate dictatorship.

While the federal government won’t confirm increasing the GST or broadening its application as its preferred approach, it is clearly part of the reactionary “mix” about to be foisted on the Australian people. Turnbull & Co are taking part in a phoney “conversation” about tax and how to fund what governments provide to the people of the country. There’s a White Paper on taxation on the way and the Productivity Commission will have much more to say on the issue.

Workers would be mistaken, however, to believe the propaganda about the croup being hatched, that it is being done to find the money needed to fund items like Medicare or a National Disability Insurance Scheme. This government, and its predecessors, have been implementing a global strategy to reduce the number of services provided by governments to the people and to turn those services into sources of private profits. “Self-provisioning” – for health, education, pensions and aged care – is the by-word of “reformers” in capitalist countries in the current era. The “reforms” being proposed are about boosting profits and making workers bear the brunt of the sluggish economy and worsening economic conditions to come.

Federal Treasurer Scott Morrison nearly lost the case out of the bag. He insists Australia has “a spending problem, not a revenue problem.” He doesn’t want a bigger overall tax take, he’s a true blue neo-liberal, after all. He and the Prime Minister and every other serv-ant of capital participating in the “conversation” taking place at the moment agrees that companies need to be “incentivised” to invest. Australia needs to be competitive in the international context to attract foreign investment. So if the tax take isn’t going to increase and the corporate tax rate is being cut, where will the revenue come from?

Morrison et al say it will come from the increased business activity that will flow from the tax changes. Not many share the government’s declared optimism. After decades of de-industrialising capitalist globalisation, Australia’s economy has been left very vulnerable to fluctuations in commodity prices. Mineral prices are down on global markets.

“The RBA has revised down its forecast for economic growth this financial year to an average of 2.25 percent, a full half a percentage point below the budget forecast of 2.75 percent.

“Sensitivity analysis in the May budget indicated that a cut of half that size would add $5.6 billion to next year’s deficit if it was brought about by lower export prices,” as Peter Martin, economics editor of The Age points out. Wages growth is also down, thanks to attacks on the trade union movement. Governments are committed to lowering personal income tax, in any case. Negative gearing won’t be touched; it helps the wealthy. Superannuation tax concessions are untouchable for the same reason. Reducing the deficit and balancing the budget is going to be harder in future.

On the spending side, the Coalition won’t consider abolishing the hugely expensive Private Health Insurance Rebate or the diesel fuel rebate so helpful to the resource sector. It won’t cut military spending. There are more wars on the horizon.

So the government is left with the GST; the one “big tax on everything” that neo-liberals love. Workers don’t. Everyone knows it is a regressive tax that consumes much, much more of low income earners’ weekly budget than that of the wealthy. While the government plays down the role of the GST in worsening income inequality in Australia, it knows that the “Robyn Hood in reverse” aspect of the tax will need a sweetener. The idea of compensation through the tax system is being floated. This sets up a future debate about whether the government can continue with the current level of compensation or will need to reduce or scrap it. Plans for how GST income will be passed on to the states are also “on the table”. States are struggling to keep public health and education systems running. But increased revenue from a GST jacked up by 50 percent or extended to basic items will come with strings attached. Contributions at a conference hosted by Melbourne University recently made this plain.

The Productivity Commission has been called the government’s “independent economic advisor” but it whitewash the same tune on this and other fundamental economic questions.

“It seems reasonable to ask, if tax reform in the form of the GST is going to extend once-in-a-generation benefits to the states, as some have suggested, whether state-based policy and regulatory restrictions should not once again be on the table,” Productivity Commission chairman Peter Harris said. Treasurer Scott Morrison, who also spoke at the Melbourne conference, lapped it all up. The way the states deliver services in the fields of health and education, for example, will have to meet the federal government’s expectations. Look out for even more privatisation! “Barriers” to investment and hiring and firing will be considered.

Big business’ whip hand over workers, their wages and conditions will be strengthened considerably with these likely changes. An economic approach favouring workers and other exploited people would be to do the opposite of what is being “discussed” at the moment. The parliamentary Labor Party will have to be held to its stance in opposition to an increase in the rate of the GST or its extension. Throw- ing the direction of policy into reverse will require major political change in Australia, a strengthening of left and progressive forces and unprecedented unity. It’s a challenge but the consequences of failure will be dire.
Many of us feel upset about the appalling situation that’s still hap-
pening around the world, the deep-rooted political, commer-
cial and cultural disempowerment, the countless deaths, griefs and so much suffering and destruction. The ongoing injustices and their dreadful consequences, the numerous atrocities committed against the Palestinians – of dispossession and displacement is one of the key problems con-
fronting the world. Their moral issue demands a just and viable solution. Only the active participation of many people can compel the entrenched forces that support the colonial settler state of Israel to alter their policies and positions.

People contact me or I read of people stating how they feel angry, frustrated and helpless in the face of the deep-rooted political, commercial and cultural disempowerment; that there isn’t enough money, and so on. Everyone can do something to support the Palestinians, more than thousands of others’ efforts makes a positive difference. Talk to your friends, workmates, people you know and meet about the need to do something; help them make a list of things to do. On your own, make a petition, put them on notice boards, or print it and leave them around the world where people will see them and read them, or join a support group, to go to a solidarity protest.

Send letters expressing your con-
cerns to your local politician. Boycott financial and commercial entities that support Israel and encourage others to do so. Promote the Boycott, Dis-
investment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign. Get a couple of enlighten-
ing DVD’s that you can lend people when they express an interest in finding out more about the Palestine issue. Send messages of solidarity to Palestinians and their organisations, this heartens their resolve.

Just do what you can and little by little this is how we get people thinking about the issue, change their minds and embolden them. And this is how we achieve real change. And never forget you are not alone, there are millions of us working resolutely towards the same aim, to help free Palestine. So don’t give up, be opti-
mistic and remain steadfast, because we can and are making a difference by what we say and do. Together our efforts will end this terrible injustice.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world, indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” Margaret Mead.
Medicare privatisation
at full tilt

Anna Pha

The federal government now has six different reviews into different aspects of the health system as it embarks upon a complete “revamp” of the system. The latest is a review of private health insurance. The government is hell-bent on the destruction of Medicare and the privatisation of all health services – the Americanisation of Australia’s health-care system.

The private health insurance (PHI) sector will be deregulated and the cost of premiums will rocket as the PHIs extend their coverage. The only healthcare the government is committed to is the health of the PHIs and the corporate sector.

The major PHIs, including the now privatised Medibank, and other corporates such as Serco, are lined up to take part in this. The Business Council of Australia has also got into the act.

The government is going through the motions of holding a public consultation on private health insurance and gaining feedback for public opinion to enable it to sell what amounts to the privatisation of Medicare.

Health Minister Sussan Ley speaks in terms of the need to “find efficiencies of unnecessary regulatory burdens in the system that will free up private health providers.”

It won’t save patients any money – quite the contrary.

Like the taxation review (see page 1), “everything is going to be on the table”, says Minister Ley, referring to the various reviews.

And there’s more. Every element of Medicare will be on the table for grabs by the private sector. And like the taxation review, the government already knows what the outcomes will be.

End of bulk-billing

The freezing of Medicare rebates by successive governments has already seen many doctors abandon bulk-billing. The standard fee in many practices is now $70-$78 for a Level B 15-minute consultation. The Business Council of Australia has also got into the act.

The government is going through the motions of holding a public consultation on private health insurance and gaining feedback for public opinion to enable it to sell what amounts to the privatisation of Medicare.

Health Minister Sussan Ley speaks in terms of the need to “find efficiencies of unnecessary regulatory burdens in the system that will free up private health providers.”

It won’t save patients any money – quite the contrary.

Like the taxation review (see page 1), “everything is going to be on the table”, says Minister Ley, referring to the various reviews.

And there’s more. Every element of Medicare will be on the table for grabs by the private sector. And like the taxation review, the government already knows what the outcomes will be.

End of bulk-billing

The freezing of Medicare rebates by successive governments has already seen many doctors abandon bulk-billing. The standard fee in many practices is now $70-$78 for a Level B 15-minute consultation. The Business Council of Australia has also got into the act.

The government is going through the motions of holding a public consultation on private health insurance and gaining feedback for public opinion to enable it to sell what amounts to the privatisation of Medicare.

Health Minister Sussan Ley speaks in terms of the need to “find efficiencies of unnecessary regulatory burdens in the system that will free up private health providers.”

It won’t save patients any money – quite the contrary.

Like the taxation review (see page 1), “everything is going to be on the table”, says Minister Ley, referring to the various reviews.

And there’s more. Every element of Medicare will be on the table for grabs by the private sector. And like the taxation review, the government already knows what the outcomes will be.

End of bulk-billing

The freezing of Medicare rebates by successive governments has already seen many doctors abandon bulk-billing. The standard fee in many practices is now $70-$78 for a Level B 15-minute consultation. The Business Council of Australia has also got into the act.

The government is going through the motions of holding a public consultation on private health insurance and gaining feedback for public opinion to enable it to sell what amounts to the privatisation of Medicare.

Health Minister Sussan Ley speaks in terms of the need to “find efficiencies of unnecessary regulatory burdens in the system that will free up private health providers.”

It won’t save patients any money – quite the contrary.

Like the taxation review (see page 1), “everything is going to be on the table”, says Minister Ley, referring to the various reviews.

And there’s more. Every element of Medicare will be on the table for grabs by the private sector. And like the taxation review, the government already knows what the outcomes will be.

End of bulk-billing

The freezing of Medicare rebates by successive governments has already seen many doctors abandon bulk-billing. The standard fee in many practices is now $70-$78 for a Level B 15-minute consultation. The Business Council of Australia has also got into the act.

The government is going through the motions of holding a public consultation on private health insurance and gaining feedback for public opinion to enable it to sell what amounts to the privatisation of Medicare.

Health Minister Sussan Ley speaks in terms of the need to “find efficiencies of unnecessary regulatory burdens in the system that will free up private health providers.”

It won’t save patients any money – quite the contrary.

Like the taxation review (see page 1), “everything is going to be on the table”, says Minister Ley, referring to the various reviews.

And there’s more. Every element of Medicare will be on the table for grabs by the private sector. And like the taxation review, the government already knows what the outcomes will be.

End of bulk-billing

The freezing of Medicare rebates by successive governments has already seen many doctors abandon bulk-billing. The standard fee in many practices is now $70-$78 for a Level B 15-minute consultation. The Business Council of Australia has also got into the act.

The government is going through the motions of holding a public consultation on private health insurance and gaining feedback for public opinion to enable it to sell what amounts to the privatisation of Medicare.

Health Minister Sussan Ley speaks in terms of the need to “find efficiencies of unnecessary regulatory burdens in the system that will free up private health providers.”

It won’t save patients any money – quite the contrary.

Like the taxation review (see page 1), “everything is going to be on the table”, says Minister Ley, referring to the various reviews.

And there’s more. Every element of Medicare will be on the table for grabs by the private sector. And like the taxation review, the government already knows what the outcomes will be.

End of bulk-billing

The freezing of Medicare rebates by successive governments has already seen many doctors abandon bulk-billing. The standard fee in many practices is now $70-$78 for a Level B 15-minute consultation. The Business Council of Australia has also got into the act.

The government is going through the motions of holding a public consultation on private health insurance and gaining feedback for public opinion to enable it to sell what amounts to the privatisation of Medicare.

Health Minister Sussan Ley speaks in terms of the need to “find efficiencies of unnecessary regulatory burdens in the system that will free up private health providers.”

It won’t save patients any money – quite the contrary.

Like the taxation review (see page 1), “everything is going to be on the table”, says Minister Ley, referring to the various reviews.

And there’s more. Every element of Medicare will be on the table for grabs by the private sector. And like the taxation review, the government already knows what the outcomes will be.

End of bulk-billing

The freezing of Medicare rebates by successive governments has already seen many doctors abandon bulk-billing. The standard fee in many practices is now $70-$78 for a Level B 15-minute consultation. The Business Council of Australia has also got into the act.

The government is going through the motions of holding a public consultation on private health insurance and gaining feedback for public opinion to enable it to sell what amounts to the privatisation of Medicare.

Health Minister Sussan Ley speaks in terms of the need to “find efficiencies of unnecessary regulatory burdens in the system that will free up private health providers.”

It won’t save patients any money – quite the contrary.

Like the taxation review (see page 1), “everything is going to be on the table”, says Minister Ley, referring to the various reviews.

And there’s more. Every element of Medicare will be on the table for grabs by the private sector. And like the taxation review, the government already knows what the outcomes will be.
Strike hits airports

Immigration and Border Force workers took 24-hour strike action at Australia’s eight international airports over their rights, conditions and take-home pay.

The all-day industrial action, which started just after midnight on Sunday and lasted into Monday, was the first of two stoppages to be held this week. The second is scheduled for Wednesday.

The CPSU says 1000 workers took part in the action, which will cost the government $17 million in a single day.

The action is a response to the government’s decision to introduce a 10 per cent pay cut for workers at its airports, which is part of a wider plan to cut its costs by 10 per cent.

The government has previously said that it will not negotiate with the unions, but the CPSU says that it is prepared to continue to negotiate with the government.

The action is scheduled to last for 24 hours, and the government has already said that it will not negotiate with the unions.

The workers say that they are being forced to accept the cuts, which they say are unfair and will not address the problems at the airport.

The government has said that it will not negotiate with the unions, but the CPSU says that it is prepared to continue to negotiate with the government.

The action is scheduled to last for 24 hours, and the government has already said that it will not negotiate with the unions.

The workers say that they are being forced to accept the cuts, which they say are unfair and will not address the problems at the airport.

The government has said that it will not negotiate with the unions, but the CPSU says that it is prepared to continue to negotiate with the government.

The action is scheduled to last for 24 hours, and the government has already said that it will not negotiate with the unions.

The workers say that they are being forced to accept the cuts, which they say are unfair and will not address the problems at the airport.

The government has said that it will not negotiate with the unions, but the CPSU says that it is prepared to continue to negotiate with the government.

The action is scheduled to last for 24 hours, and the government has already said that it will not negotiate with the unions.

The workers say that they are being forced to accept the cuts, which they say are unfair and will not address the problems at the airport.

The government has said that it will not negotiate with the unions, but the CPSU says that it is prepared to continue to negotiate with the government.

The action is scheduled to last for 24 hours, and the government has already said that it will not negotiate with the unions.

The workers say that they are being forced to accept the cuts, which they say are unfair and will not address the problems at the airport.

The government has said that it will not negotiate with the unions, but the CPSU says that it is prepared to continue to negotiate with the government.

The action is scheduled to last for 24 hours, and the government has already said that it will not negotiate with the unions.

The workers say that they are being forced to accept the cuts, which they say are unfair and will not address the problems at the airport.

The government has said that it will not negotiate with the unions, but the CPSU says that it is prepared to continue to negotiate with the government.

The action is scheduled to last for 24 hours, and the government has already said that it will not negotiate with the unions.

The workers say that they are being forced to accept the cuts, which they say are unfair and will not address the problems at the airport.

The government has said that it will not negotiate with the unions, but the CPSU says that it is prepared to continue to negotiate with the government.

The action is scheduled to last for 24 hours, and the government has already said that it will not negotiate with the unions.

The workers say that they are being forced to accept the cuts, which they say are unfair and will not address the problems at the airport.

The government has said that it will not negotiate with the unions, but the CPSU says that it is prepared to continue to negotiate with the government.

The action is scheduled to last for 24 hours, and the government has already said that it will not negotiate with the unions.

The workers say that they are being forced to accept the cuts, which they say are unfair and will not address the problems at the airport.

The government has said that it will not negotiate with the unions, but the CPSU says that it is prepared to continue to negotiate with the government.

The action is scheduled to last for 24 hours, and the government has already said that it will not negotiate with the unions.

The workers say that they are being forced to accept the cuts, which they say are unfair and will not address the problems at the airport.

The government has said that it will not negotiate with the unions, but the CPSU says that it is prepared to continue to negotiate with the government.

The action is scheduled to last for 24 hours, and the government has already said that it will not negotiate with the unions.

The workers say that they are being forced to accept the cuts, which they say are unfair and will not address the problems at the airport.

The government has said that it will not negotiate with the unions, but the CPSU says that it is prepared to continue to negotiate with the government.

The action is scheduled to last for 24 hours, and the government has already said that it will not negotiate with the unions.

The workers say that they are being forced to accept the cuts, which they say are unfair and will not address the problems at the airport.

The government has said that it will not negotiate with the unions, but the CPSU says that it is prepared to continue to negotiate with the government.

The action is scheduled to last for 24 hours, and the government has already said that it will not negotiate with the unions.

The workers say that they are being forced to accept the cuts, which they say are unfair and will not address the problems at the airport.

The government has said that it will not negotiate with the unions, but the CPSU says that it is prepared to continue to negotiate with the government.

The action is scheduled to last for 24 hours, and the government has already said that it will not negotiate with the unions.

The workers say that they are being forced to accept the cuts, which they say are unfair and will not address the problems at the airport.

The government has said that it will not negotiate with the unions, but the CPSU says that it is prepared to continue to negotiate with the government.

The action is scheduled to last for 24 hours, and the government has already said that it will not negotiate with the unions.

The workers say that they are being forced to accept the cuts, which they say are unfair and will not address the problems at the airport.

The government has said that it will not negotiate with the unions, but the CPSU says that it is prepared to continue to negotiate with the government.

The action is scheduled to last for 24 hours, and the government has already said that it will not negotiate with the unions.

The workers say that they are being forced to accept the cuts, which they say are unfair and will not address the problems at the airport.

The government has said that it will not negotiate with the unions, but the CPSU says that it is prepared to continue to negotiate with the government.
On Saturday November 7 the Sydney Central Branch held a successful function to mark the date of the Great October Revolution.

Branch secretary Rob Gowland spoke of the continuing significance and relevance today of that world shaking event.

The Great October Socialist Revolution took place in November of 1917. It was the result of a century of imperialist rivalry and century of socialist advance.

By February of 1917, both the more well-off peasants and the small farmers who had been already talking revolution, would take action themselves. So they overthrew the Tsar and installed their own bourgeois government.

The Provisional Government! They set up was still imperialist, continued the ruinous war, and tried to break it up with repression. By November of 1917, both the appeal and the peasants, who already thinking revolution, would take action themselves.

Armed workers, supported by revolutionary soldiers and sailors, arrested the Provisional Government and ushered in a new stage in human history.

By November of 1917, the Russian Revolution had finally arrived. Armed workers, supported by revolutionary soldiers and sailors, arrested the Provisional Government and ushered in a new stage in human history.

It did not have an easy birth: the capitalist powers hastily brought their workers home so that their soldiers, expecting to return home in a world at peace they found themselves being drawn back into the socialist revolutions that had followed the Russian Revolution in Hungary and Germany.

The revolution in Russia embodied the hopes and desires of working people around the world. The capitalist powers responded by sending troops from 14 imperialist countries (Australian military forces amongst them) to invade Revolution Russia itself, to “strangle the socialist baby in its cradle” as Churchill so charmingly put it.

Thanks to the sheer size of the country, and the incredible tenacity of its people who at last were fighting for themselves not their feudal masters, and also thanks to the spread of an international movement demanding an end to this war against the workers and peasants of Russia, the counter-revolution was defeated after seven months of bone-firing, privation and destruction. The revolutionaries won but inherited a country in ruins.

Undaunted, what has been called “the Russian miracle,” they went on to turn a backward agrarian country into one of the world’s two superpowers, the country that saved the world from the world from fascism, the country that humanity into space, and which developed a form of society free of poverty, the world of war, racism, colonialism.

Despite constant imperialist acts of aggression, subversion and sabotage, the new society created by the October Revolution was able to stand up to imperialist attempts at intimidation, to economic boycotts and international manoeuvres to support socialist revolutions in Eastern Europe, in Asia, and in Africa and Latin America. The largely successful movement against colonialism was as successful as it was because of the inspiration and support it received from the USSR.

The capitalist world opposed the spread of revolution with every weapon at its command, and in many countries the people’s hopes and dreams were smashed by cover-up and overt wars to prevent capitalism being overthrown or to restore it where the people had temporarily succeeded in getting rid of it.

The successful Russian counter-revolution of 1989 in Russia itself has brought the Russian people such “benefits” of capitalism as unemployment, inflation, sky-rocketing prices, the catastrophic diminishing of the state sector of the economy and a burgeoning number of profit-driven entrepreneurs. Just recently, there have been mass protests in Russia against this part of a “reform” of the health system to bring it into line with the predominately private care system of Western capitalist countries.

With a ramped up Cold War, and numerous actual wars being fought all around the world, and the economies of the major capitalist powers now dependent on an extraordinary doctrine of constant war, while millionaires and billionaires spring up like mushrooms after rain, the bulk of the capitalist world’s population faces growing unemployment, exploitative poverty, food shortages and epidemics. Big corporations are seeking control over not just the world’s energy resources but also its food and water, its trade and its health care – over everything that’s vital to life.

The Great October Socialist Revolution showed us the way. Our task is to complete the journey it began, and once again change the world!
Syria
US invasion has begun

Tony Cortalucci

President Obama is sending a small number of Special Operations troops to northern Syria, marking the first full-time deployment of US forces to the chaotic country.

The mission marks a major shift for Obama, whose determination to defeat the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria has been balanced by an abiding worry that US troops not be pulled too deeply into the intractable Syrian conflict.

The latest deployment will involve fewer than 50 Special Operations advisers, who will work with resistance forces battling the Islamic State in northern Syria but will not engage in direct combat, Obama administration officials said.

While the US claims this move is to “defeat the Islamic State (ISIS),” it is instead clearly a move to establish long-sought “buffer zones” or “safe zones” in Syria where the Syrian government can no longer operate. US airpower will also undoubtedly be used to cover these special forces, creating a defacto no-fly zone wherever they operate.

The World Association of People Accompanying a Washington Post article clearly shows ISIS territory straddling the last remaining supply corridor being used to support the terrorist group as well as others includ- ing AQaeda’s al Nusra Front from NATO-member Turkey’s territory. US special forces will likely begin utilizing Syria’s areas, targeting ISIS, and zones carved out as US operations expand.

The eventual outcome, if these operations are successful, will be the division and destruction of Syria as a nation-state. This is more than mere speculation – this is a conclusion drawn by signed and dated policy papers produced by the Brookings Institute, who has called for such zones in 2012, but under different controverted pretexts.

In the March 2012 Brookings Institute Mideast Council on Regional Options for Regime Change it is stated specifically:

“An alternative is for diplomatic efforts to focus first on how to end the violence and how to gain humanitarian access, as is being done under Aman’s leadership. This may lead to the creation of buffer zones even on an informal corri- dors, which would have to be backed by limited military power. This would, of course, fall short of US goals for Syria and could preserve Asad in power. From that starting point, however, it is possible that a broad coalition with appro- priate international mandate could add further coercive action to its efforts.”

More recently, in a June 2015 Brookings document literally titled, “Deconstructing Syria: A new strategy for America’s most hope- less war,” it is stated that:

“The idea would be to help moderate ele- ments establish reliable safe zones within Syria once they were able. American, as well as Saudi and Turkish and British and Jorda- nian and other Arab forces would act in sup- port, not only from the air but eventually on the ground via the presence of special forces as well. The approach would benefit from Syria’s open desert terrain which could allow creation of buffer zones that could be monitored for possible signs of enemy attack through a combina- tion of technologies, patrols, and other methods that outside special forces could help Syrian local forces accomplish.”

“So Assad foolish enough to challenge these zones, even if he somehow forced the withdrawal of the outside special forces, he would be likely to lose his air power in ensuing retaliatory strikes by outside forces, depriving his military of one of its few advantages over ISIL. Thus, he would be unlikely to do this.”

Unfortunately for US policymakers, it is no longer only Syria that US special forces and accompanying airpower must worry about. Russia, by invitation of Damascus, is now oper- ating militarily across Syria, including along Turkey’s border where the US has long sought to establish its “safe zones”.

The US has openly committed to the inva- sion and occupation of Syrian territory. It does so with the intent of carving Syria up into a series of dysfunctional, weak zones to literally “deconstruct” Syria as a functioning nation-state. It is doing this unable to cite any credible threat Syria poses to US national security and without any semblance of a mandate granted by the United Nations. It also dies so with the prospect of targeting direct war with nuclear- armed Russia in a region Russia is operating legally.

Bankrupt foreign policy

America’s latest actions are a desperate move sought by an increasingly hysterical political and corporate-financial establishment in Washington and on Wall Street. Recent hear- ings conducted by the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations have struggled to produce a credible response to America’s unravelling criminal conspiracy aimed at Syria, particularly in the wake of Washington’s recent intervention. The committee and witnesses brought before it have struggled to formulate a response – however, no-fly zones and US troops on the ground have been discussed at length.

It is a poorly calculated bluff. The presence of US special forces and US airpower operat- ing illegally in and above Syria, meant to deny Syria access to its own territory will take time to implement. The official number of US spe- cial forces being sent into Syria is said to not exceed 50. Syria and its allies could insert an equal or larger number of forces into these same areas to essentially create a “safe zone” from “safe zones”. Bringing America’s illegal actions before the UN would also be a sound measure ahead of potential confrontations with US forces operating uninvited in Syria.

The premise that ISIS must be fought and defeated by striking them in Iraq and Syria is betrayed by America’s admission that the organisation has already spread far beyond the borders of either nation. ISIS is clearly not sup- ported, or even in the limited regions within either country. Were the US truly inter- ested in stopping ISIS, it would strike at its spon- sors in Ankara and Riyadh. Of course, it was clear, well over a year ago, that the appearance of ISIS would be used intentionally to accom- plish US geopolitical objectives in both Syria and Iraq, serving as a pretext for, long- sought a credible multi-national military intervention.

The myth that dividing and destroying Syria while deposing its sitting government will somehow alleviate the violence in Syria and reduce the ongoing migrant crisis Europe faces, is betrayed by the fact that a similar premise used to sell intervention in Libya has only led to greater chaos in North Africa, and the creation of the migrant crisis in the first place.

If the world, including Europe, seeks to prevent the spread of ISIS and the expansion of an already growing migrant crisis, stopping the United States and its partners before they create another “Libya” in the Levant must become top priority. And while it is unlikely that Europe will show any resolve in doing so, it would be hoped that Syria and its allies realize the conse- quences of failing now, at this juncture, and to whose borders the chaos will attempt to cross over into next.

Syria
Lampedusa: Battered by wind, gaspipe

Antoine Cassar

In the final days of September, while Euro- pean Union (EU) national security minis- ters were discussing Greek and Frontex budgets in Luxembourg, the wind- swept and increasingly militarised is- land of Lampedusa witnessed another ex- treme violence and occupation of Syrian territory. It does so with the intent of carving Syria up into a series of dysfunctional, weak zones to literally “deconstruct” Syria as a functioning nation-state. It is doing this unable to cite any credible threat Syria poses to US national security and without any semblance of a mandate granted by the United Nations. It also dies so with the prospect of targeting direct war with nuclear-armed Russia in a region Russia is operating legally.

The premise that ISIS must be fought and defeated by striking them in Iraq and Syria is betrayed by America’s admission that the organisation has already spread far beyond the borders of either nation. ISIS is clearly not sup- ported, or even in the limited regions within either country. Were the US truly inter- ested in stopping ISIS, it would strike at its spon- sors in Ankara and Riyadh. Of course, it was clear, well over a year ago, that the appearance of ISIS would be used intentionally to accom- plish US geopolitical objectives in both Syria and Iraq, serving as a pretext for, long- sought a credible multi-national military intervention.

The myth that dividing and destroying Syria while deposing its sitting government will somehow alleviate the violence in Syria and reduce the ongoing migrant crisis Europe faces, is betrayed by the fact that a similar premise used to sell intervention in Libya has only led to greater chaos in North Africa, and the creation of the migrant crisis in the first place.

If the world, including Europe, seeks to prevent the spread of ISIS and the expansion of an already growing migrant crisis, stopping the United States and its partners before they create another “Libya” in the Levant must become top priority. And while it is unlikely that Europe will show any resolve in doing so, it would be hoped that Syria and its allies realize the conse- quences of failing now, at this juncture, and to whose borders the chaos will attempt to cross over into next.

GlobalResearch.ca

Lampedusa, Tunisia, Melilla, Ventimiglia, eastern Greece and other frontier zones in the Mediterranean and beyond (including Calais) were sharing their experiences and method- ologues, debating ways to resist the militari- sation of borders, to stop deportations, and to raise public awareness of the existence of migrant detention centres (often blurred out or simply unidentified by Google Maps, for example), some of which have now officially been renamed “in the sky” by the European Council.

Aside from debates, film projections, con- certs and poetry readings, the festival program included two significant acts of protest. The first was a visit to the LORAN radio station situated at Alberno Solec, the highest point of the island at 133 metres on the western cliffs, where a crucified Jesus stands in front of a heavily guarded 190-metre tall transmission tower, originally installed by NATO. A talk was given by Antonio Mazzoco, an expert on border militarisation, and a banner reading

Lampedusa: Battered by wind, gaspipe
Against war and fascism

The 17th International Meeting of Communist and Workers’ Parties has been successfully held in Istanbul. The tasks of Communist and Workers’ Parties to strengthen the struggle of the working class against capitalist exploitation, imperialist wars and fascism, for workers’ and popular liberation, form the meeting’s agenda.

The meeting was attended by 104 delegates, representing 58 communist and workers’ parties from 46 countries. Six parties could not attend the meeting against their wishes but sent their greetings and written contributions.

After the extraordinary meeting in Damascus and the 14th meeting in Beirut, it was the third of IMCP meetings held in a Middle East country. Asia Minor being the junction point of unique spheres of political class struggle. The meeting took place during the heyday of the parliamentary elections in Turkey, in which the hosting Communist Party of Turkey took part, under intense opposition by the government for the meeting provided an opportunity for an exchange of opinions and information on the latest developments of imperialist restructuring, escalation of fascist movements in different regions and the quest for emancipation opened up by appearing political working-class struggle. The perspective to develop joint and convergent action was shared.

The meeting’s agenda gave information on their activities and the progress of the communist movement in their countries. They underlined the necessity of converging towards the escalating prohibitions, persecutions and discrimination against Communist Parties. The report by the Coordinating committee of the communist and workers’ parties to strengthen the working class struggle in regions under imperialist threat and intervention was underlined. Likewise stressed was the concern about rivalries among capitalist powers, deepened by their regional collaborators. The dangers posed by militarisation and the concern to fortify anti-imperialism in such regions of confrontation was expressed.

Capitalist crisis

The refugee crisis came to the agenda and the need for promoting not only internationalist solidarity but also class consciousness among discrimination policies and active patronage policies was pointed out.

Due to the restructuring of capitalism exacerbation of crises in the economic and imperialist parties, the meeting drew attention to the rise of erroneous expectations of reviving the capitalist order in favour of the people and of establishing peace under the patronage of imperialist powers, aggravated by their regional collaborators. The dangers posed by militarisation and the concern to fortify anti-imperialism in such regions of confrontation was expressed.

The particular importance of orientating patriotic resistances against military aggression and popular struggles against austerity measures towards a class confrontation was pointed out. This was reiterated with the emphasis to mobilise the working class in order to lead these struggles.

Coordinating communist and workers’ parties’ struggles on all these issues in order to stir up the class movement on a revolutionary basis was highlighted.

Participants saluted the struggle of the peoples in Latin America and the central role of communists in these struggles for independence and socialism, strengthening the anti-imperialist and progressive forces of the region. Solidarity with Cuba and its socialist revolution, as well as with the Venetorean people and their Bolivarian revolution was reasserted.

The meeting assessed the struggle of the European peoples against their governments’ imperialist policies and domestic exploitation of workers and enslavement of migrants.

The determination of the working class in Greece to reject subordination to the blackmail of EU, ECB and IMF, including the rejection of negotiations with the Troika was underlined. The election results in Greece and Portugal for the communist and workers’ parties’ policies were hailed, qualified as hopeful and encouraging.

Anti-imperialist struggle

The consequences of intercontinental confrontations and alliances between imperialist powers were dealt by the participants. The intention to open new military bases in Hungary and Slovakia and Russia’s interventionist policy towards Syria, beside the confrontation in Ukraine, emerge as a change in power balances, both paving the way for a reinforced anti-imperialist struggle and also increasing the pressure on revolutionaries to keep dependent from mainstream power politics.

Fascist paramilitary forces are deliberate aggressors against liberal governments, shifting the context of struggle to identity politics and stimulating the dilemma of cosmopolitanism and nationalism which pushes back the internationalist stance of the working class. On the other hand, the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) and Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) negotiations, which will provide a basis for a new wave of attacks on the working classes, was called to attention and taken as an agenda of struggle for the forthcoming period of the working class. The dual threat in the Middle East and North Africa caused by the jihadists and the Israeli state was confirmed, both corresponding to a de facto coalition against secular and patriotic forces. Not only ISIS but also other Islamic reactionary groups, notably the components of the FSA in Syria, have a counter-revolutionary character and their role in legitimising military interventions, has to be deciphered. The Gulf states’ support for these jihadist groups and Saudi Arabia’s assault in Yemen was vigorously condemned as well as the threat posed by the Israeli state towards Syria.

More and more is the increasing attacks of Israel on the Palestinian people, bombing residential areas, carrying out arrests. The meeting declared its solidarity with the people resisting these attacks, particularly in Palestine and in Syria, calling for a uncompromising struggle against imperialism and fundamentalism.

The growing need to strengthen the ideological struggle against the infiltration of bourgeois ideology within the ranks of communist and workers’ parties was stressed in the previous communist and workers’ parties’ meetings. The current meeting updated the facts and warnings.

We believe that the international meeting contributed to the consolidation of the communist and workers’ parties’ policies in triggering the working class movement in each country and will initiate their common action against imperialism and fascism by raising up socialism as the concrete solution for emancipation.

The meeting’s issues of action were adopted by the parties as guidelines to be implemented, materialised and to be monitored by the Working Group until the 18th IMCP meeting.

Istanbul, November 2, 2015
Victoria Grossman

BERLIN: How the world changes!

Last spring many Europeans, especially Greeks, were so angry at Angela Merkel and her acceptance of people’s sufferings that they scribbled Hitler moustaches on her public portraits. Only weeks later she was celebrated around the continent, indeed, the world, as a symbol of generosity and human- ity — of her correct, that until July or that since late August?

What defines any clear appraisal is the on-going wavering of her gov- ernment, her party and herself? The German political scene is in turmoil, with echoes all over Europe! Such turbulence has on occasion opened the way to healthy change. Now, in my view, it can lead to great dangers.

The remorseless driving element is the tidal wave of human beings, over 200,000 in October alone, risk- ing their lives to reach Europe, especi- ally the fabled Ukraine, Germany. And didn’t Merkel say they are wel- come, that Germany is open to refu- gees fleeing death and destruction?

It would be nice to believe that Merkel was guided by altruism and humanitarian impulses, perhaps thanks to her pastor father or (as some whisper) to a spirit of internation- alism learned in her East German youth. Maybe she was.

But more cynical critics point to Germany’s demographic problems: more and more pensioners, far too few births; a fast-approaching elderly society.

There are also those who believe that the German “welcoming” policies to meet the ever-increasing wave of immigrants has been a double-edged sword, ultimately threatening Germany’s social cohesion.

There is a growing belief that Merkel’s “welcoming” policies have been a boon to the far-right Alternative for Germany (PEGIDA) and the right-wing Alternative for Germany (AfD).

The political scene is visibly far from stable and Merkel is facing a challenge from the right, especially with the rise of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD).

The AfD, which was formed in 2013, has gained popularity in recent years, especially in the eastern states of Saxony and Thuringia, and has become a force to be reckoned with in national elections.

The AfD’s success is rooted in a combination of factors, including economic concerns, immigration, and general dissatisfaction with mainstream politics.

The AfD’s rise has been particularly striking in Saxony, a former East German state that has seen a significant influx of refugees and immigrants.

The AfD’s campaign focus on issues such as immigration, security, and national identity has resonated with many voters, especially in rural and working-class communities.

The AfD has capitalized on the sense of decline and fragmentation felt by many Germans, particularly those who feel left behind by globalization and liberalism.

The AfD has also benefited from the polarization of the political spectrum, with the traditional center-right CDU/CSU and center-left SPD struggling to finding a coherent message.

The AfD’s rise has raised questions about the future of German democracy and the role of the mainstream parties. It also raises important questions about Germany’s ability to integrate its diverse population and maintain social cohesion.

It is clear that the German political landscape is changing, and Merkel will need to navigate this new terrain carefully in order to maintain her position and ensure the stability of her government.

One million approach

The other European Union members, whose statesmen love grandiose statements about continental unity, lasting cooperation and friendship, have been almost totally unwilling to accept more than a token number of the nearly one million immigrants in or approaching Germany.

Especially those great new democracies created on the ruins of the Eastern Bloc, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and the three Baltic states, refuse to take any newcomers. They are, of course, few hundred temporally, but only if they are not Christians. The others have echoed this wish.

The fabric of the European Union is wearing very thin — and hungry harpies, far-right or fascistic parties from Austria to Sweden, from Greece and Italy to France and Flanders, are just waiting to pick its bones — and are truly awakening bitter memories of the past.

The political scene is visibly far from stable and Merkel is facing a challenge from the right, especially with the rise of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD).

The AfD, which was formed in 2013, has gained popularity in recent years, especially in the eastern states of Saxony and Thuringia, and has become a force to be reckoned with in national elections.

The AfD’s success is rooted in a combination of factors, including economic concerns, immigration, and general dissatisfaction with mainstream politics.

The AfD’s campaign focus on issues such as immigration, security, and national identity has resonated with many voters, especially in rural and working-class communities.

The AfD has capitalized on the sense of decline and fragmentation felt by many Germans, particularly those who feel left behind by globalization and liberalism.

The AfD has also benefited from the polarization of the political spectrum, with the traditional center-right CDU/CSU and center-left SPD struggling to finding a coherent message.

The AfD’s rise has raised questions about the future of German democracy and the role of the mainstream parties. It also raises important questions about Germany’s ability to integrate its diverse population and maintain social cohesion.

It is clear that the German political landscape is changing, and Merkel will need to navigate this new terrain carefully in order to maintain her position and ensure the stability of her government.

One million approach

The other European Union members, whose statesmen love grandiose statements about continental unity, lasting cooperation and friendship, have been almost totally unwilling to accept more than a token number of the nearly one million immigrants in or approaching Germany.

Especially those great new democracies created on the ruins of the Eastern Bloc, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and the three Baltic states, refuse to take any newcomers. They are, of course, few hundred temporally, but only if they are not Christians. The others have echoed this wish.

The fabric of the European Union is wearing very thin — and hungry harpies, far-right or fascistic parties from Austria to Sweden, from Greece and Italy to France and Flanders, are just waiting to pick its bones — and are truly awakening bitter memories of the past.
Forgotten Lesbos?
Worsening refugee crisis on Greek island

British Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn joined campaigners at a “Refugees Welcome Here” rally in London last week. The protest came as the mayor of Lesbos claimed the Greek island had run out of room to bury refugees’ bodies.

Corbyn joined the Shadow Secretary of State for International Development Diane Abbott and hundreds of activists to rally in support of refugees. Activists are calling on European governments to find a political solution to the crisis that will offer refuge to hundreds of thousands of people fleeing war zones and repression in the Middle East and Africa.

The rally comes days after the mayor of Lesbos, in the east Aegean Sea, told local radio the island cannot handle the numbers of refugees arriving. Mayor Spyros Galinos told Greece’s Vima FM radio there are more than 500 bodies in the Lesbos morgue and he was still trying to find a burial location for them.

Mayors are reporting dozens of Greek islanders arriving in Lesbos this month, according to a Save the Children worker based on the island. Greece overtook Italy as the European country with the most new migrants arriving per day in late July.

Days before, Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras signed a bailout agreement with the European country with the most new refugees. The agreement included a €4.2 billion package with European creditors which forced a new round of draconian budget cuts on the country. The fresh austerity policies made what limited funds were already available for refugees almost non-existent. Dutch volunteer Merle Graeve, who is helping at the refugee centre in Moria, told RT that the camp cannot accommodate all the people arriving.

“Moria has been very quiet for a few days but has been booming again since this morning. The ticketing system is a little better than before, but it is still very flawed and creates a lot of problems still.”

“The sudden influx of people today, Moria is full again so we are facing this evening with many people and families sleeping outside, including babies. There were not enough blankets, not enough food and the small amount of shelter is an ongoing problem.”

Graeve, who is a set decorator in the Netherlands, said new shelters are being built, but not quickly enough.

“The sanitation is also a huge problem, we’ve started seeing lost cases of scabies. The toilet and shower facilities are incredibly, unbelievably bad and dirty. Moria needs sanitation, more sheltering and better organisation before the winter hits.”

“We have repeatedly said for months that the reception conditions in the Greek islands are inadequate and the government and European Union must do more to improve it. The government operates the centre – UNHCR is there to support and advise. We are in Greece at the invitation of the government.”

Rod Rondeon, a spokesman for the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) said.

A Syrian refugee girl is seen in the arms of her father as they depart the passenger ferry Blue Star Patmos arriving from the island of Lesbos, at the port of Piraeus, near Athens, October 21. [Photo. Alikis Konstantinidis]

In a recent Huffington Post UK blog, occupation Atlantic’s Brian created a volunteer doctor on the ground in Lesbos describing the dire situation in the camp. “In the past week, when rains swept the island.”

“The island is full of people...there are children here and their feet are literally rotting, they can’t keep dry, they have high fevers and they’re standing in the pouring rain for days on end. You have one month guys, and then all these people will be dead,” the doctor said.

Humanitarian groups say thousands of people are attempting to enter Europe before the winter comes, underlined by the increasing harsh conditions.

“Winter and rough seas won’t stop desperate people from trying to reach Europe. [But] in the winter, seas will become much more treacherous, likely resulting in greater numbers of deaths,” the International Red Cross said.

Corbyn was one of the politicians who joined union activists and religious leaders at the Refugees Welcome Here rally in central London on Wednesday evening.

According to a Facebook page promoting the event, the demonstration highlights the lack of action by European governments in response to the humanitarian disaster.

“There remains no political agreement on finding a solution to the biggest migration of refugees to Europe since WW2,” the Facebook page read.

“Recent EU summits have focused on seeking agreement with Turkey on stopping the flow to Europe of refugees, but no agreement on how [to] provide protection to many thousands still stranded in Hungary, Calais and other parts of the EU. With winter approaching, people are desperate,” it read.

Trade union representatives from the National Union of Teachers (NUT) and the National Union of Students (NUS) also took part in the rally, along with religious leader Rabbi Lee Wax and Talha Ahmad of the Muslim Council of Britain.

Venezuela re-elected to UNHRC

Venezuela was re-elected to a second, four-year term on the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) with the backing of 43 UN states on October 28. The South American nation will serve on the 47-member intergovernmental human rights body until 2018 alongside Ecuador and Panama.

In addition to backing from its fellow UN member states, Venezuela also received strong support from its re-election bid from 100 civil society groups from diverse countries across the globe, including Bolivia, Mexico, Argentina, Switzerland, Germany, Kurdistan, Chile, Palestine, Colombia, France, as well as Venezuela.

“In the last 15 years, with the advent of the Bolivarian Constitution, Venezuela has been exemplary in its advances in the promotion and protection of human rights,” read a public statement by the National Assembly.

Venezuela’s accomplishments, its human rights evangelists contended, “constitutively reducing poverty, guaranteeing access to healthcare as a social right and maintaining social spending at approximately 60 percent of GDP, among other advances.”

“We consider that the re-election of Venezuela to the UNHRC is a guarantee for the defence of human rights of all peoples as well as a voice for the victims of war and the oppressed,” the statement concluded.

Venezuela’s re-election to the human rights organ was claimed as a victory by its UN Ambassador Rafael Ramirez who emphasised that the Bolivarian nation prevailed in spite of what he termed a media campaign “full of lies directed by the United States” and aimed at tarnishing the South American country’s human rights record.

Thus, not all countries were pleased with the re-election decision, namely staunch US-ally Israel whose government has virulently opposed Caracas’s championing of Palestinian rights internationally.

Following the vote, Israeli UN Ambassador Danny Danon lashed out at Venezuela and the UNHRC, accusing the latter of practicing double standards in criticising Israel while supposedly turning a blind eye to what he alleged to be violations of political and civil freedoms by the Venezuelan government.

Speaking during a conference on the Middle East, Ramirez hit back at his Israeli counterpart, denouncing Israel’s ongoing occupation of Palestinian lands, which has been repeatedly condemned in binding UN Security Council resolutions, notwithstanding 41 votes by the United States.

“Really, I believe Israel has a lot of things to review [in its own human rights record], their behaviour against the Palestinian people… thousands of Palestinian children in Israeli jails and now this violence in Jerusalem,” he stated, referring to the ongoing Israeli crackdown on Palestinian resistance in the occupied territories that has left 65 Palestinians dead since the beginning of October.

In defending his country’s human rights record, Ramirez took aim at the United States, which has been accused of sponsoring repeated destabilisation efforts against the Bolivarian government, including a coup that temporarily ousted then President Hugo Chávez and led to massive human rights violations.

“In my country there is no death penalty, there is nothing similar to what we see in Guantanamo, we repudiate torture... Our army has never left our borders to attack, only Simon Bolivar led an army out of Venezuela and it was to liberate countries [from Spanish colonialism],” the UN ambassador asserted, referencing the US military’s infamous torture facility located on illegal, US-occupied Cuban territory.

The re-election decision came one day after 24th annual UN General Assembly vote on the Cuban embargo, in which 191 of 193 countries – with the exception of the US and Israel – voted in favour of a non-binding resolution calling for an end to the illegal 55-year US blockade of the island.

Venezuelaanalysis.com

A short introduction by Dr Thalita Anthony
S10 employed; S5 concession
Light refreshments included

Made soon after federal intervention into NT indigenous communities (now extended to other communities in WA and elsewhere in Australia), Our Generation: Land Culture Freedom shows how the world’s oldest living culture is fighting for its survival.

More info: Linda 02 9699 8844

Sydney Communist Women’s Collective presents
A film screening of

Our Generation: Land Culture Freedom

4pm - 6pm Sunday November 15
74 Buckingham Street Surry Hills

A short introduction by Dr Thalita Anthony
Murdock grabs National Geographic

Climate change denier Rupert Murdoch just bought National Geographic.
You read that right: one of the world’s most notorious climate change deniers, whose Fox media empire spreads misinformation on a massive scale, just got control of National Geographic.

The National Geographic Society does incredibly important work on climate change — from publishing groundbreaking stories to giving grants to scientists. But the new deal hands 73 percent ownership of its media operations to Fox.

Top publications enforce editorial independence by appointing Public Editors who represent the public and investigate complaints of editorial interference. The US$725 million deal makes the end of 127 years of non-profit, science journalism for National Geographic. The deal includes its magazines, maps, books, TV channels, digital media platforms, and a whole lot else.

The new Fox-controlled company, National Geographic Partners, will be run for-profit, and it will answer to Murdoch’s shareholders — via its board.

Fox CEO James Murdoch has said that he has no interest in the editorial affairs at Nat Geo, but his father Rupert has a well-documented history of editorial meddling.

From interfering in elections to hacking the phones of murdered teen-age girls, Rupert Murdoch’s media empire has shown time and again that it will do anything for profit and power. But his most dangerous legacy by far will be his scientific illiteracy — and his quest to ensure that human-caused global warming is dismissed as a conspiracy. Just two weeks ago he called climate change concern “utterly falsifiable.”

In his book he noted that “Wheeler was not only acknowledged as having fought with Delta, but his photo was widely published. That in itself is usually a no-no, for fear of linking him to others and outing active duty Delta.”

The US has supposedly withdrawn all its troops from Iraq, yet as Van Buren also noted, “[Wheeler’s] place of death, on the ground, deep inside Iraq, on a strike mission, was explicit, with only a little bullshit thrown in about how Delta was present to provide security for a bunch of media types.”

In fact, as you read Van Buren’s summation of the “mission” on which Sergeant Wheeler allegedly lost his life, the whole thing smells. “He was fighting the most evil’s army of America (for now), Islamic State. He was on a successful rescue mission; hostages were freed, prisoners released, some IS bad guys dispatched. And the whole thing was conveniently videotaped — a videotaped special-forces raid.

How often do you see that? “You don’t.”

Instead, Van Buren ponders the significance of the public attention to Wheeler’s death. “The president of the United States has made it explicit that his war against Islamic State would not involve any Americans ‘boots on the ground’. Well, Sergeant Wheeler most definite-ly was an example of boots on the ground.”

Van Buren, however, saw a much deeper and more worrying significance: “We, the public, are being readied for a larger US combat role in Iraq and Syria, one big enough that it will be hard to keep hidden.”

The US has been waging an undeclared war against Syria for several years now. At first they used the so-called Free Syrian Army, the proxy “rebels” they cobbled together from dis-attracted Syrians, special forces from the US, UK, Turkey and Israel plus “volunteers” from Saudi Arabia. When the actual Syrian army defeated them, they were pulled out and sent to regroup in Jordan. With plentiful Saudi money, and under US supervision, they re-activated as Islamic State and were sent into Iraq and back to northern Syria. The destruction they have wrought cannot be overstated: Syria has forced four million people to flee as refugees (giving former Prime Minister Tony Abbott — knifed by his own Party — the opportunity to lecture European leaders on how to deal with the refugee crisis by “turning them back”).

Less than 24 hours after Van Buren wrote his article, his prediction of how Washington would use the death of Sergeant Wheeler as a propaganda tool to enable the US to escalate its war against Syria, came true. US Secretary of Defense Ash Carter unveiled a “new strategy,” supposedly in the war against Islamic State.

For the first time, American military advisors will overtly be on the ground in Syria, some of the existing 3,200 advisors in Iraq will be moved closer to the front lines [i.e. closer to or even into Syria], and American special forces will be sent into direct combat in both locations.”

However, as Jon Rainwater of US group Peace Action pointed out, “With [Obama’s] ‘boots on the ground’ promise broken there’s no telling how many US troops will ultimately be sent to Iraq and Syria.”

Although the immediate target of the latest escalation is clearly Syria, the USA’s main target remains Russia and China, its political, military and above all economic rivals. Russia has a naval base in both, and both Russia and China support Syria diplomatically as well as militarily.

The US has bombed targets in Syria since September 2014, spending over US$4.75 billion on more than 10,659 air strikes in Syria and Iraq. They have not stopped ISIS, but then, despite the hype, they were never meant to.

The US economy and foreign policy are now hitched to the strategy of continuous war as well as a ramped up Cold War. Unable to out Syrian leader Assad and install instead a compliant strongman of its own choosing, the USA’s plans for the region now seem focused on turning the fighting in Syria into another Vietnamese War. But the US leadership should remember, “lost that one.”
At this time in history

Communist poet Pablo Neruda wins Nobel Prize

It was at this time of year in 1971 that world-famous Chilean poet Pablo Neruda (pen name of Neftalí Ricardo Reyes Basualdo) won the Nobel Prize for Literature “for a poetry that with the action of an elemental force brings alive a continent’s destiny and dreams.”

Neruda (1904-1973) was born in the Chilean town of Parral. He spent his childhood and youth in Temuco, where he knew the poet Gabriela Mistral, head of the girls’ secondary school, who took a liking to him. He started publishing at the age of thirteen. In 1920 he began writing under the name of Pablo Neruda, which he adopted in memory of the Czech poet Jan Neruda (1834-1891). His first published book was Crepusculario (At Twilight, 1923), followed the next year by Veinte poemas de amor y una canción desesperada (Twenty Poems of Love and a Desperate Song), one of his best-known and most translated works.

Between 1927 and 1935, the government put him in charge of a number of honorary consulships, which took him to Burma, Sri Lanka, Java, Singapore, Buenos Aires, Barcelona, and Madrid. His poetic production during that difficult period included, among other works, the collection of surrealist poems Residencia en la tierra (Residence on Earth, 1933), which marked his literary breakthrough.

The Spanish Civil War and the murder of Federico García Lorca, whom Neruda knew, affected him strongly and made him join the Communist Party. Due to his protests against President González Videla’s repression, he had to live underground for two years until he managed to leave in 1949. After living in different European countries he returned home in 1952.

Neruda’s 1952 stay in a villa on the island of Capri was fictionalised in Antonio Skármeta’s 1985 novel Ardent Patience (Ardiente Paciencia), which inspired the popolar 1994 film Il Postino (The Postman) and an opera by Daniel Catán which starred Plácido Domingo as Neruda.

Returning to Chile, in 1945 Neruda was elected senator of the Republic, also joining the Communist Party. Due to his protests against President González Videla’s repressive policy against striking miners in 1947, he had to live underground for two years until he managed to leave in 1949. After living in different European countries he returned home in 1952.

Neruda’s 1952 stay in a villa on the island of Capri was fictionalised in Antonio Skármeta’s 1985 novel Ardent Patience (Ardiente Paciencia), which inspired the popular 1994 film Il Postino (The Postman) and an opera by Daniel Catán which starred Plácido Domingo as Neruda.

In the 1950s he published Las uvas y el viento (Grapes and the Wind, 1954), regarded as a diary of exile. In Odas elementales (Elemental Odes, 1954-1959) the subjects of his poems – things, events and relations – are duly presented in alphabetic form.

Neruda’s extensive production has been gathered into numerous volumes of collected works.Saluting the anti-fascist victory at Stalingrad he wrote “Canto a Stalingrado” and “Nuevo canto de amor a Stalingrado”) and later poetry honouring his political heroes. Aside from the Nobel, he also received the International Peace Prize in 1956, the Lenin Peace Prize and the Stalin Peace Prize in 1953.

Neruda died of cancer only days following the coup that overthrew his compatriot, socialist President Salvador Allende of Chile, although the circumstances of his death have been debated.

People’s World  

POLITICS

IN THE PUB

November 11

The ongoing saga of oppression of Tibetans: Why China’s human rights record continues to decline

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

Every Thursday 6:30 pm ‘til 8:15 pm

Harold Park Hotel

Cnr Wigram Rd & Ross St Glebe
In early September 2015, I was asked if I wished to accompany my partner on a family visit to Bradford in northern England for two weeks as well as a trip to the Lakes District. With some foreboding I was on a flight to England via Dubai as I had heard that it had rained all summer there and after landing in Manchester on a cloudy though rain-free afternoon we were collected and taken to East Bierley, an outer suburb of the former wool milling and coal mining city of Bradford.

In and around Bradford there are lots of former woolen mills. We still saw many sheep in the countryside around Bradford and in a drive to the Lakes District through the Yorkshire Dales via The Pennines. My host advised me that there are now only two mills in the whole of England which process English wool while the rest is exported for processing.

All the bus and train services have long been privatised and at least ten different bus companies operate out of the Bradford Interchange in the centre of the city. The trains which operate out of the adjacent train station are also privatised and one train was operated by a company owned by Deustches Bundesbahn, the rail company of the German government.

Public hospitals which are part of the National Health Service (NHS) have been under-funded and run down by the Conservative government of Prime Minister David Cameron. The situation is very similar to that in Australia.

Major parties

While there were the two main parties held their national conferences in successive weeks. The British Labour Party was first, from September 7-9 in Brighton on the south coast of England.

Their new leader Jeremy Corbyn caught the public imagination with pledges to scrap the Trident Submarine defence programme and to abolish university tuition fees which are publicised in the English countryside.

Public hospitals which are part of the National Health Service (NHS) have been under-funded and run down by the Conservative government of Prime Minister David Cameron. The situation is very similar to that in Australia.

Notes on a visit to northern England during autumn 2015

Low water levels at Keswick on Lake Windermere in northern England.

Unseasonably dry

On a four-day visit to the Lakes District there was no rain and barely a cloud in the sky when normally a day would not pass in the English autumn without some form of rain.

A strong persistent high pressure cell over England was causing not only unseasonably dry conditions but it was also quite warm. When we climbed England’s highest peak, Scafell Pike, we were warned to dress with coats and not to be disappointed if cloud closed in on the summit in the afternoon.

The only clouds we encountered as we strolled up in t-shirts and shorts were the vapour trails of the many jet planes that cross-crossed the blue sky overhead. Down below on Lake Windermere, England’s largest lake, a ferry boat operator remarked that he had not seen the water level, which was down “two and half feet” or more than 70 cm, so low it exposed darkened rocks and black mud.

On the return to the Yorkshire City of Bradford we noticed the rain had not returned either and we continued to enjoy sunny and even warmer temperatures for England in the lead-up to winter. The British Met Office is forecasting a warmer than usual winter and is not optimistic about sufficient snow for any lasting duration.

The English were fighting back under the new Labour Party leadership of Jeremy Corbyn, who was being openly recognised as a socialist and unmering the Tories and the ruling class that props them up.

Everywhere in England people are either joining the Labour Party or cautiously considering it after many years. There is very little one could commend of our own Labor Party and its current leader Bill “Bipartisan” Shorten.

The English people know what an more egalitarian looks and feels like and they haven’t had one since the leadership of vicious anti-worker Conservative PM Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s. Since then successive Conservative and Labour governments have let them down badly.

In the next 12 months Australians will go to the polls to choose a new government. In the mean time we must take up the struggle in all areas of social, economic and political endeavour.

Postscript: The unseasonable warm and dry weather in England, saw the warmest November day on record on November 1, 2015 when the temperature hit 22.4C at Trawgoad, Ceredigion in mid Wales – not too far from the Lakes District in north-western England.