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TIME TO RESET PRIORITIES

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WHAT A WASTE OF BLOODY MONEY!

Time To Reset Priorities

By Murray Horton

In 1999 I and other Anti-Bases Campaign (ABC) members took part in a protest against the Christchurch visit of US President Bill Clinton (the only US President to ever visit Christchurch, and only the second US President to visit NZ. There have been none since). I was holding a banner with ABC founder and my dear friend, the late Bob Leonard. Bob was a very easy going, affable American-Kiwi and it took a lot to get him riled up. He very rarely used even the mildest of swear words (my obituary of Bob is in *Peace Researcher* 46, December 2013, <http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-bac-kissues/pr46.pdf>).

As we watched the lengthy motorcade of armoured limousines come sweeping up the road which the cops had cleared of other traffic, and us protesters suddenly each got a policeman virtually standing on our toes, Bob reached boiling point and let rip, right into the face of the unfortunate cop eyeballing him. I swear I saw the cop's hair blow back. Bob roared: "What a waste of bloody money!".

21 years later I was reminded of that evocatively pithy phrase as coronavirus engulfed the world in 2020. When there is such a glaring need for the top financial priority to be public health and everything connected to it, governments all over the world, including New Zealand, waste trillions on the military/intelligence complex. Let's confine ourselves to ABC's main (but not only) issue of concern, namely the NZ Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB) and its Waihopai spy base.

GCSB Given \$220m In 2020 Budget

The GCSB has existed since the late 1970s and Waihopai since the late 80s. In that time many, many hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayers' money have been spent on the GCSB spies and its Waihopai spy base. The most recent Budget (2020) alone allocated more than \$220 million to the GCSB, a \$50m increase on the previous year (no official figure has ever been published about the cost of running Waihopai, either for any individual year or in total).

The whole coronavirus pandemic has thrust the State and its economic power back into the limelight all around the world, including NZ (after decades of it being weakened and mocked, in favour of "the market". It turns out the market is not up to the job of dealing with an existential health and economic crisis). Alongside that, the notion of public service and public servants has come back into the limelight.

NZ's Director-General of Health, Dr Ashley Bloomfield, is the personification of that. He even looks like Clark Kent, Superman's alter ego. And he's the exact antithesis of Donald Trump, who wouldn't know what public service was if it bit him on his fat arse. So, the GCSB and its Waihopai staff are public servants. We, the public, pay them to serve us. And how do they serve us? Well, you would think that a central function of NZ spies (and their mates in the military) is to defend and protect the people of New Zealand from threats to our national security.

GCSB Protects Us From What Exactly?

And what have been those threats in the most recent decade? Well, there have been thousands of earthquakes in Christchurch that killed 185 people and caused billions of dollars of damage to the local and national economy. Other damaging quakes, in Kaikoura and Seddon in particular, have been in Waihopai's own backyard. Yet more big quakes have caused major damage to the nation's capital, including – very embarrassingly – Defence Headquarters and the building housing the spy agencies (GCSB, Security Intelligence Service and National Assessments Bureau).

In 2019 a foreign terrorist murdered 51 people and wounded a nearly equal

number in two Christchurch mosques, completely undetected, let alone prevented, by any spy agency. The specific brief of the GCSB is to electronically spy on foreign terrorists, particularly those with an extensive electronic footprint, which is exactly what Brenton Tarrant had. And, of course, in 2020 the NZ economy – along with the that of the rest of the world – has been decimated by the coronavirus. What has been the common denominator between these massive threats to NZ's national security? None of them were detected or prevented by the GCSB or Waihopai.

Now, you can argue that spies can't do anything about earthquakes and viruses. My point exactly – money and resources should be directed to agencies of the State that can deal with those real threats to national security. As for the blind eye towards murderous fascist terrorists, the explanation is simple – the GCSB's Five Eyes' bosses in the US National Security Agency (NSA) directed them to spy on "foreign terrorists" that have thus far proved imaginary in this country, namely Islamic ones. So, they ended up spying on the community that got murdered, not on those who murdered them.

Wasting Taxpayers' Money To Keep US Happy

Let's expand the argument out from Waihopai, the GCSB and spy agencies to the New Zealand military as a whole. How do things look when you do a cost/benefit analysis there? Like militaries anywhere in the world, New Zealand's is a major spender of taxpayers' money. Nothing has changed under this "transformational" Government. Indeed, under the influence of Coalition partner, New Zealand First and its key Ministers, Winston Peters (Deputy PM & Foreign Affairs) and Ron Mark (Defence), this Government has become more pro-American and pro-military than its National predecessor.

The 2008-17 Key-English government had sniffed the imperial wind and realised that new boots needed to be licked, meaning that National got into bed with the new emperor – China – while still trying to have a dollar each way with the old one (the US). But Labour/New Zealand First still prefer to snuggle up under the increasingly tattered and be-draggled Stars and Stripes.

Meaning that serious money gets spent to keep our old imperial masters happy. The lead article in *Peace Researcher* 56 (November

2018, <http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-backissues/pr56.pdf>) was Keith Locke's "NZ Creeping More Into The Embrace Of The US Military" and highlighted Ron Mark announcing the spending of \$2.3 billion to buy four P8 Poseidon anti-submarine warfare aircraft from giant US transnational corporation Boeing.

Global Military Spending

The most succinct summary of military spending, globally and nationally, comes from Peace Movement Aotearoa ("Global Military Spending Increases, New Zealand Ranks In Report", 27/4/20): "Global military expenditure increased for the fifth year in a row to according to figures released by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), during the Global Days of Action on Military Spending. World military expenditure totalled an estimated \$1,917 billion (US) in 2019 - an increase of 3.6% from 2018 and the largest annual growth in spending since 2010".

('Global military expenditure sees largest annual increase in a decade - says SIPRI - reaching \$1,917 billion in 2019', SIPRI, 27 April 2020, available at <http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/gdams.htm> and 'Trends in world military expenditure 2019', SIPRI Fact Sheet, April 2020 are available at <http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/gdams.htm>). *It is worth mentioning in passing that there is a historic ABC link to SIPRI. ABC founder, the late Owen Wilkes, worked for it in Stockholm in the late 1970s and early 80s. Peace Researcher 31, October 2005 (<http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-backissues/pr31.pdf>) is an Owen Wilkes special issue. MH.*

"2019's global military spending averaged out to more than \$5.25 billion (US) every day, while an average of more than 14,520 children under the age of five died every day from mainly preventable causes - lack of access to adequate food, clean water and basic medicines (Levels and Trends in Child Mortality Report, Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation, September 2019, <https://www.unicef.org/reports/levels-and-trends-child-mortality-report-2019>). That is one of the prices paid, the collateral damage that is seldom talked about, for maintaining armed forces in a state of combat readiness around the world..."



Deborah Williams with NZ "Defence" Budgets placard, Waihopai spy base protest, January 2020.

"The five largest spenders in 2019, which accounted for 62% of expenditure, were the United States, China, India, Russia and Saudi Arabia. This is the first time that two Asian states have featured among the top three military spenders (SIPRI, *ibid.*). Military expenditure increased in at least four of the world's five regions during 2019 - the highest increase was in Europe (5%), followed by Asia and Oceania (4.8%), the Americas (4.7%) and Africa (1.5%). For the fifth successive year, SIPRI could not provide an estimate of total spending in the Middle East (*ibid.*)".

New Zealand's Military Spending

"Shamefully, in 2020 New Zealand is ranked at number 13 in the SIPRI table ranking the highest increases in military spending around the world. The SIPRI figures, which are based on self-reporting by the Government, put the 2019 increase at 19%. However, the Government figures do not include military spending across all three of the Budget Votes where it is mostly itemised: Vote Defence, Vote Defence Force and Vote Education".

"The increase in military spending in the 2019 Budget - the first 'Wellbeing Budget' - when compared with the allocation in the 2018 Budget was 24.73% ('Wellbeing Budget: Shocking rise in NZ military spending', Peace Movement Aotearoa, 29 May 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/notes/peace-movement-aotearoa/wellbeing-budget-shocking-rise-in-nz-military-spending/2230103127037044>)".

"The allocation for military spending in 2019's 'Wellbeing Budget' increased to a record total of \$5,058,286,000 (NZ) - an average of \$97,274,730 (NZ) every week. By way of contrast, more than 20% of children here are estimated to live in a family with an income below the poverty line, and an estimated one in one hundred New Zealanders are homeless".

"Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, essential public services including health, education, support for persons with disabilities and housing desperately needed increased spending, yet the Government continues to prioritise military spending - in addition to the increase in 2019's Budget, in June 2019 the Government announced that it would spend \$(NZ)20 billion

over the next decade on increased combat capability, frigates and military aircraft..."

2020: Still Funding Outdated Military Concepts

Peace Movement Aotearoa updated this by analysing the 2020 Budget ("Welfare Or Warfare? Military Spending In Budget 2020"): "Military spending in the 2020 'Rebuilding Together' Budget is a total of \$4,621,354,000 - that is an average of more than \$88.8 million every week... While this is a small decrease when compared with the record amount of military spending allocated in Budget 2019, it does not go far enough. This year's allocation shows that despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government still has the same old thinking about 'security' - a focus on outdated narrow military security concepts rather than real security that meets the needs of all New Zealanders".

"Rather than continuing to focus on outdated narrow military security concepts, we urgently need to transition from maintaining combat-ready armed forces to civilian agencies that meet the wider security needs of all New Zealanders and our Pacific neighbours. Given New Zealand's comparatively limited resources, the desperate need for substantially increased social funding domestically, as well as the urgent need for climate justice in the Pacific and globally, it simply makes no sense to continue to spend billions on military equipment and activities".

"Fisheries and resource protection, border control, and maritime search and rescue could be better done by a civilian coastguard with inshore and offshore capabilities, equipped with a range of vehicles, vessels and aircraft that are suitable for our coastline, Antarctica and the Pacific, which - along with equipping civilian agencies for land-based search and rescue, and for humanitarian assistance here and overseas - would be a much cheaper option as none of these would require expensive military hardware".

"If there is any lesson to be learnt from the current pandemic, surely it is that new thinking about how best to meet our real security needs is essential. Instead of relying on an ideology that focuses on outdated narrow military security concepts, New Zealand could - and should -

lead the way. Instead of continuing down the path of spending \$20 billion plus (in addition to the annual military budget) over the next decade for increased combat capability, including new military aircraft and warships, this is an opportune time to choose a new and better way forward".

"A transition from combat-ready armed forces to civilian agencies, along with increased funding for diplomacy, would ensure New Zealand could make a far more positive contribution to wellbeing and real security for all New Zealanders, and at the regional and global levels, than it can by continuing to maintain and re-arm small but costly armed forces".

Obsolete Imperial War Exercises

And yet, despite the pandemic sweeping all before it, with giant global events such as the Olympics falling victim, the US military and its satellites - including New Zealand - are determined to press on with business as usual. Every two years there is the US-led Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) military exercise, the world's largest.

As originally planned for June 2020, it was going to be held in Hawaii, involving more than 26,000 troops from 25 countries, including more than 300 from NZ. This would have been a perfect transmission vehicle for the virus to be spread far and wide. Preparations for this were proceeding at the same time as 2,700 sailors were being evacuated from a US aircraft carrier infected with the virus. Even the world's mightiest military is no match for it.

The latest news from Cancel RIMPAC Aotearoa is that it has been postponed to August 2020 and will only be conducted at sea. Some participating nations e.g. Australia and Israel have reportedly withdrawn. But - at the time of writing - the exercise has not been cancelled and New Zealand has not withdrawn. Maire Leadbeater, veteran peace activist and ABC member, wrote to Defence Minister Ron Mark urging NZ to withdraw.

"Rules-Based International Order" Hogwash

Mark was having none of that and replied with a nonsensical assertion that such exercises allow the "New Zealand Defence Force (to play) an integral part in supporting that rules-

based international order, for the benefit of all people” (letter, 7/5/20). The activities of the US military can be described as many things but “rules-based international order” is definitely not one of them and definitely not under this President. Mark went on to detail the role of the NZ military in the fight against the virus in NZ, and its role in regional disaster relief. That is all well and good but it is not what countries have militaries for – which is to fight wars and dish out murderous violence as directed by the State.

The same thing was seen in the aftermath of the 2011 killer quake in

Christchurch, which led to the longest peacetime deployment by the Army in NZ history. I bet when those soldiers joined up it wasn't with the intention of guarding a fence around the ruins of central Christchurch for a couple of years. In terms of responding to local, national or regional disasters (be they quakes, cyclones or viruses) the same results could be achieved better by a properly resourced civil defence agency and/or a coastguard. You don't need State-sanctioned killers.

Citing the sorts of examples given by Mark simply gilds the lily of what the NZ military exists for – as a jun-

ior satellite force ready to operate as and when required by the US military. It is notable that the NZ military's most worthwhile and successful mission in recent decades – the Bougainville peace-making one – was done without any US involvement and without any weapons. NZ could maintain a small military for peacekeeping missions, be they regional ones or UN ones further afield. As for the rest of it – the whole NZ military/intelligence complex – Bob Leonard said it best: “What a waste of bloody money!” ■

WAIHOPAI SPYBASE PROTEST 2020

By Murray Horton

The Anti-Bases Campaign (ABC) held our regular protest at the Waihopai spy base in January 2020. Our press release spelled out why we were there. “The protest will make the point that Waihopai works for Donald Trump, which makes this country complicit in his downright unhinged behaviour. In 2020 Trump has added outright murder to his charge sheet and is intent on war with Iran”.

“This ‘transformative’ Government has continued NZ's membership of the Five Eyes spy alliance, which is the reason for Waihopai's existence. NZ has not uttered one word of criticism of Trump's most recent outrageous behaviour towards Iran (*i.e. the January 2020 murder, by US drone strike, of Iranian military commander, General Qasem Soleimani*). This despite Jacinda having said: ‘New Zealand has, and always has had, an independent foreign policy’”.

“The evidence shows 100% the opposite and nowhere more glaringly than at Waihopai. The fact is that NZ is the most loyal, albeit junior, satellite of the US Empire. NZ needs to only look at the very recent example of the betrayed and abandoned Syrian Kurds to see how Trump treats American ‘allies’” (*in late 2019 the US withdrew its military from fighting alongside the Kurds in Syria who had fought and defeated Islam-*

ic State. This left the Kurds exposed to invasion and attack from their long-time enemy, Turkey).

Does Nothing To Protect NZ From Terrorists

“One monotonously expressed defence of the Waihopai spy base (operated by the NZ Government Communications Security Bureau - GCSB) is that it defends NZ from terrorists. No, it doesn't. That was dramatically shown on March 15th, 2019, when a fascist white foreign (Australian) terrorist murdered 51 people at the two mosques in Christchurch. The GCSB totally missed the worst act of terrorism on NZ soil”.

“It was two country cops that ended the mass murderer's rampage; the spies were conspicuous by their absence throughout the whole thing. That is because Waihopai and the GCSB define ‘terrorists’ as per the instructions of their Five Eyes Big Brother, the US National Security Agency (NSA) and the American ‘war on terror’ in countries like Afghanistan and Iraq. They turned a blind eye to the real terrorists already here”.

“Which begs the question – if this spy base can't even protect us from terrorists, what useful purpose does it serve? Certainly nothing for the NZ people. For more than 30 years Waihopai has been NZ's most significant contribution to Washington's global effort to manipulate world business and diplomacy. And for more than 30 years the Anti-Bases Campaign has protested at Waihopai, calling for its closure”.

“Waihopai does not operate in the national interest of New Zealand. In

all but name it is a foreign spy base on NZ soil, paid for with hundreds of millions of our tax dollars; it spies on Kiwis and foreigners; it is NZ's key contribution to America's global spying & war machine. It does not protect us from terrorists. Waihopai must be closed” (ABC press release, 17/1/20, “Waihopai Drags NZ Into Donald Trump's Wars. Waihopai Does Not Protect NZ From Terrorists”).

All sorts of things had gone wrong in the build-up and a number of key people had pulled out at short notice. So, I had no expectations when we headed off to the base on the Saturday morning in something like 35 degrees heat, with blazing Sun and no shade. But there were 30-40 people there, it had a good buzz, and it all went much, much better than I had expected. Our people never fail to pleasantly surprise me.

There were a number of scheduled speakers, including me (I was also the MC). An unscheduled one was Melanie Oakley who, as Melanie Thomson (daughter of ABC founder Warren Thomson), used to be on our Committee and was a leading Waihopai participant decades ago. She gave an emotional speech, saying that she'd been away from Waihopai protests too long and finished by singing us all a song from the 1980s' Waihopai protests that she'd grown up amongst (she got a big round of applause).

Two days beforehand our star speaker (Green MP Golriz Ghahraman) pulled out on medical grounds. Golriz had last spoken at a Waihopai protest in 2018. This was the first time we hadn't had a current Green MP at a Waihopai protest

since 1996 (when the Greens first entered Parliament, as part of the former Alliance. Every Greens' Co-Leader, with the exception of James Shaw, has spoken at a Waihopai protest in the course of those 24 years).

Former Green MP Steffan Browning, a Marlborough local, has been a regular participant from years before he entered Parliament and he has continued ever since he retired from the House. He was with us again in 2020 and spoke at the base gate. And Golriz sent us her speech, which ABC Committee member, and veteran Green Party activist, Dot Lovell-Smith, read out at the base (Golriz wasn't kidding about the medical grounds. Not long after the Waihopai protest she made public that she has been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis).

Golriz Ghahraman's Speech

"E ngā mana, e ngā reo, e ngā karangatanga maha, tēnā koutou katoa. I want to begin by thanking everyone who has helped bring this protest to life year after year here at Waihopai, everyone who has ever showed up here, in body, or stood with us, against the kind of surveillance that furthers international division, assists in armed conflict, and breaches the rights of ordinary people, here in Aotearoa and in our region".

"I want to thank you, as a Green. The Green Party has long stood as part of the movement against the use of mass spying on New Zealanders and foreigners, including in our Asia Pacific neighbourhood. As a movement that comprises activists, dissidents, and voices who have for decades challenged the powers that be to advance the rights and interests of those outside of the political status quo – we know too well how surveillance can be weaponised to undermine democracy and legitimate protest".

"As a movement for peace, we know how information gathered here by this spy base is shared with those, our so-called allies, to further the interests of war and breach human rights. That is not in New Zealand's interest and it is not in the interests of global peace or security. Today, at this moment in global politics, I want to thank you, in particular, as an Iranian New Zealander and a refugee".

"We know that the forces of war are again at play and threaten the people of the Middle East. I have seen what war looks like. I remember the bloody eight-year war waged between the Iranian regime and Saddam Hussein's Iraq during the 1980s. I remember the rubble of apartment blocks in our urban centres, where ordinary people had built their lives, then living in perpetual fear and grief. I remember that our brothers, dads, sons, were conscripted to fight against their will. I remember the sea of amputees coming home from the frontlines. We all lived under screaming sirens. Under scarcity".

"But mostly, I remember the little kids, my own age, who stopped speaking because of shell shock. Later, we found out that the West, some of New Zealand's so-called allies, had sold weapons, sold surveillance, sold information, to both sides of that war. That, is what refugees are made of. Now, while the Middle East still suffers under perpetual war for profit, Aotearoa is faced with the choice: to share surveillance with the likes of Donald Trump or to stand as an independent, principled voice for peace".

"How comfortable are we that a US President who has threatened to destroy 52 targets, which admittedly include civilian and cultural sites – that would constitute premeditated war crimes - may receive assistance from this spy base? The Green Party says, as we have always said, Waihopai does not operate in the national interest of Aotearoa New

Zealand. In all but name it is a foreign spy base on NZ soil, paid for with millions of our tax dollars. It spies on Kiwis and foreigners. It is a key contribution on our behalf to America's global spying & war industry".

"The interests of peace must come first. Waihopai must be closed. Aotearoa New Zealand must stand as that independent, principled, voice, on the world stage, as we have done so well in our history. If that means standing up to our allies, for peace, then we will. That, will speak to the strength and goodness of New Zealand's values".

**"Kia hora te marino
May peace be widespread
Kia whakapapa pounamu te moana**

May the ocean become like pounamu

**Aroha atu, aroha mai
Give love, receive love**

**Tātou ia tātou katoa
Let us show respect for one another".**

Media Coverage

"Protesters at an annual demonstration against the Waihopai Spy Base, in Marlborough, say the base does nothing to prevent terrorism in New Zealand. More than 30 people gathered outside the station, about 20 kilometres outside Blenheim, on Saturday morning. Police also attended the event. Anti-Bases Campaign spokesperson and protest organiser Murray Horton said the demonstration was particularly relevant this year, given the recent ac-



Dot Lovell-Smith, ABC Committee & Green activist, delivers speech of Green MP Golriz Ghahraman

tivity in Iran and the terrorist attack in Christchurch last year.

“He said the events of March 15 (2019), in which a foreign gunman murdered 51 people at their place of worship, showed that the Waihopai spy base was not keeping New Zealanders safe. ‘The spies were conspicuous by their absence, they played absolutely no role in detecting, preventing or stopping that mass murder’, he said. ‘That particular guy, a foreign terrorist operating on New Zealand soil with a long foreign electronically engineered footprint was eventually brought down by two country cops, not by any spies’”.

“Horton had been attending the protests since they began in 1988, shortly after the Government Communications Security Bureau surveillance base became operational. He noted when the first protest took place, Ronald Reagan was the US President and Princess Diana was alive. Since that time, he said the base had continued to spy on ‘New Zealanders and foreigners alike as directed by the US National Security Agency (NSA)’”.

“Scheduled guest speaker Greens MP, Golriz Ghahraman, was unable to attend due to sickness, but had supplied a speech that was read by Green Party member Dot Lovell-Smith. As an Iranian New Zealander and a refugee, Ghahraman had reflected on living through the Iranian regime of the 1980s, and urged the base's closure in the interests of peace and New Zealand independ-

ence. ‘It is a key contribution on our behalf to America’s global spying and war industry’ she wrote”.

“Lesley Hill, who had also attended the protests for decades, said the spy base was not in New Zealand’s own interests. ‘Is it really working for us? I think it’s working for America, it’s working for the NSA and the other Five Eyes partners,’ she said. ‘It’s tying us into military alliances, and the insanity, the drone killings, the whole lot’”.

“The argument for an independent foreign policy was also raised in connection to recent news events, the assassination of Iranian Major General Soleimani by the US military earlier this month. ‘Waihopai represents the most important contribution New Zealand makes to the American military alliance’, Horton said. ‘It makes us complicit in the actions of the mad king (Trump), and it means we have blood on our hands’. Green Party Kaikōura candidate Richard McCubbin attended the protest for the first time on Saturday, and said he had learnt a lot. ‘The Greens stand for an independent foreign policy and this is an insult to that’, he said.

Protester Melanie Thomson, who used to attend the protests with her father Warren Thomson, sang the Waihopai song to the crowd, and said she was disappointed her generation had been unable to achieve more. ‘My teenage years were spent here, I was arrested with my dad here many times going through the fences, and I feel like my gener-

ation has let people down. ‘It’s the young people that are going to have to pay the price for places like this’”

(*Stuff*, 26/1/20, “Waihopai Spy Base ‘Does Nothing’ To Prevent Terrorism, Protesters Say“, Sophie Trigger, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/119016424/waihopai-spy-base-does-nothing-to-prevent-terrorism-protesters-say>). That online report – which is the best print media coverage of a Waihopai protest for years – also included many more photos than usual, plus a short video.

Marathon Campaign

Following the protest at the base, we then went into Blenheim for a very productive informal seminar and discussion. That was the first time we’d done anything in Blenheim itself for a couple of years. ABC has been protesting at Waihopai for more than 30 years. So, this campaign is definitely a marathon, not a sprint.

But we’ll keep going and urge others to join us (as they have always done over the decades). This affects all New Zealanders, because it’s being done in our name and with our money. With every passing year, the scandals involving Five Eyes, the GCSB and Waihopai, and the threats caused by them, become bigger and worse. To add insult to injury, we can see clearly now that Waihopai does nothing to protect New Zealand from real terrorists (because it’s too busy following US orders looking for imaginary ones). Time to say: “Enough is enough! Close Waihopai now!”. ■



Protesters at outer gate, Waihopai spy base, January 2020

GOVERNMENT HACKING AND SUBVERSION OF DIGITAL SECURITY

Electronic Frontier Foundation

Too often, the policies and practices of law enforcement and intelligence agencies can be disastrous for security. Attempts to weaken encryption through law, policy, or informal pressure can make technology devices less secure for everyone. Government agents may infiltrate, copy, delete, or damage data during digital investigations. The Government may even actively create and disseminate malware that can damage computers. We've seen these dangerous techniques employed both in the United States and in countries around the world, and they inevitably have the same consequence: we are less secure. Government attacks on security come in many disguises, including:

- **State-sponsored malware.** The Government will design and deploy malicious code that infects computers, a technique often employed by authoritarian governments to uncover or silence dissent. Read about State-sponsored malware at <https://www.eff.org/issues/state-sponsored-malware>.
- **Stockpiling or exploiting vulnerabilities.** The Government may find or purchase details of security vulnerabilities and then use them for investigative or "offensive" purposes. The US government has created a policy, known as the Vulnerabilities Equities Process (VEP, <https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2016/04/will-apple-ever-find-out-how-fbi-hacked-phone-faq>), to decide whether to disclose information about security vulnerabilities or instead withhold this information for its own purposes. This process is opaque, leaving the public

in the dark about how frequently security vulnerabilities are left unaddressed. Although the Government says the process is biased in favour of disclosure, there is no requirement in the VEP to tell technology makers about their security flaws.

- **Promoting crypto backdoors.** Whether through legislation, litigation, or unofficial pressure, Government attempts to undermine crypto, defeat security features, obtain "keys" to unlock encrypted data, or insert vulnerabilities into software make us all less secure.
- **Malicious hacking.** Whether sanctioned by a court or not, the Government may actively break into computers remotely. Agents may access, copy, delete, or even create data in order to suit their needs. Too often, these practices are shrouded in secrecy with inadequate oversight by the judicial system, beginning with opaque and overbroad warrants authorising installation of malware, all the way up to refusals to share details of the malware with defendants as part of a fair trial.

These tools can have dire consequences for the security and privacy of users who have done nothing wrong and are not even connected to an investigation. In other cases, these tools are disproportionate to the threat, wreaking havoc on users' computers when less invasive techniques would have been appropriate.

In balancing the need for strong security against the potential benefit of hacking and other anti-security techniques, the Government - including the courts - must carefully consider the costs to society. The public needs to be able to access secure digital tools. And as a society, we have an interest in protecting innocent users from the collateral effects of intrusive surveillance, whether by law enforcement and intelligence agencies. Above all, the Government must be accountable to the people, and that means promoting strong crypto and security. ■



BOMBER DIPLOMACY

Why Was USAF B-52 Given Permission To Feature At Warbirds Over Wanaka 2020?

By Murray Horton



Coronavirus hasn't been all bad news; there have been some unforeseen good consequences. One of the multitudes of New Zealand events forced to cancel by it was the April 2020 Warbirds Over Wanaka air show. Anti-Bases Campaign (ABC) had been alarmed to learn that the "star" of the show was scheduled to be a US Air Force B-52 Stratofortress bomber, making its first ever appearance in New Zealand (one was supposed to fly over the 2019 Wings Over Wairarapa air show but it never made it, breaking down en route).

ABC is Christchurch-based and we have had a US military transport base (Harewood) at our airport for more than 60 years. We are used to US military transport planes coming and going here, and for those planes to feature at open days at Christchurch Airport. But a B-52 bomber is a whole different kettle of fish. Because it is synonymous with the systematic aerial destruction inflicted upon Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos during the Vietnam War, people may think that B-52s are historic relics, on a par with the various vintage warplanes that are flown at NZ air shows on a regular basis.

But not so – although B-52s date back to 1952, they have been in continuous use by the US Air Force ever since, and remain so today (they have been most recently used to bomb Syria and, in 2020, were deployed to the Indian Ocean base at Diego Garcia as part of Trump's aggressive military threatening of Iran following the murder of the Iranian general in Iraq).

To quote *Wikipedia*: "The USAF continues to rely on the B-52 because it remains an effective and economical heavy bomber in the absence of sophisticated air defences, particularly in the type of missions that have been conducted since the end of the Cold War against nations with limited defensive capabilities. The B-52 has also continued in service because there has been no reliable replacement". The US military expects to keep using the B-52 until the 2050s.

Soft Power

NZ has been out of the ANZUS Treaty for nearly 35 years (the Australia, New Zealand, US military treaty that was the foundation of all New Zealand's defence and foreign policy from its inception in 1951 until the US, under President Ronald Reagan, kicked us out in 1986. It remains in force today, but only between the US and Australia).

So, what was this Wanaka visit going to be all about? It was aimed at softening up the New Zealand people to support further extending the military alliance with the US, but this time on home soil, rather than overseas. This is called "soft power". It took until 2016 for the first US Navy warship to visit NZ since the 1980s' "ANZUS row". That warship visit was under the Key National government, which is not that surprising.

But this proposed 2020 B-52 visit (and its abortive 2019 predecessor) was authorised by the Ardern Labour Coalition government. The US knows that it can keep on chipping away at NZ public opinion, aided and abetted by a sympathetic Government. The steady drip, drip, drip of soft power is intended to lead to the full resumption of "hard power" i.e. NZ as a fully functional, albeit junior, US satellite once again (that is already the reality but it is not the perception that is peddled to the NZ people).

The US military propaganda announcing the B-52 visit was aided and abetted by a media headline saying: "US Bomber To Grace Airshow". It wouldn't have graced anything – it would have disgraced the country. Allowing a B-52 into NZ is particularly provocative and offensive. It is not just any old warplane. It is a weapon of mass destruction and terrorism directed at civilians in whichever country it operates, a veritable Angel of Death.

When, or if, there is another Warbirds Over Wanaka air show, why don't the organisers (and their political accomplices) go the whole hog and invite over one of the Russian warplanes that are bombing Syrian civilians, including hospitals? How about inviting Assad's air force to put on a display of barrel bombing civilians? Let's see how "our" terrorist bombers shape up against "their" terrorist bombers. ABC sees any NZ visit by a B-52 as a dangerous precedent. They have no place in New Zealand. Nor do any other US warplanes. ■

SPOOKY BITS

By Warren Thomson

New Zealand's Role In US Middle East Military Base

A recent edition of *Air Force News* revealed that a senior NZ Defence Force (NZDF) officer served a six month posting at the Al-Udeid air-base in Qatar, placing New Zealanders at the heart of the main targeting and bombing centre of that region, according to researcher Darius Shahtahmasebi (*Global Research*, 4/2/20).

Shahtahmasebi notes that although the NZ government has declared the end of NZDF deployments in Iraq, nothing has been said about the future of NZDF staff deployment to a US military base at the centre of a large proportion of US bombing missions in the Middle East. Operations of the base are implicated in large numbers of civilian casualties. The *Global Research* article says a recent issue of *Air Force News* revealed that a senior air force officer, Group Captain Shaun Sexton, served a six-month posting at the Qatar base (<http://airforce.mil.nz/downloads/pdf/airforce-news/afn211.pdf>).

The presence of New Zealand staff at the base has been kept largely quiet by the New Zealand military. According to information released by NZDF in response to an Official Information Act request, there were five New Zealand personnel currently serving at the Al-Udeid Airbase. Two of the personnel were involved with coordinating "air tasking" in Iraq and Syria and missions in Afghanistan. The base was responsible for 8,713 airstrikes (or weapons released) in 2018, 39,577 strikes in 2017 and 30,743 in 2016, including both manned and unmanned aircraft (*Global Research*, *ibid.*).

In the article, the NZDF confirmed that New Zealand personnel work across the region, including operations in Syria, but stated its troops are not involved in combat operations. An NZDF spokesperson said the organisation is confident its personnel on all operations are con-



RNZAF member (right), with USAF counterpart, at the Combined Air and Space Operations Center, Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar, 2018

ducting themselves in accordance with both domestic and international legal obligations. Shahtahmasebi cites news reports of operations targeting Mosul (Iraq) and Raqqa (Syria), run from the base, that resulted in the destruction of large areas of the cities and the "appalling rate of civilian casualties" with the deaths of thousands (mostly unreported).

Of most interest to *Peace Researcher* readers are the three NZ personnel supporting intelligence functions within the US Central Command Forward Headquarters at the base. A 2019 *Stuff Circuit* report (<https://interactives.stuff.co.nz/2018/02/the-base/>) suggested that NZDF personnel had been secretly operating at the Combined Air Operations Center at Al-Udeid since at least 2016 (*ibid.*). The relationship between NZDF and Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB) personnel remains to be revealed.

Worst Fears About GCSB Attitudes Realised

Belligerent comments from GCSB officers, revealed in Government Communications Security Bureau emails show, unfortunately, the spirit of gung-ho covert action is alive and well amongst our undercover agents. Secret GCSB emails, part of public disclosure of confidential records from the Operation Burnham Inquiry, involved NZ spooks discussing a New Zealand military op-

eration aimed at destroying an Afghan compound housing women and children.

They discussed the intelligence gathered for the action showing "women and kids and goats" coming in and out of the compound, and announced "There ain't gonna be much of those compounds left once they've finished" (*Stuff*, 16/12/19). One officer, joking about one of the suspected terrorists targeted in the raid, asked: "Speaking of which, is anyone going to go and snot those guys?"

One revealed conversation took place at Trax bar, in Wellington's train station, and related to information from an Afghanistan-based GCSB officer that an "op" was planned, and that authorisation for the kill or capture of three insurgents had been sought under urgency. Officially the GCSB has said the recorded comments do not meet professional standards, but alarms should be raised about the attitudes at the Bureau such comments represent.

"The GCSB email chain was among a tranche of documents released on Monday, most regarding the possible torture of suspected insurgents by Afghan authorities" (*Stuff*, *ibid.*). The July 2019 report of the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security did not find direct evidence of NZ personnel involved in torture, but did find a lot of examples of the spooks using information extracted under torture in their work (<http://www.igis.govt.nz/assets/Inquiries/>

CIA-Detention-Programme.pdf).

The Operation Burnham Inquiry has been investigating allegations that Afghan civilians were killed in an SAS-led raid in Afghanistan in 2010, stemming from the Nicky Hager/Jon Stephenson "Hit And Run"* book. The Inquiry findings were expected in March 2020, but there have been considerable delays. The Inquiry struggled to obtain classified documents from the NZDF and security agencies, and hearings were derailed by an internal NZDF row over a report into civilian deaths apparently hidden away by Defence Force staff in 2011. *Reviewed by Jeremy Agar in *Peace Researcher* 53, June 2017, <http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-backissues/pr53.pdf>. Ed.

What our spooks and soldiers have been doing, and supporting, in nasty operations carried out in regions far from our core interests, is a subject that nobody in Government wants to confront and one that fails to hold public interest for long. But the small bits of information that become available, often long after the incidents occurred, reinforce a constant theme of *Peace Researcher*: the public relations stories from the GCSB which promote the agency as the white knight of NZ's cybersecurity domain hide a much grimmer reality. Five Eyes and US military operations involve this country in dirty and undemocratic realpolitik that any decent citizenry would deplore.

As this *Peace Researcher* was being prepared for publication, the latest media release from Andrew Hampton, GCSB Director, warned us of "... cyber actors taking advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic to carry out malicious cyber activity" and plaintively "... call[s] upon all cyber actors to refrain from activity that may jeopardise national or international responses to the COVID-19 pandemic" (GCSB media release, 13/5/20). In February 2020, Hampton said the GCSB worked on about 340 cyber incidents in 2019, more than a third of which could be linked back to foreign states, including Russia, China and North Korea (RNZ, 10/2/20).

Intelligence IG Looking At Activities Related To Afghanistan

"The Office of the Inspector-General

of Intelligence and Security has completed a draft report for her inquiry into the role and knowledge of the intelligence agencies into certain events in Afghanistan. This Afghanistan Inquiry is entirely independent from the Government Inquiry into Operation Burnham, but concerns some of the same events, and, as appropriate, we have liaised with that Inquiry pursuant to the terms of our Memorandum Of Understanding".

"Our Afghanistan Inquiry has four terms of reference, and examines those issues from the knowledge and perspective of the intelligence agencies. ... The Inspector-General is required by law to publish an account of all inquiries. Our aim is for our unclassified report to be published in the next few months" (Afghanistan Inquiry: Progress Report No 2: 19/3/20).

Police Apologies To Nicky Hager And Martyn Bradbury

The Police have made apologies to Nicky Hager, his daughter Julia, and Martyn Bradbury, for breaches of privacy and civil rights following their 2014 investigation into hacked information of former Whale Oil blogger Cameron Slater. The Police were criticised for failing to sufficiently address whether the officers had reasonable grounds to believe they would find relevant evidence at Hager's home.

(For details, see my *Spooky Bits* in *Peace Researcher* 58, November 2019, <http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-backissues/PR58.pdf>). The Independent Police Conduct Authority ruled Police failed to fulfil their duty of candour when they seized private information about Nicky from Air NZ, Paypal and NZ Customs. The apology to Bradbury related also to the way they accessed his financial records.

Can We Trust The Warrant Process?

As the powers of the GCSB and Security Intelligence Service (SIS) have been extensively expanded in recent years, some legislative sceptics have been bought off by the promise of warrant systems that are supposed to ensure limits to spookery. The changes have meant

there is some better supervision of activities, but it is very dependent on the persons who approve or monitor the warrants.

In the early years of Inspectors-General, NZ was very poorly served by such people. But another major flaw centres on the information provided to obtain warrants and the lack of time/resources for an issuing authority to check it. As evidenced in the previous item, the Police warrant system can be bent. How much more so for our spooks?

In recent US developments there has been scathing criticism of Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) failings when the Bureau is applying for secret surveillance warrants. An American Justice Department audit found a multitude of flaws in FBI surveillance applications and reported widespread problems with the law enforcement agency's process for ensuring that facts are backing up the claims made to judges when seeking a warrant. An earlier inquiry had found numerous errors in applications to monitor former Trump campaign foreign policy adviser Carter Page.

US Justice Department Inspector-General Michael Horowitz's audit team investigated 29 applications for surveillance of US citizens or Green Card holders over a five-year period. Horowitz found an average of 20 errors in each of the applications. The investigation emphasises the concerning problem of adequately vetting warrants approved for covert operations. Another troubling finding in Horowitz's ongoing audit was that files providing detailed support for four of the 29 applications reviewed were missing.

However, we can comfort ourselves by noting that NZ spooks will surely follow procedures much more accurately and ethically than Americans! Except for the evidence of problems in Police warrants noted above, and the missing files which were not available for some of former Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security Cheryl Gwyn's investigations. Gwyn reported ongoing struggles to be given access to staff emails and attachments from the agencies, even though she was legally empowered to see these (RNZ, 17/6/19).

What Did Our Spies Know And When Did They Know It?

American intelligence officers knew a new virus was sweeping through central China in November 2019 but they couldn't get the White House to take any notice, according to *ABC News*. Martyn Bradbury (*Daily Blog*, 10/4/20) raises the question as to whether our own spooks were given information about the virus and/or were briefed as a Five Eyes accomplice.

"Seeing as our spy base spies on Chinese satellites, it's possible we were helping gather this information so questions must be answered". In this case, the spooks can't win; either they were given the information and made little of it, or they didn't have any information and have to front up to say why not – given that our access to privileged information is the *raison d'être* for NZ's Five Eyes membership.

Covid-19 Tracking And The Privacy Issue

The coronavirus pandemic has raised so many issues so quickly that most of us are stunned; in terms of the issues *Peace Researcher* deals with, one of the conundrums is whether to accept that the virus cannot be controlled without contact tracing, or be horror-stricken by the concept of a Government following every step and contact you make.

The Ministry of Health has been consulting with the State electronic spy agency, the GCSB, over tracing people as it works to get its Covid-19 systems up to speed. This comes amid growing concern globally that contact tracing could lead to mass surveillance, and local concern the Government is not being transparent enough.

The Ministry told *RNZ* any data held about individuals would be used only to help the public health response and "not be used for other purposes" (*RNZ*). "We expect the majority of the information held will also regularly and automatically be deleted". However, it would be a simple matter for the GCSB to hack into the Ministry of Health's data and use it for their own purposes. Imagine a spook data base that detailed where

every citizen went and with whom every citizen spoke.

Digital Identity NZ Executive Director Andrew Weaver said the Ministry asking the GCSB about cyber security was "absolutely appropriate", but that the Ministry's short statement to *RNZ* was not clear enough. "We're speculating that they are talking about the cyber security of things like an app-based tool, but we don't know because we don't know if those were the questions that they were asking the GCSB".

"Globally, Amnesty International, civil liberty groups and some technology groups have expressed concern". Covid-19 tracing could be misused for mass surveillance, using, for example, smartphone GPS tracking technology (*RNZ*, reported on *Stuff*, 20/4/20). The issues raised are extremely difficult. But the issues of privacy need to be seriously addressed before the tracking of individuals becomes embedded.

Five Eyes Network Contradicts White House Theory Covid-19 Leaked From Lab

President Donald Trump has contradicted his own intelligence agencies by suggesting he has seen evidence that coronavirus originated in a Chinese laboratory. As Trump flails around to find someone to blame for the US Covid-19 disaster, and ramp up his 2020 re-election campaign, one of his themes has been to attribute the pandemic to mysterious Chinese sources. However, intelligence sources have told the *Guardian* that there is no current evidence to suggest that coronavirus leaked from a Chinese research laboratory, while the White House continues to claim that there is growing proof this is how the pandemic began (*Guardian*, 4/5/20).

Mike Pompeo, the US Secretary of State, said: "I can tell you that there is a significant amount of evidence that this came from that laboratory in Wuhan," which is totally at variance with Washington's spy bosses – of whom Pompeo used to be a leading member. In a rare public statement, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, which oversees US spy agencies, said it concurs with the "wide scientific consensus" regarding Covid-19's natural origins. In other words, Trump

and Pompeo are lying.

Asked later to clarify his comments, Trump said: "I can't tell you that. I'm not allowed to tell you that" [*BBC* 1/5/20, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/03/mike-pompeo-donald-trump-coronavirus-chinese-laboratory>). British and other Five Eyes agencies do believe that Beijing has not necessarily been open about how coronavirus initially spread in Wuhan at the start of 2020. But they are nervous about getting involved in an escalating international situation. The *Guardian* cites one Australian intelligence source as attributing the story to the US itself, the old misinformation trick to malign opponents.

Trump Tries To Take Control Of US Spooks

A Trump loyalist will be the next Director of National Intelligence (DNI), only nine months after being rejected for the post because he misled officials by exaggerating his security experience. John Ratcliffe is a Republican Congressman who was one of Trump's most fervent advocates in 2019's impeachment hearings. He falsely claimed on his Website to have "arrested over 300 illegal immigrants in a single day" and had "put terrorists in prison" although he had not tried a terrorism case in his time as a US attorney (*Guardian*, 6/5/20).

His two predecessors were forced from their posts because some findings of the intelligence community were not acceptable to Trump. Acting Director of National Intelligence Admiral Joseph Maguire was disposed of after Maguire defended a subordinate who had briefed Congress on Russian meddling in the 2016 election. And one of Maguire's aides, Shelby Pierson, told the House Intelligence Committee in February 2020 that it was the consensus assessment of the Central Intelligence Agency, National Security Agency, and FBI that Russian hackers aren't just meddling in 2020's US elections, they're trying to help Trump win re-election (*Time*, 20/2/20).

The man who replaced Maguire as Acting Director of National Intelligence, Richard Grenell, was also a Trump loyalist but made the mistake of issuing a statement that contradicted the President. "The Intelli-

gence Community ... concurs with the wide scientific consensus that the COVID-19 virus was not man-made or genetically modified," the statement read (<https://www.dni.gov/index.php/newsroom/press-releases/item/2112-intelligence-community-statement-on-origins-of-covid-19>).

The *New York Times* has reported that the Trump Administration is pushing the intelligence community to reach a conclusion blaming China (14/5/20, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/30/us/politics/trump-administration-intelligence-coronavirus-china.html>).

Trump Loyalist Infiltrates Political Opponents

According to the *New York Times*, former UK and US spooks have been recruited by a security contractor to infiltrate opponents of Trump [*Press*, 10/3/20]. Erik Prince, who has a long history of organising mercenaries to get involved in various conflicts around the world, established a spy programme targeting Democratic Party campaigns and a teaching union, the *NYT* reports.

Prince, who was head of the notorious Blackwater security company, has close ties with the Trump Administration and his sister is Betsy DeVos, the hardline US Secretary of Education.

US Senate Chair's Criminal Misuse Of Data

Republican Senator Richard Burr has stepped down as Chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee after the FBI launched an investigation into a series of stock trades he made earlier in 2020 as the coronavirus pandemic began to spread. Burr, the senior Senator from North Carolina, is under investigation for selling stocks after attending a briefing on the potential impact of the pandemic.

In March 2020, *ProPublica* reported that Burr dumped between \$US628,000 and \$US1.72 million's worth of holdings on February 13, shortly after Congress began receiving intelligence briefings about the threat of the coronavirus. A classic case of the misuse of intelligence data (from *Huffington Post*, 14/5/20).

Ex-CIA Killer Driver Officially A Fugitive

On May 12 2020, an Interpol notice was circulated worldwide making Anne Sacoolas an international criminal escaping justice if she sets foot outside her native United States. But the United States refuses to allow extradition of Sacoolas, 42, to be tried on suspicion of dangerous driving causing the death of UK citizen, Harry Dunn, 19, outside a US intelligence base in England (see my *Spooky Bits* in *Peace Researcher* 58, November 2019, <http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-bac-kissues/PR58.pdf>).

Dunn's mother, Charlotte Charles, 44, who learnt in February 2020 about the spying past of Mrs Sacoolas from a Sunday newspaper, has consistently attacked the UK government, and, in particular, Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab, who has been accused of hiding from Harry Dunn's bereaved family the fact that the woman charged with killing him was a US Central Intelligence Agency spy. It is also now clear that the Foreign Office facilitated the rapid exit of the killer driver back to the USA.

Human rights commentator and former British ambassador, Craig Murray, on his Website as far back as October 2019, alleged Jonathan Sacoolas (husband of Anne) does not have, and has never had, any entitlement to diplomatic immunity in international law. "Sacoolas works as an US National Security Agency (NSA) technical officer at the communications interceptions post at RAF Croughton. His role is support to the interception of communications from British citizens." (That is, he is a Five Eyes spook).

British Government Accused Of Covering Up War Crimes

The UK government and armed forces have been accused of covering up the killing of civilians by British troops in Afghanistan and Iraq. An investigation by *BBC Panorama* and the *Sunday Times* has spoken to 11 British detectives who said they found credible evidence of war crimes by British soldiers in Afghanistan and Iraq (*BBC*, 17/11/19). Leaked documents allegedly contain evidence implicating troops in killing children and the torture of civilians.



© Jamie Wasserman for The Daily Mail
Anne Sacoolas, fugitive ex-CIA killer driver, free in US

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) rejected the unsubstantiated allegation of a pattern of cover-ups. But one detective told *Panorama*: "The Ministry of Defence had no intention of prosecuting any soldier of whatever rank he was unless it was absolutely necessary, and they couldn't wriggle their way out of it". *Panorama* has re-examined the evidence in a number of alleged war crimes cases.

One such case investigated by IHAT (Iraq Historic Allegations Team) was the shooting of an Iraqi policeman by a British soldier on patrol in Basra in 2003. Raid al-Mosawi was shot in an alleyway as he left his family home, and later died from his wounds. The incident was investigated at the time by the British soldier's commanding officer, Major Christopher Suss-Francksen.

Within 24 hours, Suss-Francksen concluded the shooting was lawful because the Iraqi police officer had fired first and the soldier had acted in self-defence. His report said another British soldier had seen the shooting and confirmed the Iraqi had fired first. IHAT detectives spent two years investigating the case and interviewed 80 British soldiers, including the soldier who had supposedly witnessed the shooting. But he told detectives he was not in the alleyway. In his statement to IHAT, this soldier directly contradicted Major Suss-Francksen's report: "This report is inaccurate and gives the impression that I was an eyewitness. This is not true" (*Guardian*, 17/11/19).

In 2014, the UK government set up Operation Northmoor to look into 52 alleged illegal killings. But the closure of this investigation was then announced by the Government before Royal Military Police detectives even had a chance to interview the key Afghan witnesses. No case investigated by IHAT or Operation Northmoor has led to a prosecution. The *Guardian* article (ibid.) reports a senior Special Air Service (SAS) commander was referred to prosecutors for attempting to pervert the course of justice.

A Grievous Miscarriage Of Justice

Abdelbaset al-Megrahi from Libya was convicted in 2001 of the 1988 Lockerbie bombing, the only person

found guilty of the atrocity. He was sentenced to 27 years in prison but died of prostate cancer in 2012 aged 60 after being released in 2009 on compassionate grounds. It now seems a grievous miscarriage of justice, possibly one of the worst in British legal history, may have occurred, a Scottish criminal cases' review commission has found (*Daily Mail*, 12/3/20). Pan American flight 103 was on its way from London to New York when it exploded above Lockerbie, Scotland on 21 December 1988, killing 243 passengers and 16 crew, and a further 11 people on the ground.

Iran has long been suspected of being behind the attack, ordering a Syrian-Palestinian group to carry out a revenge attack for the downing of an Iranian Airbus flight by the USS *Vincennes* on 3 July 1988, which killed all 290 on board. The governments of the United States and the United Kingdom "stand exposed as having lived a monumental lie for 31 years, imprisoning a man they knew to be innocent and punishing the Libyan people for a crime which they did not commit," Megrahi's lawyer Aamer Anwar said (*Guardian* 11/3/20).

Beware Definitions Of "Terrorism"

A British Counter-Terrorism Police document distributed to medical staff and teachers as part of anti-extremism briefings included Greenpeace, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and other non-violent groups as well as neo-Nazis, the *Guardian* reports (17/1/20). The guide, produced by Counter-Terrorism Policing, is used across England as part of training for Prevent, the anti-radicalisation scheme designed to catch those at risk of committing terrorist violence.

The list of groups viewed as a potential concern contained in the 24-page document included Extinction Rebellion, Greenpeace – among whose supporters are Dame Judi Dench, Stephen Fry, Gillian Anderson and Joanna Lumley – and the ocean pollution campaigners Sea Shepherd, whose supporters include Sean Connery and Pierce Brosnan. Also included is Stop the Badger Cull, which is backed by Sir Brian May, the Queen guitarist. Police claimed documents uncovered by the *Guardian* that listed the envi-

ronmental protest group Extinction Rebellion (XR) alongside far-Right extremists and jihadists were a local error.

Boris Promotes Arms For Dictators

The UK government has quietly drawn up proposals to lend other countries £1bn of public money so that they can buy British-made bombs and surveillance technology. The plan was slipped into the annual Budget; the Government announced the creation of "a new £1bn (fund) to support overseas buyers of UK defence and security goods and services".

The cash to support arms dealers will also promote sales in the Middle East. According to the *Independent* (24/12/19), the value of UK arms sold to a Saudi-led military coalition increased by 45% over the last five years – despite the introduction of a UK supported treaty to limit the sales of weapons. Since January 2015, £6.4 billion (approximately \$NZ13 billion) worth of UK arms have been sold to Saudi Arabia and its allies.

In January 2019, arms sales to Saudi Arabia were suspended because the Court of Appeal ruled they had gone ahead without due assessment and selling arms to be used in Yemen was "irrational and therefore illegal". But the Tory government appealed the ruling and will continue to peddle armaments at a huge profit until the case is finally decided in the Supreme Court – which may still be months away.

UK Defence Costs Out Of Control

The British National Audit Office has reported Ministry of Defence mistakes led to Trident nuclear "deterrent" programme costs rising by £1.35 billion, and has blamed poor management by the Ministry of Defence. The work has been carried out by three monopolistic suppliers – the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE), Rolls Royce and BAE Systems – and contracts cannot be terminated if poor performance is identified, the report said (*Guardian*, 10/1/20). The National Audit Office has also said that work to complete the building and maintenance of the UK's Trident nuclear deterrent in

Cumbria, Derbyshire and Berkshire will also be completed more than six years later than planned.

Aussies Throwing A Fortune Down The Dunny

As reported in previous issues of *Peace Researcher*, successive Australian governments have committed to purchasing a large number of the technological disaster touted by the Pentagon as the greatest fighter/bomber plane ever. Here is a comment on the fiasco by Connor O'Brien from *Politico*, 19/11/19:

“The most expensive weapon in Pentagon history is basically broken. F-35 fighter jets aren't meeting major combat readiness metrics, the Pentagon's chief weapons tester told lawmakers. The jets are plagued by maintenance problems, including shortages of spare parts and poor performance of its computer systems. The Lockheed Martin-built jet (programme), estimated at a cost of over \$US1 trillion, is the most expensive weapons acquisition programme in Pentagon history — and the Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps and numerous foreign allies are all depending on it”. Not so much the poor, hungry and brutalised of the world, I reckon.

Secret Australian Arms Sales To Repressive Governments

Documents obtained by the *Guardi-*

an show the Australian government issued nearly 100 permits for Aussie-based companies to export weapons and military technology to the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka and the Democratic Republic of Congo over the 2018/19 financial year. All of these countries have been involved in awful human rights abuses.

But the Australian Defence Department has refused to reveal how many weapons have been sold, for how much, or for what purpose, and most information provided by Canberra was heavily redacted (*Guardian*, 13/1/20). Nearly \$A5bn worth of declared value defence permits were issued by Australia in 2018-19, a dramatic increase on the \$A1.6bn approved the previous year.

Aussie Government Gags Media

“The Australian government has issued an unprecedented gagging order in a third high-profile trial that threatened to reveal details of defence, security and intelligence operations” (*Press*, 12/5/20). The case involves a defamation suit brought by a former Special Air Service (SAS) soldier who was awarded a Victoria Cross and is accused of the unlawful killing of Afghan prisoners.

Other orders to limit information released to the public have involved evidence about Australia's bugging of the East Timor Prime Minister's office (see my *Spooky Bits* in *Peace Researcher* 56, November 2018,

<http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-backissues/pr56.pdf>) and the secret trial of a military intelligence officer jailed for breaching national security laws.

Chinese Hacking Attacks

The US Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency (DCSA) has put out a bulletin to defence contractors stating that nearly 40 US contracting facilities with access to classified information were targeted by a hacking group with suspected ties to the Chinese government between February 1 and early April, 2020.

The bulletin, reported by *Politico* (16/4/20), warns that DCSA's Cyber Division detected nearly 600 “inbound and outbound connections” from “highly likely Electric Panda cyber threat actors” targeting 38 cleared contractor facilities, including those specialising in health care technology. “Electric Panda” is a designation accepted by some cyber experts as indicating Chinese government connections. Former National Security Agency researcher Dave Aitel said the detection of both inbound and outbound activity likely means the US managed to penetrate the command and control machines that Electric Panda was using (*Politico*, *ibid.*). ■

CHALLENGING IMPERIAL STRUGGLES & THE CONTORTIONS OF GEOPOLITICS

By Dennis Small

“**N**uclear weapons were, and are, the gravest threat to humanity's survival. Their effect in preventing wars has been overrated and reports of the damage they cause tend to be brushed aside ... to depend on nu-

clear deterrence indefinitely into the future, especially when other means of deterrence are available, is foolhardy” (former US Secretary of State, George Shultz¹). Most ironically, Shultz was a strong opponent of NZ's nuclear free zone.

The existential threats of nuclear war and climate crisis are compounding. We need to unite and act co-operatively and pre-emptively together (press release, “IT IS NOW 100 SECONDS TO MIDNIGHT”², 23/1/20; 2020 Doomsday Clock Announcement, The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists [BAS]). The Doomsday Clock is the nearest it has ever been to midnight!

“People who don't understand the importance of cooperation and dis-

armament shouldn't go into politics” (former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev).

In the words of Ban Ki-Moon, Deputy Chair of the Elders (a group of independent global leaders working together for peace and human rights), and former UN Secretary-General: “We can overcome the existential threats we face, but we must act, together, now”.

(Sociology Professor) “C Wright Mills observed that ‘the history of modern society may be readily understood as the story of the enlargement and centralisation of the means of power – in economic, in political, and in military institutions’ (quoted in “Deadly Contradictions: The New American Empire

And *Global Warring*”, Stephen P Reyna, Berghahn Books, 2016, p39).

“Urbanisation and mistreatment of wild and farmed animals unleashes zoonotic diseases such as Ebola, SARS, MERS and Covid-19. We’ve sliced and diced Nature and now she’s fighting back. It’s time to take stock. As economies shut down and Nature responds with cleaner air and seas, we need to learn lessons and do better by Nature in the future” (“A Call To Do Better By Nature” The Daily Blog³, 25/3/20).

“United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Antonio Guterres urged leaders of the world’s 20 major industrialised nations to adopt a ‘wartime’ plan, including a stimulus package ‘in the trillions of dollars’ for businesses, workers and households in developing countries trying to tackle the coronavirus pandemic” (“Guterres Calls For ‘Wartime’ Plan”, Press, 26/3/20).

“Climate scientists and activists are alert to the threat (of ‘revenge pollution’ as the world economy seeks to return to ‘business as usual’), and are already calling for governments to create ‘green’ stimulus packages” (“Carbon Emissions Will Drop, But Experts Fear ‘Revenge Pollution’”, Press, 30/3/20).

A message for the ANZAC Commemoration on 25 April 2020: Lest We Forget! – about “1,800 US, Russian, British and French [nuclear] warheads are on high alert, ready for use on short notice” (“Status Of World Nuclear Forces”, Federation of American Scientists [FAS]⁴).

Over decades, there has been an accumulating impetus to imperial confrontations and conflicts, even if to the greater extent – *and real relief of most of us!* – such tensions have not turned into large-scale open and direct hostilities. This impetus has gone through periods of apparent quiescence, as during the 1990s, following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Underlying these phenomena are the processes of corporate globalisation and the industrialisation of a small and very vulnerable planet.

But, then, at the start of the 21st Century came 9/11 and the ensuing so-called “War on Terror”, which released pent-up imperial frustrations and Western State terroristic fire-

power on the oil and gas-rich Middle East. This “shock and awe” State terrorism was also directed at the very poverty-stricken countries of Afghanistan and Yemen, and elsewhere. The shocking devastation and suffering for the tragically afflicted peoples of so many Middle Eastern and North, West, and East African countries also continues unabated.

Today, in the wake of the coronavirus or Covid-19 pandemic, we have reached a momentous point in human so-called “progress” on planet Earth. International tensions could get worse, or humankind in its global cooperation against Covid-19 could create a marked improvement in relations. Tensions could be eased, despite having to use border and migration controls in the struggle to suppress the spread of the virus.

The huge question is whether we can somehow turn our currently inevitable national self-preoccupation into an impetus for far greater global cooperation. Can we turn the call by UN head Antonio Guterres for wartime cooperation in the battle against Covid-19 into a continued momentum for peace and nuclear disarmament? As well, we have now the real opportunity to embrace development alternatives that effectively combat global warming and environmental deterioration.

Imperial Competition

We have to acknowledge present realities and the factors that have shaped them stemming back from the past. Then we can consider how better to address the problems we face. Understanding the geopolitical background and how it has shaped the ongoing context we inhabit is crucial. President Jimmy Carter asserted “in 1980 that the USA was prepared to use military force to prevent an outside power gaining control of the Persian Gulf region, owing to the vital importance of the region’s oil reserves in meeting US energy needs”.

“For its critics, American policy towards the Middle East ever since, and even in the context of the post-2001 War on Terror, only makes sense if seen within this strategic context” (“International Security: A Very Short Introduction”, Christopher S Browning, Oxford University Press [OUP], 2013, p81). Other regions and locations have emerged

as focal points for competition and conflict. Geographical areas from the South China Sea to Latin America are now at contest.

For instance, with the economic rise of China, “great power competition over resources is even increasingly evident in Africa, as China seeks to safeguard its continued economic growth by acquiring mining and extraction rights” (ibid.). Under its so-called “free trade agreements”, which can be portrayed as “neo-colonial”, the West puts various conditions on its partners, e.g. those protecting corporate intellectual property. China, in contrast, imposes “few demands on its African partners, instead offering to build extensive infrastructure projects in return for mining concessions” (ibid., p81 & 83).

Trumpism Trampling On Global Conventions

In the second decade of the 21st Century, the Trump Administration has recently recast the interface of America with the rest of the world. For some of us who have long been involved with peace and anti-nuclear issues, Washington has often stood out as the home of so many of the mad and bad. In these times, a bloc of far Right national security cheerleaders for Trumpism has emerged. These ideologues – far from seeing the current Administration as grossly out of line, or “isolationist”, or otherwise dangerously disruptive – instead celebrate a touted new realism.

To quote a couple of these nuclear-war mongers, Elbridge A Colby and A Wess Mitchell: “In truth, the US is gearing up for a new era – one marked not by unchallenged US dominance but by a rising China and a vindictive Russia seeking to undermine US leadership and refashion global politics in their favour” (“The Age Of Great Power Competition: How the Trump Administration Refashioned American Strategy”, *Foreign Affairs (FA)*, “The Future Of Capitalism” issue, January/February 2020, pp118-130, quote on p118 – *the cover shows a bull teetering on the edge of a cliff!*). *So, Social Darwinism is openly flaunted on the path to the Doomsday!*

Their article is riddled with self-serving hypocrisy. As they portray the global scene – the American aim is to embrace “great power competi-

tion” now as “the primary focus of US national security” (ibid., p121). Hilariously, they go on to proclaim what they claim is “the central objective of US foreign policy since the end of World War II [WWII]” (ibid.).

This objective is purportedly “the freedom of states, particularly US allies, to chart their own courses without interference from a domineering regional hegemony” (ibid.). In fact, what the authors Colby and Mitchell advocate in reality is the very thing they deny that this Trumpist strategic shift signifies. Their strategy is “blindly confrontational” and so very predictable in terms of geopolitics. *It is pre-eminently the road to Hell and WWII!!!*

Containing The “Evil Genie”?

It has long been received wisdom that with the existence of nuclear weapons we cannot hope to ever succeed in putting the evil genie back in the bottle. In other words, we have to learn to live somehow indefinitely into the future with the ever-present threat of nuclear annihilation. The obvious problem with this position, of course, is that such a situation is not viable in the long term, certainly given the human record to date and all the challenges currently unfolding and looming ahead.

One of the nuclear war-mongers cited above, Elbridge Colby, writes articles with titles like “If You Want Peace, Prepare For Nuclear War” and “How To Win America's Next War”. He and his ilk – like former US National Security Adviser John Bolton – are the very embodiment and expression of the Freudian “death instinct”. At present, humankind is gripped by the global coronavirus or “Covid-19”, with the economic fallout cascading down and tipping millions into poverty (“Great Lockdown To Wipe \$15 Trillion Off GDP”, *Press*, 16/4/20).

This comes at a point when the world economy had already obviously entered a parlous state, even evident to pundits of American-led capitalist globalisation (see various articles in *FA*, op. cit.). In this context, we confront all the dangers of unravelling globalisation, with its consequences for socio-economic disruption and social disintegration. We could well now have reached the critical tipping point of the world economy and now its subsequent slide down into uncertainty and potentially perilous turmoil.

Big Contests Ahead!

With the suddenly implemented worldwide clampdown on air travel and related trade woes, causative conditions for competitive nationalist tensions may quickly escalate in certain situations. President Trump has proclaimed the US is on a war-time footing in the fight against Covid-19. To be sure, of course, the UN has also used such terminology (“Guterres Calls For 'Wartime' Plan”, op. cit.). For the UN, it is a war to save lives, not destroy them.

Yet the fight against Covid-19 could overlap with other kinds of conflict. Paradoxes and contradictions are running rampant. Division and separation are at present a necessary component in the international cooperative fight against the virus but these aspects of the world order could also sharply aggravate and even induce greater conflict.

At present, we are very lucky in Aotearoa/NZ to have a very positive Jacinda Ardern Prime Minister (PM)-headed Coalition government. Ardern's message is: “Be strong. Be kind”. Our leadership has indeed enjoyed participatory domestic solidarity and kindness in a united national campaign (“Unite Against COVID-19”) to counter and crush this invasive virus, along with all the related management of the socio-economic fall-out (“Grateful To Live In Such A Supportive Society”, Donna Miles-Mojab, *Press*, 19/3/20; “Kindness From Our Leaders”, *Press* editorial, 19/3/20).

Generating Conflicts

In contrast, by April 2020 President Trump had upped the ante against China, accusing it of hiding the pandemic's real import in the early stages. While, at least according to some available evidence, China can be charged with an initial cover-up, Trump has clearly used this issue to deflect from his own gross incompetence and failures.

The President has employed the well-worn displacement device of an attack on a foreign country to cover up his own outrageously stupid, bungling, and inconsistent management of the viral invasion of America. His corporate-mandated “America First” policy has made the US the pre-eminent casualty of this global crisis. Lamentably, at this very critical time in the fight against the virus, the vicious Trump has lashed out as well at the World Health Organisa-

tion (WHO), calling it “China-centric”. He has suspended the US share of funding for the WHO, which amounted to about 15%.

Furthermore, Trump & co. are working systematically to undermine the WHO on a number of fronts (“Trump Focuses On WHO”, *Press*, 27/4/20). It all amounts to one more significant sign that America sees its power slipping away even within the forums of the UN, and is consequently prepared to step up its general global aggression. Meanwhile, the poorest and most vulnerable across the world will suffer most from this substantial cut in funding to the WHO. *The evils of the Trump Administration are indeed manifold!*

NZ Corporate Crony Media Caught Out!

Closer to home, Covid-19 has brought its own set of tumultuous issues. In an irony of ironies, the Covid-19 crisis has even derailed (at least for a while) a crony corporate media campaign to roll the Coalition government out of office and reinstall the Rightwing National Party in power (for this campaign see my “Rap Hard The Reactionary Right: Grow the Progressives – Survival Is At Stake!”, *Foreign Control Watchdog (FCW)*, no. 153, April 2020⁵). As British Labour PM Harold Wilson – incidentally, one of the architects of the Indonesian Genocide 1965-70 – so famously said: “A week is a long time in politics”!

As the Covid-19 crisis broke over Aotearoa/NZ during March 2020, National's Simon Bridges, the Opposition Leader, ignominiously overplayed his hand in critical negativity. His irresponsible behaviour even reaped a public backlash from normally friendly media, as exemplified by a *Press* editorial (e.g., “Kindness From Our Leaders”, op. cit.). Jacinda Ardern is instead widely seen as again showing the superb leadership she displayed following the mosques murders perpetrated in Christchurch by an Australian white racist in March 2019 (ibid.). Her commitment, sure judgement, and sincerity have again been heartily endorsed (ibid.).

In contrast, an earlier *Press* editorial had been rather cynical about our PM's political motivation for positivity and its practice (“It Might Be Hard To Stay Positive”, 25/1/20). It is so revealing of the normal negativity of the mainstream media to the Left in

Aotearoa/NZ that our PM is obviously far better appreciated overseas than she is in her own country!

Most ironically, however, for the mainstream media the Covid-19 crisis soon became a real crisis in itself for survival of this same sector. We certainly need multiple media and a plurality of voices, both private and public, for a thriving democracy. A crucial model in years to come must be a greater publicly funded but independent body of journalists. These reporters should be truly committed to proper discussion, debate, and scrutiny of our societal well-being in an ever more challenging world.

Growing Challenges Of Collapsing Globalisation

From a global perspective, it is clear that the risks of geopolitical conflict and even widespread war have shot up. After all, it is sobering to remember that the Great Depression of the 1930s ushered in WWII. These days, President Trump even revels in his racist, antagonistic "America First" fashion by calling Covid-19 the "Chinese virus", and promoting inquiries into both China's and the WHO's management of the outbreak.

With its usual strategic opportunism, the Anglo-American axis – in the form of the US, Britain, and Australia – is now also openly blaming China for hiding the nature and gravity of the Covid-19 outbreak in its initial stages. These axis nations are charging China with damaging consequences for the rest of the world, especially for their own countries. Some nations, including NZ, want an "independent" international inquiry into the origins of the virus.

President Trump has gone further, indulging in a far Right conspiracy theory, and alleging the virus likely escaped from a research lab ("Coronavirus May Have Come From A Chinese Lab, If You Believe Donald Trump – But Experts Disagree"⁶, 18/4/20).

America's Dr Anthony "Fauci, the nation's top expert on infectious disease, said the available evidence on the origins of the virus is 'totally consistent with a jump of species from an animal to a human'", rather than being transmitted out of a lab ("Fauci Rejects Conspiracy Theory Coronavirus Engineered In Chinese Lab"⁷, 18/4/20). *We are surely living*

in very unstable, dangerous times!

The politico-economic Establishment in the West has certainly been rocked by the advent of the coronavirus pandemic. Former ANZ Bank Chief Economist Cameron Bagrie ponders the implications of the crisis, warning how bad things could get ("Globalisation In Early Stages Of Unravelling", *Sunday Star Times* (SST), 1/3/20). "The world's (economic) fundamentals are not good. Debt is high, and interest rates are already incredibly low. Negative interest rates have distorted the price of risk. We need a cure but also a united world to deliver a coordinated policy response. We have a divided one and high levels of government debt in many countries" (ibid.).

While Cameron Bagrie sees globalisation as having "delivered tremendous benefits", various groups and sectors of society got left behind. "Society is pushing back. Trade wars, elections, and more recently coronavirus will accentuate the trend. We've become too dependent on the existing supply chain" (ibid.). The challenges for positive change ahead are huge.

Blundering Into Armageddon?

Cameron Bagrie sees the Covid-19 crisis in conventional economic terms, as do most of his profession. Again, I would add here that in such conditions of uncertainty and instability the causes of conflict can mount as economic pain bites. Whether by miscalculation, accident, stupidity, aggression and over-reach, or a sequential combination of such factors – or whatever the exact forms of behaviour or interaction that might eventuate – there is an accumulating risk of crossing the

brink into all-out war. Already, the Trump Administration in its confrontations with Iran has come perilously close to triggering war in the Persian Gulf region, and very likely, further beyond!

In one stunning instance, President Trump – *luckily for all of us!* – called off an air attack at the very last possible moment, when the military were primed and just about to launch. Thankfully, he had had second thoughts. It is yet another testament to the risks of human folly, and how the fate of the planet's inhabitants can hang by just a thread as it were! To be sure, the sword of Damocles hovers over us all most menacingly.

It reminds me of the stupidity of former President Ronald Reagan, who once thought that Trident missiles, fired from submarines, could be recalled! ("Reagan: The Real Story", *CounterPunch.org*⁸, 25/7/12). Now we have President Trump, who is so crazy that he thinks global warming is a "hoax", and that "nukes" can kill hurricanes!

Trump Crazy!

In the case of Covid-19, he obviously believes at bottom that if left alone the coronavirus could just drift through America, and that then things would soon be all okay again! Creating so-called "herd immunity" at the cost of many thousands of lives would truly be a desirable Social Darwinist aim for the likes of Trump & co. Astonishingly, this was apparently even the advice of "the scientists working to steer Britain out of the coronavirus crisis" ("Scientists Face Death Threats For Herd [immunity] Advice", *Press*, 30/3/20). Far Right buffoon British PM Boris



Trump wilfully & negligently ignored killer virus

Johnson, indeed, started Britain down this track in early March but soon backed off it when he found the political cost (*per the high human cost!*) would be too much to swallow. He, of course, paid for his own outstanding stupidity by getting a life-threatening bout of the disease.

NZ/Aotearoa has its own “herd immunity” advocates, led by an Auckland University epidemiologist, Simon Thornley (“‘Contrarian’ Academics Oppose NZ Lockdown⁹”, 14/4/20). This group is being promoted by a “dark arts” corporate public relations (PR) outfit, appropriately called Blackland PR.

President Trump excelled himself in April with his suggestion that injecting disinfectant into people would be a good antidote for Covid-19. World politics threatens to become more and more surreal, given so many toxic leaders running loose! As continually stressed in this article, the capacity of humans for stupidity and mistakes (e.g., miscalculations and misunderstandings) in potentially perilous situations is huge. Covid-19 threatens to enlarge and spread the scope for violent confrontations. So, internationally, we have to work far harder to reduce tensions and better control conflicts.

Promoting Peace

In recent years, the prestigious *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists (BAS)* has alerted the world to the mounting dangers, *moving the Doomsday Clock forward from 2015 to ever nearer midnight*. It has well warned that: “The probability of global catastrophe is very high and **the actions needed to reduce the risks must be taken very soon**” [my emphasis] (“Doomsday Clock – Timeline”, *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*¹⁰).

The environmental/climate certainly is compounding the risks of nuclear war. Covid-19 has joined this dangerous mix. But the zombie, brain-dead Western media have been overwhelmingly remiss in failing to foster constructive global dialogue on geopolitical conflicts. Having said all this, however, there were at least some more positive signs in March 2020 here in Aotearoa/NZ, with the commemoration of the horrible 2019 mosque murders in Christchurch/Otautahi, of a broader and more sensitive media perspective.

There has been more constructive

engagement on ethnic antagonisms at both the domestic and international levels. As well, in the wake of the onset of the Covid-19 crisis, even elements of the conservative media have borne witness to a new positivity, something I shall touch on further below. Meantime, we need to encourage and grow our own country's peace-making efforts to the very fullest extent we can.

For instance, in February 2020, Justice Minister Andrew Little attended “a high-level summit on nuclear disarmament” on the 50th anniversary of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) (“Justice Minister Represents New Zealand At Berlin Nuclear Disarmament Summit”¹¹, 22/2/20). Aotearoa/NZ was “one of only 16 countries in Berlin exploring ways to resolve the deadlock on nuclear disarmament” (ibid.). As non-government organisations (NGOs), we should monitor and support such efforts as much as possible.

Riding The Stormy Waves Of Corporate Globalisation

Yet humankind continues to undermine the very conditions and foundation of its existence (“Warning That Tipping Points May Trigger Climate Cascade”, *Press*, 29/11/19). To date, the globalist assault on Earth's biosphere has been truly awesome, and horrifying in its unfolding and ultimate consequences – i.e., if we don't take pre-emptive and sufficiently off-setting measures in time!

By March 2020, Antarctica had registered its highest temperature ever recorded in modern times – *over 20 degrees centigrade!* (“Antarctica Breaks 20C”, *Press*, 19/2/20). Meantime, the Arctic, Greenland, the Himalayas, and the rest of the cryosphere or frozen water part of the Earth's system are melting away, with long-term dire consequences (e.g., “Intense Sun Threatens Everest Ice”, *SST*, 15/12/19; “Speed Of Ice Melt Picks Up”, *Press*, 19/3/20). Greenland and Antarctica “are losing ice six times faster than they were in the 1990s” (“Speed Of Ice...”, ibid.).

Rising sea levels and more powerful storms are both eroding and infiltrating land masses – from southern states like Louisiana in North America to the flood-plains of Bangladesh. Again, these climate change effects are reducing the capacity for food production. Incidentally, the state of

Louisiana has been especially hard hit by Covid-19. As well, the resulting social disruption and displacement, triggering the unsettling movement of climate change refugees, will inevitably lead to more forms of conflict. This is yet another type of problem demanding far more pre-emptive and cooperative action on a global scale.

Meanwhile, major problems are developing in the planet's oceans (“Warming Oceans Warn Of Looming Climate Disaster”, *Press*, 15/1/20). Besides dying coral reefs, declining fish stocks, shifting currents, and increasingly warmer and acidic waters, “our oceans are seeing another mega-scale consequence of climate change” (“Sea Change: World's Oceans Speed Up”, *Press*, 7/2/20). Most ominously: “Three quarters of the world's ocean waters have sped up their pace in recent decades”, spurred on by faster winds (ibid.). This mega-scale change is likely to deeply affect weather patterns.

At the same time, to reiterate, human geopolitics is intensifying. Anthropology Professor Stephen P Reyna pictures the “US Leviathan” swimming in stormy seas “of contradictory waves sent roiling by the Leviathan's own prodigious force” (“Deadly Contradictions”, from 'Introduction', op. cit.). Its' imperial reach is stirring resistance around the globe. *The tempest unleashed could drown us all!*

Looming Self-Extinction?

Then there is the Sixth Extinction in process, with all the increasing loss of biodiversity and degradation of vital eco-systems. Currently, Africa, that continent so continuously afflicted by both natural and human agents, has been suffering from terrible droughts and hunger in both its southern region and its northern Horn. “The Horn of Africa is suffering from a food crisis – severe food and water shortages have decimated livestock and driven families from their homes in search of food”, observes Save the Children NZ in its appeal for aid¹².

“(In times gone by), The Horn of Africa used to experience one drought every decade. But in the past ten years alone, children and families have been hit by three droughts”, repeatedly pushing people to the brink of starvation (ibid.). Plagues of locusts evocative of Biblical “end-

times” have also ravaged both East Africa and the Horn of Africa, decimating crops.

But, with the exception of aid groups and NGOs like Save the Children, the lack of interest and concern in the West, let alone proffered assistance and support, has been damning in terms of our shared humanity! *It is certainly sobering and strange how the Biblical Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (War, Famine, Plague, and Death) can be seen as anticipating the Darwinian Grim Reaper! Can we counter the worst of evolutionary overshoot and turn the tide in time?!*

Mobilise For Survival!

Right now, of course, humankind in general is still grappling worldwide with the enormously ominous and unfolding costs of the Covid-19 disease on the global economy and daily lives. Insecurity, inequalities, and uncertainty have skyrocketed for multitudes of people. Yet again, as also previously noted, while there have been all kinds of painful ramifications and fallout, the Covid-19 shock could yet be used positively in facing up to the imminent threat of global warming and environmental deterioration. But it will demand unprecedented levels of both international and domestic cooperation, with the overall goal of the welfare of everyone. We must meet the basic needs of life while at the same time safeguarding the viability of the Earth's environment.

The US-based international online campaign organisation, Avaaz, has called on governments, in April 2020, to action a “Solidarity Pledge to protect the most vulnerable”¹³. Avaaz and the signatories of its petition appeal for available medical equipment, and any appropriate “treatments and vaccines in the future”, to be assigned in terms of priority access to “health workers and the most vulnerable” people (ibid.).

We must build on such positive initiatives in helping create far more sustainable, and fair societies. Before the Covid-19 crisis struck as a global crisis, it was already overwhelmingly evident that the climate crisis would demand of us new heights of international cooperation and joint adaptability. Now we have the opportunity to extend the global co-operation against Covid-19 in tackling such related challenges.

The necessary “resilience will require unprecedented levels of collaboration among different kinds of experts and across different kinds of organisations. For example, public health officials will have to partner with geospatial analysts and biologists to anticipate how climate change may shift the geographic spread of mosquito-borne diseases, such as dengue and Zika” (“Adapt Or Perish: Preparing For The Inescapable Effects Of Climate Change”, Alice Hill & Leonardo Martinez-Diaz, in *FA*, pp 107-117, quote on p116, op. cit.).

Mind you, the two American writers just quoted are very much wedded to the American Establishment, and also advise that “military planners will have to learn from climate modellers how to secure bases and supply chains” (ibid.). Obviously, the premises of tribalist resource geopolitics underline their analysis, however benignly oriented a lot of their injunctions may seem on the surface. Their advice and admonitions are domestically attuned for their American audience. But the global movement for real alternative change can still reach beyond these limitations. *We have a world to win, and human survival at stake!*

Sustaining Stepping Stones Instead To Greater Global Cooperation?

At the Berlin meeting on the NPT, the 16 countries, including NZ, aimed to identify “stepping stones” – steps to help retain the credibility of the NPT by spurring momentum toward a nuclear-weapon free world” (“Justice Minister Represents New Zealand...” op. cit.). We can only hope that this signals progress. In rugby parlance, we need a lot more “go forward”!

Covid-19 is inducing the implementation of nationalist barriers in an international cooperatively inspired programme as advocated by the WHO. So, we have a paradox that we have to grapple with now in addressing other global problems. We must develop the internationalist dimension of this programme in overcoming divisiveness to tackle the issues of conflict and weaponry.

At the same time, Pakistan's PM Imran Khan has expressed fears that “the new coronavirus will devastate the economies of developing nations, and warned richer economies to prepare to write off the debts of

the world's poorer countries” (“Imran Fears 'Poverty And Hunger' From Pandemic”, *Press*, 18/3/20). South Asia's multitudes of poorer people in Pakistan, India, and other countries are facing a very grim outlook (e.g., “India's Poor – No Work, Don't Eat”, *Press*, 28/3/20).

Widespread violence has gripped India of late, in a country with “the world's second-highest number of people living in extreme poverty” (ibid. “Teargas, Beatings And Bleach: The Most Extreme Covid-19 Lockdown”¹⁴, 31/3/20). There are real concerns about police state repression in many countries of “the poorest and most vulnerable groups, including tens of millions who live hand-to-mouth and risk starving if they do not defy lockdowns and seek work” (ibid.).

Grappling With The Global Covid Crisis

At worst, large parts of the world could fall into disastrous misery and chaos, fuelling widespread violence, disease outbreaks, and famine (“Virus Could Overwhelm The Developing World”, *Press*, 3/4/20; “Don't Leave Africa Out Of Virus Fight, Officials Warn”, *Press*, 11/4/20). Refugee camps are particularly vulnerable to inroads of the virus.

As even a Murdoch (the) *Times* journalist, Catherine Philp, warns: “Poor countries stand no chance in the fight against the outbreak – and that is bad news for us all” (“UN Warns No Action In Developing States Puts All In Peril”, *Press*, 18/4/20). Given the divisive state of the world today, the pitch to self-interest can be imperative in a paradoxically “interconnected” humankind.

The essential self-interested message is as follows: “Public health officials have said that the West needs to assist the developing world, if not simply to save the lives of millions of people, then for reasons of enlightened self-interest, to prevent a second wave [of the virus] reaching their shores” (ibid.). Refugee camps are a “ticking time bomb” (ibid.).

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said “that if the West ignored the outbreak in the developing world, it could be leaving the virus to mutate into a form that no vaccine could combat” (ibid.). With humankind being so interconnected across

the planet today, our fate has never been more interdependent. Guterres wants urgent action to prevent the pandemic-caused global recession from leading to “hundreds of thousands of additional child deaths in 2020” (“Pandemic A ‘Child Rights Crisis’”, *Press*, 18/4/20). This must be the priority for all nations.

Meantime, the US has already been preparing for “climate wars”, worried about its imperial assets and geopolitical grip in poorer lands (“All Hell Breaking Loose: The Pentagon’s Perspective On Climate Change”, Michael Klare, Metropolitan Books, 2019). Another enormous irony of the current global crisis yet inheres in the fact that the sudden drop in economic activity across the globe has led to a marked decline in the emission of greenhouse gases! This result signals the sort of action that humankind ideally needs in order to make a successful transition to a low-carbon, far more sustainable future. Certainly, a drastic response is required for any meaningful hope of meeting the targets urged by the leading climate scientists.

A Grim Legacy Updated!

Historically, the ruthless repression by the West, especially in the 1970s of “Third World” (the South) requests for better and fairer prices for their countries’ commodities and raw materials, has exacted a very heavy cost in “an ‘unequal exchange’ of goods and services” (“Commodities And The Third World”, Goutam K Sarkar, OUP, 1983). This brutal manipulation of trading relationships was engineered above all by the Anglo-American axis, with NZ happy to tag along, especially following the demise of the Norman Kirk Labour government.

To a very large extent, Western capitalism has industrialised and enriched itself on the backs of the world’s poor. And the 21st Century environmental/climate crisis testifies to the complete unsustainability of the model of development it has unleashed on the Earth. Its inspiration and impetus for countries like China, India, Brazil, etc. is now reaping a grim harvest on many fronts.

This exploitation has gone hand in hand with Western cultural attitudes of technocratic domination of the planetary environment. Inequitable development and its justification constitute so much of the essence of capitalism anyway. At the end of

WWII, “roughly 50% of world manufacturing was in the hands of American firms” (“Deadly Contradictions”, op. cit., p92). This was the platform from which the US launched its assault on the peoples and environment of the Earth.

While China may be the world’s factory today, America’s demand for imported minerals continues to grow. In 2018 the US was completely dependent on imports for at least 18 mineral commodities. They included asbestos, manganese, tantalum, rare earths, and vanadium (“Which Mineral Commodities Used In The United States Need To Be Imported?”¹⁵).

Meanwhile, China scours the planet, seeking resources for its own growth, putting fear into its capitalist rivals in the West (see, e.g., “Winner Take All: China’s Race For Resources And What It Means For The World”, Dambisa Moyo, Penguin, 2012). *As capitalist competition becomes more militaristic, Social Darwinism is riding high!*

Exploitation And Excess

“Up to the 1920s, the US was a net exporter of minerals but by 1961 14% of the minerals needed by US industry was imported; by 1966, 43% (by weight) of US iron ore needs was imported, and the country was heavily dependent on imports for a large number of strategic minerals” (“The Geography Of Empire”, Keith Buchanan, Spokesman Books, 1972, p49).

Moreover, by the early 1970s: “The so-called ‘less-developed countries’ (accounted) for 28% of total US investments overseas but (accounted) for almost one half of the total earnings – and of the total earnings derived from these countries almost two-thirds (was) accounted for by the petroleum industry” (ibid., p51). So, the US was able to use the surplus profits siphoned from the “Third World”, and the various resources extracted, for its own optimal benefit and growth at the expense of much poorer nations.

Conditions for the facilitation of minerals and other vital imports to the US were maintained by a combination of cultural, economic, military, foreign aid, and political policies, amounting to varying forms of imperial control across countries in Latin America, Asia, and Africa (ibid.; “The Age Of Imperialism: The Eco-

nomics Of US Foreign Policy”, Harry Magdoff, *Monthly Review*, 1966/69). The American Empire may be crumbling in a range of aspects but it still spans the planet. While the Middle East was the cradle of civilisation its early empires can radiate eerily disturbing echoes right up to the present.

Professor Reyna asks us to contemplate and compare the following quotations. “The chronicler of Assyrian Emperor Sennacherib’s reign (his rule being based in what is now modern-day Iraq) recorded that the Emperor ‘tore out’ the ‘privates’ of his slain foes like the seeds of a cucumber. A chronicle of civilian deaths during US warring in Iraq, 2700 years after Sennacherib’s rule, but not so far from it, has children ‘incinerated, skeletal remains’” (“Deadly Contradictions”, op. cit., p49). *Warring, with all its violence, is what imperial elites do, from Sennacherib to George W Bush!*

Ratcheting Down Renewables

Under the global regime imposed by American rule, renewable natural resources in the form of agricultural commodities and critical food supply came under increasing pressure in a multitude of ways for poor Third World farmers (“Ill Fares The Land”, Susan George, Penguin Books, 1984/90). “The struggle to survive imposes a goal of maximum yields today – whatever the long-term costs” (p30).

Ecological damage includes “the increased use of fertilisers with rapidly diminishing returns; disastrous pest outbreaks (e.g. the cotton boll worm) created by pesticide use which destroys natural predators; and the pollution of land, water, and the rest of the food chain by these chemicals (ibid.; “The Hidden Price Of Perfect Produce: **Pesticides**”, Bonnie Flaws, *SST*, 15/3/20; for background see the ground-breaking study by Meriel Watts, “The Poisoning Of New Zealand”, Auckland Institute of Technology Press, 1994). The mining and pollution of land and water goes on, sapping and eroding basic natural sustainability.

Ongoing environmental damage, especially under the mounting impact of the climate crisis, is taking its toll on food production capacity. In these times, “over-use of water has left big rivers like the Indus in Pakistan and the Colorado in the USA and Mexico regularly running dry

("Fragile Earth", Julia Bucknall, et al, Harper Collins, 2012, p27). Upstream hydroelectric dams are eroding the Mekong River's "banks and bed", as well as lowering water levels and damaging fisheries ("Blue Water Colour Suggests Mighty Mekong In Trouble", *Press*, 7/12/19).

Extinction's Viral Exports

With the Sixth Extinction fast under way, planetary biodiversity is under constant siege. Covid-19 is suspected as originating from an animal source, with possibly pangolins or bats, or a combination of both, as the prime hosts, incubators, and transmitters. The rare and yet horribly persecuted pangolin is the Earth's most illegally trafficked animal according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature [IUCN] ("How Did Coronavirus Start And Where Did It Come From? Was It Really Wuhan's Animal Market?"¹⁶, 9/4/20).

Bats are the prime source suspect (ibid. "Why Bats Are Breeding Grounds For Deadly Diseases Like Ebola"¹⁷, 28/2/20). The basic reason as to why bats are now the prime source of so many contagious diseases lies in the fact of increasing human intrusion into their habitat. Bats should be protected as much as possible, along with their habitat, as part of the global program of protecting Earth's bio-diversity (ibid.).

To date, the exact cause, route of transmission, and other aspects of the source of Covid-19 are still subject to a lot of uncertainty and dispute ("How Did Coronavirus Start?", op. cit.). There is even a "possibility that a descendant of the virus jumped into humans and then adapted as it was passed from human to human", although this seems pretty remote now (ibid.).

It is important indeed to note that "humanity has been preyed upon and changed by microbes, especially viruses, over millions of years" ("Future Plagues: Biohazard, Disease, And Pestilence – Mankind's Battle For Survival", Peter Brooksmith, Brown Packaging Books Ltd., 1997, p9). Our genome is intimately inter-woven with virus parasitism (ibid., p10).

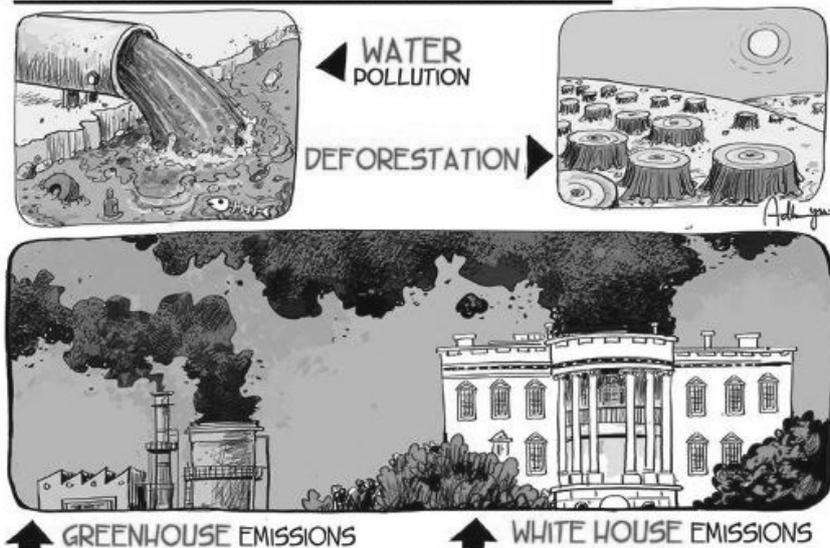
Nature Bites Back!

Given the mounting evidence, we can see this phenomenon, however, as Mother Nature biting back against human intrusion, as viruses

LINE OF NO CONTROL

SANDEEP ADHWARYU

SIXTH MASS EXTINCTION IN PROGRESS



leap the species barrier ("A Call To Do Better By Nature", op. cit.). A very prophetic chapter (ch.6) – "The Ruin Of Nature: How Human Activity Is Creating New Opportunities For Ancient Afflictions" - in Peter Brooksmith's "Future Plagues" (op. cit.), pointed ahead to the increasing impact of global warming, etc., in unleashing the plagues to come.

The coronavirus outbreak comes hard on the heels of "the second-biggest Ebola outbreak in history", which has afflicted the eastern Congo. This disease is fortunately now in decline ("Ebola Outbreak Waning", *SST*, 16/2/20). According to one estimate, "the number of viruses in birds and mammals that have the potential to leap the species barrier, and infect us may be as high as 800,000. That is a lot of potential danger" ("The Body: A Guide For Occupants", Bill Bryson, Doubleday, 2019, p325).

In fact, a further estimate ascertains from the evidence assessed that "about 60% of all infectious diseases are zoonotic (i.e. from animals)" (ibid.). The naked ape shares a deeply-rooted biological heritage. China's growth, with other Asian nations in tow like Thailand and Vietnam, has opened up planetary biodiversity for massive plunder. The illegal exotic wildlife animal trade is one of the world's biggest and worst criminal enterprises ("Illegal Wildlife Trade", *Fauna & Flora International*¹⁸).

Despite concerted efforts, this illegal wildlife trade has escalated dramatically over the last decade (ibid.).

Famed primatologist and conservationist Dr Jane Goodall "blames (the Covid-19) outbreak on (the global) animal trade" ("Conservationist Blames Outbreak On Animal Trade", *Press*, 14/4/20). She condemned "messing with nature" for the coronavirus pandemic" (ibid.).

Yet, along with all the horrendous dimensions of ecological damage and animal cruelty, the risks of disease transmission to humans have always been high. The Covid-19 crisis has been another egregious case of human denialism and dereliction at work, including also various instances of gross country mismanagement as in the US.

Writing back in 1969, analyst James Dewar observed that: "Increased sales of exotic pets are to be deplored because, among other reasons, they are an additional threat to health, and the revision of legislation to control imports of disease-carrying animals into Britain is urgent" ("The Rape Of Noah's Ark", William Kimber & Co. Ltd., 1969, p221). In light of what has happened globally, the irony here is hugely distressing in that such warnings were ignored at the international level!

Butchering Biodiversity

Fast forward to China, and other Asian countries, where shocking wildlife/domestic markets – so-called "wet markets" selling both live and dead animals – have flourished. This has been especially due to perversely ignorant notions associated with traditional medicine and modern disregard for Nature, as well as meat consumption. Although not

confirmed as the immediate, original human source, the Huanan seafood market in Wuhan has obviously been a key vector for the spread of Covid-19 (“How Did Coronavirus Start?”, op. cit.).

Early in 2020, Avaaz promoted a petition about saving the world’s wildlife (“Before The Earth Falls Silent”, 4/4/20¹⁹). **“By 2020, two-thirds of wild animals will be gone.** *LIFE* is being extinguished as fast as when the dinosaurs disappeared – and it’s happening because humanity is taking a chainsaw to the Tree of Life” (ibid. For a summary of Avaaz campaigns see: “Bert Wander: What Will I Tell Him?” 6/4/20²⁰). Avaaz’s petition about saving wildlife called for “an ambitious new plan to protect 50% of our planet.” (ibid.). It is backed by top scientists to try and get governments to adopt this vital path to survival for life on Earth, which of course includes humankind.

Wayne Linklater, an expat Kiwi who is a Professor of Environmental Studies at California State University, Sacramento, rightly gives NZ and its Government a hard serve for allowing “ourselves to be hoodwinked and hijacked by a fruitless predator eradication policy, Predator Free 2050”, while letting more of our wildlife habitat disappear (“We’ve Been Chasing The Wrong Pests”, *Press*, 12/3/20). Our priority should instead be stopping the loss of habitat.

The Capitalist Culture Of Death

Our Earth is experiencing a whole range of increasing threats to viable ecosystems. Birds are in decline, insects are in decline, and habitats eroding with the degradation and simplification of living systems. Aotearoa/NZ, of course, is acutely affected by such processes. Early on in life, I felt deep unease about where we are all going. The imprint of the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis and suchlike events only came to heighten this concern about the nature of our species and its fate. So far humankind has been doing damn little to prevent an otherwise obviously looming end.

Instead, our capitalist culture of death is permeated with the continuing celebration of environmentally damaging “entrepreneurship”; and, most ironically, endless war-oriented movies, and similar cultural outpourings, including the recent TV series on WWII. We are surely to date a

most stupid, hubristic, and self-destructive species. *Can we yet break the chain, escape our artificially concocted global bubble, and check in time the downward death spiral?! All hands to the pumps!!*

Behold The Reactionary Right On The Rise!

There are many factors involved in the growing crisis of capitalist globalisation but the dominant framework for our era was set back in the 1980s. The Anglo-American joint Reagan/Thatcher regime set this framework. This hard-Right Anglo-American regime introduced “neoliberalism” and forced its cutting-edge strategy of “free trade” further on to the modern world scene. Repressive policies imposed on “Third World” countries under the burden of debt came to be known as the “Washington Consensus” (“A Fate Worse Than Debt”, Susan George, Penguin Books, 1988).

These policies were driven by the transnational corporations’ (TNCs) “free market”, open access investment, and free trade/investment imperatives. For centuries, “free trade” has been driven by those with real politico-economic clout. This is why NZ hitched its wagon to the American juggernaut in the so-called “Cairns Group” in the international trade negotiations leading up to the formation of the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

The past couple of decades have certainly borne witness to the imperial agenda in operation, as graphically illustrated by the ongoing struggle in Latin America (“Free Trade And Social Conflict In Colombia, Peru And Venezuela: Confronting US Capitalism, 2000-2016”, Rene De La Pedraja, McFarland & Co., Inc., 2016). Its ideological roots had sprung from an earlier very aggressive spurt of activity.

Suppressing Domestic Dissent

“Starting in the late 1980s, the US government and Wall Street intensified their earlier efforts to impose capitalism and free trade on Latin America ... (and) the result has been recurrent social conflict” (see Preface, ibid.). Correspondingly, the US and its crony corporate media have systematically misled and manipulated publics in the West for many years.

It is highly important for those of us seeking the truth as much as we

can in international relations and geopolitics to note that author Rene De La Pedraja of the book cited immediately above acknowledges his profound debt to Wikileaks. This book, and others that he has written, have been “possible only thanks to the Wikileaks’ revelations of the diplomatic cables of US embassies” (ibid.).

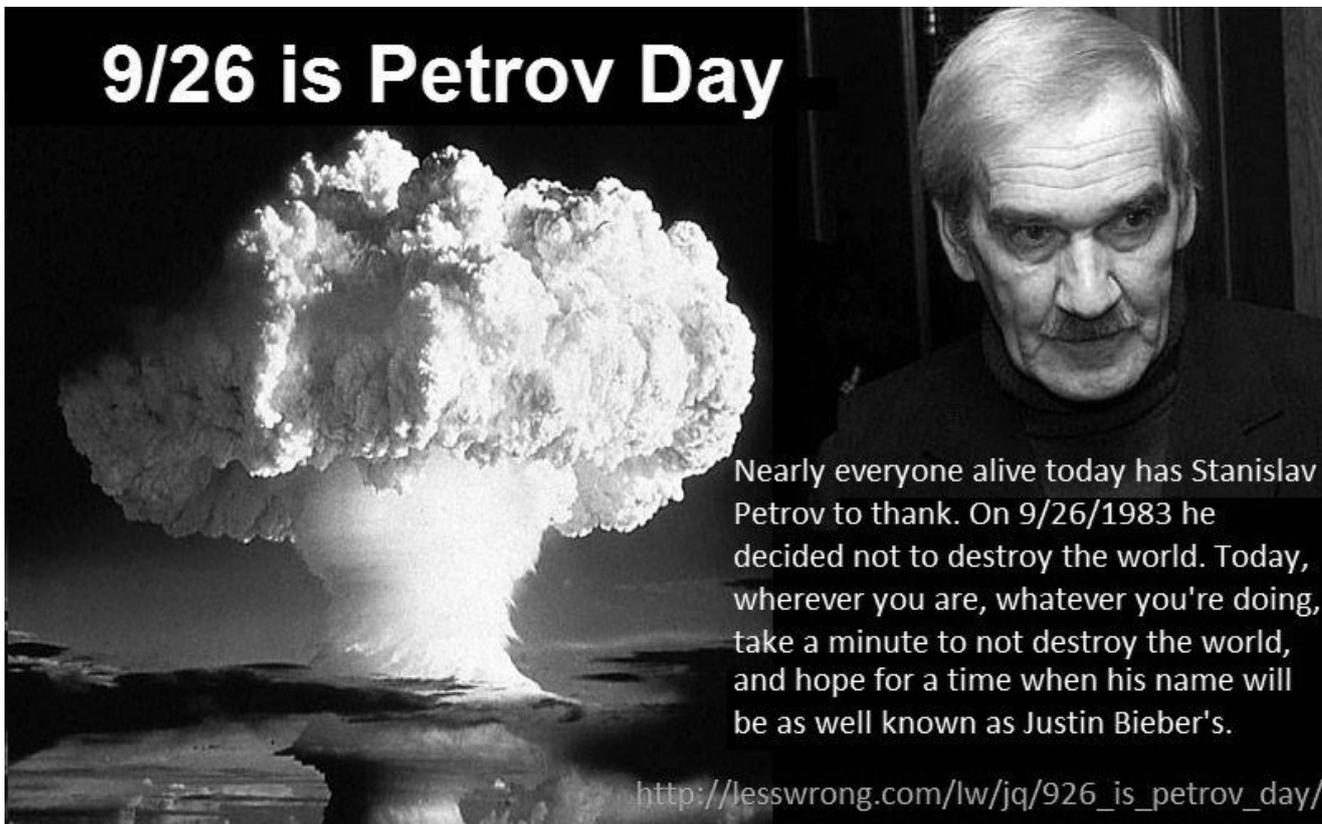
Given the current legally contrived Anglo-American persecution of Wikileaks co-founder Julian Assange, we can understand more clearly today the truly neo-fascist threat now posed by the military-industrial complex. The nuclear surveillance/covert action and terrorist rogue state heading the “Five Eyes” club is a loose cannon in urgent need of effective global control!

Bloody Belligerence

The politico-economic strategy described by De La Pedraja went hand in hand with frighteningly belligerent militarism, taking the world to the brink of nuclear annihilation in the 1980s. This militarist version of messianic capitalism came to be called “neo-conservatism”. The Cold War very nearly became a catastrophically Hot War. During the 1980s, President Ronald Reagan’s warmongering policies, with his openly broadcast preparedness to carry out a “pre-emptive nuclear strike”, i.e. “a nuclear first strike”, sent Russia into a state of virtual paranoia (“With Enough Shovels: Reagan, Bush & Nuclear War”, Robert Scheer, Secker & Warburg, 1982; “Exterminism And Cold War”, ed., *New Left Review*, Verso, 1982).

All this missile rattling made for a super-power stand-off situation highly fraught with danger. Our fears and concerns in this period, as articulated by the NZ nuclear-free and peace movements, were absolutely most reasonable and fully justified. Willard Professor of Classics & Fellow of the Archaeology Centre at Stanford University, Ian Morris, starts his historical/analytical study on war in an opening chapter titled “Introduction: Friend To The Undertaker”, describing how one individual – namely Stanislav Petrov – saved humankind from nuclear annihilation (“War: What Is It Good For?: The Role Of Conflict In Civilisation, From Primates To Robots”, Profile Books, 2014, p3).

9/26 is Petrov Day



Nearly everyone alive today has Stanislav Petrov to thank. On 9/26/1983 he decided not to destroy the world. Today, wherever you are, whatever you're doing, take a minute to not destroy the world, and hope for a time when his name will be as well known as Justin Bieber's.

http://lesswrong.com/lw/jq/926_is_petrov_day/

Stanislav Petrov, the Soviet military officer who saved the world from accidental nuclear war in 1983

Being Rationally Precautionary And Pre-Emptive

"Petrov was the deputy director for [computer] combat algorithms" in the Soviet Union's early-warning system. In 1983, he stopped a missile attack message before it worked its way up the chain of command" (ibid., p5). It had seemingly been a "counter-force" situation shaping up: i.e. a power making a first strike on an enemy's weaponry; or, as in the Soviet case, preempting the loss of its own weaponry by firing off its missiles on notice of the apparent incoming enemy attack. The message that Petrov saw indicated such an incoming American attack on the Soviet Union. But Petrov "still trusted his instincts over his algorithms" (ibid.). *Almost incredibly, and most luckily enough for everyone at the time, Stanislav Petrov's snap judgement saved the world!*

Most worryingly, in these times, militarist conditioning with all its perils is now resurgent again in the West as we observed early on in my article. In particular, both the decade of the 1980s, and later the period following 9/11 right up to the present, have seen the overlap, and even fusion of what we can term "neo-liberalism" and "neo-conservatism" ("Neo-liberalism: A Very Short Introduction", Manfred Steger & Ravi Roy, OUP,

2010, pp22/23).

And in recent years this has all been greatly heightened and aggravated in various ways with the advent of paleo-conservative / neo-fascist Trumpism and its volatile flaky leader as the American President, along with "Brexit" Boris Johnson in Britain. The Anglo-American axis may be on the verge of wobbling dangerously out of control!

Neo-Liberals, Neo-Cons, Paleo-Conservatives, And Neo-Fascists

"Neo-liberalism" is a creed extolling the so-called "free market" and "free trade". Its pundits have portrayed "globalising markets in a positive light as an indispensable tool for the realisation of a better world" (ibid., p11). The capitalist media has been permeated with this messaging (ibid.). The definition of "neo-conservatism" can be expressed as an American-led ideology that ascribes to "free markets, free trade, corporate power and elite governance" but which combines such ideas "with intrusive action for the regulation of the ordinary citizenry in the name of public security and traditional morality... In foreign affairs, neoconservatives ("neo-cons") advocate an assertive and expansive use of both economic and military power, ostensibly for the purpose of promoting freedom, free markets,

and democracy around the world" (ibid, pp22/3).

On the springboard of Reaganite/ Thatcherite neo-conservatism, the world became "a human laboratory for the momentous social experiment called neo-liberalism. Its proclaimed purpose is to reduce global poverty. Its protocols are derived from the orthodox theory of competitive free markets and its policies (have been) enforced by the full weight of the rich countries and global institutions such as the WTO, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)" ("Globalisation And The Myths Of Free Trade: History, Theory, And Empirical Evidence", ed., Anwar Shaikh, *Frontiers Of Political Economy* series, Routledge, 2006/13; see also: "False Dawn: The Delusions Of Global Capitalism", John Gray, Granta Books, 1998/ revised 2009).

Neo-liberal theory dissolves under close examination (ibid.). It has perverted economies and induced stark and increasing inequalities. It has engendered mounting conflict as expressed by Trumpism and the Brexit divisions. Today, the Covid-19 pandemic is blowing the theory and practice to pieces as governments around the world scramble to protect their populations and public health systems! *But the West's cor-*

porate brigade are yearning to return to "business as usual"!

Crusading Marketeers

The more militant promotion of the market, in the form of neo-con ideology, became tantamount to a modern Western crusade. It came to represent yet another extremist imposition on the rest of the world; and, in turn, this neo-liberal/neo-conservative crusade generated widespread blowback, most aggressively from Muslim fundamentalism.

("Black Mass: Apocalyptic Religion & The Death of Utopia", John Gray, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2007; see also my articles "Middle East Turmoil And Beyond: Political Blowback In Action" in *Peace Researcher* 43, May 2012²¹; & "Western Globalist Crusade Continues To Backfire" in *PR* 49, June 2015²²).

Conservative analyst Professor John Gray, who is harshly critical of Western globalisation and free trade as harnessed in the cause of promoting "modernity", still has a mental block when portraying the role of the US in the world and the militant backlash against it ("Black Mass", *ibid.*). He grossly underplays some aspects of American imperialism.

Most tellingly, Gray, in typical Western Establishment style, sees "terrorism" only in retail terms – i.e. something done by enemy agents. He thus ignores the wholesale State terrorism of imperialistic American-led "counter-insurgency" and "pre-emptive war". Furthermore, while Gray sees "terrorism and the trade in illegal drugs" as intimately "intertwined", he accepts at face value the Western pretence of the joint war together against "terrorism and crime" (*ibid.*, p19). His criticism in this particular connection is that "waging war on both fronts makes little sense" (*ibid.*).

He says: "If the campaign against terrorism is modelled on the war against drugs, it is already lost" (*ibid.*). Instead, in his view, we need to get our focus right by legalising drugs, which would remove the "worst evils" (*ibid.*). However, for a proper understanding of the place of drugs in American foreign policy, we have to get beyond the stereotypical conventional conceptualisations of even certain critics of Western globalisation like Professor John Gray. The much-touted war against drugs was badly compromised from the

start!

Tripping High On Militant And Militarist Markets

These days, Trumpism is further inflaming global conditions making for conflict. In March 2020, the President accused the Venezuelan government of "narco-terrorism" and of trying to undermine the US through the illegal drug trade. He is using this latest ploy to step up America's bid for another regime change. Ironies abound here, as we can record. The well-known corporate "futurologist" Alvin Toffler quotes in one of his books, journalist James Mills, who authored "The Underground Empire: Where Crime And Governments Embrace" (Doubleday, 1986).

"Mills writes: '... the Underground Empire today has more power, wealth, and status than many nations. It flies no flag on the terrace of the UN, but it has larger armies, more capable intelligence agencies, more influential diplomatic services than many countries do' ("Power-shift: Knowledge, Wealth, And Violence At The Edge Of The 21st Century", Bantam Books, 1990, p459).

The credibility of James Mills' study of global drug cartels in "The Underground Empire" (*op. cit.*) was strongly questioned in various dimensions. But Mills was certainly correct about the close governmental links to the international illegal drug trade. He himself wondered just how influential the American government was in peddling this trade.

In fact, the global reach of the US has been both long in time, and extensive in distance and regional coverage. American foreign policy interventions overseas, especially covert operations, have often had drug connections, as well as violent and disruptive outcomes. Most significantly, the armies, intelligence agencies, and influential diplomatic services of the world's biggest rogue nation have often fostered the general growth and spread of the international illegal drug trade.

"Beginning with Thailand in the 1950s, Americans have become inured to the Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) alliances with drug traffickers (and their bankers) to install and maintain Rightwing governments. The pattern has repeated itself in Laos, Vietnam, Italy, Mexico, Thailand [*again!*], Nigeria, **Venezuela** (*tweet that, Trump!*), Colombia,

Peru, Chile, Panama, Honduras, Turkey, Pakistan, and the vicious martyrdom of Afghanistan" (see "American War Machine, Deep Politics, The CIA Global Drug Connection, And The Road To Afghanistan", Peter Dale Scott, Rowman & Littlefield, 2010/14).

As Jonathan Marshall, Peter Dale Scott, and Jane Hunter, the authors of "The Iran-Contra Connection: Secret Teams And Covert Operations In The Reagan Era" (South End Press, 1987), contend so forcefully: "the Iran-Contra scandal (was) not merely a plan gone awry, but a consistent out-growth of a long tradition of covert US activities". It involved CIA operations that both enacted and manipulated illegal programmes of "drug trafficking, gunrunning, government-toppling, and assassination" (*ibid.*). A lot of the "dirty work" done by America's "bad guys" blew apart in this particular scandal. But the kind of operations uncovered in the "Iran-Contra" or "Irangate" controversy have continued in multiple forms up to the present.

Orwellian Double-Think

Here in Aotearoa/NZ, the mainstream media just constantly reel out official US propaganda with a straight face, showing a pervasive lack of knowledge and interest beyond the standard spiel. It is a long-hallowed neo-colonial tradition with a host of pernicious implications. In fact, the history of American government and CIA drug dealing is far-reaching, ongoing, and malevolent in its geopolitical machinations.

("The Politics Of Heroin: CIA Complicity In The Global Drug Trade: Afghanistan, Southeast Asia, Central America, Colombia", Alfred W McCoy, Lawrence Hill, 1972/2003; for an up-to-date overview, see McCoy's paper "Searching For Significance Among Drug Lords And Death Squads: The Covert Netherworld As Invisible Incubator For Illicit Commerce", *Journal of Illicit Economies and Development*, Vol 1, No. 1, 14/1/19, pp2-22).

Afghanistan's torment owing to America's embrace of government and drugs was set soon after the US invasion, following 9/11. As renowned investigative reporter Seymour Hersh pointed out, quoting a touted Pentagon expert: "The conditions under which the post-Taliban government came to power gave 'warlordism, banditry, and opium

production a new lease on life” (“Chain Of Command: The Road From 9/11 To Abu Ghraib”, Allen Lane/Penguin, p150).

The Taliban had actually imposed a total ban on poppy production for the opium/heroin industry in 2000. American propaganda for the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, in the wake of 9/11, painted the Taliban as nasty drug runners, as well as dangerous fundamentalist terrorists, etc. “When US and British forces invaded Afghanistan in October 2001, poppies were grown on around 74,000 hectares – 285 square miles” (“How The US Military's Opium War In Afghanistan Was Lost”²³, 25/4/19). The Taliban might not have quite eliminated poppy production but they had done a pretty comprehensive job overall.

Yet, by 2019: “Opium (accounted) for around a third of Afghanistan's GDP (and) is by far the country's biggest cash crop and provides almost 600,000 jobs” (ibid.). Poppy “production had increased more than four-fold in 15 years; now opium was being grown on 328,000 hectares – 1,266 square miles” (ibid.). The Taliban were now in charge of at least 70% of the country.

Both America's so-called “War on Terror” and “War on Drugs” have come to ignominious grief on the shoals of Afghanistan. In 2020, with a resurgent Taliban still in tortuous negotiations with the US and its puppet government there to thrash out some sort of relatively stable peace agreement, the world's crumbling Anglo-American empire has stumbled into another damning defeat.

Counter-Productive Counter-Insurgency (COIN)

As signalled earlier in my article, Professor John Gray determined in 2007 that the combination of the wars against terrorism and drugs had ended up in hopeless failure (“Black Mass”, op. cit.). Tragically, Afghanistan provides another graphic example. American COIN was always conflicted, contaminated, and compromised! In the wake of the American 2001 invasion of Afghanistan, “heroin was among the most immediate – and the most intractable – social, economic, and political problems” (“Chain Of Command”, op. cit., p154). Even the CIA-handpicked President Hamid Karzai, in appealing for foreign aid, de-

claimed that: “Drugs in Afghanistan are threatening the very existence of the Afghan state” (ibid.).

But the US has always cultivated its own “power base of warlords”. A UN report, published in 2003, had found that “opium production, which, following a ban by the Taliban, had fallen to 185 metric tons in 2001, had soared to 3,600 tons – a twenty-fold increase” (ibid.). It was yet another instance of the American imperialists being mired in their own self-serving, hypocritical bullshit!

You see, US strategy was closely tied to the drug-peddling warlords. To conduct the farce of seemingly democratic elections in 2004, the latest wave of foreign invaders was wedded to local warlord demands. If the American occupying force were to attempt “a 'hard and heavy' poppy eradication programme, the warlords would disrupt the election” (ibid., p161).

Failing To Strike Hard And Fast?!

Fast forward to April 2019, when a BBC reporter wrote about watching what he considered a “jaw-dropping” and awe-inspiring use of sophisticated, precisely-targeted American firepower, applied in an aerial attack on a drug-making site (“How The US Military's Opium War In Afghanistan Was Lost”, op. cit.). Actually, it was part of a series of attacks that the Pentagon had published online – in this particular case depicting an operation inflicted on Helmand province in November 2017 (ibid.).

Later research showed that at the time of the assault, the site had been abandoned for the purpose of drug-making. But the onslaught killed eight civilians. These unfortunate Afghan civilians were obviously just so much more collateral damage for the Yankee imperialists. These deaths, however, like so many others, have actually contributed in real terms accountability towards why the US is losing yet another war like it lost Vietnam. By far the greatest cost, sadly again, has been paid in the lives and livelihoods of multitudinous Afghan victims, and the brutal ravaging of yet one more poor country under the Yankee jackboot.

Over the years, the American occupying force came to see the drug trade as the principal source of funding for the Taliban insurgency (ibid.). Josh Meyer, an American na-

tional security journalist, charges the Obama Administration with failing to get on top of the drug-funded insurgency by not implementing a plan to bring to justice key Taliban leaders and warlords in American courts, supposedly using international law (“The Secret Story Of How America Lost The Drug War With The Taliban”²⁴, 8/7/18).

High On Hypocrisy

In reality, Meyer's article shows how the cheerleaders of the American Empire are so morally bankrupt. Their hypocrisy is egregious. Thus, according to Meyer & co., the world's worst rogue nation, which regularly tramples so freely over international law, should have applied this same law in the drug war in Afghanistan via US courts. Such perversity is aptly illustrated by an item from a timeline in Josh Meyer's article (ibid). The perverted American bias is clearly evident. This item reads as follows for the 1970s and 1980s: “Opium trafficking skyrocketed with help from US-funded Pakistani agents, who deliver Afghan mujahedeen freedom fighters and help them export their opium” (ibid.).

Get it! – “mujahedeen freedom fighters”, many of whom morphed into the Taliban, are now fighting another foreign invader!! Further, many of the fighters funnelled into Afghanistan during the 1980s were Muslim foreigners, who rallied to the jihad against the godless Soviet occupiers. Then, to really rub in the irony, the former “freedom fighters”, now transmogrified into Anglo-American defined “terrorists”, are still helping to fund their guerrilla war from the drug trade!

Afghanistan, to be sure, was a convenient battleground for the US to deliver the Soviets their own “Vietnam”-style debacle. The CIA recruited the most fundamentalist, fanatical fighters they could, and so later the US helped directly reap its own karma in 9/11. Well-known *Washington Post* investigative journalist Bob Woodward culled a most revealing admission from Reagan's CIA Director Bill Casey, who recounted an agency “stuff-up” in the Iran-Contra affair.

Casey said that: “... some 'dumb' low-level employee at the Agency had used the same Swiss bank account for the Iran arms sales as was used for the joint US-Saudi covert

support programme to the Afghan rebels. So, some of this Iran money and the US\$500 million for the Afghan operation had been commingled" ("Veil: The Secret Wars Of The CIA, 1981-1987", Simon & Schuster, 1987, p502).

Get this again! – the Reagan Administration was backing the murderous CIA-contrived Contra death squads in a counter-insurgency against the new revolutionary Leftwing government in Nicaragua. At the same time, it was working hand in glove with the totalitarian, fundamentalist, feudal Saudi kingdom and a reactionary Pakistan to conduct an insurgency in Soviet-occupied Afghanistan.

Openly Supporting Subversion And Regime Change

To return to the case of Venezuela, the Trump Administration has obviously stepped up its openly flaunted campaign of subversion of this Latin American government. This has been just the latest phase of a viciously orchestrated US programme, now covering at least a couple of decades ("US Regime Change In Venezuela: The Documented Evidence"²⁵, 25/1/19; "The History – And Hypocrisy – Of US Meddling In Venezuela"²⁶, 28/1/19).

Even some critics of the Maduro regime can concur to some considerable extent about the subversive US role (e.g. "How Washington Funded The Counterrevolution In Venezuela"²⁷, 8/2/19). "The shift towards socialism in Venezuela, led by President Hugo Chavez, was bitterly opposed by privileged groups [and the

US] ("Free Trade And Social Conflict In Colombia, Peru And Venezuela", op. cit.). Imperialism and its onerous conditions for free trade and/or debt relief inevitably induce class conflict and deep social disruption.

The Western media in the case of Venezuela, as with other geopolitical conflicts, have been rife with malicious propaganda. This mainstream media campaign is committed in particular to promoting Washington's neo-fascist puppet would-be President (e.g. "[Juan] Guaido A Symbol Of Hope Against Brutality", *Press*, 8/2/20). But the US imperialist bid for another geopolitical power grab has been stymied for the moment by rival big power support for the Maduro regime, as well as that from a host of other countries ("Putin Offers 'Strategic Support'", *Press*, 30/3/20). Both Russia and China aid Venezuela. They are similarly supportive of Iran.

Moreover, Russia has even offered assistance to Iraq, following Trump's treacherous murders of Iranian commander General Qassem Soleimani and Iraqi senior militia leader Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis near Baghdad Airport at the beginning of 2020 ("Russia Offers Military Assistance To Iraq", *Press*, 8/2/20). Trumpism is putting the Middle East continually on edge.

Trumpeting Perfidy!

For sure, Trumpism means even more nakedly self-interested, disruptively confrontational, and grasping behaviour in its out-reach of the tentacles of power. This pernicious Ad-

ministration, in the pursuit of its very narrowly perceived self-interest, is even quite prepared to sideline the niceties of diplomacy with allies, let alone with rivals and foes

For example, the Trump Administration has threatened "Britain, France and Germany with a 25% tariff on cars exported to the US unless they took action against Iran for defying (sic.) its nuclear agreement" ("Trump: Punish Iran Or Face Tariffs", *Press*, 17/1/20). It is freely and virulently brandishing and applying the stick of economic sanctions – mostly illegal – wherever and whenever it suits. Trump & co. have started a very dangerous chain reaction with Iran and other nations associated in the nuclear control deal set up by the previous Obama government. Their stupidly aggressive and malign strategy to sink this formerly viable, and indeed so vital deal, puts everyone at risk.

The Iraqis have even asked America to withdraw its occupying force but the Yankee imperialists have blatantly refused ("US Rejects Iraq's Call For Troops To Get Out", *SST*, 12/1/20). The US uses the excuse of staying to fight Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). It is yet another enormously arrogant breach of Iraqi sovereignty but the West in its utter hypocrisy conforms as usual to America's dictates.

America has, of course, cynically and calculatedly "balkanised" Iraq with its divide and rule strategy. It has pitted the Kurdish and Sunni minorities in rivalry with the dominant Shiite majority and the latter's orientation to Iran (ibid.; "The End Of Iraq: How American Incompetence Created A War Without End", Peter W Galbraith, Pocket Books, 2006). Even the ruling Shiite regime put in place by the US has been rocked in its home territory by recent rioting against unemployment, corruption, and alleged political misrule. Despite all this, the US is still intent on retaining its pernicious, destabilising presence ("US Rejects Iraq's Call...", ibid.) Thankfully, NZ is however withdrawing its troop trainers from Camp Taji.

Market Mayhem

Given such global conditions as so far outlined, the criticism of what is called "isolationism" regarding the Trump Administration – as illustrated, say, by the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement on climate



change – is, in fact, very misconstrued. In terms of predatory power projections, Trumpism is far from isolationist in the political economy of its foreign policy (“The Age Of Great Power Competition”, *FA*, op. cit.). In sum, Trumpism pursues a very narrowly construed perception of self-interest, both in terms of ends and the means to achieve them. We must work even more closely with American-based peace and anti-nuclear NGOs in helping to counter all the fallout from the present Administration.

Such brazenly paraded rejections of diplomacy and “soft power”, therefore, go hand in hand with more internationally intrusive militarist market policies and practices in search of exports, investment, and resources. Meantime, US-initiated geopolitical confrontations around the planet are sustaining a series of potential flash-points – from Syria and Iran through Yemen to Venezuela and Ukraine.

Currently - as highlighted earlier above - given the Covid-19 global crisis, the UN is trying desperately to dampen down the world's conflict “hotspots”, especially Syria, Yemen, and Libya. Simmering conflicts can, of course, bubble up again, as with the situation of late in the South China Sea (e.g. “Australia Joins US Drill in Contested Sea”, *Press*, 24/4/20). China is accused of “exploiting the Covid-19 crisis to bolster its territorial claims to regional flash-points” (ibid.). Meanwhile, a leading priority for the UN is to try and relieve the associated human misery as much as it can. Pope Francis has lent his moral authority in these causes. Again, as ever, we have to do our best to marshal support in our respective countries.

Social Darwinist Struggles

The geopolitical challenges are great indeed. From efforts for regime change in oil and gas rich Iran and Venezuela to bolstering the Saudi butchery of Yemen and revolutionary strife in Syria, global disruption and mass murder, along with constant disinformation and “fake news”, signify the name of the game for the US and its mates.

Similarly, where their interests are seen as threatened, both Russia and China are quite prepared to be equally as ruthless. For instance, a UN commission of inquiry has put direct blame for attacks on hospitals

and other civilian facilities in Syria at the feet of the Assad regime “and/or its allies”, i.e. Russia (“Assad And Russian Allies Targeted Hospitals: UN”, *Press*, 9/4/20). The evidence here indicates calculated war crimes!

Given such barbarism inflicted over decades on Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Afghanistan, etc., as freely perpetrated by the great powers and their client forces, the world stage is sadly set, as continually stressed in this article, for very dangerous times ahead. This outlook will hold unless the international peace and anti-nuclear movements can support the UN sufficiently in its peace-making and mediation efforts. *Human survival is at stake!* In this context, the testimony to date of the belligerent stupidity of the Trump Administration is stark. To be sure, by August 2019, the ramped-up trade war with China was even rattling stock markets around the world. It is certainly sobering to recall how trade wars ushered in WWII as the Great Depression unfolded.

Later on, thankfully, the heat went down somewhat with some wheeling and dealing between the US and China as the Trump Administration switched from aggressive “hard-ball” to more serious negotiations and a new trade deal (“US-China Declare Trade War Truce”, *Press*, 17/1/20). Yet, by March 2020, stock markets were reeling worldwide from the coronavirus or “Covid-19” disease. These days, we still have the unfolding saga and ramifications of this pandemic, and its impact on the world economy and socio-economic systems. Humankind has to overcome the multiple down-sides and generate effective continuing crisis management for the future.

Critical Geopolitical Crisis Points And The Case Of Ukraine

One of the critical global conflicts is that simmering away in the Ukraine. The dominant understanding of this crisis in the West is in fact a travesty of the truth. *Perceived self-interest and self-image rule as per usual as conveyed by the political Establishment and its crony media!* By February 2019 it had been recorded that about 13,000 people had been killed, and 30,000 wounded in the Ukrainian civil war which, like the Syrian conflict, serves as a proxy battleground for outside powers. A superficial look at the significance of this geopolitical issue and great

power stand-off can be misleading.

A couple of American academics, in pondering the problem of Ukraine and probing deeper, point out that in fact: “Over the past quarter century, nearly all major efforts at establishing a durable post-Cold War order on the Eurasian continent have foundered on the shoals of Ukraine. For it is in Ukraine that the disconnect between triumphalist end-of-history delusions and the ongoing realities of great power competition can be seen in its starkest form” (“The Shoals Of Ukraine: Where American Illusions And Great - Power Politics Collide”, Serhii Plokhly & ME Sarotte, in *FA*, pp81-95, op. cit.). The authors portray the Ukraine as a pivotal fulcrum in the struggle between West and East. “Ukraine's place in the Eurasian order and its role in the fraught relationship between Washington and Moscow” lies at the heart these days of a long history of geopolitical competition in this region of south-eastern Europe (ibid., p82).

Uncovering The Realities Of The Ukraine?

But the two American History Professors just cited above are, at the same time, traditionally very conventional in a lot of their analysis of East/West competition as focused on the Ukraine. Plokhly and Sarotte walk us through a post-WWII history of the Ukraine and the struggle to decide the destiny of this country in the midst of all its cultural, ethnic, political, economic, and geopolitical entanglements and tensions (ibid.).

Although they recognise the complexity of the issues impacting on Ukraine, they ultimately and simplistically ascribe most blame to Russian violent interference in Ukrainian affairs for the current mess and potentially dangerous stand-off (ibid.). Mind you, on close examination, their analysis gets rather muddled in the attribution of blame.

In promulgating their main thesis that the US-led brigade was misled by its optimism for the dissemination of capitalist democracy, they echo the dominant view of the Ukrainian situation as trumpeted by the Western political Establishment and its media. According to this narrative, Putin's Russia has been belligerently aggressive in taking over Crimea, and igniting a civil war in eastern Ukraine (ibid.). President Putin, in this storyline, has maliciously killed

off the momentum for national democracy in Ukraine. This democratic project was supposedly driven by America's good intentions and wishful thinking!

So, in the view of Ploky and Sarotte, the West – and particularly the US – has suffered from triumphalist delusions about the progress in this geographical region of capitalist democracy (ibid.). Indeed, as the title of their article suggests, this is basically the specific thesis put forward by these two authors and the angle of analysis that they propound. They frame their general thesis in terms critical of the US-led triumphalist delusions as they see them. The West has unfortunately failed to take account of the underlying realities present in this part of the world.

Muddled And Malign Thinking

Yet, most ironically, their article is devoid of any mention of all the machinations that the US and its mates undertook to blatantly overthrow a democratically elected government in the Ukraine. The US-backed coup against the Ukrainian government needs to be put in context. America spent at least \$US5 billion in a programme of calculated subversion over a long period of time (“American Conquest By Subversion: Victoria Nuland Admits Washington Has Spent \$5 Billion to ‘Subvert Ukraine.’”²⁸).

Even a British Establishment media organ like the BBC could recognise US interference, at least on the rare occasion (“Victoria Nuland: Leaked Call Shows US Hand On Ukraine”²⁹, *BBC News*, 7/2/14). The BBC even noted at the time that it was “the larger conversation, which shows the US is manipulating Ukraine just as much as Russia, that is the real diplomatic disaster” (ibid.). But later, the mainstream media consensus overwhelmingly promulgates the themes of Russian deviousness and aggression as opposed to Western good intentions. *Brazenly dangerous bullshit prevails!*

The American programme of subversion covered a wide spectrum of activities under the camouflage of democratic pretence. Stephen F Cohen, Professor Emeritus of Russian Studies & Politics at New York and Princeton Universities, agrees with Professors Ploky and Sarotte about the significance of the Ukraine (as highlighted in “The Shoals Of Ukraine”, op. cit.) but puts his em-

phasis very much on the reality of what has happened (“Four Years Of Ukraine And The Myths Of Maidan”³⁰, 3/1/18).

Imperial Blame Gaming

Professor Cohen stresses that the US/North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)/European Union(EU) projection into Ukraine “has militarised and moved the new Cold War to Russia's borders – in the form of a civil and proxy shooting war – indeed, to inside a civilisation shared for centuries by Russia and large parts of the Ukraine” (ibid.). While Professors Ploky and Sarotte recognise this shared civilisation of Russia with so much of the Ukraine, they play the blame game, as noted, by primarily attributing the current civil war to Putin's irredentism (“The Shoals Of Ukraine”, op. cit.).

Allegedly, Putin's refusal to acknowledge the loss of the Ukraine from the former Soviet Union is at the root of the ongoing violence (ibid.). Yet, as Professor Stephen Cohen rightly contends instead, the evidence overwhelmingly points to a US-orchestrated “coup” in 2014 against the democratically elected Government of Ukraine (“Four Years Of Ukraine”, op. cit.). The specific charge of geopolitical outrage against Putin by Professor Ploky and Sarotte is thus gutted by this reality!

Ironically, this kind of charge has a parallel in the US-led assault on Venezuela, except for the glaring factual reality. In sum, the Yanks have far less a claim under their long-standing but unilaterally imposed “Monroe Doctrine”^{*} on Latin America! There are obvious differences of geographical contiguity, culture, history, etc. *But, oh, the tangled coils of geo-politics could certainly strangle us all! *Named after the 1823 declaration by US President James Monroe, it warns European imperialists to stay out of the Americas, which it asserts as an exclusive sphere of influence of the US. Ed.*

At this stage, I want to firmly register how that the potentially very dangerous situation of the Ukraine and its implications for world peace demands some further examination in a later article, including in terms of the US/NATO subversion of this country. The role of Joe Biden, the 2020 Democratic contender against Trump for the Presidential office, re-

quires close scrutiny too in such an examination (see again Professor Cohen's article: - ibid.; also, his recent book “War With Russia? From Putin And Ukraine To Trump And Russiagate”).

Some Loopy Loopholes In The Memory Hole!

In the course of their *FA* article, Professors Ploky and Sarotte do let slip some vital facts (“The Shoals Of Ukraine”, op. cit.). Following the Budapest Memorandum, a deal signed in December 1994, “British, Russian, and US leaders” together succeeded in getting Ukraine denuclearised” (ibid., pp86/7). Doing this had been a joint priority for the great powers since a nuclear armed Ukraine seemed to be a loose cannon endangering everyone.

However, under pressure from the opposition Republican Party, US President Bill “Clinton made clear (over the protestations of) his Secretary of Defense (William Perry) that the US would now proceed with NATO enlargement into central and eastern Europe” (ibid., p88). Domestic American politics, driven by the rabidly hardline Republicans, has come to trump the desperately urgent cause of world peace.

So, by 1994, the US/NATO/EU phalanx had embarked on an openly aggressive advancement right up to the Russian flank. The aim was obviously to station nuclear weapons – or, at least, the capacity for the very rapid mobilisation of these weapons – on Russia's very border for an all-out attack if the occasion were to arise. Today, the co-conspirators still maintain their imposition of economic sanctions on Russia.

Most ironically as ever, the US has been clearly intent on using Europe as a prospective battleground well away from the Homeland. Nations like the newly independent Ukraine are just ultimately expendable assets. Just imagine the outraged howling, say, if Russia had suborned Mexico, and was going to move nuclear weapons, or even conventional missiles, up to the US southern border! *Remember the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, and just how close the world came to midnight mayhem!*

The mind-blowing hypocrisy here lays bare the self-serving pontifications of analysts like Professors Ploky and Sarotte, and indeed the

general Western foreign policy Establishment. *Just as the West and Russia got Ukraine denuclearised, the US/NATO brigade forged on with plans to position nuclear weaponry within almost instant striking distance of the Russian Motherland!*

Peace Versus Preparations For War

Again, it is mind-blowing how this eminently wicked crap has been so successfully sold in Orwellian fashion to Western publics. Let's get this right. The West and Russia collaborated in denuclearising Ukraine but around the same time the American hard Right pushed an agenda to the fore to renuclearise this same country as a launching-pad for a US/NATO first strike on Russia. In the circumstances, Putin's response has been decidedly defensive. One can only be stunned by how the peoples of the West are so easily and repeatedly manipulated!

Ironically, too, there has been the Partnership for Peace (PFP), "a NATO programme aimed at creating trust between NATO and other states in Europe and the former Soviet Union; 20 states are members (including Russia & Ukraine). It was "formally launched on January 10-11, 1994 at the NATO summit in Brussels, Belgium" (Partnership for Peace³¹). Apparently, in 1994 the PIP was even construed as an alternative programme to a NATO weaponisation and renuclearisation of Ukraine. Professors Plokhly and Sarotte explicitly acknowledge this ("The Shoals Of Ukraine", op. cit., pp87/8).

But "opponents of the PFP, who wanted to expand NATO proper as soon as possible to a few select states rather than build another, looser security alliance from the Atlantic to the Pacific, gained new momentum thanks to the mid-term election victory of the Republican Party, which was in favour of NATO enlargement, in November 1994" (ibid., p88). Hence President Clinton's decision in favour of NATO's takeover of Ukraine. Over time: "Fourteen former member states of the PFP (namely Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia), have subsequently joined NATO" (Partnership for Peace, op. cit.). *No wonder Russia feels under siege!*

Misleading And Malign Media Spin

In Aotearoa/NZ, the mainstream media are pervaded more than ever with pro-US-mandated "Five Eyes" conformity. At this point, as way of illustration, I shall take up the question of the portrayal of the Ukrainian situation in our own media here in Aotearoa/NZ. For instance, presenter Lisa Owen on TV3's *The Nation* tackled Deputy PM and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Winston Peters, about a supposed obstacle to a free trade deal with Russia (11/3/18). This media interview reflects elements typical of our mainstream media in dealing with such geopolitical issues.

Owen charged that not only does Russia have a bad domestic human rights record but that it had intervened nastily in the Crimea and the wider Ukraine, and had even shot down a civilian airliner. She asked Peters how can he and his Government just ignore all this. Well, Lisa (now with Radio NZ [RNZ]) since we so openly and hypocritically ignored the blatantly contrived US/NATO subversion of a democratically elected government in the Ukraine in 2014, we can surely be quite pragmatic, eh?!

Winston Peters aptly commented in reply to TV3's Lisa Owen that any human rights conditions for trade would leave NZ with few trading partners indeed (ibid.). Meanwhile, the "hotspots" of global conflict and US-generated confrontation simmer or boil away – from the Ukraine to the Korean Peninsula, from the South China Sea to Syria; and from Iran to Venezuela. But this is all grist for the media propaganda mill with endless enemies to condemn.

So, again, we have the most Orwellian hypocrisy in action as so often paraded in our media, unashamedly ignoring the pernicious American record. More to the point, we have the whole geopolitical thrust of NATO – as then orchestrated by the Obama Administration - right up to Russia's very borders, an intrusion which as described has sharply boosted the arms race and led to a very perilous standoff in Europe ("It's Not Russia That's Pushed Ukraine To The Brink Of War"³², Seumas Milne, *Opinion, Guardian*, 30/4/14).

Then, to recap, there is the apparently minor matter of the Obama Ad-

ministration having facilitated a fascist-style coup and toppling a democratically elected government in the Ukraine; let alone overthrowing others in Latin America, i.e., the Left-wing governments of Honduras and Paraguay ("On Western Terrorism: From Hiroshima To Drone Warfare", Noam Chomsky & Andre Vltchek, Pluto Press, 2013, p159).

Mainstreaming Geopolitics

It was certainly a most damning insight in NZ's culture and neo-colonial conformity as to how our media, political Establishment, business class, and so on, fawned so lovingly over Obama when he visited Aotearoa/NZ in March 2018. Obama was here on one of his lucrative corporate-sponsored speaking trips. This was the self-proclaimed, boasting drone serial killer, who had embarked on a trillion-dollar update of America's nuclear weapons; assiduously fostered death squad operations in foreign lands; cavalierly overthrew democratic governments; and dramatically boosted the dangers of nuclear war for everybody. Appropriately enough, he talked about leadership!

Smugly self-serving, hypocritical, and power exuberant behaviour is certainly the hallmark of those who see themselves as among the privileged of humankind. They can feel immune to being held accountable for human rights abuses and any responsibility for worsening the global crisis. Their followers can share these sentiments in vicarious satisfaction.

In the case of TV3, the new Political Editor Tova O'Brien was to the fore in carrying on the foreign control agenda of the Anglo-American "Five Eyes" spy/covert action alliance. She kept trying to pressure PM Ardern to toe the aggressive, anti-Russian line on the Skripal poisoning case, Trump's latest missile attack on Syria, cyber-warfare charges, etc.

The Covid-19 Crisis And Global Implosion

By the end of April 2020, the global coronavirus crisis was still unfolding. The pleas from the UN and humanitarian NGOs and agencies were getting more dire and urgent. Most distressingly, David Beasley, Executive Director of the UN World Food Program, said "that even before Covid-19 became an issue", he had been warning about how "2020

would be facing the worst humanitarian crisis since WWII” (“UN Food Agency Warns Of ‘Hunger Pandemic’”, *Press*, 23/4/20).

“... as the world is dealing with the coronavirus pandemic, it is also ‘on the brink of a hunger pandemic’, that could lead to ‘multiple famines of Biblical proportions’ within a few months if immediate action isn’t taken” (ibid.). Causes lay with “wars in Syria, Yemen, and elsewhere, locust swarms in Africa, frequent natural disasters and economic crises, including in Lebanon, Congo, Sudan and Ethiopia” (ibid.).

As the UN alerts us then again, the impact on humankind of Covid-19 is increasing in intensity, with very probably the worst yet to come (as signalled by the end of April). Pleas for international peace are yet to be properly met (“US And Russia Stall Over Plan For A Global Ceasefire”, *Press*, 21/4/20). *The very survival of the UN itself is at stake (ibid.)*.

The good news is that progress is gaining in other forms. “World leaders (have) rallied around the UN for an initiative to help the most vulnerable countries gain access to vaccines, diagnostics and treatment tools for the coronavirus as soon as they emerge”, despite the US and China being missing in action (“UN Plan Seeks Global Response To Pandemic”, *SST*, 26/4/20). UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has well said that “the fury of the virus illustrates the folly of war” (“Leaders Back Global Truce To Fight Virus”, *Press*, 17/4/20; see also: “Virus Threat To Peace, Security – UN Chief”, *Press*, 11/4/20).

A Challenging New Future

There has been a vigorous ongoing discussion at both the international and domestic levels about what a post-coronavirus world will look like, or what it should look like. A whole range of views is being aired – from the very pessimistic to the very optimistic, and from preoccupation with problems ahead to opportunities for fairer and more sustainable lifestyles.

As someone who has always abjured what I would define as a misleading and simplistic framework of optimism versus pessimism, it is a matter of clearly facing up to the problems and tackling them together. Some of the problems are very much in our face. But what is heart-

ening is how – for the moment at least (*and let’s seize the time!*) – an international movement is continuing to gather strength for real positive change.

Weblinks:

- 1 <https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2016/02/sanders-looks-establishment-on-nukes/126101/>
- 2 <https://thebulletin.org/2020/01/press-release-it-is-now-100-seconds-to-midnight/>,
- 3 <https://thedailyblog.co.nz/2020/03/25/a-call-to-do-better-by-nature/>, Christine Rose,
- 4 <https://fas.org/issues/nuclear-weapons/status-world-nuclear-forces/>
- 5 <http://www.converge.org.nz/watchdog/53/11.html>
- 6 <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-04-18/coronavirus-misinformation-origin-theory-donald-trump-wuhan-lab/12158774>
- 7 <https://www.businessinsider.com.au/fauci-throws-cold-water-conspiracy-theory-coronavirus-escaped-chinese-lab-2020-4>
- 8 <https://www.counterpunch.org/2012/07/25/reagan-the-real-story/>
- 9 www.newsroom.co.nz, <https://www.newsroom.co.nz/2020/04/14/1127726/contrarian-academics-oppose-nz-lockdown>
- 10 <https://thebulletin.org/doomsday-clock/>
- 11 <https://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PA2002/S00140/justice-minister-represents-new-zealand-at-berlin-nuclear-disarmament-summit.htm>
- 12 www.savethechildren.org.nz/
- 13 <https://secure.avaaz.org/page/en/>
- 14 <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/apr/01/extreme-coronavirus-lockdown-controls-raise-fears-for-worlds-poorest>
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¹⁷<https://www.discovermagazine.com/health/why-bats-are-breeding-grounds-for-deadly-diseases-like-ebola-and-sars>

¹⁸www.fauna-flora.org

¹⁹<https://www.avaaz.org/>

²⁰<https://www.avaaz.org/>

²¹<http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-backissues/pr43.pdf>

²²https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwcB6Aysm_HHSFY1VDA0blc1ZU0/view?pli=1

²³<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-47861444>

²⁴<https://www.politico.com/blogs/politico-press/2018/07/12/politico-investigation-the-secret-story-of-how-america-lost-the-drug-war-with-the-taliban-707696>

²⁵<https://www.globalresearch.ca/us-regime-change-venezuela-documented-evidence/5666500>

²⁶<https://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/14263>

²⁷<https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/venezuela-washington-funded-counterrevolution/>

²⁸<http://www.globalresearch.ca/american-conquest-by-subversion-victoria-nulands-admits-washington-has-spent-5-billion-to-subvert-ukraine/53677782>

²⁹<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-26089450>

³⁰<https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/four-years-of-ukraine-and-the-myths-of-maidan/>

³¹https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Partnership_for_Peace

³²<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/apr/30/russia-ukraine-war-kiev-conflict> ■

SECRET

The Making Of Australia's Security State by Brian Toohey Melbourne University Press, 2019



Mates: Donald Trump and Scott Morrison

“We the Government have vital information which we cannot disclose. It is upon this knowledge that we make decisions. You, who are merely private citizens, have no access to this information. Any criticism you may have of our policy, any controversy about it in which you may indulge, will therefore be uninformed and useless. If, in spite of your ignorance, you persist in questioning our policy, we can only conclude that you are disloyal”.

This quotation, provided in the introduction to Brian Toohey's analysis of Australian government attitudes, says it all. The remark came from the Minister for Defence in 1938, the year before Nazi troops marched into Poland and began what came to be called the Second World War. The Minister was certainly confident he was offering the nation impeccable and unimpeachable wisdom, but we can read his words and see in them the epitome of paternalistic arrogance.

The ideals of democracy, which the Minister and his mates doubtless professed, were far from what he actually believed. The tone suggests that had Australia faced a deeper threat than the very real dangers that did eventuate, the Minister would have claimed an emergency that necessitated a (temporary of course) dictatorship and allowed him to crush the remnants of democracy that might have persisted.

That is clear enough, but it is not all that would have troubled any citizen who might have been aware of the

contempt with which she was being held. The Minister was almost certainly wrong. It is safe to assume that he had no idea of what was about to happen in Europe - or, later, in Asia and the Pacific. And it's safe to assume that he had no secret knowledge of importance and that, even if he did know something that needed to be treated with discretion, that it would not have needed to be kept from the public.

The Minister was simply trying to evade scrutiny and promote his ego. These days we talk of transparency. The Minister wanted an opaque gloom as this would allow him to blunder his certainty in the dark. He would have been both nasty and wrong. That is the inevitable consequence of irresponsible power. As the oft cited maxim has it: All power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

The Minister perhaps should not fill several paragraphs of critique, his claim being so boldly absurd, but he merits attention if only because thoughts like his on how governments should conduct themselves have never been far from the surface in Australian public affairs - or those of any other place where the baubles of office attract.

Colonial Cringer Robert Menzies

The Prime Minister at the time was Joseph Lyons, the policies and motivations of whom - according to *Wikipedia* - are still unclear. Lyons was originally elected as a Labor MP but had diverged to a coalition when he was PM. After the war political alignments became simpler,

even if the obsession with secrecy was unchanged. Australia's most influential and longest serving leader was probably the Liberal (conservative) Robert Menzies. In 1952 Menzies agreed to a UK request to test nukes in Western Australia. He did so without consulting his Cabinet, let alone the public.

Menzies would have been keen to help his Mother Country out of his often-paraded colonial cringe. For him, Britain was Best (he once remarked that had the Americans and Russians played cricket as sensible chaps did the world would have avoided all that nuclear aggro). But, at the same time, he saw that America had emerged as the one real boss of the world. Britain was fading. Apprehensive Australians were very aware of the debacle of the recent nastiness, when the UK had abandoned Singapore and all points east of Suez.

So, an American interest in Australia and an official Aussie welcome mat were inevitable. As was a US failure to come clean about its activities. In 1955 an American base near Alice Springs was established, ostensibly for “meteorological” purposes. It was really there to detect nuclear explosions which the Soviet Union - or China? - might detonate.

Given an ethos in which governments are at once dismissive of their citizens and subservient to the bigger bullies overseas, it is too much to expect the participants to be honest with each other, and as long as there was no evidence of public awareness of the secrets and

lies, Menzies would not have cared. Perhaps because his account is full enough in dealing with internal Aussie affairs, Toohey does not elaborate the wider context of the times, but it helps to remember that the early 1950s witnessed the hysteria of the emerging Cold War.

At the time when Menzies was inviting the Brits to spray nuclear debris over his country, the US was gripped by Senator Joe McCarthy's "witch trials" of supposed Communists and the UK was trying to hold onto its colonial lands, where ungrateful and disloyal nationalists were starting to rouse the natives (a New Zealand manifestation of this reactionary moment was the 1951 waterfront lockout, a manipulation of the then-National government to drive down workers' wages by deploying State power against their trade unions).

ANZUS & Vietnam War

In 1951 (the year of the violence on the wharves) the ANZUS (Australia New Zealand United States) Treaty had been signed off. Toohey's discussion of this is intriguing and important. In NZ ANZUS is often supposed to have been a mutual defence arrangement but Toohey shows that in fact the Treaty did not commit the partners to step in if one or more were attacked. The US, he says, would not have come to Australia's aid if someone had wanted to invade. The Treaty mumbled about how any disagreements should be settled "peacefully", and the trio were committed only to "consult".

The Americans were interested in Oz because its Government was conservative, stable and puppy-loyal, so it was an ideal spot from where they could keep an eye on the seething continent to the north. They were particularly interested in Indonesia, a populous country closer to any likely action in Asia. For this reason, the US wanted Japan and the Philippines included in the Treaty.

Menzies had to hide his horror, Japan in these post-war years being seen as Australia's biggest worry. Menzies might have been an old fossil but he was no fool. Toohey suggests that he suspected some lack of American urgency so he advised his Cabinet not to push the Yanks. He would have wanted to avoid asking for any specific re-

sponse from them that risked being merely cool.

Later, in Vietnam, the contradictions and ambiguities climaxed. The US enlisted Australian support to take on the locals there not because it really believed - or cared - that their faithful ally was threatened. Cooler analysis in Canberra would have surmised that if, as post-WW2 assessment suggested, the US had not previously been motivated by any wish to protect Australia as an aim per se, it would not now care to thwart any Vietnamese assault on the country, a prospect that no planner could have taken seriously anyway.

Appreciating this reality, in the early days of the Indo-China fighting, Menzies was not fussed. Yet within two years, by 1964, he boosted an initially small force in Vietnam and started talking of falling dominoes as the Viet Cong, mistakenly alleged to have been puppets of Red China, threatened. Yet in 1969, as the fighting peaked, Australia cut its military spending.

It seems that the inconsistency needs to be seen in the light of a historic Australian habit of embarking on foreign wars to keep on side with the imperial protector (and economic power). Originally Britain, this was now America. Domestically, another traditional gambit had been to conjure up foreign threats to demonise any opposition calls for peaceful and rational foreign policies. There's nothing like a panic to boost support and thereby win an imminent election. In the world of the secrets and lies, such gambits are ubiquitous.

Bob Hawke's Puppyish Loyalty To US

Toohey sometimes refers to the patrician gentleman as Bob Menzies, possibly because he wants to deflate the man's pomposity. But Menzies had always been Robert, just as his namesake, the quintessential Labor PM, striving always to seem to be the sort of mate you'd want at your barbie, has always been Bob Hawke (see Murray Horton's "Bob Hawke: Faithful Servant Of US Empire" in *Peace Researcher* 57, June 2019, <http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-backissues/PR57.pdf> Ed.).

No Labour PM has ever been other than a willing junior partner in American foreign gambits but Hawke was especially keen to show his puppy-

ish loyalty. When, in 1985, NZ was ejected from ANZUS because of its banning of nuclearism, US President Reagan ordered it be denied intelligence briefings. Hawke followed suit, barking insults across the Tasman. Not known at the time was that the US kept the flow going anyway. In the world of secrets and lies the gap between what is said and what is done is always wide.

Like the Minister of Defence who had been pleased to say that anyone who questioned him was uninformed, valueless and disloyal, the Roberts and Bobs of the world like to imagine that their shifting prejudices are eternal verities. Toohey offers an example of the sort of pettiness and ridiculous behaviour that can result. It seems that official America hated Gough Whitlam, a Labor PM for a short time in the 1970s. Whitlam's tenure didn't last long because he was (sometimes) too progressive for polite society to countenance, so he was deposed in a 1975 coup led by the Governor General.

The Americans hated him too because Whitlam was poised and intelligent, the sort of person who - if he is prepared to challenge the secrets and lies - would now be deemed "elitist". So it was that when the Government leaders were at a conference, it was ordered that the red carpet for Whitlam be one metre shorter than the one laid out for NZ's Norm Kirk. Kirk had not yet offended orthodoxy (*Murray Horton's obituary of Gough Whitlam is in Peace Researcher* 49, June 2015, https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwcB6Aysm_HHSFY1VDA0blc1ZU0/view?pli=1 Ed.).

Toohey has a long track record as a journalist covering what's misleadingly called "defence" policy, during which he has often been an advocate himself. As such, he appears as a source in his own account. So, there is a vigorous and entirely welcome expansion of his theme to include a wider consideration of his country's foreign relations. He looks at 13 wars in which Aussie has been involved and concludes that 12 of them were not a good idea.

Putinesque Scott Morrison Regime

He concludes with some thoughts on topical matters, like the way the purveyors of secrets and lies interfere in other country's elections. Between 1946 and 2010, he reports,

the US has done so 81 times. So, what about Russia right now? Here Toohey is curiously unwilling to chastise Vladimir Putin, content to refer only to Putin's "alleged" interference in the 2016 US election. In the same vein he terms Russia's invasion of Crimea a "reincorporation". He even questions Putin's responsibility for the poisoning of Russian nationals in Britain, asking rhetorically, why would he?

Because he has a history of killing people who he sees as rivals or threats to his autocratic privilege,

that's why. To go after Australia's betrayal of democratic norms by exposing its State's secrets and lies is a valuable service for which his compatriots will be grateful, but Putin's Russia is so much worse. It's a murderous autocracy. The book's blurb accuses Australian governments of promoting "secrecy, ignorance and fear to introduce new laws that undermine individual liberties". Yes, of course, that's not good. But it's not good anywhere any time.

Meanwhile the Scott Morrison regime wants to revert to the openly

dictatorial style of 1938. Evoking "terrorism" as a pretext, in 2018 the Government enacted a bill that, in Toohey's words, brought in "seventy-five new laws against murder" as existing and adequate criminal law was redefined in terms of national security. And, alarmingly, it has been deemed that when it comes to what the Government says is in the interests of this security, the "release and reception of information of any kind, whether true or false" will be a crime. The offending "includes an opinion and a report of a conversation". That's Putinesque. ■

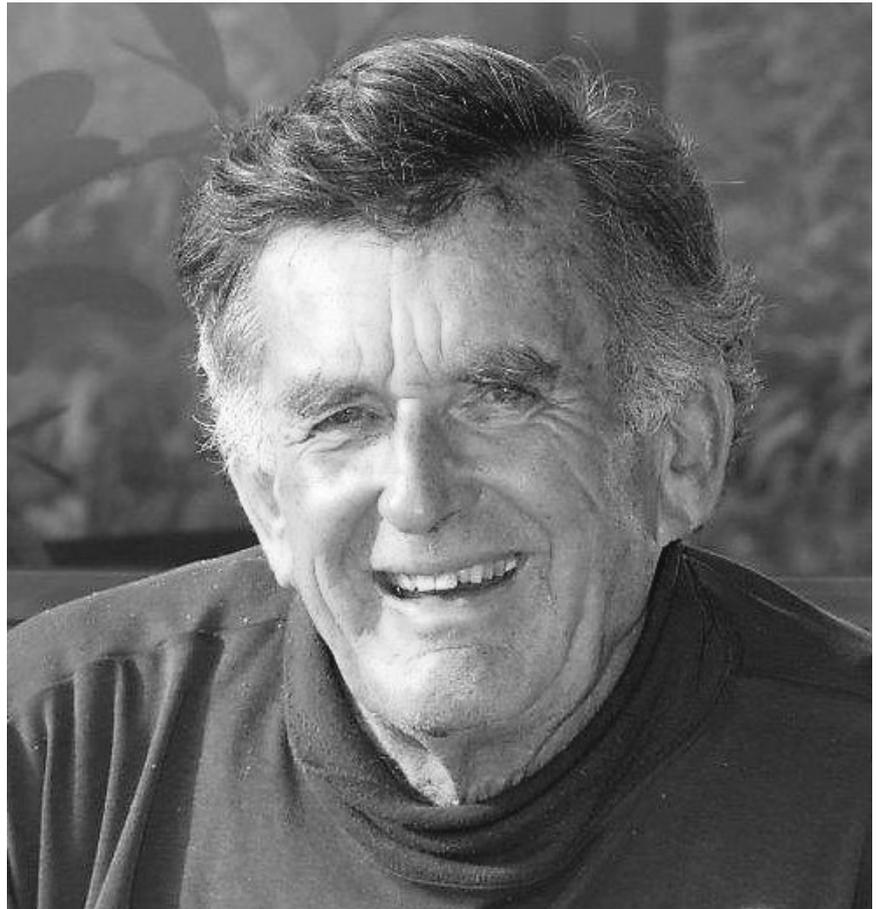
OBITUARIES

NOZZ FLETCHER

By Murray Horton

Nozz Fletcher, who died in December 2019 in Marlborough, aged 88, was a Campaign Against Foreign Control of Aotearoa (CAFCA) member (off and on) between 1999 and 2008. I knew Nozz as a regular participant at Anti-Bases Campaign's Waihopai spy base protests in the late 90s and early years of this century (interestingly he never actually joined ABC). During that time, he was one of the vital crew of Marlborough locals that ABC absolutely depends on to make those protests happen. Tribute was paid to Nozz at the January 2020 one at the spy base gate.

He was a ball of energy – in those days he was the age I am now (late 60s) – and was into everything. One year, ABC ran a Best Dressed Spy contest in central Blenheim (Greens Co-Leader Rod Donald* was the MC) and Nozz's enthusiastic theatricality came to the fore in that (although he didn't win – for the record, it was veteran Blenheim anti-bases activist, Evin Wood). * *My obituary of Rod Donald is in Peace Researcher 32, March 2006, <http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-bac>*



kissues/pr32.pdf.

Nozz was a wonderful host. In 1998 ABC held a strategy meeting in Wai-kawa Bay, near Picton. Nozz and Alison invited us all to their beautiful home on a hillside overlooking the bay. It happened to coincide with the 60th birthday of ABC founder and leader, Bob Leonard*. That was a birthday party Bob never forgot. Alison was the Picton and Blenheim organiser of my 1999 CAFCA national speaking tour and she and Nozz hosted me in their beautiful home. * *My obituary of Bob Leonard is in Peace Researcher 46, December 2013, <http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-backissues/pr46.pdf>.*

Nozz remained an activist, specifically on climate change and environmental issues, right through his 80s and up until near the end of his life. "At 88-years-old, he joked his last act would be to drown in front of an oil rig. That would be the ultimate, final attempt to raise awareness about climate change, he said" (*Marlborough Express*, 23/12/19, "Marlborough Climate Activist Nozz Fletcher Dies", Alice Angeloni, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/environment/climate-news/118343679/marlborough-climate-activist-nozz-fletcher-dies>). He was an activist for 60 years and he lived long enough to see many of the issues on which he campaigned become mainstream. ■

Nozz Fletcher was a man of many names. Born Norman Duncan Fletcher, his grandchildren had referred to him as the BFG (Big Friendly Giant) and he certainly was a big man in spirit and energy as well as height. Changing his name to a childhood one of Nozz was in response to a series of his usual insightful and informative letters to the editor being attributed to Norma Fletcher, Norm Fletcher and finally Normal Fletcher. That was too much. He wrote to the paper announcing that from now on he would be known as Nozz Fletcher as he certainly didn't regard himself as normal.

He had as many faces as names; a family man, the consummate activist, a political junkie, a sports fanatic, an actor, a writer, raconteur, environmentalist, and propagator and planter of herbs and native trees that now grow in his memory from one end of NZ to the other. Born in West Kerby near Liverpool in 1931, Nozz studied the Classics at Cambridge before following the desire for world travel that his Merchant Navy father had instilled in him, leading initially to living five years in Africa working for a vertical textile company.

Nozz then followed a Kiwi friend to New Zealand in 1961, no visa or work permits, he just walked off the boat and got a job, settling in Auckland and eventually meeting and marrying Ngaire Christiansen. It was through Ngaire who was Whakatohea from Opotiki that spurred his attempts to learn Te Reo, not altogether successfully, but he was heartened by the elders telling him how much they appreciated him trying. He and Ngaire had two children who travelled the length of NZ with them as he worked representing a publishing company.

Green Party Grassroots Activist

In Auckland he became really involved with theatre which led to parts in several TV series, and it was the theatrical side of Nozz that later did him well in many a political activism stunt. Painted gold to stand as a living statue raising money for the Greens, dressed as a spy at a Waihopai spy base protest and his Greenie the scarecrow was always a great success. He even won a prize at the A&P show in the scare-

crow competition with it, apparently feeling mortified as he'd only done it for a joke and the kids had put a lot of work into their entries.

Ngaire sadly died of cancer when the children were teenagers and Nozz ended up meeting Alison through a Values Party friend. Always a man with a big heart he ended up with a big family too as Alison came with her three children and four of a friend's children she fostered. Family life wasn't busy enough to keep him from contributing to his community whenever he saw the need.

His concern for the environment started with Rachel Carson's book "Silent Spring" and became stronger over the years as more and more issues surfaced. He actively campaigned for the environment and social justice through his letter writing, articles, drama, street theatre, living statues, National Radio opinion pieces and even his *Wordsworth Listener* contributions.

He got involved wholeheartedly with many groups; in early days with the Whangapoua Environmental Society managing to get enough support to stop the development at Matarangi being able to discharge raw sewage into the harbour. Nozz and Alison were active with Coromandel Watchdog and, at one demonstration, he sat in front of the bulldozer at the top of Black Jack's Road to stop the prospectors going onto private land.

Later when the children became independent Nozz and Alison moved south to a steep gorse covered section in the Marlborough Sounds that over the years Nozz planted back to a beautiful bush covered hillside. It was in Marlborough that Nozz and Ali got involved with the fledgling Green Party and the two of them became the public front of the Party every Saturday at the car boot sale setting up a Greens' stall, and over the years sold thousands of native plants that Nozz had lovingly propagated and grown, raising much needed funds for the Party while spreading the indigenous message.

Nozz's acting ability, big voice and occasional absolutely outrageous costume helped draw people in to stalls whenever and wherever they were. He showed people that environmental concern could also be allied with fun, flair and good humour.

The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Earth Day, Conservation Week, Kaipupu Point, Men's Shed and many more, Nozz was always there striving for the betterment of us all, supporting in so many ways.

East Timor, Waihopai

In 1999 when the East Timor Independence Committee led by Maire Leadbeater held a protest at Woodbourne Airforce Base in Blenheim Nozz was quoted in the newspaper calling: "They're killing East Timorese every day, while Safe Air is making hay". Safe Air was refitting two Indonesian Skyhawks that had already been used in East Timor bombing attacks against civilians by the Indonesian military and the demo got good coverage.

Nozz was a regular attendee at the Waihopai spy base protests. Don Murray remembered him collecting ragwort from around the campsite on one of the demos. "A sort of metaphor. He noted that so many "townies" didn't recognise that particular form of noxious weed in our country, along with US goons, ginks and finks!"

It wasn't always good humour that he used. When supporting the fledgling Guardians of the Sounds group in their fight against the fast ferry damage to local shorelines, the District Council members were being threatened with personal law suits by the ferry operator's lawyers and things were looking dire. Nozz rose up to his full height, finger pointing accusingly: "How DARE you threaten these hardworking people". And we all know where those fast ferries ended up.

As Tim Newsham of the Marlborough Environment Centre said at his memorial: "Nozz, we expect your passion and spirit will continue to be the impetus for us left carrying the can to continue your work. And your example will guide us to pursue today's and tomorrow's challenges not out of anger and frustration, but with your love for humanity and all life forms, and the belief and knowledge that drove you, that the world that you seemed to enjoy so much, can be even better". RIP Nozz. ■

DAVE MORGAN

By Murray Horton

This is an extremely condensed version of my full obituary of Dave, which can be read in Foreign Control Watchdog 153, April 2020, <http://www.converge.org.nz/watchdog/53/14.html>.

Dave Morgan, who died in Masterton in November 2019, aged 79, personified a now vanished age of militant blue-collar unionism and political unionism. As his *Stuff* obituary said, he was “one of the last of a generation of New Zealand trade union leaders who were once household names” (“Dave Morgan, Flamboyant And Newsworthy Union Leader”, Karl du Fresne, 7/12/19, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/117939097/dave-morgan-flamboyant-and-newsworthy-union-leader>).

For the final three decades of the 20th Century and into the early years of the 21st Dave was the national leader of what is now called the Maritime Union of New Zealand (which was called the Seamen’s Union and then the Seafarers’ Union in Dave’s day). Under his leadership it was a fighting union, one which fought political battles, not simply industrial ones over pay and conditions (which is the bread and butter stuff of any union).

With the exception of the late Helen Kelly (for whom Dave was both a family friend and a mentor), none of the recent or current crop of union leaders could be called household names. But Dave Morgan was such a household name that he could be simply depicted – invariably, negatively – in newspaper cartoons without the need of being named. I remember one such showing him as a dinosaur, wearing his trademark hat (which, conveniently, was black, to emphasise the point that he was the baddy).

Political Unionism

His political unionism can be judged from this quote: “And the one thing I am most proud of is our achievement in keeping the USS *Truxtun* out of Wellington’, he says of a re-

fusal by unionists to berth the American warship or service it while it lay at anchor for six days in 1976” (from a media interview when he retired. *New Zealand Herald*, 30/10/03, “Retiring Union Leader Says He’ll Continue To Fight”, Matthew Dearnaley, https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=3531619). The *Truxtun* was one of several US warships which the Seamen’s Union refused to service when they visited NZ ports in the 1970s and 80s.

When people today think of the heroes of the mass campaign which led to NZ having been nuclear free since the 1980s, they think of the Peace Squadron or those who marched in the streets. But the Seamen’s Union, and other unions, played a key role in that campaign. Governments since that time, both National and Labour, have paid them a backhanded compliment by passing laws that ban “political” strikes. That’s why you won’t hear any of the current crop of union leaders talking about his or her proudest achievement being a political action – it’s all strictly bread and butter industrial unionism these days. Which is exactly how Governments and employers like it.

The seamen were a mainstay of the anti-Vietnam War movement of the 1960s and 70s. Ports regularly closed so that members could join the huge mobilisations in the cities; striking ships were festooned with anti-war placards and banners. They came on the first wave of anti-bases demos in the early 70s – Dave Morgan and other seamen played their part in the epic battle on top of Mount John in 1972 (you can read about the Battle of Mount John in my article “In Memory Of Derek Bunn”, in *Peace Researcher* 55, June 2018, <http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-backissues/pr55.pdf>. Derek was one of those injured by the cops in that).

Proletarian Internationalism

Dave Morgan retired in 2003, aged 63. He did so at the inaugural conference of the Maritime Union of NZ (MUNZ), of which he was the joint President. MUNZ was formed by a merger between the unions of the seafarers and the watersiders. Not only was he a giant of the NZ union movement, he was a leading exponent of proletarian internationalism. This was succinctly summarised by the tribute from Sam Huggard, who

was then the NZ Council of Trade Unions’ Secretary:

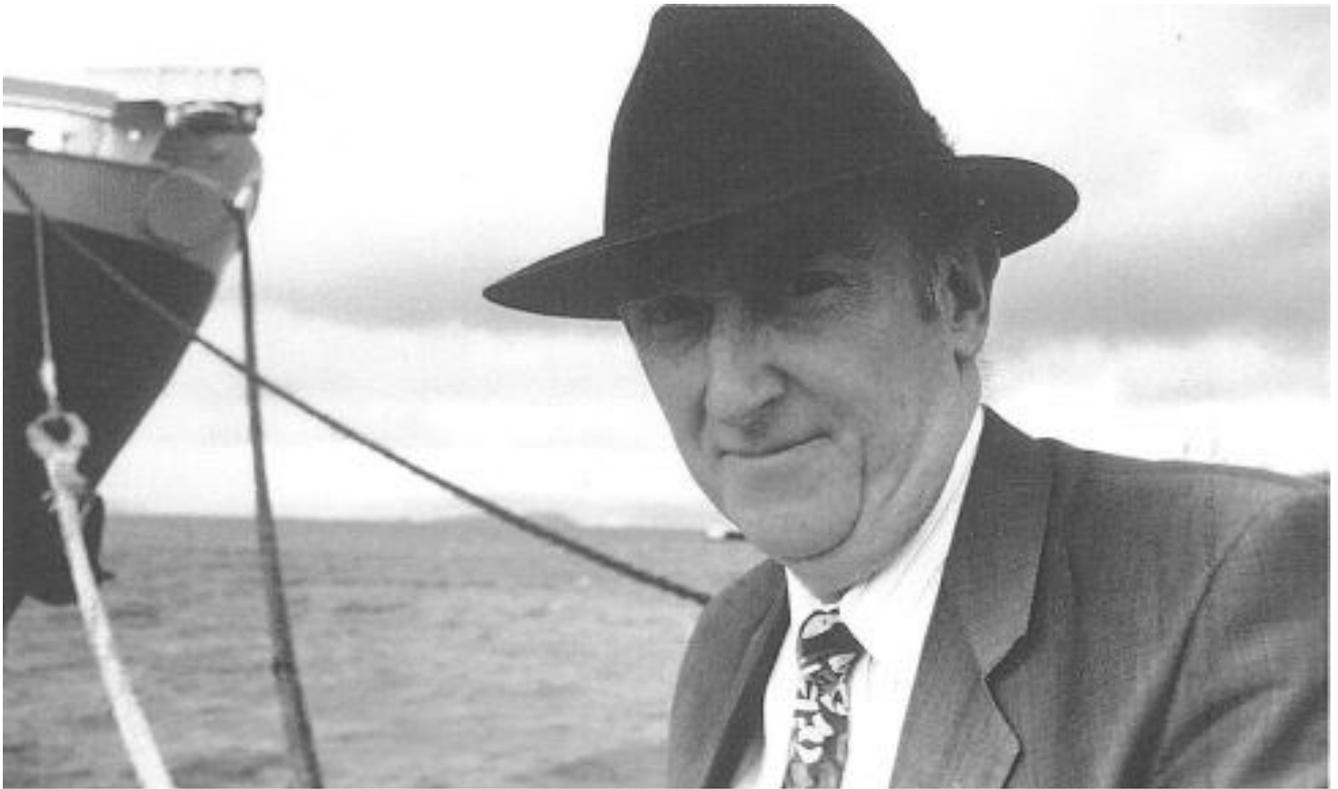
“Dave Morgan, liberationist and freedom fighter, died today. When Dave was first elected President of the New Zealand Seafarers’ Union in 1973, workers’ rights were under pressure everywhere in the world. Even in those young days, Dave was a seasoned activist, heavily involved in the movement against the war in Vietnam”.

“In his decades of committed service to the trade union movement, Dave’s internationalism continued. He led the Seafarers’ Union and later the Maritime Union of New Zealand in campaigns against the Vietnam War; against the brutal Pinochet dictatorship in Chile (including the prolonged trade ban); and in opposition to the apartheid regime in South Africa including campaigning against racist sports tours. Much more could be written”.

“Dave was also a leading member in many workers’ solidarity movements in the Pacific region, including movements opposing the coups in Fiji. He was the principal backbone of the New Zealand trade union movement’s support for the miners in the United Kingdom in the 1980s, who were facing brutal repression from the then Thatcher government. Within the maritime unions internationally Dave was a mentor to many, and was the key mover in agitating against flags of convenience and against servitude and slave-like conditions on sea-going vessels. This work continues today”.

“Dave was a giant figure in the New Zealand trade union movement, and hundreds of thousands of workers benefitted from his contribution and his solidarity. He was also particularly close to his Australian comrades, especially the Maritime Union of Australia. There is grief across both countries today” (5/11/19).

“Under his leadership, the seamen were part of a hard core of Leftwing blue-collar unions – along with others representing meat workers, boilermakers, watersiders and truck drivers – that regarded themselves as upholding traditions of militancy, solidarity and class consciousness” (*Stuff* obituary, *ibid.*). One could also add that those old school working class unions were overwhelmingly male. The militant un-



ions of today are more likely to be middle class, white collar and female. The composition of unions changes but not the principles of unionism.

A Giant Of NZ Working Class History

Dave cast a very long shadow. In 2017 I went to Melbourne, for the first time since 1988. I went in my Anti-Bases Campaign capacity to attend and speak at the national conference of the major network of Australian peace groups. The conference was held in a Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) building and the union and its members generously supported it.

One of the conference's major speakers was the MUA's Assistant National Secretary, Warren Smith. Warren's speech "Peace Is Union Business" is in *Peace Researcher* 54, November 2017, <http://www.converge.org.nz/abc/pr/pr-backissues/pr54.pdf>. I recommend you read it – I haven't heard anything remotely like it from any NZ union leader in decades.

After Warren's speech I had a chance to have a chat to him and we ended up talking about somebody we both knew – Dave Morgan. How appropriate that I should find myself, very recently, talking about Dave with somebody I'd never met

before, in Dave's homeland, among his fellow Australian seafarers, in the building of a maritime union still very much practising the same Left-wing, anti-war, blue-collar militancy and proletarian internationalism which were the hallmarks of Dave Morgan.

The MUA is an old school fighting union. Dave would have been right at home in that gathering. It's a cliché but Dave Morgan truly was a giant of New Zealand working class history. For a whole lot of reasons - ranging from the diminished power of unions to the changed nature of both work and society – we won't see his like again. More's the pity. ■

PEACE RESEARCHER WELCOMES YOUR FEEDBACK

Peace Researcher is published by the Anti-Bases Campaign. The Editor is Murray Horton; the Layout Editor is Becky Horton. It covers a range of peace issues with emphasis on foreign military bases and intelligence topics. Contributed articles will be considered for publication based on subject matter and space requirements. We are particularly interested in reports of original research on peace topics in Aotearoa and the wider region of Australasia and the Pacific. We welcome your feedback and constructive suggestions on how we can improve.

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- ⇒ personally deposit cash into ABC's account at any Kiwibank branch, OR
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389000 0619007 00**

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**CAFCA/ABC Organiser Account
Westpac, Sydenham Branch, Christchurch.
030866-0300063-00.**

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