



SEEK THE TRUTH AND SERVE HUMANITY

# Beacon

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## RAMPANT CORRUPTION AT EVERY LEVEL

For those who are thinking, 'Stop the world I want to get off!' ... their position is quite understandable. It seems as if we are living in the novel world of *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, seeing what we think we see, but really only seeing what they want us to see. For example, do we think we have a federal government that runs the country for us? No! We have a federal government that runs the country for themselves and the monied elite. Are elections in the US really a contest between the Republicans and the Democrats? No! Elections in the US are between the people and those in power ... and those in power will stop at nothing to maintain their control of the world and its resources. Is global warming being genuinely addressed? No! Global warming is a direct danger to the future of the world, and the world's leaders are prevaricating between managing it and deliberately mismanaging it despite being clearly aware and well informed by climate experts that time is rapidly running out. Are the world's leaders addressing the issues of poverty, homelessness and ill health? No, world leaders are too busy immersing themselves in self-seeking plunder, war and control of the resources of other countries.

Meanwhile, here at home while we are dealing with the worst pandemic for 100 years, we see our leaders squabbling about whether the economy is more important than the lives of its people, and we see rampant corruption at every level of government and in public and privately owned industry.

We have witnessed the appalling treatment of the elderly in the many privately owned nursing homes that are subsidised by the federal government and whose owners are making a profit from cutting services to the most vulnerable in our society. We have seen corruption with the sports rorts affair and in the Leppington Triangle land purchased by the Commonwealth for \$30 million as part of the Western Sydney Airport project at Badgerys Creek for land actually valued at \$3 million. We see the NSW leader deeply involved with a minister of her own government who has been exposed for fraud. We have seen the profligate affairs of the CEO of Australia Post wasting public money in an orgy of spending. We saw the head of ASIC (the corporate watchdog) spend \$118,000 for advice on his personal tax affairs, and the corporate watchdog's deputy chairman Daniel Crennan resign after it emerged that he claimed almost \$70,000 from taxpayers to cover his rent.

So, what does this appalling and mostly hidden corruption mean to us? It means that while this theft from the public purse continues, at the same time we suffer from a contraction in the breadth and quality of the services offered to us.

Witness, as an example, this 2012 report from the United States Institute of Medicine, which claims that '30 cents of every medical dollar goes to unnecessary healthcare, deceitful paperwork, fraud and other waste. The \$750 billion in annual waste is more than the Pentagon budget and more than enough to care for every American who lacks health insurance ... Most of the waste came from unnecessary services (\$210 billion annually), excess administrative costs (\$190 billion) and inefficient delivery of care (\$130 billion)'.

And can we rely on our mass media to expose all of this corruption? In the view of Glenn Edward Greenwald, an American journalist, author and former attorney: 'A key purpose of journalism is to provide an adversarial check on those who wield the greatest power by shining a light on what they do in the dark and informing the public about those acts.' Unfortunately, our media, mainly privately owned, strongly controls 'adversarial checks'.

So, if only 10% of the corruption iceberg is revealed, just how prevalent is it?

EDITORIAL

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BY JOAN COXSEDGE

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POLITICAL ACTIVIST, ARTIST AND WRITER; AUTHOR: THANK GOD FOR THE REVOLUTION;  
COLD TEA FOR BRANDY; OLD CUBA, WORLD HERITAGE; NUGAN HAND; SOME FACTS ABOUT LIBYA;  
BACKGROUND TO THE VIETNAM WAR; CO-AUTHORED ROOTED IN SECRECY



# Crisis in the Middle East

part I

The international scene is heartbreakingly dreadful. The downward slide has turned into an avalanche of chaos, destruction and despair, especially in the Middle East where over 350 million people exist in 15 nations, plus what's left of Palestine, with most of the inhabitants practising Islam in a variety of different sects. The borders of the region were first imposed by British and American imperialists when the Ottoman Empire broke up after WW1 to ensure that no single strong Arab nation would emerge and that the oil would remain in Western hands.

As High Commissioner, from 1920 to 1923, Sir Percy Cox presided over the birth of modern Iraq when he drew red lines on a map – said to be the climax of his career – but he left a fledgling nation fraught with political, ethnic and religious problems which have bedevilled Iraq and the Middle East ever since. When the Brits left in 1932, after installing a monarchy, the country was in a hell of a mess and it took until 1958 before Iraq shook off the last remnants of foreign control when the British-installed Hashemite regime of King Faisal II – cousin of Jordan's King Hussein – was overthrown in a bloody coup.

In 1926, France carved Lebanon out of Syria, which it had seized from the Ottoman Turks for the precise purpose of creating a pro-Western enclave in the eastern Mediterranean. In 1943, France granted the country independence, where the presidency would go to a Maronite Christian, the post of PM would go to a Sunni Muslim and the Speaker of the National Assembly to a Shi-ite Muslim. And so on throughout the ranks. Lebanon's fragile internal political balance was further strained by the influx of 120,000 refugees from Palestine in 1948, driven from their homes following the establishment of Israel.

In 1958, when Arab nationalist forces threatened to topple the archaic system, the US sent in the Marines, continuing to interfere whenever its interests were threatened. Today, the fate of the Palestinians, approximately five million people, remains unresolved being denied Lebanese citizenship or any political representation. Their displacement is the key regional



factor that draws Lebanon's neighbours, Syria and Israel, into Lebanon's internal struggles.

In 1951 in Iran, Mossadegh was appointed premier. A fierce nationalist, Mossadegh called for the nationalisation of the oil fields, which brought him into conflict with Iran's pro-Western elites and the Shah who had dismissed Mossadegh but was forced to reinstate him after massive public riots. And then in 1953, the CIA fearing Iran was moving into the Soviet orbit, orchestrated a coup helped by pro-Shah forces. The Shah quickly returned to power and immediately signed over 40% of Iran's oil fields to US companies and became one of America's most trusted allies and a brutal leader. Mossadegh died under house arrest in 1967 and in 1978 the Shah was toppled from power and was replaced by the Ayatollahs.

To better understand how we've reached such a diabolical state of affairs, we need to go back a few years earlier to the end of WW2 when Britain was broke and Europe was broken and incapable of defending its extensive international interests. The US stepped into the breach imposing its religion, anti-communism, onto the world. Almost immediately, the Americans started their Cold War campaign that got very hot at times. Fundamental rights were compromised, and the American Republic was replaced by the National Security State.

If you lift up the rock of American foreign policy since that time, out crawl a litany of horrors: invasions, bombings, the overthrowing of governments and assassination of political leaders, the suppression of movements for social change and manipulation of unions, perversion of elections and manufacture of 'news'. The list goes on and on. It's the only nation that has dropped nuclear bombs and sells and uses depleted uranium. During that time, the US bombed 21 countries deliberately and claims it bombed Pakistan, Macedonia and Bulgaria by mistake.

Ever since the US became the world's cop, it has laid waste to a span of territory from North Africa to Central Asia to the Middle East and Latin America, where a huge number of the region's people were killed and maimed, left homeless and desperate, and fled wherever they could, creating an avalanche of refugees.

## IRAQ

In 1981, when I visited Iraq with a trade union delegation, it was secular and strong, adorned with turquoise tiled domes, minarets and great mosques whose calls to the faithful echoed in our ears. Everywhere we went, we saw reminders of its great and ancient past in thousands of archaeological sites, many uncovered while excavating for new buildings. In Nineveh and Ur, writing and literature flourished when the West still lived in the Dark Ages. Back then, its thriving capital, Baghdad, was called the New York on the Tigris, but it was still possible to find traces of Old Baghdad with Mongols at the gates and caliphs in their harems.

We walked in the Suq with its labyrinth of arcades and narrow streets and tiny shops where coppersmiths beat out designs and bins overflowed with aromatic spices and herbs. We visited the 13th century Mustansiriya School, a widely renowned seat of learning, and

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dined in the Khan Murjan, a beautiful 600-year-old inn converted into a restaurant, and listened to poetry and Arabic music in a central hall more than 45 feet high with crenellated arches of brick and perforated windows. Iraq was a country that evoked the Bible, the Arabian Nights, Sinbad the Sailor and Ali Baba.

But during our visit the country was firmly controlled by the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party from the minority Sunni brand of Islam and its leader Saddam Hussein with the nine-member Revolutionary Command Council at the top of the hierarchy and a National Assembly of 250 delegates. Wherever we went, Saddam's portrait, moustached and toothy, beamed down at us from billboards, shop fronts and buildings.

Back then, despite some repression, Iraqis enjoyed a high standard of living with access to free healthcare, free education and public welfare. More than 70 per cent of the people lived in cities and took their modern interlinked infrastructure of sanitation, communications, industry and transport for granted. Alcohol was freely available, along with casinos, but such vices were discreet.

Shia and Sunni lived next door to each other and married each other and Saddam's deputy, Tariq Aziz, was a Christian. Women in Baghdad were fashionably dressed, attended universities and held some of the highest offices in the land, becoming engineers, pilots, doctors, lawyers and teachers. Many worked in factories. The official doctrine of the Ba'ath Party stated that women should have full equality with men. Iraq prospered and Saddam became one of Washington's key strategic allies in the region.



## WHITE HOUSE COWBOYS CRANKED UP THEIR ANTI-SADDAM PROPAGANDA, CLAIMING HE WAS A 'MAJOR THREAT', SO THEY COULD RESTRUCTURE THE ENTIRE REGION...

As a thank you for protecting the Arab Gulf states from Iran – then the biggest threat to US interests, it claimed – it 'rewarded' Iraq with huge quantities of weapons, technology and covert intelligence. A 1994 US Senate report documented that these rewards included anthrax and botulism agents, which were supplied by a US company, licensed by the US Commerce Department and approved by the US State Department.

We travelled freely throughout the country, even spending time up north in the troubled Kurdish region where we could see the distant mountains of Turkey. One night in Irbil in the East, we heard the sounds of gunfire and were told that Iraq had gone to war with its neighbour, Iran. Saddam Hussein had launched what he hoped would be an easy victory over a disorganised enemy, but it didn't work out like that. The death toll at the end of it was a shocking one million for Iran and up to half-a-million for Iraq.

Border clashes between the pair had continued to take place from time to time and Washington wanted both countries to bleed, but it feared Iran more. Its support for Iraq was totally opportunistic, based on its long-standing policy of controlling Middle Eastern oil, described by Washington as a '*stupendous source of strategic power and one of the greatest material prizes in world history*'.

When Iraqi troops marched into Kuwait in August 1990, US strategy changed overnight, but not for the officially stated reasons. It had nothing to do with Saddam's 'invasion' – he'd done it before with US support – and not because he was

'developing' unconventional weapons – he'd used them before with US help. But by seizing Kuwait's oil wells, Saddam threatened US control over this most valuable asset and because he aspired to the leadership of the Arab world against Israel and 'threatened' 'moderate' regimes he had to go, like Diem in Vietnam, Noriega in Panama and Milosevic in the former Yugoslavia before him.

White House cowboys cranked up their anti-Saddam propaganda, claiming he was a 'major threat', so they could restructure the entire region and above all, consolidate US control over the oil-rich Persian Gulf. This was spelled out when testimony was given to the US Congress that a pipeline through Afghanistan was crucial to move Caspian Basin oil to the Indian Ocean. For good measure, the US also stated Saddam was about to invade Saudi Arabia and made a mint out of that lie, selling the Saudis \$US21 billion of military hardware to defend their corrupt despotic throne. Weeks later the Saudis said: 'Whoops, we made a mistake. Iraq never intended to invade our country', but too late to avoid the carnage.

Despite huge protests around the world, the US and its allies went to war on the basis of another lie, that they were 'liberating' Kuwait, as if it was a real country with real freedoms when for 200 years it was a brutal dictatorship run by the corrupt al-Sabah clique. A few facts slipped out. We learned that Saddam Hussein had been given the green light to invade Kuwait by US Ambassador April Glaspie and that a PR outfit called Hill and Knowlton was paid more than \$US11 million to act for the 'Citizens for Free Kuwait' – a phoney mob – to blitz the media on the 'need' for war.

Hill and Knowlton's head openly boasted about the success of his 'press kit' in influencing hundreds of millions of people. Many of the videos shown on TV as 'news' were simply exaggerated sales propaganda put out by the arms manufacturers to their clients. In today's 'New World Order', where giant corporate interests rule our lives and public relations agencies determine foreign policy, manipulation by highly paid spin doctors and wordsmiths have become the norm and it has become increasingly difficult for ordinary people to sort out the truth from the lies.

Right from the word go the US did everything possible to sabotage efforts to negotiate a diplomatic solution. Secretary of State James Baker tricked, bribed and bullied other nations to back the use of force, thereby ushering in one of the most shameful chapters in the history of the United Nations. In contravention of its own charter, the full Security Council completely caved in to the War Party. The US 'bought' Turkey by giving them more than \$US8 billion of military hardware, increased its textile export quota by 50% and turned a blind eye to its appalling treatment of Kurds, while the World Bank and IMF did their bit by 'freeing up' \$US1.5 billion in low cost loans.

Egypt was 'forgiven' by Baker to the tune of \$US14 billion, almost wiping out its huge debt, and Syria was 'helped' by a billion dollars worth of military aid and given a 'paint-over', while Israel demanded an extra \$13 billion over and above its regular annual \$US5 billion. The vote of non-permanent Security

Council members was crucial. Only Cuba and Yemen held out. Minutes later, a senior US diplomat told the Yemeni Ambassador 'that was the most expensive "no" vote you ever cast'. Within three days, a US aid program of \$US70 million to Yemen, one of the world's poorest countries, was stopped and 800,000 Yemeni workers were expelled from Saudi Arabia.



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The day after it invaded Iraq, the US pushed the Security Council to adopt Resolution 661, banning all trade between Iraq and the rest of the world. Later resolutions tightened the noose by imposing naval and air blockades and freezing Iraq's foreign assets, unprecedented in their scope, severity and level of enforcement.

After buying its allies, the United States unleashed all its military might against a vastly inferior opponent in a six-week around-the-clock bombardment. Ninety thousand bombing runs precipitated one of the great civilian slaughters of the 20th century. The men in their flying machines dropped their anti-people weapons with names like Beehive and Bouncing Betty that shredded human beings, sucked air from lungs and burnt and blinded. Huge numbers were killed and maimed in a carefully calculated scientific war against ordinary human beings like you and me just going about their business.

### **CHURCH BANKING DETAILS**

**BANK: ANZ**

**ACCOUNT NAME: MELBOURNE  
UNITARIAN CHURCH**

**BSB: 013 275**

**ACCOUNT NO: 3011 30386**

General Shwarzkopf's strategy of 'denying the enemy an infrastructure' meant bombing Iraq's water, fuel and electricity supplies, its food distribution, its schools and hospitals and its residential areas. Raw sewage flowed in the streets. People in one residential area in Basra living close to a bridge, whose homes and shops were destroyed by US planes which consistently failed to hit the bridge, became so desperate they wanted to bomb the bridge themselves so the Yankees would stop hitting them. By the end of Gulf War 1, nearly 90% of Iraq's industrial workforce became instantly unemployed.

In clear breach of the Geneva Convention and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the shooting war was followed by eight years of brutal sanctions presided over by the US, which scuttled every attempt to lift them. As a direct result, more than a million children died, suffering from the effects of gross malnutrition, along with half-a-million adults. Diseases that had been eradicated reappeared. People were operated on without anaesthesia because hospital equipment was included among other life-saving medical items. When confronted with the number of Iraqi children that had died – more than in Hiroshima – Secretary of State Madeleine Albright was asked whether it was worth it. Yes, she replied, we think the price was worth it.

In 1998 the US unleashed yet another shooting war despite Iraq being on its knees. And yet again in 2003 when George Bush Two unleashed a full-scale invasion using 9/11 as a smokescreen, which Iraq had nothing whatever to do with. It was the last straw, destroying what was left of old Iraq and its famous museums full of priceless archaeological treasures. It also fractured the Arab world by deliberately stirring up ethnic and religious divisions and directly led to the rise of al-Qaida, ISIS, the al-Nusra front and other extremist groups, none of which were in Iraq until the US went to war. Saddam was hunted down and brutally killed in 2006. In December 2011, the US declared an official end to the war, but the violence continued.

Just imagine if the city you lived and worked in was suddenly cut off from the rest of the country, with military checkpoints at every point of entry and exit, blocking all trade and travel, with no food, medicines or other basic goods being allowed in, and with prices rising sharply and your salary stagnating or disappearing. Then all the countries around you join in the carnage, raining bombs on your city, destroying its infrastructure, with electricity and phones ceasing to work, with bridges down and factories destroyed, and sewerage plants hit.

END PART ONE



# **TUNE IN!**

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# Corbyn Suspended for Telling the Truth – A New Socialist Party is Required

The other day a thoroughly decent and honest man suffered a grave injustice. A man who has a peerless record in opposing racism and anti-Semitism was suspended by the political party he has been a member of for over fifty years, has represented it in the British Parliament since 1983, and was its leader from 2015–20.

Irony died in Britain yesterday when Jeremy Corbyn was suspended by the Labour Party with the consent and probable collusion of the man who succeeded him as leader, Sir Keir Starmer.

We now have a Tory leader in 10 Downing Street who is famed for his racist views including referring to black Africans as 'piccaninnies' with 'watermelon smiles'.

A racist Prime Minister nostalgic for the days of slavery and brutal exploitation and ownership of black people was elected by the people of England in preference to a man whose whole life has been dedicated to fighting racism and injustice.

## **CORBYN WAS BETRAYED BY HIS OWN PARTY BUREAUCRACY IN 2017**

Jeremy Corbyn would have won the 2017 general election if his campaign had not been sabotaged from within by Labour opponents. They hated him more than the Tories and refused to accept the democratic will of the Labour Party masses who elected Corbyn leader, not once but twice with a bigger majority the second time round in 2016. He led a remarkable 2017 election campaign which inspired millions and confounded all the opinion polls and political pundits as he came within a whisker of winning. He smashed the Tory majority and rocked the British Establishment. A genuine socialist was almost elected to lead the UK. Millionaires and billionaires were petrified that they would be forced to pay their taxes and public services would no longer be up for sale. Corbyn would have won if staff at the heart of the Labour Party had not actively undermined him.

Paid Labour Party staff expressing disgust for the elected leader of their party and hoping for a bad election result and undermining the effectiveness of the campaign wherever possible is what the right wing did with gusto. And after the close call of the 2017 general election the powerful and rich who make up the British Establishment and mainstream media declared war on Corbyn from every angle but specifically colluded to weaponise the scourge of anti-Semitism and throw every slur and empty accusation against Corbyn that was possible to muster.

## **AFTER 2017 CLOSE-CALL ANTI-SEMITISM WAS WEAPONISED AGAINST CORBYN**

An incredible narrative was created whereby a man that had done more in his life to confront and combat racism and anti-Semitism than anyone in British politics was cast as an anti-Semite. It was bizarre, ridiculous, and obscenely unfair and inaccurate but it was effective in creating a wholly false perception. An inordinate number of Labour anti-Semitism stories, headlines and even documentaries were produced and by 2018 polls of Jewish voters indicated an incredulous number believed the Labour Party was anti-Semitic while the problem in the Tories and Lib-Dems was perceived to be minor.

## **LABOUR BECAME HUGE UNDER CORBYN – OVER 500,000 MEMBERS**

Jeremy Corbyn attracted hundreds of thousands of new members to the Labour Party and transformed it into the biggest membership party in Europe with well over 500,000 signed up to his brand of socialism. The number of party members ever subjected to accusations of anti-Semitic behaviour never surpassed more than 300, so the anti-Semitic 'problem' in Labour amounted to 0.1% of its membership at most but the coordinated media-led campaign aided and abetted by Labour right wing MPs created a deeply warped and distorted picture that almost 62% of party members were anti-Semitic.



This was the result of a well-coordinated media campaign led by the BBC to traduce the character of Corbyn and the Labour Party under him.

Feeding from the false narrative and whipped up hysteria created by the media the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) decided to launch a formal investigation into claims of anti-Semitism within Labour to establish if they had breached the *Equality Act 2010* and were guilty of acting unlawfully in relation to anti-Semitic actions. This decision was taken in May 2019 amid the Brexit crisis and talk of an early general election. The fact the EHRC acted on the basis of complaints from vehemently anti-Corbyn organisations indicates just how loaded the dice was from the outset.

## ANTI-SEMITISM IS ABHORRENT, BUT JEREMY CORBYN IS NOT AN ANTI-SEMITE

All anti-Semitic behaviour and opinions should be condemned and confronted unreservedly. Of that there should be no doubt or debate. But the accusations of anti-Semitism against the Labour Party have been overstated and used politically to undermine Labour and Corbyn. Anti-Semitism is a problem in society as a whole. An ugly and repulsive problem. But to suggest Labour has a bigger problem than other parties or that Jeremy Corbyn is an anti-Semite is patent nonsense and lies.

Unlike the Corbyn detractors, Labour's 2020 'No Place For Antisemitism' report provides hard facts refuting media and EHRC allegations that Labour under Corbyn did not address anti-Semitism complaints.

- The Labour Party expelled 45 members in relation to antisemitism in 2019, compared to 10 in 2018 and 1 in 2017.
- After rule changes passed at Conference in September 2019 gave NEC panels the power to expel, twice the number of people were expelled in two months than had been expelled during the whole of 2018.
- NEC Disciplinary Panels heard 274 cases relating to antisemitism in 2019, a tenfold increase on the 28 cases heard in 2017.
- In 2019, 149 members were removed from the party as a result of disciplinary processes relating to antisemitism, either being expelled or quitting the party as proceedings progressed.
- The Labour Party suspended 296 members in relation to antisemitism in 2019, compared to 98 in 2018 – itself a big increase on the previous year.

Once you have read the facts contained in this report and considered that the lengthy EHRC Report which took almost 18 months to compile concludes that Labour is guilty of 'unlawful acts of indirect discrimination and harassment for which the

Labour Party is responsible' based on the conduct of TWO Labour Party members, Ken Livingstone and a Councillor called Pam Bromley, you can reasonably conclude that when Corbyn said the allegations of anti-Semitism against Labour were 'overstated' he was stating a fact.

Corbyn was a clear and present danger to the rich and powerful British Establishment and his sympathy with the Palestinian people and willingness to call out Israel's human rights abuses made him dangerous on an international plane also. America and Israel could not tolerate a pro-Palestinian British Prime Minister. The anti-Semitism campaign was a conscious and dishonest scheme to undermine his electoral credibility and the BBC played a blinder in promoting the lie at every available opportunity.

## A NEW TRADE UNION SUPPORTED SOCIALIST PARTY IS NOW URGENT

The suspension of Jeremy Corbyn from Labour is an attack on him and every single socialist still in that party. Jeremy is now suffering the consequences of being popular on the one hand but being far too pliable on the other. The day Jeremy stood back and allowed socialists like Chris Williamson be suspended was the day he succumbed to the right-wing bullies within the Labour Party hierarchy. Chris was a loyal lieutenant of Corbyn. A very capable and popular crusader for socialism. When the right wing went after him with the anti-Semitism slur Jeremy should have resisted and stood with Chris. Instead he sought to avoid an internal battle and that was his ultimate undoing. Jeremy had the backing of the members but not the comfortable and right-wing bureaucracy who used their influence to stifle Corbyn and undermine his 2017 election campaign.

The new Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer is determined to turn the party back into a Tory second eleven like in the red Tory Tony Blair days.

The challenge to other socialist Labour MPs and the trade union leaders who support socialist policies which will actually improve the lives of their members is clear. If you can't fight for the former leader of your party who raised the hopes of millions and came so close in 2017 to winning, then you are not worthy of the description of socialist. The time has come for a party of workers that promotes socialism with guile, enthusiasm, and pride. Instead of funding Starmer's Tory Party Mark II, the trade union movement should fund a real socialist party committed to changing the lives of millions for the better.

The suspension of Corbyn must be the crossing of the Rubicon for the socialist and trade union movement. Labour is already irrelevant in Scotland. It will become irrelevant in England as well soon. The time for a new force backed with trade union organisation and resources is now.



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# FORTY-FIVE YEARS ON, SECRETS OF THE BALIBO ATROCITY HAUNT AUSTRALIA

Forty-five years ago, on 16 October 1975, five Australian-based journalists near the town of Balibo were reporting on the impending Indonesian invasion of Portuguese Timor. They were Gary Cunningham, Brian Peters, Malcolm Rennie, Greg Shackleton and Tony Stewart.

The Indonesian military, specifically Yunus Yosfiah and Cristoforo da Silva, killed these young men to prevent them from broadcasting information about the invasion.

## THE BALIBO FIVE

Eight investigations have been held since. The last was a coroner's inquest in Sydney in 2007, and the findings were handed over to the Australian Federal Police. Seven years later, in October 2014, the AFP dropped the investigation, citing jurisdictional challenges and insufficient evidence.

No one has been held accountable for the slaughter of the journalists. To this day, relevant documents are denied to the Australian public, well beyond the usual thirty-year rule. This denial conceals the true extent of Australian knowledge of the invasion, and avoids offending Indonesia for fear of economic or political repercussions. It is made on the grounds of protecting 'national security'.

The irony of the claim cannot be missed. Australian citizens and regional neighbours clearly see government untrustworthiness in the Balibo Five atrocity and complicity with the occupation of East Timor. They see the bully-boy tactics against the weak and grovelling obeisance to the strong that then emboldened an Australian government to spy on the new but impoverished nation of Timor-Leste

in 2004 for the benefit of resource companies with interests in the Timor Sea.

That swindle is compounded by the current prosecutions of those who told the truth about it – former Australian intelligence officer Witness K and his lawyer Bernard Collaery. This is the spectacle of an Australian government willingly surrendering an essential component of national security – trust.

As with the Balibo Five episode and cover-up, the national security supposedly protected by secrecy concerning the matter is already undermined. The whole world knows we spied, lied, and are now concealing the corruption of past decision-makers.

The prosecutions are not for the Australian people's security, but for government revenge, and to serve as a warning to others not to allow conscience to be placed before the state. As with Balibo, Australian citizens are not safe from their own governments in thrall to greater powers or big business.

Thankfully, there have been no retaliatory acts by Timorese groups or individuals, as happens too often in other parts of the world. That level of security occurs despite Australian governments. It flows from the extraordinarily forgiving nature of the Timorese people, and their friendship with the countless Australians who cringe at the greed and deceit of recent decades.

Five journalists were killed 45 years ago for telling the truth, but few politicians of the time spoke up for them. Will our present politicians allow two Australian truth-tellers go to jail on their watch? Will the Australian public?

*Susan Connelly is a Sister of St Joseph and the convener of the Timor Sea Justice Forum.*





**The Melbourne Unitarian Peace Memorial Church has raised a number of concerns relating to the Defence Legislation Amendment (Enhancement of Defence Force Response to Emergencies) Bill 2020.**

**Our submission below to the Senate Committee details these concerns.**

This legislation was introduced on September 3 into the federal Parliament. It has passed the initial reading, with limited opposition or amendment in the House of Representatives. The Federal Member for Warringah Ms Steggall stated in Parliament 'Our defence force should never be used for quashing internal protests or the exercise of democratic rights'. Ms Steggall goes on: 'We've seen a dangerous rise of authoritarian responses to civil protests around the world and in many neighbouring nations. Some months ago, the Prime Minister himself spoke words that I found concerning in relation to the right to protest, especially around environmental issues. It would be concerning if there were any intention to use these measures in the amendment for something that was in fact quashing democratic rights.' The Member for Warringah is correct. It is particularly worrying as it suggests a lack of keen scrutiny, suspicion of sound procedures and due process. In this case, accountability, removal of barriers and so-called red tape are being sacrificed for streamlining on the altar of 'we need this for the forthcoming bushfire season'.

As it stands, the Defence Minister, after consulting with the Prime Minister, can unilaterally call out the Defence Forces and involve foreign troops and foreign police to address an Australian emergency. 'Emergency' is undefined but could conceivably include using these forces to suppress industrial action or protests such as those concerning climate change. Indeed, one wonders whether the Government is preparing to use a military response to the impact of climate change itself, instead of addressing the causes of climate change. The legislation provides the Defence Forces, including foreign and reserve troops and foreign police, immunity from civil or criminal prosecution which might arise from the actions in their 'emergencies'.

Human rights lawyer Kelly Tranter said of the Bill that 'there are a number of elements that are concerning and will impact on civil liberties'. In Tranter's briefing paper she says that the Bill not only fails to properly define 'other emergencies'. It also delegates too much responsibility for the call out to a single minister, permits foreign armies and police forces to be called in, does not restrict the use of force for defence forces and extends an unreasonable level of immunity for the defence force from criminal and civil penalties.

Bushfire and flood ADF assistance may be justified in an emergency, but is already being handled satisfactorily. On January 4 this year, in response to Defence Minister Linda Reynolds, Governor-General David Hurley agreed to make a special order to 'call out' the ADF to assist in the catastrophic fires that were sweeping the east coast of Australia. Neither the Constitution nor the *Defence Act 1903* authorises the federal government to take control of an emergency response or move 'from responding to assistance requests from states' to actively leading elements of the bushfire response. Alex Hawke, the Assistant Defence Minister, referred to this in the second reading speech on the Bill as follows: 'to respond to natural disasters and other civil emergencies'. While the federal government might not like this, it is most likely aimed at ensuring 'states rights' were not compromised.

Freedom of Information requests show that Defence is planning towards extreme climate change impacts, raising concerns that Government is preparing for a militarised response to climate breakdown. The Government should be investing in civilian capacities to manage future disasters and climate impacts. Although the explanatory note in the legislation states assistance is limited to that of 'not using force', that does not appear in the legislation. Further, the

granting of immunity, notably to institutions vested with powers to wound and kill, should cause a chill in the community. It effectively nullifies any enforceable right of instances of harm. It is also a statement of exclusion to judges that their scrutiny will not be needed. The protector knows best!

As Labor Senator Kim Carr wrote on September 22, 'Hidden in the fine print of an otherwise unremarkable bill gives legal protection to ADF personnel following lawful instruction while on service, it is an extraordinary extension of emergency Commonwealth powers'. Senator Carr goes on, 'Item 4, sub section 123AA2 provides for a **general emergency power** for the Defence Minister to deploy the ADF. Such directions do not need to be published, they are not time limited and the Minister does not need to consult with the states or territories'. Further, Carr writes: 'On the nature of the emergency – the emergency does not need to be defined. These decisions are not disallowable by the parliament. While the extension of power has been announced, who initiates this machination, remains unclear. Was it the Executive? Or the ADF?' Our church is concerned that broadness in executive power is the enemy of liberty.

There are legitimate actions that citizens may take and being confronted or suppressed by the ADF or Reserve would not be legitimate use of these forces in a healthy democracy. The use of foreign military forces and foreign police to assist in undefined

'emergencies' is of great concern. We certainly do not want foreign forces confronting or suppressing legitimate protest actions by Australian citizens.

**The Melbourne Unitarian Peace Memorial Church endorses the following recommendations for changing the Bill.**

That the Bill be sent to a Special Senate committee/ public hearing where constitutional law experts can provide advice on the constitutional validity of the legislation and human rights experts can properly assess the human rights impacts.

That the civil and criminal immunity granted to Defence Forces operating domestically be revisited to include a guarantee that the right of victims of civil or criminal misconduct can seek justice.

That the call out powers be subject to review by Parliament and that a test be introduced to provide checks and balances.

That the Defence Forces be explicitly prohibited from using force domestically. The proscription should be in the legislation.

Foreign armies or police forces should not be empowered by this legislation and should under no circumstances be granted immunity for crimes or other wrongs against citizens.

**The Melbourne Unitarian Peace Memorial Church thanks you for considering our submission.**



# DID YOU KNOW?

Democracy is popular because of the illusion of choice and participation it provides, but when you live in a society in which most people's knowledge of the world extends as far as sports, sitcoms, reality shows, and celebrity gossip, democracy becomes a very dangerous idea. Until people are properly educated and informed, instead of indoctrinated to be ignorant mindless consumers, democracy is nothing more than a clever tool used by the ruling class to subjugate the rest of us.

– Gavin Nascimento

# WE ACKNOWLEDGE

Traditional owners of the Kulin Nation, past Warriors, Elders past and present.

# Inequality a major threat

There is a very serious danger confronting our civilisation.

It is income inequality, the destroyer of civilisations, according to Stanford University professor, Walter Scheidel.

He claims that only state collapse, disease, war and revolution have really levelled income in the past, but he does concede that there are policies which might mitigate what is becoming a very dangerous trend in the USA.

Emphasis put upon the education of young people and the retraining of older people could help. The implementation of a wealth tax on the super-rich section of the 1% would also help, but he does not see a real solution in such policies [11 February 2019 *Maven Roundtable*].

## INEQUALITY IN AUSTRALIA

Inequality has become more severe than ever before in Australia.

The Australian Council of Social Services and the University of NSW, using ABS data 2017–18, found that the incomes of the top 20% were six times higher than the bottom 20%.

In the past 15 years, the wealth of the top 20% has grown by 68% but that of the bottom 20% had grown only 6%.

The average wealth of the top 20% was about \$3.2 million but the bottom 20% had only \$36,000 in assets and savings.

As the economy opens up again after the pandemic, the bottom 5% are expected to go backwards by about \$5,000 per year.

It also noted that inequality amongst younger Australians has grown faster than the overall rate.

ACOSS warns of a 'social and economic catastrophe once most COVID-19 government supports are removed' [2 September 2020 *ABC News*].

The future for the young, given the slipping scores of Australian students revealed in the latest Programme for International Student Assessment, is not encouraging.

'Australian 15-year-olds are now below the OECD average in mathematics and our results in reading and science have fallen badly,' reports Professor Holden of the UNSW [6 December 2020 *The Conversation*].

In a globalised world of international trade and labour mobility our relative level of skills becomes a major issue affecting 'productivity, living standards and income inequality'.

The starkest indication of growing inequality is the rise in homelessness.

Although Australia is one of the world's wealthiest countries, Gerry Georgatos, the national coordinator of the National Suicide Prevention and Trauma Recovery Project, points out that we have the third highest rate of homelessness in the OECD.

According to the ABS, 117,000 Australians suffer from some form of homelessness and about 20% are children aged 12 years and less.

Georgatos argues that there are some 300,000 who are actually homeless with 15,000 sleeping on the streets.

'Several years ago, Bethlehem House the only men's shelter in Hobart, found the average age of death of the homeless they supported was in the 40s [25 September 2020 *Independent Australia*].

## SUICIDE RATES ARE RELATED TO POVERTY

A US study links suicide increases with times of high unemployment, which is what the world is facing post COVID-19.

'The new study examined suicide rates from 1990 through 2015 across all 50 states and Washington and measured how they changed as the minimum wage increased ... the researchers estimated that a \$1 increase in the minimum wage corresponded with a 3.5 per cent decrease in the suicide rate for those with a high school education or less. Without some of the controls, the decrease in the suicide rate was 6 per cent. The effect was most pronounced during times of high unemployment' [14 January 2020 *NYT*].



## ANOTHER MAJOR STUDY OF SUICIDE RATES IN AUSTRALIA POINTS TO SIMILAR CONCLUSIONS

'Recent widening socioeconomic inequalities in Australian suicide have been primarily associated with declines in suicide rates in high SES areas. However, an increasing inequality in older male suicide is linked with low SES. Efforts targeting people from poor areas, especially older males, should be considered when developing suicide prevention strategy.'

[Too LS, Law PCF, Spittal MJ et al. Widening socioeconomic inequalities in Australian suicide, despite recent declines in suicide rates. *Soc Psychiatry Psychiatr Epidemiol* 53, 969–976 (2018)].

The most disadvantaged community in Australia is that of the First Nations people.

Research by journalist Gerry Georgatos found 'that the prevalence of spates of suicides among Australian Aboriginal youth are the world's highest, and that these spates are becoming more prevalent and settling into higher medians year in year out' ([www.creativespirits.info](http://www.creativespirits.info)).

## GOVERNMENT POLICIES PANDER TO OBSCENE WEALTH

Despite such data, ABC business reporter Michael Janda reported: 'Back in 1984, Australia's 200 richest people had a combined wealth of \$6.4 billion ... this year's list reveals a combined wealth of \$342 billion.'

The wealth is flowing to the top 1% [31 May 2019 ABC News].

This is part of an international trend. It has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

'A report by Swiss bank UBS found that billionaires increased their wealth by more than a quarter (27.5%) at the height of the crisis from April to July' [7 October 2020 Rupert Neate *The Guardian*].

This sort of imbalance is of course economically and socially destructive. There will be a strike back from those being fleeced.

In this developing imbalance we would expect government to tackle the problem, but here in Australia we have a ruling political party which is catering to its main supporters.

The October Frydenberg-Morrison Budget, in the words of the Australia Institute, 'will permanently widen inequality in Australia ...'

'The Australia Institute's analysis found that in 2020–21, 41% of the government's tax plan will go to the top 20% of income earners, who earn about \$102,000. The bottom 20% of taxpayers receive only 4%.

In 2021–22, 88% of the government's tax plan will go to the top 20% of income earners. The bottom 20% get nothing, the think tank found' [7 October 2020 *The Guardian*].

Tax cuts to the rich will not stimulate spending but will keep the party donors happy.

The rights of the needy, of the disadvantaged and the vulnerable are being ignored and this creates peril for social stability and the continuation of civilised society.

The Christians in the government, of which there are supposed to be many, would do well to remember the words of the Magnificat:

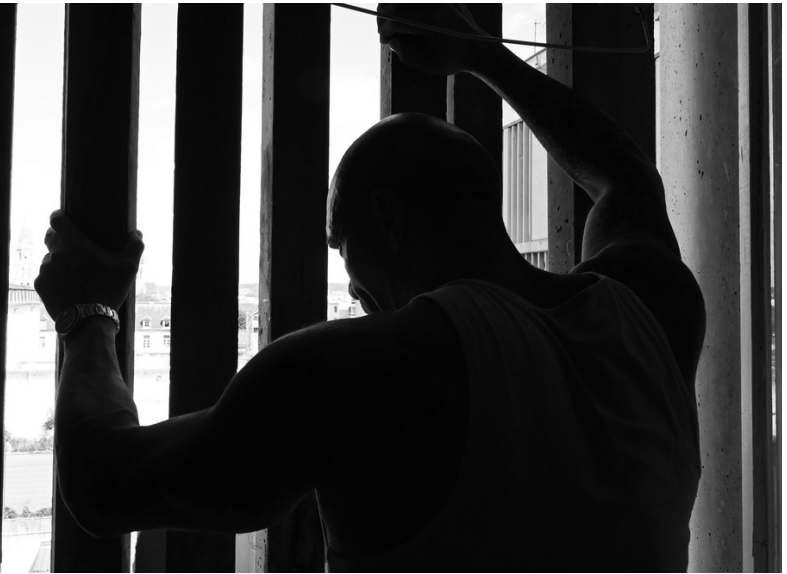
**He has scattered the proud in their conceit.  
He has cast down the mighty from  
their thrones,  
and has lifted up the lowly.  
He has filled the hungry with good things,  
and the rich he has sent away empty.** 🕯

## Did You Know?



Source: Just Foreign Policy

## US prison labour, foreign weapons-makers finance Australian government think tank ASPI



The Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) is not only funded by the Defence Department but also receives sponsorship money from foreign governments, weapons manufacturers, and US corporations that have used or are using prison workers paid as little as 23 cents an hour. Marcus Reubenstein reports.

At least 10 financial backers of ASPI have either directly or indirectly been involved in prisons and the use of prison labour and/or implicated in human trafficking.

Four of ASPI's major long-term financial backers – BAE Systems, Lockheed Martin, Boeing and Raytheon – have relied upon prison labour to build components in their military hardware.

ASPI sponsors Raytheon and Lockheed Martin directly benefit from prison labour that produces electronic components for the Patriot surface-to-air missile.

At a cost of about \$US5 million per missile, more than 10,000 Patriots have been produced, with Raytheon reporting that missiles have been supplied to 16 US allies.

### WEAPONS WORKFORCE

Prisoners making missile parts are paid as little as 23 cents per hour. UNICOR, the operator of the factories in federal prisons, discloses on its website that prison authorities can withhold some, or even all, of those wages from prisoners to pay fines and other debts.

Since it was revealed a decade ago that these defence contractors were using prison labour, Raytheon shares have risen by 430% and Lockheed Martin's by 500%. Over that time, their prison workers have not received a pay rise.

Independent news website *Wired* quotes a former civilian employee of prison labour operator UNICOR as saying, 'We make wiring harnesses for the military, the [Lockheed Martin-assembled] Patriot missile being one of them'.

UNICOR controls prison labour across 110 factories housed in at least 65 US federal prisons.

Boeing, which donated to ASPI for a decade between 2008 and 2018, jointly manufactures the F-15 jet fighter, which uses components made by forced prison labour.

The Lockheed Martin F-16 jet fighters, jointly made by General Dynamics, use similar prison labour components, sourced from UNICOR.

Lockheed Martin is one of ASPI's most loyal supporters, having provided cash sponsorship continuously for the past 16 years.

Though ASPI has never disclosed the dollar amounts paid by individual sponsors it was revealed through Senate Estimates that Lockheed Martin paid the think tank \$135,909 in 2018–19.

In 2019, Lockheed Martin began negotiations which saw the Australian government buy \$800 million of missiles from the US weapons giant.

BAE Systems, which paid money to ASPI between 2014 and 2019, also has connections to forced prison labour. UNICOR supplies advanced electro-optical equipment – a laser rangefinder – for the BAE Systems Bradley Fighting Vehicle.

### A 23-CENTS-PER-HOUR WORKFORCE

In UNICOR's factories, inmates manufacture a range of products for both civilian and military applications, with 16 of its prison factories specialising in manufacturing electronics.

Prison workers supply body armour and, according to one report, all US military combat helmets. UNICOR also reportedly supplied the US with three-quarters of all uniforms used during the Iraq War.

Prisoners without a high school diploma can only make 23 cents (US) per hour, while high school graduates can make up to \$US1.15 per hour.

However, a significant proportion of the money they 'earn' is withheld to pay court-imposed fines or financial restitution associated with their incarceration.

Despite the low rates of pay, federal prisoners are among the highest paid in the US system, with the national average wage of prison workers just 86 cents a day. In five states – Texas, Arkansas, Alabama, Georgia and Florida – prisoners must work without pay.

In some states, prisoners who refuse to work are put in solitary confinement. This practice also extends to immigration detention centres, with a report in 2018 of a Bangladeshi detainee being placed in solitary confinement for refusing to participate in a forced work program.

In 2017–18, ASPI took sponsorship money from the UAE. One of the world's richest nations, the UAE has an appalling record in human trafficking and forced labour of domestic and construction workers, according to Human Rights Watch reports.

In March 2020, the US State Department, which last year gave ASPI \$1.37 million, released a report listing 'significant human rights' violations including torture and accusations of war crimes committed by UAE-backed security forces in Yemen.

KBR (formerly Kellogg Brown & Root), a military focused engineering company, was among ASPI's first declared sponsors. For at least five years it was a major financial backer of ASPI's annual conference and in 2008 a human trafficking lawsuit was filed in the US against it in connection to its work for the US military during the Iraq War.

In 2004, a KBR subcontractor hired 13 Nepalese men to be kitchen workers in a Jordanian hotel but seized their passports and shipped them off to work at a US military base in Iraq. Twelve of the men were later kidnapped and executed by Islamic extremists.

KBR appealed and won on a legal technicality – the US Circuit Court ruled that the human trafficking was principally conducted on foreign soil.

Throughout the time of its ASPI sponsorship, KBR was also involved in an international bribery scheme. Its chairman and CEO Albert 'Jack' Stanley oversaw the payment of \$US180 million in bribes to Nigerian officials to secure a \$US6 billion contract in Nigeria. Stanley was sentenced to 2½ years prison in 2008.

At the time, KBR was a division of giant US defence contractor Halliburton. Former US Vice President Dick Cheney served five years as Halliburton chairman and CEO.

The US Justice Department found the bribes were being paid throughout Cheney's tenure although he was not directly implicated by US authorities.

*Sources: ASPI Annual Reports 2001–2019, ASPI Website US Bureau of Prisons, UNICOR, US Department of Justice, Human Rights Watch, Wired, Reuters, The Guardian, Business Insider, Harvard Prison Divest Campaign, prisonlegalnews.org, Centre for Research on Globalization, 'Prison Industry: Mapping private sector players' (Worth Rise, April 2020), APAC News*

| <div> <div>ASPI</div> <div>AUSTRALIAN STRATEGIC POLICY INSTITUTE</div> </div> <div>ASPI FUNDERS' PRISON &amp; FORCED LABOUR LINKS</div> |                                  |  |
|---|----------------------------------|--|
| <b>BAE Systems</b><br>2014-19   | Military hardware & aerospace    | -->> Prison labour components in military vehicles |
| <b>Boeing</b><br>2008-18  | Military aircraft                | -->> Prison labour components in F-15 jet fighters |
| <b>Cisco Systems</b><br>2019-   | Networking hardware systems      | -->> Prisoner staffed marketing call centres       |
| <b>KBR Inc</b><br>2004-09   | Military engineering & logistics | -->> Human trafficking lawsuit & \$US180m bribery  |
| <b>Lockheed Martin</b><br>2004-   | Aerospace & armaments            | -->> Prison labour in F-16 jets & Patriot missiles |
| <b>Microsoft</b><br>2018-   | Computer software                | -->> Prisoner staffed marketing call centres       |
| <b>Raytheon</b><br>2013-  | Missiles & defence systems       | -->> Prison labour components in Patriot missiles  |
| <b>Serco Group</b><br>2007-14   | Defence, prisons & detention     | -->> Use of immigration detainee labour            |
| <b>UAE Government</b><br>2017-18  | Nation State                     | -->> US State Dept cited human rights violations   |
| <b>Unisys</b><br>2005-19  | IT solutions & hardware          | -->> Provider of US prison phone systems           |
| <b>US Government</b><br>2018-   | Nation State                     | -->> Owner of largest US prison labour company     |



## SERCO PAYS £1 PER HOUR

Multinational private prison operator Serco, which operates prisons and immigration detention centres in Australia, paid ASPI sponsorship dollars for eight years between 2007 and 2015.

During the life of that sponsorship, an investigation revealed that Serco had replaced paid employees with detainees in two of its immigration detention centres in the UK. Those detainees were being paid as little as £1 per hour.

Independent British NGO Corporate Watch has published dozens of reports highlighting questionable practices by the company.

## LUCRATIVE PHONE SERVICES

IT company Unisys, which provided ASPI with sponsorship money between 2005 and 2019, supplies phone systems to a number of US prisons. Such phone services are very profitable, with the average cost of a local phone call in US jails \$US5.74 for 15 minutes, while in Arkansas the rate is \$US24.82 per 15 minutes.

Two other ASPI sponsors, Cisco Systems and Microsoft, use prisoner-staffed marketing call centres operated by private company Televerde. The company pays female prisoners from Arizona and Indiana the minimum wage, of which two-thirds is withheld by the correctional institution.

This program is one of the nation's most successful: one-quarter of Televerde prison employees remain with the company after their release: only 6% return to prison compared to the national average of 67%.

*Editor's Note: Using the same research methodology employed by ASPI in the production of its reports on the use of 'forced labour', information in this report was garnered from public sources including company websites and media reports. Information on commercial relationships between ASPI and governments and companies named in this article was taken from the ASPI website, ASPI Annual Reports and answers provided to an Australian Senate Estimates Committee.*

**THROUGHOUT THE  
TIME OF ITS ASPI  
SPONSORSHIP,  
KBR WAS ALSO  
INVOLVED IN AN  
INTERNATIONAL  
BRIBERY SCHEME.**

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Marcus Reubenstein is an independent journalist with more than twenty years of media experience. He spent five years at Seven News in Sydney and seven years at SBS World News where he was a senior correspondent. As a print journalist he has contributed business stories to most of Australia's major news outlets. Internationally he has worked on assignments for CNN, Eurosport and the Olympic Games Broadcasting Service. He is the founder and editor of China-focused business website, APAC News. You can follow Marcus on Twitter @ReubensteinApac.*



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