Royal Commission report

Coward punch on workers’ rights

Bob Briton and Tom Pearson

It was snuck out at the height of the holiday season so it would provoke the least public outrage. The report from the prejudicially named “Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption” capped off an orchestrated witch hunt of the leadership of the organised labour movement launched in 2014 by then Prime Minister Tony Abbott. It lasted 29 months and cost $43 million but that was money well spent in the eyes of the enemies of trade unions and the interests of the working class.

Its recommendations go way beyond mechanisms supposedly designed to prevent a few opportunists “bad apples” from rotting their positions. The proposed changes to the industrial relations regime gut workers’ rights in the workplace and seek to convert every trade union into a yellow union. The report now sits on CEO bookshelves alongside the Productivity Commission’s report on the “Workplace Relations Framework”. If enacted, the impact of those documents on the rights of ordinary Australians would be devastating.

As expected, Turnbull welcomed the report but tried to put a novel spin on it. The inquisition sought to re-invigorate the trade unions, according to the smooth-talking PM. “Does anybody seriously believe that Malcolm Turnbull and his Liberals want stronger unions?” acting opposition spokesperson on industrial relations, Mark Dybul, asked. “They don’t. They want weaker unions so they can attack conditions like penalty rates.”

The report forces a moment of truth on Turnbull & Co. They don’t want a “WorkChoices election” of the sort they got in 2007. But expectations from the corporate sector have swelled since those days and they are impatient to lay the killer punches to workers’ rights. They’re not happy that the decision about Sunday penalty rates is to be left to the Fair Work Commission. At the very least, they want a submission from the government recommending a cut to the pay of the country’s lowest wage earners.

Employers pile on pressure

The bosses are feigning disappointment. Heydon’s report didn’t call for a ban on all patterns bargaining whereby trade unions seek to negotiate common terms in enterprise agreements or a ban on enterprise bargaining. But he did try to put a novel spin on it. The inquisitorial thrust of the Royal Commission was undoubtedly the special target of the Royal Commissioner. He claimed that the “revelations” of the Royal Commission were the “small tip of a very large iceberg” and that misconduct in the trade union movement is “widespread and deep-seated.” There was a recommendation for criminal or civil action against 37 individuals, including trade union officials as well as against the AWU and the CFMMEU, which was undoubtedly the special target of the Royal Commission.

Echoes of the Cole Commission

But, as Heydon himself points out, “A finding of a Royal Commissioner is an expression of opinion, not a determination of legal rights.” (Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption Report, 2015, Vol 1, [p.139]). For example, Queensland was a special focus of the Commission but only one out of the state’s several hundred trade union officials and organisers was referred for prosecution. The Commission was carefully designed not to drag employers and other big wigs into the spotlight but, despite the glaring class bias of the proceedings, two Queensland corporate executives had to be referred.

Outcome.

It denigrated individuals and cast a stain over the trade union movement in order to undermine the legitimacy of trade unionism – all, in the final analysis, to boost profits. That was its ideological thrust. The Labor Party is being pushed to abandon its links to the trade unions; indeed to renounce its own history as a product of the unions.

In Victoria, “No Room for Racism” is the theme for this year’s festival day at Borthwick Park in Belgrave. Kutcha Edwards is the headline act, and there will be stalls and family activities. The annual Songsline Festival will also be held at the Treasury Gardens in the city from 1pm.

The Survival Perth concert will be held in a new location at the Ozone Reserve, near Langley Park. The line-up includes The Merindas, John Bennett, Phil Valley-Stick, Gina Williams and Guy Ghose, Jake and the Cowboys, and Lilly Gogos. The event, which starts at 3pm, will also include a flag raising and traditional dance.

In Canberra, activities are planned from January 24 at the Tent Embassy, including a march from Garema Place and a rally outside Parliament House. In Brisbane there will be a march and rally from Parliament House to Musgrave Park during the morning, followed by a gathering in the park.

Survival Day events

Survival Day events have been planned around the nation for January 26.

In NSW, Pilanjiatjara singer Bart Willoughby is the headline act for the Yabun concert at Victoria Park in Camperdown, Sydney. Other acts will include Radical Son, Yarraw, Drewz, Leah Flanagan, Evie J Willie, Black Turtles, Bow & Arrow and The Australian Eagle. The free event will also feature workshops, games and traditional cultural performances.

The Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre has organised a street march followed by a rally on the lawns of Parliament House, Hobart. Musician John Butler will play at the event.

In South Australia, dance, music and market stalls will be held at Semaphore Esplanade. Artists will include Electric Fields, Catherine Carter, Bec Gollan, Tempstts Sumner-Lovett, Allan Sumner, Eddie Peters, Michael Colbung, The Twang Bangers, Nuthin Yet and Eskotology. Kurruru Youth Performing Arts members will dance.
Joan Williams an outstanding Communist

Comrade Joan Williams would have turned 100 years of age on Invasion Day. Born in Coolgardie, WA on January 26, 1916, Joan Williams a great poet, revolutionary and a Communist, died on June 26, 2016.

Joan developed as a poet under the name of Justina Williams. She was awarded the Order of Australia in 1996 for service to the community as a writer, particularly in the areas of peace, social equality and protection of the environment.

Joan campaigned against the presence of the US military base on North West Cape near Exmouth in the 1970s and much later the first Iraq war in 1991, in which her poem, Not in my name is an internationally recognised anti-war clarion for peace activists to this day.

Not in my name, my woman’s name, not one drop of blood that makes some billionaires and sets the Middle East aflame.

But in my name, in the name of peace, send home great armadas of the black and dispossessed, world rebellion set free. Peace in my name!

The CPWWA branch pays its respects to Joan as one of those true communists who dedicated their lives to the workers’ class struggle.

Comrade Joan Williams, your example lives on!

Coward punch on workers’ rights

Continued from page 1

Lurid headlines in the Fairfax press about the CFMUE receiving payments from a bogus foreign company associated with “underworld figure” George Alexius turns out to be a classic made up of overpaid workers that were promptly forwarded to the workers involved. Other allegations and police action have already fallen over. Like the Cole Royal commis- sion before it, the latest witch hunt is ongoing and short on proof and any sense of justice.

The objectives

The latest attacks are means to an end. The extreme rates are the test case of a change in the balance of class forces with other objectives clearly on the minds of the capitalist ruling class.

They want to reconfigure trade union structures into corporate entities in order to wage democratic processes and open up leaderships to massive civil court actions.

They want a Registered Organisations Commission – essentially an ABC for the entire trade union movement – and the creation of a boosted Australian Building and Construction Commission to try and crush the CFMUE.

Fines for taking anything but legally constructed action will go through the roof. Hayden recommend- ed they go from $10,000 for individuals to $216,000 and $360,000 for “reckless” actions. Unions will be very unhappy at being fined. It is time to go back to basics.

We must be consultation at each step of the process to ensure agreement on policies and tactics; there has to be adherence to decisions made and the carrying through of decisions.

An atmosphere needs to be cre- ated in which the results of decisions and steps taken can be fairly dis- cussed and evaluated.

The road to unity, the creation of class conscious trade unionism and solidarity will be a long and compli- cated one but the first steps must be taken. The alternative involved in capitalism leads to fascism.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Mick Gooda has taken aim at the federal government’s new “healthy welfare” card and work-for-the-dole scheme in his annual Social Justice and Native Title report.

Mr Gooda said the two programs, which came out of a review by mining billionaire Andrew Forrest, would not help Indigenous people and said a human rights approach was needed to welfare programs. He said both programs should be voluntary and allow people the choice to opt in.

In August, the government announced Ceduna in South Australia would host a trial for new debit card accounts that allow spending only on certain items. Mr Gooda said the card did not address the underlying causes of alcoholism, drug use and problem gambling.

“These reforms will significantly impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples because of our overrepresentation in the welfare system,” he wrote.

“In the coming months, the Australian government must meaningfully engage with our people about the design and implementation of the healthy welfare card and the work-for-the-dole program in remote communities.”

“Limiting people’s ability to access their welfare payments in cash does not address the reasons for this harmful behaviour, including poverty, trauma, and lack of education.”

Mr Gooda made 21 recommendations, including that the Western Australian government should not close any remote Aboriginal communities without proper consultation. And he addressed the anxiety and confusion caused by deep cuts to Aboriginal programs and organisations through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS).

Mr Gooda also considered some human rights issues for Indigenous people with disability, recommending that the Closing the Gap targets consider disability as an area for action and that First Nations disability support organisations ensure they are culturally competent, as the NDIS (National Disability Insurance Scheme) rolls out.

In the report, Mr Gooda calls for all states and territories to establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children’s commissioners and for child welfare targets to be added to the Close the Gap campaign. Secretary of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) chair Sharon Williams told the Koori Mail that Mr Gooda’s discussion of cuts to services through the IAS was spot on.

“If government cuts funding to services and SNAICC how can we continue to do the job we’re required to do?” she said. “SNAICC was created as a result of the Bringing them Home report, to speak for and have a strong national voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

“If you reduce our capacity to do so, and if you reduce the capacity of service providers in the community, our people are going to suffer. “Fund-cutting has a profound impact on how we deliver services. The IAS was very destructive to many Aboriginal organisations, which were defunded or had to reduce what they were able to provide on the ground.

“It’s been a double whammy. The federal government has reduced SNAICC’s capacity to influence and removed community organisations’ ability to do their jobs.”

Ms Williams said that when Aboriginal children were nine times more likely to be in out-of-home care than other children, then you had to realise there was something “profoundly wrong” with current practices.

“We are not addressing the problems,” she said. “Government is continually saying, ‘This is really serious. We have to build faster ambulances,’ doing things in a reactive rather than preventative manner.

“We should be strengthening the capacity of families, so we can care better for our children at home and in our communities.”

Opposition Indigenous Affairs spokesman Shane Neumann said Mr Gooda’s report showed the need to refocus policies towards working with Indigenous people and creating meaningful consultation.

“We’ve seen a pattern of chaos, confusion and neglect, which Mr Gooda has made clear in his report,” he said. “The thing that really strikes me is the urgent need to increase genuine consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

“The government needs to refund the National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples. Congress has two new leaders who are very capable, and the elected representatives. You have to listen to the people who are elected, not just a handpicked group.

“The trouble with this government is that it doesn’t listen to peak bodies.

“It picks and chooses who it listens to, rather than taking advice from those delivering front-line services.”

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**Call for Solidarity**

**Samidoun (Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network)**

Take Action to support the Mohammed al-Qeq and the other Hunger Strikers: What to do to help the Palestinian Political Prisoners:

1. Protest at the Israeli consulate or embassy in your area. Bring posters and flyers about administrative detention and Palestinian hunger strikers and hold a protest, or join a protest with this important information. Hold a community event or discussion, or include this issue in your next event about Palestine and social justice. Please email us at samidoun@samidoun.net to inform us of your action – we will publicise and share news with the prisoner.

2. Contact political officials in your country – members of Parliament or Congress, or the Ministry/Department of Foreign Affairs or State – and demand that they cut aid and relations with Israel on the basis of its apartheid practices, its practices of colonization, and its numerous violations of Palestinian rights including the systematic practice of administrative detention. Demand they pressure Israel to free the hunger strikers and end administrative detention.

3. Boycott, Divest and Sanction. Hold Israel accountable for its violations of international law. Don’t buy Israeli goods, and campaign to end investments in corporations that profit from the occupation. G4S, a global security corporation, is heavily involved in providing services to Israeli prisons that jail Palestinian political prisoners – there is a global call to boycott it. Palestinian political prisoners have issued a specific call urging action on G4S. Learn more about BDS at bdsmovement.net

About Samidoun

Samidoun: Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network is a network of organisations and activists, based in North America, working to build solidarity with Palestinian prisoners in their struggle for freedom. Samidoun developed out of the September-October 2011 hunger strike of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails, seeing a need for a dedicated network to support Palestinian prisoners.

We work to raise awareness and provide resources about Palestinian political prisoners, their conditions, their demands, and their work for freedom for themselves, their fellow prisoners, and their homeland. We also work to organise campaigns to make political change and advocate for Palestinian prisoners’ rights and freedoms. 

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**Sydney Solidarity Night**

Trivia Night to support children’s education in Palestine

Friday January 29 from 6 pm

Gumbramorra Hall

Addison Rd Community Centre

142 Addison Rd Marrickville

Come and have a fun night with prizes, drinks, food and music. Organised by Leichhardt Friends of Hebron

Tickets at the door or online booking tinyurl.com/trivia2016
Radioactive racism in the wild west

Mia Pepper

You’d be forgiven for thinking Western Australia was the Wild West. The announcement from the WA government that it planned to close 150 Aboriginal remote communities came hot on the heels of plans to gut the Aboriginal Heritage Act.

The changes to the Aboriginal Heritage Act have two main objectives: one is to make it easier for Aboriginal heritage sites listed in the first place. One of the key factors in a site getting and staying on the register is proving an ongoing connection to the site – a logistical fact that made much harder if people are being forcibly removed from remote communities.

Pastor Geoffrey Stokes, a Wunungma man from Kalgoorlie, was out hunting one day near Mt Margaret when he encountered a mining company, Darlex, literally about to dig into a cave – an Aboriginal heritage site. This particular site had been lodged with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs by the Goldfields Land and Sea Council 23 years earlier – but had not been officially registered. The company was about to destroy the site without having gained permission or consulting with the Aboriginal custodians and had no requirements to do so because the site did not appear on the register. On inquiries made to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA) about this site, it was revealed that something like 10,000 sites have been lodged but never registered.

This is how the system works: Traditional owners can lodge a site with the DAA and the Department may or may not register it – depending on how busy they are over a period of about two decades. Once it is registered, a mining company can then apply to destroy it anyway, but rest assured that if it’s registered you’ll be consulted about the site’s impending doom. However, if you don’t visit the site regularly, under a changed Aboriginal Heritage Act, it’s likely to be disregarded unless a project comes to talk to you before they destroy your heritage.

I’m reminded of being at a mining conference in WA where the then Minister for Mines and Petroleum gave a keynote presentation. He ended by lacing his comments with a joke. When played back to him in calling the raffle, the Minister re-used the joke when he encountered a mining site on their hit list of communities to get projects off the ground.

Mulga Rocks

Just around the corner from Mt Margaret is Mulga Rocks – the site of the latest uranium mine proposal by a company that has recently changed its name to Vimy Resources. Vimy is like an all-star cast with a former Fortescue Metals Group executive as director, a former Liberal MP on the board of directors and generously funded byTwiggy Forrest. Vimy recently submitted a scoping study for Mulga Rocks, which is near Kalgoorlie and adjacent to the Queen Victoria Springs – an A-Class Nature Reserve.

In submissions made to the scoping study, the DAA provided comments in response to the proposal saying the company should minimise impact to Aboriginal heritage, should consult with the DAA and the Central Desert Native Title Service, and suggesting that some sites may “still be under the protection” of the not-yet-gutted Aboriginal Heritage Act.

The company responded: “No Native Title Groups claim the areas and no traditional owners undertake any traditional activities in the area.”

That comment was based on a 1982 “study” by an Australian anthropologist – using a dubious methodology. The anthropologist just asked around in the nearest town (150 kilometres away), a process that identified at least one family who used to go out, and no further inquiries were made about that family. The family survived and live in the area but are yet to be consulted. Neighbouring communities and interested communities are yet to be consulted and the company refuses to consult, stating the project won’t impact anyone so there’s no need.

The closest community to the proposed Mulga Rocks mine is called Coonana and it has been on the government’s hit list of communities to close down for many years. Slowly but surely the WA government has cut all funding to the community, which is now virtually a ghost town. Coonana is a refugee community – people who have been moved from community to community over generations. Known as the Spinifex people, they came across the border from South Australia following the nuclear weapons tests at Maralinga and Emu Field in the 1950s. The government used to kick Aboriginal people hiding a free ride west off the train, but then had a bright idea: give Aboriginal people a free ride west and then put them off the atomic bomb testing sites permanently.

The dislocation that began during the atomic bomb tests is very much alive today. The starving of services at Coonana should sound alarm bells about what this government is capable of doing. At Oombulgurri in the Kimberley, the strategy was to demolish houses: no resettlement, no alternative housing, nothing. As the country tries to heal from centuries of displacement and bad government policy, this government is creating another generation of displaced people.

The plans to shut 150 remote Aboriginal communities are much more secretive – the Premier Colin Barnett has promised consultation but refused an invitation from the Kimberley Land Council to join a joint Land Councils meeting about the closures in early 2015.

Discrepancies

In addition to proposed changes to the Aboriginal Heritage Act, the WA government last year released a draft Heritage Bill 2015, covering the protection of all WA heritage sites except Aboriginal sites of significance.

Professor Ben Smith, from the University of WA, and a spokesperson for the Australian Archaeological Association (AAA), told the ABC last August that the discrepancies and contradictions between the two sets of proposed changes were “untenable”. He noted that in the new Heritage Bill, the decision to add or remove a site will remain with the minister for heritage, while in revisions to the Aboriginal Heritage Act the decision will be left with a senior public servant. “We have a watering down of the Aboriginal Heritage Act,” Smith said, “whereas we have continued the strength of non-Aboriginal preservation.”

The AAA also raised concerns about a “tiered approach” to fines for those who damage sites. Smith said under proposed changes to the Aboriginal Heritage Act, an individual found to be damaging an Aboriginal site on their first offence will face a fine of up to $100,000. If a corporate body is found to have damaged a registered Aboriginal site, in the first instance they will be fined up to $500,000, with the maximum penalty of $1 million only levelled for repeat offenders. In contrast, the Heritage Act doesn’t make provision for first and second fines – if an individual or a body corporate damages a piece of non-Indigenous state heritage, they instantly face a $1 million fine.

Smith said: “Why would we want a tiered structure? If you damage any piece of Aboriginal heritage, you are committing a crime of great seriousness, just as if you damage any piece of Australian heritage. Why is one subject to a lesser process? It’s extraordinary in an international context. How will these be perceived by UNESCO?”

Phil Czerwinski, chair of the WA Association of Consulting Archaeologists, said all heritage sites should be treated equally. “We seem to want to protect white fella heritage better than we want to protect black fella heritage,” he said.

A petition against changes to the Aboriginal Heritage Act is posted at aboriginalheritagewa.com under the news section. Mia Pepper is the Nuclear Free Campaigner at Conservation Council WA, and Deputy Chair of the Mineral Policy Institute. First published in the Chain Reaction section of national magazine of Friends of the Earth, Australia, edition # 124, September 2015, fox.org.au/chain-reaction

The Beacon 0
Indigenous Grandmothers organise against unjust removals

Kathy Brown

An official Australian narrative has developed around the seeming insolubility of the third world statistics of Australia’s First People. This narrative pushed by the mass media and political parties across the spectrum, is being accepted by many Australians. It is past time to challenge this vilification of the world’s oldest living culture and confront the causes of our intran- sient racism which translates to assimilation by stealth. In capi- talist Australia – the only beneficiary of the official narrative – and present policies attacking Indig- enous land rights and culture, are powerful mining and monopoly interests and the governments that support them.

Building the struggle to recognis- e and defend Indigenous rights to land, culture and children is imperative. Aboriginal people themselves take it to heart. Legislation like Grandmothers Against Removals (GMAR), an organisation formed in 2013 by a group of Indigenous grand- mothers to challenge the daily abuse of Indigenous families’ rights by government agencies, is testament to this. The fact that today is that, on any night across Australia, there are more Indigenous children in state “out-of-home care” than there were during the period of the Stolen Generation. There are more than 15,000 Aboriginal chil- dren presently in “out-of-home care” and 32,000 parents are deemed to be “unable to look after their own chil- dren”. This is approximately a third of the 40,000 children of “out-of-home care” on any given night. Yet Indigenous Australians make up approximately 3% of the Australian population.

On the 6th anniversary of Sorry Day, in February 2013, a group of Indigenous grandmothers met in Tamworth, NSW, and formed: Grandmothers Against Removals (GMAR). Since then their simple initiative has become a national resistance move- ment against the racist and system- ic practice of removing Indigenous children from their families, communi- ties and culture. The Grandmothers were angered by state child protec- tion agencies who they believed deliberately ignored extended family and community networks willing to care for Indigenous children deemed to be “at risk”.

GMAR, together with the Ombudsman’s Office, developed a set of guiding principles, “How to Work with Aboriginal Families, Indi- viduals and Communities”. These principles have now become a rally- ing creed for Grandmothers Against Removal Committees, which have sprung up across the country over the last three years.

Last year, Grandmothers Against Removals held a public meeting at Redfern Town Hall and began organising a protest in Feb- ruary 2013 in Canberra, against the mass scale of removals of Indigenous children across Australia (see details this page). “Removals of Indigenous children must stop.” This requires state agencies to notify family members before removing Indigenous children”.

The Aboriginal Placement Plac- ement is included in the relevant child protection legislation, which requires state agencies to notify family members before removing Indigenous children”. The Aboriginal Placement Plac- ement is included in the relevant child protection legislation, which requires state agencies to notify family members before removing Indigenous children”.

GMAR members have pointed out that traumatic con- sequences for the child and family result from a billion dollar “child protection industry” that “victimises Abo- riginal families and fails to recognise and support Australian culture. Simi- lar practices in the past led to inter- generational trauma as Indigenous children were cut off from their cul- ture and language. From their experi- ence, the Grandmothers present at the Redfern meeting were unanimous in their belief that no lessons had been learnt from the Stolen Generation”. Indigenous people at the meeting rejected the stereotyping of Aborigi- nal families as drug addicts and alcoholics. This stereotyping has led to the phenomenon of “hidden shame” amongst Aboriginal people. Not dis- similar to the generalised shame that the NT Intervention has caused for reasons not to place children with the family. The Grandmothers listened, heard, were placed instead with white families and restricted from contact with their Indigenous families by dis- tance or the often arbitrary conditions placed in the Care Plans formulated by the state agencies.

This is resulting in long-term separation of Indigenous children and their families. Audience mem- bers pointed out that traumatic con- sequences for the child and family result from a billion dollar “child protection industry” that “victimises Abo- riginal families and fails to recognise and support Australian culture. Simi- lar practices in the past led to inter- generational trauma as Indigenous children were cut off from their cul- ture and language. From their experi- ence, the Grandmothers present at the Redfern meeting were unanimous in their belief that no lessons had been learnt from the Stolen Generation”.

The goal of assimilation began with colonisation and is the ultimate result of ongoing discriminatory practices like those being opposed by the Grandmothers. Back door adoptions are being encouraged by the use of legislation which allows white foster parents to adopt children after a certain length of time. This is in the context of the ongoing failure of governments to support Aborigi- nal families in crisis, (employment programs cut, land rights reversed, Aboriginal organisations defunded, long-term and permanent housing services closed etc). It is a continuation of assimilationist policies.

Indigenous audience members revealed that many Indigenous Aus- tralians will avoid ticking yes to questions about their Aboriginality on government forms because this can make them a target for racist assumptions about their ability to raise their children.

Grandmothers Against Removals is planning a nationwide protest in Canberra between February 11 and 13 … “we need to join our voices to become a very loud voice... work collectively to implement a restora- tion program and place child pro- tection issues back in community control. Instead of spending money on home care services it should be spent on family preservation.” The Canberra protest is timed to coin- cide with the anniversary of “Sorry Day” and demands all our support to make governments accountable for the billion dollar industry that has been created around child remov- als. As one audience member com- mented, “Stop these departments coming in and making our families dysfunctional”.

Stolen Generations action

Grandmothers Against Removals (GMAR) is a national network led by Aboriginal families directly affected by the forced removal of children by child welfare agencies. On February 11, 2016, activists like Grandmothers Against Removals will rally at the Aboriginal Tent Embassy in Canberra and march on Parliament House to protest against the escalating mass removal of Ab- riginal children from their families. We will conference at the Embassy until February 13. This date will mark eight years since then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd made an Apology to the Stolen Generations of the 20th century – we say “sorry” means you don’t do it again! Currently, there are more than 15,000 Aboriginal children in “out- of-home care” on any given night. This is more child legislation which cibiely removed at any point in Aus- tralian history. More than half of these children have not been placed back with their Aboriginal family, despite the “Aboriginal placement principle” being mandated by law in every State and Territory. There has also been a national push for chang- es in legislation that are seeking many more children removed until 18 years of age, with new “per- manent guardianship” laws either planned or in place across Australia. Since forming almost two years ago, GMAR members have been at the forefront of challeng- ing forced removals, with consistent work assisting families fighting to have their children returned, and their cases that have forced the issue into the national spotlight and negotia- tions with welfare departments in an attempt to change practice.

We demand Aboriginal con- trol of Aboriginal welfare. We want to see resources and opportunities provided to struggling families, rather than the punishment and trauma of forced removal. We want 2016 to be the year when these horrible statistics start to turnaround and the children are brought home. This will only come when a peo- ple’s movement grows to challenge racist departments and put Aborigi- nal people in control of their own communities. Join us in Canberra on Febru- ary 11 to stop continuing Stolen Generations.

Please send notice of your endorsement to stopstolengenerators@gmail.com or contact

Debra (NSW): 0413 732 344
Karen (QLD): 0455 732 617
Vanessa (WA): 0448 054 686

If you are able to contribute to the substantial costs of this event, please make a donation!
Account Name: GMAR NSW BSB number: 633 000
Account number: 153 568 613
In solidarity, Grandmothers Against Removals

Stolen Generations action

Endorse appeal to February 11 protest in Canberra against Aboriginal child removal
It is clear, even with an unamed eye that great progress had been made. Those of us who knew Ecuador two decades ago, (then a depressing part of the world, with powerful people-orientated neoliberal policies, and defunct movements and “intellectual” leadership, not some European and North American “elites”). Once there are nothing to eat, one time on food lines in all the major cities, as well as great insecurity and violence, people will vote him out of power.


In Bolivia the “elites” tried and tried, but they were not successful, because there was great solidarity with the government of Evo Morales, coming from countries like Brazil and Venezuela.}

Andre Vitchek

For now, Argentina is lost and Venezuela is deeply wounded, divided and frustrated. Virtually everywhere in socialists Latin America, well-orchestrated and angry protests are taking place, accusing our left-wing governments of mismanagement and corruption.

What was gained during those years of hard work and sacrifices is suddenly evaporating in front of our eyes. And there seems to be no way to stop the trend in the foreseeable future. Whatever magnificent work our governments have done have been smeared. Western propaganda and its local surbs belittle the achievements of our people. In several countries, revolutionary zeal has almost entirely vanished.

The “elites” said: “We will get rid of Morales”. They tried and tried, but they were not successful, because there was great solidarity with the government of Evo Morales, coming from countries like Brazil and Venezuela.

We lost elections? What nonsense! It was clean economic and political terror unleashed against us, and it was the most vicious propaganda, which began forcing out the left wing governments of Latin America from power peaceful and democratic means to prevent them from democracy. It was plundered. Its veins were, tubes with starved rats are inserted into their stomachs, and they were thrown from helicopters straight into the sea.

The will of the people is being handedly saved Cuba, when the island-nation of the world, with powerful people-orientated neoliberal policies, and defunct movements and “intellectual” leadership, not some European and North American “elites”. It was plundered. Its veins were, tubes with starved rats are inserted into their stomachs, and they were thrown from helicopters straight into the sea.

We arrested just a few of them, and left the rest of the people free to overthrow or overturn their own government. It was the Cuban revolution after the Soviet Union had been destroyed by Western imperialism. The same people actually who were cheering the demolition of the Soviet Union itself. They kept pushing for anarchism and for some formulae of “participatory economy”, in fact for their own concepts, for Western, white concepts, for something that most of Latin American people who fought and won their revolutions never asked for!

Jealous and petty, they hate the true power-houses of resistance against Western imperialism: Russia, China, Iran or South Africa and in fact, even Latin America itself. Latin American people have always been intuitively longing for big, strong governments, like those in Cuba and those that later emerged in Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador.

And their natural allies should have been those countries from other, non-Western parts of the world, with powerful people-orientated leadership, not some European and North American representatives of grotesque and defunct movements and “intellectual” concepts. In several countries, Latin America lost its way and again got directed by Western demagoguery. Suddenly there was almost nothing left here of Chinese or Russian or Vietnamese ideas, nothing of internationalism, only Western soft liberal egotists and countless irrelevant marginal groups.

What do we in fact do? We arrest just a few of them, and leave the rest of the people free to overthrow or overturn their own government. It was the Cuban revolution after the Soviet Union had been destroyed by Western imperialism. The same people actually who were cheering the demolition of the Soviet Union itself. They kept pushing for anarchism and for some formulae of “participatory economy”, in fact for their own concepts, for Western, white concepts, for something that most of Latin American people who fought and won their revolutions never asked for!

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And their natural allies should have been those countries from other, non-Western parts of the world, with powerful people-orientated leadership, not some European and North American representatives of grotesque and defunct movements and “intellectual” concepts. In several countries, Latin America lost its way and again got directed by Western demagoguery. Suddenly there was almost nothing left here of Chinese or Russian or Vietnamese ideas, nothing of internationalism, only Western soft liberal egotists and countless irrelevant marginal groups.

History was forgotten. It was simple, decisive and powerful action by China that single-handedly saved Cuba, when the island-nation was hit by the Gorbachov and Yeltsin disasters. I wrote about it a lot, and Fidel quoted me, agreeing in his “Reflections”.

It was the Soviet Union that stood in solidarity with almost all revolutionary movements of Latin America throughout the 20th century. And it was Russia that was backing Chávez during the countless Western attempts to overthrow his government.

Playing with anarchism, liberalismo and Euro-socialist concepts brought several Latin American revolutions to the brink of absolute calumny.

South America is at the frontline. It is under attack. There is no time for the flower theories. I know Latin American revolutionsaries. I have met many, from Eduardo Galeano to several Cuban and Sandinista leaders.

I also met many of the South American “elites”. One day, not long after Evo Morales came to power in Bolivia, I spoke to a man, a member of one of the “leading” families, which has in its ranks Senators, owners of mass media outlets, as well as captains of local industry. “We will get rid of Morales”, he told me, openly. “Because he is a dirty Indian, and because we will not tolerate lefties in this part of the world.”

He was not hiding his plans – he was extremely confident. “We don’t care how much money we have to spend; we have plenty of money. And we have plenty of time. We will use our media and we will create food and consumer goods deficits. Once there is nothing to eat, once there are food lines in all the major cities, as well as great insecurity and violence, people will vote him out of power.”

It was clearly the concept used by the Chilean fascist economic and political right wing thugs, before the 1973 US-backed coup against President Salvador Allende. “Uncertainty, shortages”, and if everything failed – then a brutal military coup.

In Bolivia the “elite” tried and tried, but they were not successful, because there was great solidarity with the government of Evo Morales, coming from countries like Brazil and Venezuela.

When the Right tried to break the country to pieces, declaring it the richest, “white” province of Santa Cruz, Brazil, President Lula declared that he was going to send the mighty army to the richest, South American continent and “defend the integrity of the neighbouring country”. It is well known that South America is actually extremely powerful beasts, who are leading the “opposition” in South America. And to be frank, we can hardly speak about “opposition”. These are oligarchs, landowners, Christian (many from the Opus Dei) demagogues and military leaders. In many ways they are still the true rulers of the continent.

Nothing except brute force can stop them. They have unlimited financial resources, they have a propaganda machine at their disposal, and they can always count on the Empire to back them up. In fact it is the Empire that is encouraging, training and sustaining them.

“All too familiar … Like in Chile and Argentina, where the elites have as well.

“Violations of democracy and human rights”, the “oppositions” yell, whatever our governments decide to hit back. It is not that we are lately hitting back really hard, but any retaliation is packaged as “brutal”.

What do we in fact do? We arrest just a few of the most notorious terrorists, those who are openly trying to overthrow or overthrow our state. But when they, the “elites” and their army, do not succeed, they talk of internal subversion, of terrorism, of wars of resistance and terrorism in our soil, of “Soviet” agents and so-called “opposition” and “intelligence services” is suddenly evaporating in front of our eyes. And there seems to be no way to stop the trend in the foreseeable future. Whatever magnificent work our governments have done have been smeared. Western propaganda and its local surbs belittle the achievements of our people. In several countries, revolutionary zeal has almost entirely vanished.

The “elites” said: “We will get rid of Morales”. They tried and tried, but they were not successful, because there was great solidarity with the government of Evo Morales, coming from countries like Brazil and Venezuela.

Andre Vitchek

For now, Argentina is lost and Venezuela is deeply wounded, divided and frustrated. Virtually everywhere in socialists Latin America, well-orchestrated and angry protests are taking place, accusing our left-wing governments of mismanagement and corruption.

What was gained during those years of hard work and sacrifices is suddenly evaporating in front of our eyes. And there seems to be no way to stop the trend in the foreseeable future. Whatever magnificent work our governments have done have been smeared. Western propaganda and its local surbs belittle the achievements of our people. In several countries, revolutionary zeal has almost entirely vanished.

The “elites” said: “We will get rid of Morales”. They tried and tried, but they were not successful, because there was great solidarity with the government of Evo Morales, coming from countries like Brazil and Venezuela.
should also be immediately identified. They should be exposed, confronted, and if their goal is to destroy the socialist fatherland, shut down. Again, this is no time for liberal niceties.

Freedom of expression has nothing to do with the freedom of using newspapers and television stations to spread fabrications, fear and uncertainty, or to call for the direct overthrow of democratically elected governments.

And in South America, entire huge international newspaper and television syndicates have been working for years and decades for one single and deadly goal—to smear and liquidate the Left, and to deliver the entire continent back to the racist, fascist foreign imperialists. It has all gone too far, and it has to stop.

A few months ago, I was riding on the impressive Sao Paulo metro system, together with my Cuban friend. “It is much better than any public transportation network that I have seen in Europe or in the United States,” I exclaimed.

“But people in Brazil think that it is total shit,” commented my friend, laconically.

“How come?” I was shocked.

“They are saying they are told on the television, and because they read it in the newspapers.”

Yes, that’s how it is! Free art, including opera, given to the Brazilian public, is nothing more than crap, if one reads the main-stream Brazilian press. Free medical care, no matter how (still) imperfect it is, is not even worth praising. Free education in so many South American countries … New transport networks, free or heavily subsidised books, brilliant parks with brand new libraries that are mushrooming in Chile and Ecuador … Financial support for the poor, the fight to keep children in school, the fight to save the environment, countless programs to protect indigenous communities. Nothing, nothing, and absolutely nothing is positive in the eyes of the pro-Western South American propagandists.

This has become one huge counter-process, financed from foreign and local sources, aimed at discrediting all those great achievements.

Corruption!!! That is the new battle cry of the elites and their lackeys. Accusations of corruption are fabricated or inflated against all governments of the left: Dilma Rousseff in Brazil, Rafael Correa of Ecuador, Nicolas Maduro of Venezuela, Evo Morales of Bolivia, even Michelle Bachelet of Chile. Cristina Kirchner’s back was almost broken by constant corruption charges.

Freedom of expression could anyone take such accusations seriously, if they are coming from those who have been plundering, for over 500 years, their own continent on behalf of Europe and then the United States and multi-national corporations? Like locust, the right-wing families have been looting all the natural resources, while forcing people into near slave labour. Under horrendous feudal and fascist rulers, Latin America was converted into the pinnacle of corruption—moral and economic.

Nothing was left intact, and nothing remained pure. In order to survive in such a vile system, people had to bend, twist, and manoeuvre.

Now these same bandits clans that have been destroying the continent are smearing, pointing fingers at the governments that are, step by step, trying to reverse the trend and save the people.

The same bastards that were bombing restaurants and hotels in their own countries, planting bombs on passenger airliners, and assassinating thousands of innocent people, are talking about morality.

Are our people, our governments, expected to reach, to achieve total purity in just one or two decades, after the entire continent had been functioning for over 500 years as a bordello of Western colonialism and imperialism?

Are we going to allow ourselves to be on the defensive when facing those who robbed and raped almost everything and everybody in Latin America?

Yes, the people of Latin America were brutalised for several long centuries. They went through unimaginable suffering. They lost everything. But they never gave up. Since the holocaust performed by Spanish, Portuguese and other European barbaric conquerors, they have been rising, rebelling and fighting for their scarred land.

Pablo Neruda wrote a tremendous poem “Heights of Machu Picchu.” Eduardo Galeano wrote “Open Veins of Latin America.” It is all there, in those two tremendous works.

We have to counterattack now. What are we waiting for? Of what are we afraid? That the biggest terrorist on Earth—the West—would brand us as undemocratic? That the same West that has, for centuries, overthrown our governments, murdered our leaders as well as simple men, women and children would not give us its stamp of approval?

That we would be criticised by those countries, which are still looting, violating, lying and ruining?

Our friends, our allies are not in the West. We all know how hukewarh was the support given to Venezuela, Cuba or Ecuador in Europe and North America by those “progressive forces”, and how hostile was the mainstream. We have to wake up and join forces with those who are now standing proudly and with great determination against Western imperialism and market fundamentalism.

There is no time for experiments. This is the fight for our survival!

As I wrote earlier, in order for the Revolution to continue, we need big governments, determined cadres, loyal armies and mighty allies. We also need huge Latin American solidarity, true unity and integration. One monolithic South American block in fraternal embrace of democratically elected governments would be lost. Such an opportunity would not come back. It is here, for the first time in 500 years! Millions died to bring it here. If the Revolution is crashed now, it may not return in full force for who knows how many years. In simple terms it means that several more generations would be lost!

We have to counterattack now. What are we waiting for? Of what are we afraid? That the biggest terrorist on Earth—the West—would brand us as undemocratic? That the same West that has, for centuries, overthrown our governments, murdered our leaders as well as simple men, women and children would not give us its stamp of approval?

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As I wrote earlier, in order for the Revolution to continue, we need big governments, determined cadres, loyal armies and mighty allies. We also need huge Latin American solidarity, true unity and integration. One monolithic South American block in fraternal embrace of truly independent countries.

This is an extremely serious moment. Comrades! This is damn serious. Anarchism and the concepts of the factories administered by workers will not save us right now.

Argentina has fallen, but Venezuela is still standing. Each creek, each boulder has now to be defended, be it in Brazil, Uruguay, Ecuador, Bolivia, Chile, Venezuela, Nicaragua or Cuba.

We have to be tough, we have to be alert, and we cannot do it alone!

Venceremos nuevamente, camaradas!

globalresearch.ca
Indonesia snubs Saudi “anti-terror” coalition... Then it's capital gets hit

Finian Cunningham

Indonesia joins a growing list of countries beyond the Middle East region reportedly hit by the Islamic State group or its affiliates. Is it a case of IS simply going global, or is there something else to the latest incident in Indonesia?

On the face of it, the attacks this week in downtown Jakarta – the Indonesian capital of 10 million people – seemed to come out of nowhere, with no one knowing what to expect, and with no advanced warning.

In the Jakarta attacks, some eight armed men killed 130 people while they struck at various public venues on November 13. This week in Jakarta up to 15 armed men armed with explosives and rifles managed to kill only two civilians; the other five reportedly escaped.

From the terrorists’ point of view, the Jakarta operation was a failure. That failure was partly due to the vigilance of Indonesian police, who had increased security across the capital in the days preceding the November 13 assault. Certainly, the terrorists said was the interception of terror communications.

In a press release following the attack, the government said there were no warning signals beforehand.

Forced by its brothers to nominate Prince Bandar ben Sultan and that of the old King Abdallah. However, we don’t know if he was consulted to prepare the way or whether just as the second generation, and in any case, certain anonymous letters published in the British Press lead us to believe that they have abandoned their ambitions.

In one year, the new king of Saudi Arabia is now inevitable and the world’s fourth largest nation has been achieved because of the country’s relatively democratic transition having been able to co-opt dissident Islamist figures.

With a population of over 240 million, Indonesia is the world’s most populous Muslim nation, while a country suffered from a brutal dictator for almost five decades since 1965. Until the mid-1990s, it has since managed to steer a more benign, inclusive and secular political path.

Under President Joko Widodo, elected in 2014, Indonesia has managed to mostly get a long-lasting and marked Islamist problem.

One month ago, on December 17 Saudi Arabia launched a 34-Islamic nations anti-terror coalition, with an ostentatious announce-ment in the Saudi capital Riyadh. The surprise initiative was welcomed by Washington and London, although it was greeted with skepticism by many observers given the documented role that the Saudi rulers have had in funding and arming terror groups, including the Islamic State and other Al-Qaeda-linked militants.

Skeptics noted that the Saudi-led coalition of 34 Islamic nations appeared to be hastily cobbled together, with none of the member countries other than Saudi Arabia being known to have any real interest in fighting the menace, despite having been considered a threat to the stability of the Gulf region.

The fall of the House of Saud only tribal serfdom. What has for many years been considered a resi-
due of the past called to adapt to the modern world has thus progressively congealed until it has become the very definition of anachronistic that the Sauds and Western intellig-ence are indeed in some murky way driving jihadist terrorism for their geopolitical agenda, then it stands to reason that such terror groups could be manipulated by these same protagonists in Indonesia – or anywhere else for that matter.

A terror attack in the heart of Jakarta, apparently carried out by the IS group, would serve as a sharp warning to Indonesia over its derti-
sity putdown of the Western-backed Saudi “anti-terror” coalition.

The sudden uptick in Islamist terror activity in Indonesia and the failure of the attackers in Jakarta to inflict greater damage suggest that the assault was hastily planned. As in the orders to the operatives were hastily dispatched and acted on.

That would fit with the theory that the Saudi sponsors of terrorism was looking for a quick counter to Indonesia undermining their anti-terror charade last month.

Then its capital gets hit...

Towards the collapse of Saudi Arabia

Thierry Meyssan

In one year, the new king of Saudi Arabia, Salman, 25th son of the founder of the dynasty, has managed to consolidate his personal authority to the detriment of other branches of his family, including the clan of Prince Bandar ben Sultan and that of the old King Abdallah. However, we don’t know if he was consulted to prepare the way or whether just as the second generation, and in any case, certain anonymous letters published in the British Press lead us to believe that they have abandoned their ambitions.

In a country which has never elected a parliament, and where political par-
ties are forbidden.

In terms of its interior policy, the regime favours only the Sunni or Wahhabi half of the popula-
tion, and discriminates against the other half. Prince Mohammed ben Salman advised his father to have Sheikh Nimr Baqr al-Nimr decapitated because he had dared to defy him. In recent years, the state con-
demned to death and executed the leader of the opposition, whose only crime was to have formulated and repeated the slogan – “Despot-ism is illegitimate”.

The fact that this leader was a sheikh of the Shia movement only reinforces the feel-
ing of apartheid. As the son of the second in line to the thrones, the royals are forbidden a religious edu-
cation, and also forbidden to enter into public service. As for non-Mus-
lims, about a third of the population, they are not allowed to practise their religion and cannot hope to receive Saudi nationality.

On the international level, Prince Mohammed and his father, King Salman, are implementing policies based on those of the Bedouin tribes of the kingdom. This is the only way of understanding both their continued financing of the Afghani Taliban and the Afghan Movement of the Future, the Saudi repression of the Revolution in Bahrain.

Incidentally, we should note that the execution of Sheikh al-Nimr follows the creation of a vast anti-
terrorist Coalition of 34 states led by Riyadh. Since we know that the victim, who always stood against the use of violence, was convicted for acts of “terrorism”, we may con-
clude that this Coalition is in fact a political alliance against all other religions.

Prince Mohammed took it upon himself to launch the war against Yemen on the pretext of helping President Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi, who had been overthrown by an alliance between the al-Houthis and the army of ex-President Ali Abdullah Saleh. In reality, the war was waged in order to seize the oil fields and exploit them with Israel. Predictably, the war went wrong, and the insurgents launched incursions inside Saudi Arabia, where the army fled, abandoning its equipment.

Saudi Arabia is therefore the only state in the world which is the property of a single man, gov-

erned by this autocrat and his son, who refuse any form of ideological debate, who will not tolerate any form of opposition, and who accept only tribal sedition. What has for many years been considered a resi-
due of the past called to adapt to the modern world has thus progressively congealed until it has become the very definition of anachronistic that the Sauds and Western intellig-ence are indeed in some murky way driving jihadist terrorism for their geopolitical agenda, then it stands to reason that such terror groups could be manipulated by these same protagonists in Indonesia – or anywhere else for that matter.

A terror attack in the heart of Jakarta, apparently carried out by the IS group, would serve as a sharp warning to Indonesia over its derti-
sity putdown of the Western-backed Saudi “anti-terror” coalition.

Far from acting to prevent this tragic end, the US protectors of the kingdom are awaiting it with impatience. They continually praise Prince Mohammed’s “wisdom”, as if encouraging him to make even more mistakes.

The US objective is now to divide the country into five states. Wahlabism is the state religion, but the power of the Saudi family, whose reach and power is now transferred exclusively to Sunni tribes, while it subjects all other populations to apartheid. King Salman (80 years old) leaves the exercise of power to one of his children, Prince Moham-
med (30 years old). The Prince has seized control of the country’s major companies, has declared war on Yemen, and has just executed the leader of the opposition, Sheikh al-Nimr.

Information Clearing House

The Information Clearing House (ICH) is a not-for-profit organization that promotes freedom of speech and information. ICH seeks to provide a neutral and informative source of information to individuals and organizations engaged in the struggle against totalitarianism and to the defense of personal liberties. ICH offers a comprehensive view of the world crisis and the threat of totalitarianism.
Tensions, repression in Turkey

On January 20, a suicide bombing, evidentely carried out by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, or Daesh as it is called in Arabic, killed ten German tourists in a historic square in downtown Istanbul, Turkey. This bombing, and another carried out shortly thereafter in Diyarbakir, in the heavily Kurdish southeast of the country, have raised tensions in this country of 78 million to boiling point, and have led to threats of more repression of the government’s many critics.

The bombing in the Sultanahmet district, within sight of the beautiful Blue Mosque and a major tourist area, was carried out by a Syrian ISIS member. In addition to the dead, there were many people injured. Speculation locally is that ISIS wishes to disrupt Turkey’s lucrative tourism industry. Last year, there were several deadly bombings, also attributed to ISIS, that were aimed at Turkey’s large and disaffected Kurdish population. There the motive appears to be related to the fact that Kurdish militia in Northern Syria have become recognized as one of the most effective forces fighting against ISIS in that country’s civil war. A bombing on July 20 in Suruç killed 33 young Kurds who were meeting to organize support for the besieged people there, while another bombing on October 10, another bombing targeting a pro-Kurdish rally in the historic square in downtown Istanbul, was carried out by a Syrian ISIS member. In fact, Erdogan had earlier received credit for involving the PKK in peace negotiations to end the decades-long standoff between the Kurdish leftist group and successive Turkish governments. However, on June 7, 2015, Erdogan’s party, the AKP, lost its parliamentary majority in a surprise race that was taken by the electoral advance of another left-wing, mostly Kurdish party, the People’s Democratic Party, or HDP.

This prevented Erdogan from moving forward on his plan to change Turkey into a presidential dominated republic instead of a parliamentary democracy. After that, Erdogan, accusing the HDP of being a stalking horse for the PKK, essentially scuttled his peace approach and had the relationship between the military and the PKK resume. Erdogan and his Prime Minister, Davud Ahmetoglu, called a snap election on November 1, 2015, in an atmosphere in which the opposition HDP and its press members were under harassment and repression by the government. Unsurprisingly, the AKP majority was restored, though the HDP was not driven from parliament.

Erdogan’s critics voiced suspicion that the government, which has played a major role in efforts to overthrow Syria’s President Bashir Al Assad, had made a de facto alliance with violent Islamist factions in Syria, and was making a minimum effort against ISIS while concentrating the military’s major resources against the Kurds. The suspicion also arose that ISIS was funding itself by shipping oil out of Syria to Turkey, finding ready purchasers there while the DKP’s oil pumper was inactive.

The United States, meanwhile, has developed a de facto military alliance with Kurdish fighters in Northern Syria whom the Obama administration sees as the most effective anti-ISIS force. As the Syrian Kurdish militia is seen as closely allied to the PKK, this complicates US relations with Turkey, its ally in NATO. Erdogan has wanted to declare a no-fly zone over Northern Syria, something Obama opposes. Responding to these pressures, the Turkish government has made recent moves to hit ISIS targets in Syria and Iraq.

Erdogan has gotten his country into a complicated situation. But the bold and aggressive response to criticism remains his hallmark. In response to the academics who signed the open letter, Erdogan has called them complicit with terrorism and is evidently going after them with repressive moves. He has asked academic authorities in Turkey to require that universities fire all signatories of the letter, who may also be prosecuted for their words. He is unable to fire the international signatories, but he can insult them. He accused Noam Chomsky, the distinguished linguist and trenchant critic of imperialism, of having a “colonialist” mentality. Erdogan challenged him to come to Turkey and present his views and have them refuted. Chomsky declined the invitation.

Meanwhile, on Wednesday, a notorious Turkish gangster, Sedar Peker, called for signatories of the academic letter to be killed. He was quoted in the English-language edition of the opposition daily paper Hurriyet saying, “We will let your blood [flow] in streams and we will take a shower in your blood.” Peker was active in supporting Erdogan’s AKP in the November elections and is considered a government ally. Needless to say, his comments elicited further pointed protests from the opposition.

The suspicion also arose that ISIS was funding itself by shipping oil out of Syria into Turkey, finding ready purchasers there while the government turned a blind eye.

Region Briefs

The US recently deployed a B-52 long-range bomber to South Korea as part of its retaliation for the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’s (DPRK) successful underground hydrogen bomb test. The South Korean government also showed a hostile attitude to the DPRK, spreading anti-DPRK messages at the shared border. Both the US and South Korea are considering further military actions, such as deploying the THAAD missile system, nuclear-powered submarines and aircraft carrier Ronald Reagan to South Korea.

Human trafficking has been reduced in the border area of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia due to a three-month counter-transnation- al crime operation, according to Vietnam’s Investigation Police Department. Victims were forced into slave labour, illegal marriages, prostitution and organ sales. An estimated 3,000 people were trafficked and another 3,500 women were forced into marriage.

The Vietnamese Embassy in China recently hosted a ceremo- ny in Beijing, marking the 68th anniversary of the establishment of Vietnam-China diplomatic ties. The Vietnamese ambassador, Dang Minh Khoi, praised the ties and said his country attached special importance to China and wished to continually fos- ter the relationship in 2016. Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister Kong Xuanyou hoped to promote collaboration on the basis of mutual benefit and deal with differences for the good of the two people. For maintaining regional peace and stabili- ty, both sides also agreed to adhere to the principles of neighbouring friendliness, international law and agree- ments that had been reached by the two countries’ top leaders.

Ten major Japanese general construction contractors won con- tracts for building a new US military base in Okinawa, after they had donated AS$7.8 million to the Japanese ruling Liberal Democratic Party in 2014. Taisei Corporation won three out of seven contracts and Shinzui Corporation won one. In 2015, the Japanese government promised to give a $11.7 billion subsidy to the US military in Japan from the period of 2016 to 2020, in order to help the US to maintain a large number of troops in the country.

Hundreds of protesters blocked roads to Srinagar airport and shouted anti-India slogans in Indian-controlled Kashmir, as Indian police were accused for torturing and killing Owais Basher Malik, a college engineering student. Indian police open fired and threw tear gas shells to disperse the crowd.

China has started to register people who were born illegal- ly under the One Child Policy, or out of marriage and the official adoption system. The registration will help the people to have full access to compulsory education, medical insurance and other social benefits. According to the 2010 national census data, there are 13 million unregistered citizens in the country. China’s police, education, social security, civil affairs, health and fam- ily planning authorities recently issued a joint statement, calling for registration to be provided to everyone regardless of any reason in order to "remove restriction to citizens’ rights to register". The government also promised to ensure that previously unregistered people get the benefits due to them.
I was pleased to see the quotation in Larry Rubin’s article: “ISIS and Al-Qaeda are to Islam as the KKK is to Christianity.” (Guardian 21 January 2016).

Those who try to associate terrorism with all Muslims obviously have not also looked into the scriptures of Judaism and Christianity as well. If they did, they would also find passages that are just as violent.

I one quotes these sections in the Koran to argue that Islam is not a religion of peace, then surely, to be consistent, the same argument should apply to the others that justly dislikes terrorism.

It is well known that most of the adherents of the “Religions of the Book” - Islam, Christianity and Judaism, claim that they follow a philosophy of peace. I think that the majority of these people sincerely believe this. I have lived in a Muslim country for two years (Malaysia) and most of the Muslims I worked with were very peace-loving, helpful and compassionate people. In addition, I know many Christians and some Jews who believe like the Muslims I have met.

Where the problem lies, I believe, is whether the adherents of these religions are extreme fundamentalists or not. All the “Religions of the Book” have historical stories justifying the slaughter of people as does Hadith and Judaism. Many of these people believe that they have the right to use violence to reach their ends and they believe that God is endorsing their actions. The history of all religions show that religious extremists have caused much death and destruction.

We are currently experiencing waves of violence by extreme fundamentalists. Since 2001, we have watched fundamentalist Jews who describe themselves as Zionists and who have used their resources, just taking a huge area of land from Palestine and have been taking much more since 1967 while subjecting the Palestinians to gross human rights abuses.

However, we need to take a very close look at the effects of extreme right-wing, fundamentalist groups in the US have on the policies of the US Military Industrial Complex, Apart from the KKK, such groups include The Family, the Moral Majority, the Tea Party and Moral Rearmament (MR). Both The Family and MR were started by pro-Nazi Americans. The Family organises the Presidential Prayer Breakfasts which bring together the right extreme wings of big corporations, high ranking military and right wing politicians. This group has a great influence on US policies. Mohamed Suharto, the former brutal dictator of Indonesia, was recruited to be a luncheon in US policies in SE Asia through three prayer breakfasts. They also helped identify other extreme right wing leaders in other parts of the world as well.

In 2006, Andrew Denton produced a documentary, God on My Side, which examined the attitude of fundamentalist Christians in the US. Most of the people interviewed were religious, particularly that George Bush Jr was God’s man and that God endorsed what he did. In Afghanistan, for example, the Taliban was acceptable for the US “to make” other nations with whom their leaders disagreed. There are millions of Americans who are fundamentalist Christians who fully support the policies of the US Military Industri- al Complex that has caused so much death, suffering, huge numbers of refugees and destruction in the Middle East. These actions have con- tributed to the formation of extreme fundamentalist jihadist groups in that region.

Zbigniew Brzezinski, Jimmy Carter’s national security Advisor, admitted in a 1994 interview that the US started funding the Mujahideen a full six months before the Soviets entered Afghanistan. He also justified funding them because of the Soviet invasion.

And the cumulative and deliberate destruction this group has caused to Afghanistan and the NW of Pakistan. And earlier this year, former Brit- ish PM, Tony Blair, who was a strong supporter of George Bush’s war in Iraq, admitted that that war had led to the formation of Al Qaeda.

Trying to blame all Muslims for the current wave of violence without conceding that a lot of people have contributed to the problem is only to divide people in a way that will hinder finding solutions to stop it.

We need people of goodwill, no matter what their philosophy is, to cooperate to improve our security, cooperate to defeat ISIS and to assist the refugees from the war that our leaders have involved us in which have contributed to the problems. We also need to cease being involved in unjust wars that lead to the violence we are seeing today. Andrew (Andy) Alokia

All’s well?

So let me get this straight: Aus- tralia is part of a USA-led coa- lition fighting a violent, cruel, reactionary, religious extremist enemy in Syria and Iraq. Some of our leading USA friends in this coalition include violent, cruel, reactionary, religious extremists such as Donald Trump, Senators Ted Cruz, Ben Carson, Michele Fiore and others. That right? Mm, but hey, I guess that’s okay because all I could have done was to get us beside the USA and the zealous President George Bush in Iraq and Afghanistan previously. And in Vietnam before that. And all that went before.

Steven Katsinis

The year that was

Well, we survived last year, and now we’re back to see what calamities and catastro- phes the capitalist system has in store for those of us who are not super-rich! The last-named are the infamous 1% that owns most of the world’s wealth. They used to be called the ruling class, but “the 1%” at least recognises the fact that, numeri- cally, they’re a lot smaller than the working class. Not a fact I suspect that they want us common folk to dwell on lest we decide to do something about it.

Of course, something else they don’t want us to think about too much is the grim fact that a lot of people didn’t even survive the year. They were victims of war, terrorism or raging poverty. The imperialist powers insti- gated wars beyond number in their profit-driv- en quest to take over global resources, destroy regimes trying to be independent of imperialist control, or just to secure their own corporate investments.

For the people in the former Socialist coun- tries of Eastern Europe, the last few decades have been particularly disturbing. First they were disillusioned with the supposed “benefits” the counter-revolutionary “colour revolutions” brought them – unemployment, inflated prices, racism, etc. In a few countries there were suc- cessful revolts. But the possibility of a return to Socialism was suffi- cient for the capitalist regimes the counter-revolu- tions had installed to resort to their ultimate defence: fascism. Subversion, “spontaneous” riots by gangs of armed thugs, often brought in from other countries, and overt interference by EU and US politicians saw numerous openly fascist regimes installed from the Baltic States to Hungary to Ukraine. Atrocities by the regime installed in Ukraine led to the creation of two

state-levels the Libs continued Abbott’s attack on vital programs. They have savagely cut funding for refugees for women and children escaping domestic violence, and cut funding for the arts. The concept of free tertiary education has been abandoned and now they are pushing for secondary education to follow suit. TAFE has been wrecked and replaced by a host of fee-charging private “colleges” more interested in making money than in educating anyone. The Libs have no plans at state or federal level to fund effective public transport or to develop renewable energy. Government reluctance to seriously embrace renewable energy will adversely impact Australia’s capitalist econo- my in years to come.

Everywhere they can, corporate interests are trying to replace government involvement in running the affairs of the nation, arguing that private enterprise is “more efficient” and even “cheaper”. This corporatisation of the country is coming to a peak with the attempt to replace Medicare with private, for-profit health care, US-style. They also want to remove the gov- ernment subsidies on pharmaceuticals, leaving consumers to the tender mercies of the market. The greed of capitalists really does know no bounds.

However, this massive, hugely damag- ing but in how Australia functions is not yet a done deal. Even where the privateers have been successful so far – as in privatising our rail system, for example – a future government that puts the people’s needs and interests first can always restore them to public ownership and control by nationalising them once again. 2016 is shaping as another year of intense struggle as we always restore them to public ownership and control by nationalising them once again.
Film review by Bob Treasure

Joy

Joy is about America and capitalism or, as apologists would like to describe it, “free enterprise”. However it is a double-edged sword and needs to be viewed critically. On the plus side Joy describes the mess we all find ourselves in, and in this sense it is a “good movie”. As with Director David O Russell’s earlier farce expose of American “Law ‘n Order”, American Hustle, the emphasis is on people and their struggles to survive. Most of the shots are close-ups, so that dialogue and personal reaction are most important; the background is almost incidental.

“Almost” that is. While the context appears secondary, it is actually crucially important. Joy (Jennifer Lawrence – Hunger Games) has a family which is an allegory of American social dysfunction: her mother lives in a small bedroom compulsively watching soaps; her Latinex husband resides and rehearses his trumpet playing; her father (Robert de Niro), who her ex-husband resides and rehearses his trumpet playing, is almost incidental. Dialogue and personal reaction are the emphasis is on people and needs to be viewed critically.

In the event, Joy loses her job and “invents” an improved mop, which she patents and enjoins her family’s assistance/investment to manufacture. Clearly, the “idea” of a mop is not new and what Joy does is to add some labour-saving modifications to make it “better”.

Does she deserve some reward to drag her and her family out of the “working-class swamp”? We join Joy as she seeks to convince the world of the value of her creation, but what happens is that her creative contribution becomes lost in the process of capitalist investment, production (cheap illegal? migrant labour is employed to make the new mops), and selling: the role of American “advertising” gets a special ironic guernsey, here.

According to script, “advertising” is the medium by which “ordinary people” like Joy get to rub shoulders with the “extraordinarities”: it’s how they get their message out. We are constantly reminded that this happens best in America where, despite all the confusion, “ideas” spread via the 5th estate and social mobility is all around.

At a certain point Joy loses ownership of her idea. Of course, in a capitalist society, “ownership” is everything and so Joy must lose everything - her hypocritical family, once keen to ride the success bandwagon, now desperate wants her to sign the bankruptcy papers so they can escape with minimal damage. All social relationships again collapse, and we are sliding back into the swamp.

But Joy has learned how to survive much better the American “free enterprise”. A metaphor from one of her mother’s soap operas, where a woman is given a gun to kill an oppressor and thus save her own interests, is reinforced by Trudy (brilliantly played by Isabella Rossellini, Ingrid Bergman’s daughter, now broaching old age herself), her father’s new flame and ruthless financier, who forces Joy to pledge her willingness to kill others to protect her investment. This Joy ultimately does, metaphorically, to save “everything”, and to become a “success”.

Therefore, we must not be fooled by America’s apparent economic malaise and social dysfunction, because beneath it all the motive for continued success remains fertile. It fosters amid the desperation of its people to win success and create freedom from the bonds of necessity – it’s the dynamic of progress, forget the “gift bestowing virtue”.

The hierarchy of bottom and top consequently remains as a necessity, and is underpinned by the violence of ruthless competition and the gluttony of the swamp of underclass struggle. To cap it all, Joy is finally shown dispensing largesse to a woman (and her haggard family) “with an idea” because, after all, “she knows what it’s like”! The irony that she is in fact, now in the same position as those ghastly harbingers of the ruling class before whom she had humiliated herself in an earlier life, seems to have been forgotten. She has become Donald Trump in a power-dress: another horrid American Success Story.

If there is any further proof needed that Joy is a desperate apo logia for the current state of American capitalism just look at the list of its major producers, headed by none other than the Murdoch-owned Fox, with the real Joy Mangano as one of its pre-eminent cable TV junk-product presenters. Enough said.
Neo-liberalism raises its ugly head in South America

Jack Rasmus

After 9-11, the United States focused its most aggressive foreign policy on the Middle East – from Afghanistan to North Africa. But the deal recently worked out with Iran, the current diplomatic negotiations over Syria between US Secretary of State John Kerry, and Russia Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, and the decision to subsidise, and now export, US shale oil and gas production in a direct reversal of US past policy toward Saudi Arabia – together signal a relative shift of US policy away from the Middle East.

With a Middle East consolidation phase underway, US policy has been shifting since 2013-14 to the multinational focus that it had for decades: first, to check and contain China; second, to prevent Russia from economically integrating more deeply with Europe; and, third, to reassert more direct US influence once again, as in previous decades, over the economies and governments in Latin America.

Following his re-election in 2012, Obama announced what was called a ‘pivot’ to Asia to contain and check China’s growing economic, political and cultural influence. In 2013-14, it was the US-directed Ukraine coup – i.e. a pretext for sanctions on Russia designed to sever that country’s growing economic relations with Europe. But there is yet another US policy shift underway that is perhaps not as evident as the refocus on China or the US “cold war” offensive against Russia. It is the US pivot toward Latin America, begun in 2014, targeting in particular the key countries and economies of South America – Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina – for economic and political destabilisation as a fundamental requisite for re-introduction of neo-liberal policies in that region.

Venezuela: case example of destabilisation

Economic destabilisation in its most recent phase has been underway in Venezuela since 2013. The collapse of world oil and commodity prices, a consequence in part of the United States vs. Saudi Arabia’s bid that ended in 2014 over who controls the global price of oil, has caused the Venezuelan energy agency, the Bolivar, to collapse. The US raising its long term interest rates the past year has intensified that currency collapse. But US government and banking forces have further fanned the flames of currency collapse by encouraging speculators, operating out of Colombia and the US, to drain the Bolivar, and depress it still further. US-based media, in particular the arch-conserv- aitive Wall Street Journal, has led the way in its efforts, in concert with the US Treasury and US government in Washington, has joined in the effort by consistently reporting exaggerated claims of currency decline, as high as 100 percent, to panic Venezuelans to further dump Bolivars for dollars, thus causing even more currency crisis.

Meanwhile, multinational corporations in Venezuela continue to hoard more than US$1 billion in dollars, causing the dollar to rise and the Bolivar to fall even more. The consequence of all these forces contributing to collapse of the currency is a growing black market for dollars and shortages of key consumer and producer goods.

Just the beginning

But all that’s just the beginning. Curren- cy collapse in turn means escalating cost of imports and domestic inflation, and thus falling real incomes for small businesses and workers. The black market and dollar shortage means inability to import critical goods like medicines and food. Rising cost of imports means lack of critical materials needed to continue production, which results in falling produc- tion, plant and business closures, and rising unemployment.

Currency collapse, inflation, and recession together result in capital flight from the country, which in turn exacerbates all the above again. A vicious cycle of general economic collapse thus ensues, for which the popular government is blamed but which it has fundamentally not caused.

As this scenario in Venezuela since 2014 has worsened, the United States has targeted Venezuela’s state-owned oil company, Petroleos de Venezuela, with legal suits. The Obama gov- ernment in March 2015 also issued executive orders freezing assets of the Venezuelan govern- ment and military representatives charged with alleged “human rights” abuses. The US then recently arrested Venezuelan business- men in the United States, holding them with- out bail, no doubt to send a message to those who might still support the government. The US government has also indicted Venezuelan political and military officials recently with charges of alleged drug conspiracy, including National Guard generals who have supported the Maduro government.

This all raises implications of govern- ment corruption with the public, while giving second thoughts to other would-be military and government supporters to “think twice” about their continuing support and perhaps to con- sider “going over” to the opposition in exchange for a “deal” to drop the legal charges. The popu- lar impression grows that the economic crisis, the inflation, the shortages, the layoffs must all be associated with the corruption, which is associated with the government. It is all classic US destabilisation strategy.

As all the above economic dislocation has occurred in Venezuela, money has flowed through countless unofficial channels to the opposition parties and their politicians, ena- bling them to capture in December control of the national assembly. The leaders of the new assembly, according to media leaks, have now plans to reconstitute the Venezuelan Supreme Court to support their policies and to legally endorse their coming direct attack on the Maduro government in 2016. It is clear the goal is to either remove Maduro and his government or to render it impossible to govern.

As Julio Borges, a possible next president of the National Assembly, has declared pub- licly in recent days: if the Maduro govern- ment does not go along with the new policies of the Assembly, “it will have to be changed”. No doubt impeachment proceedings, to try to remove Maduro, will be on the agenda in Venezuela – just as it now is in Brazil. But for that, the Venezuelan Supreme Court must be changed, which makes it the immediate next front in the battle.

Argentina and Brazil

Should the new pro-US, pro-business Ven- ezuela National Assembly ever prevail over the Maduro government, the outcome economi- cally would something like that now unfolding with the Mauricio Macri government in Argentina. Argentina’s Macri has already, within days of assuming the presidency, slashed taxes for big farmers and manufactur- ers; lifted currency controls and devalued the peso by 30 percent; allowed inflation to rise overnight by 25 percent; provided US$2 bil- lion in dollar denominated bonds for Argen- tinian exporters and speculators; re-opened discussions with US hedge funds as a prelude to paying them excess interest the de Kirchner government previously denied; put thousands of government workers on notice of imminent layoffs; declared the new government’s intent to stack the supreme court in order to rubber stamp its new neo-liberal programs; and took steps to reverse Argentina’s recent media law.

And that’s just the beginning.

Politically, the neo-liberal vision will mean an overturning and restructuring of the current Supreme Court, possible changes to the exist- ing Constitution, and attempts to remove the duly-elected president from office before his term by various means. Apart from plans to stack the judiciary, as in Argentina, Venuez- eula’s new business controlled National Assembly will likely follow their reactionary class compa- nions in Brazil, and move to impeach Venezuela’s president Maduro and dismantle his popular government – just as they are attempting the same in Brazil with that country’s also recently re-elected president, Rousseff.

What happens in Venezuela, Argentina, and Brazil in the weeks ahead in 2016, is a harbinger of the intense economic and political class war in South America that is about to escalate to a higher stage in 2016.