



DISARMING *Pax Christi* TIMES

— *The Journal of Pax Christi Australia* —

Vol. 34 No.3

August September October 2009

The Enemy can cut down the flower, but nothing can stop the coming of the spring.

Malalai Joya

I would like to introduce you if you have not yet heard, to a truly remarkable young woman from Afghanistan who has put her life on the line for peace and justice. Those who had the privilege to hear her during her recent visit to Australia will attest that such is the force of her mission that she can say (as she did during her recent visit) . . . to those in Afghanistan who wish me harm "You can kill me but you can never kill my spirit" And as a challenge to our present military preoccupation with Afghanistan she claims that "I have a country full of people

who know what I know and believe that we Afghans can govern ourselves without foreign interference". The above statement: Our enemies can cut down the flower, but nothing can stop the coming of the Spring is her mantra and I will leave it to Onnie Wilson of the Malalai Joya Committee Australia, to tell you more about this young woman and the history of her life of resistance. (Ed.)

Malalai Joya, the extraordinary and youngest member elected to the Afghan parliament in 2005, has been likened to

Aung San Suu Kyi for her forthright and courageous pursuit of justice and unfailing dedication to her people. She has become an inspirational heroine amongst ordinary Afghans and gained widespread, international acclaim.

For Malalai Joya's entire life of thirty-one years, Afghanistan has experienced ongoing violence, insecurity and the social upheaval of continuous war. In 'Raising My Voice', Malalai Joya traces her life of hardship from
(Continued on page 3)

Resistance to oppression is often based on a love that leads us to value ourselves, and leads us to hope for more than the established cultural system is willing to grant ...

such love is far more energizing than guilt, duty, or self-sacrifice. ...

Solidarity does not require self-sacrifice, but an enlargement of the self to include community with others.

Sharon Welch,
The Feminist Ethic of Risk

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DISARMING TIMES

A quarterly journal of Pax Christi Australia. It aims to provide members and interested peacemakers with peace news and views both local and international. We endeavour in each edition to reflect the three-fold emphasis of Pax Christi which engages members in study, Non-violent action and prayer for peace, justice, human rights, development and inter-faith and inter-civilisation dialogue.

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Human rights, justice and integrity of
creation are central to its work.
We take a stand against militarism, nuclear
weapons and the arms race
As an ecumenical Christian movement
Pax Christi fosters the spiritual and scrip-
tural dimensions of peace-making.**

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Disarming Times is printed by Arena Press
2-14 Kerr St. Fitzroy 3065 Ph 03 9416 0232

EDITORIAL

Increased calls for review of Australian's involvement in Iraq

With both Australia and Great Britain winding up their combat mission in Iraq the focus of our military action turns to Afghanistan—a country crisscrossed by continual war for many decades. There is no doubt that for the Afghani people there will be the same legacy of displacement and tragedy suffered by huge numbers of Iraqi people.

While the troop withdrawal from Iraq by Australia and UK may close a controversial chapter in our illegal military invasion of that country there remains many questions to be answered about why Australia joined this war that left regional chaos and millions of refugees fleeing the country and at least 100,000 civilians dead and an infrastructure deliberately in ruins.

The U.K. government for its part has recently announced that it will conduct an inquiry into Britain's involvement in Iraq. "We're very pleased that the British government has taken this decision and we would support the same thing happening in Australia," says Sue Wareham, president of Australia's Medical Association for Prevention of War (MAPW). At the time this decision to invade Iraq was made there was widespread opposition and resistance by large groups of Australians in huge public protests and rallies across the country. Pax Christi agrees with Ms Wareham that clarification is required regarding the extent to which the leaders of the U.K. - along with those of the U.S. and Australia - "were acting outside the law" at the time of the invasion.

While these enquiries come too late for the Iraqi people it may result in limiting the extent of the damage in Afghanistan. For this to happen, it is time for the decision-makers to be held accountable for their actions.

Andrew Wilkie, who came to prominence in Australia when he resigned in protest from the Office of National Assessments (ONA) just days before the Iraq war began, says that Britain's planned inquiry should act as a catalyst for others to undertake investigations of their own. And demands that such an inquisitor should be "given the broadest terms of reference to look at all aspects of the war and to pursue lines of inquiry in any direction he or she chooses to go." Although he says that a thorough inquiry in Australia is required, Wilkie believes that "there is next to no chance" of such a review being established by the current government.

It is the challenge of the peace movement and the legions of protesters who marched against the war to again take a stand for truth and justice. The Iraq war will also come under the scrutiny of a Dutch enquiry. This will be worth watching.

Pax Christi intends to heighten the focus on the rapidly escalating war in Afghanistan through a public forum later in the year. Meanwhile we draw your attention to a most worthy book *Invisible History: Afghanistan's Untold Story*. reviewed on page 10 and 11.

If you prefer a personal story of resistance I refer you to the writings of a brave politician Malalai Joya who has been called the "bravest woman in Afghanistan" She has just completed a speaking tour of Australia and her story will warn you off any viable military solution to the crisis in Afghanistan and turn you towards calling for the withdrawal of all Australian and other foreign troops from Afghanistan.

Continued from Page 1

the Russian invasion, when her family were displaced as refugees in Iran and Pakistan, to her current, dangerous life as an outspoken critic of the current Karzai government and the NATO and US occupation.

During the rule of the Taliban, the teenage Malalai Joya returned to Afghanistan and her life of defiance and dedication to the pursuit of human rights began with her perilous work of running clandestine schooling for girls. But her life became at greater risk following her bold, outspoken attack on the criminal warlords in the country's representative council, the Loya Jirga. Her words ricocheted around the world and her life was changed forever.

Since that time, Malalai Joya has refused to be silenced but her relentless and public pursuit of justice has had enormous personal repercussions. There have been five assassination attempts on her life and she must live away from her family in a different location each night, relying on a team of dedicated bodyguards for her survival. She lives the life of a criminal in hiding for exposing those who need to be brought to account.

Malalai Joya displays a fearless and passionate zeal to speak the truth about her country and a steely commitment to be a voice for the voiceless, irrespective of the personal costs. 'Raising My Voice' allows all to enter her world and gain a unique insight into an outstanding yet selfless life that is so alien to our own but one that is imperative we know and understand.

'RAISING MY VOICE'
by MALALAI JOYA
PAN MACMILLAN AUSTRALIA, 2009

Onnie Wilson
Malalai Joya Committee Australia
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WORDS ARE ONE THING : WAR IS ANOTHER

By Norman Solomon (truthout perspective June 2009)

It takes at least tacit faith in massive violence to believe that after three decades of horrendous violence in Afghanistan, upping the violence there will improve the situation.

Despite the pronouncements from high Washington places that the problems of Afghanistan can't be resolved by military means, 90% of the spending for Afghanistan in the Obama administration's current supplemental bill is military.

Often it seems that lofty words about war hopes are boilerplate efforts to make us feel better about an endless warfare state. Oratory and punditry laud the Pentagon's fallen as noble victims or war, while enveloping its other victims in a haze of ambiguity or virtual non-existence.

When a recent edition of The Washington Post printed the routine headlines, 'Iraq War Deaths,' the newspaper meant American deaths—to Washington's ultra-savvy, the deaths that really count. The only number and names under the headlines were American.

Ask for whom the bells toll. That's the implicit message—from top journalists and politicians alike.

A few weeks ago, some prominent US news stories did emerge about Pentagon air strikes that killed perhaps a hundred civilians. But much of the emphasis was that such deaths could undermine the US war effort. The most powerful media lenses do not correct the myopia when Uncle Sam's vision is impaired by solipsism and narcissism.

Words focus our attention. The official words and the media words—routinely—more or less the same words—are ostensibly about war, but they convey little about the actual war at the same time as they boost it. Words are one thing, and war is another.

Yet words have potential to impede the wheels of war machinery. "And henceforth", Albert Camus wrote, "the only honourable course will be to stake everything on a formidable gamble: that words are more powerful than munitions."

A very different type of gamble is routinely underway at the centre of political power, where words are propaganda munitions. In Washington, the default preference is to gamble with the lives of other people, far away.

More than 40 years ago, Country Joe McDonald wrote a song, "An Untitled Protest," about war fighters who "pound their feet into the sand of shores they've seen / Delegates from the western land to join the death machine." Now, tens of thousands more of such delegates are on the way to Afghanistan.

In pseudo-savvy Washington, "appearance is reality" Killing and maiming, fueled by appropriations and silence, are rendered as abstractions.

The death of people unaligned with the Pentagon are the most abstract of all. No wonder The Washington Post is still printing headlines like "Iraq War Dead." Why should Iraqis qualify for inclusion in Iraq war deaths?

There's plenty of media invisibility and erasure ahead for Afghan people as the Pentagon ramps up its war effort in their country. War strives on abstractions that pass for reality.

There are facts about war in news media and speeches but how much do they tell you about the most important realities? Millions of words and factual data pour out every day. Human truth is another matter.

Norman Solomon's books include "War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death," For more information, go to: www.normansolomon.com.

Talisman Sabre military exercises, war and the environment

The impact of the Talisman Sabre military exercises

By Sue Wareham - MAPW, 10 July 2009

There is one human activity that manages to escape scrutiny in our efforts to address climate change and other forms of environmental destruction. That activity is war and its preparation. The commencement of major military exercises in Australia on July 6 should prompt an examination not only of warfare's environmental footprint, but, importantly, its impact on our security.

The Talisman Sabre exercises will take place from 6 to 25 July, at a number of locations, primarily at Shoalwater Bay, adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef, in Queensland. Shoalwater Bay is Commonwealth Heritage listed because of the ecological importance of its coastal and hinterland areas. It includes large numbers of plant, animal and fish species (some threatened), Ramsar listed wetlands, and many marine mammals. In 2008 Minister for the Environment Peter Garrett rejected, on environmental grounds, a proposed rail line and coal port for Shoalwater Bay.

The exercises will include land, sea and air combat and involve approximately 30,000 troops, bombing and other live fire exercises, over 1,600 armoured and other vehicles, and many naval vessels including nuclear-powered ships. According to the Defence Department, this influx of heavy vehicles, tens of thousands of humans, and live bombings, will leave "no footprint", and all disturbances will be rehabilitated.

While this claim does appear to border on the miraculous, it clearly overlooks at least one thing – the carbon footprint of

the exercises, the size of which is not to be revealed. In response to questioning in parliament recently from Greens Senator Scott Ludlam, the Minister representing the Minister for Defence stated, "The quantities of fuel used during the exercise are not disclosed because of the potential to reveal valuable intelligence information about the preparedness of the participating forces".

Regardless of the real reason for such secrecy, the reality remains that modern war machines cannot operate without vast quantities of oil. The US military, for example, uses a total of over 55 million litres of oil daily.

Michael Klare, Professor of Peace and World Security Studies at Hampshire College, Massachusetts, estimates that US combat operations in Southwest Asia and the Middle East use around 13.25 million litres of oil daily, which is more than the whole of Bangladesh's daily usage. Australia's own military establishments and operations account for approximately 65% of total Australian Government energy use.

The environmental impacts of war and its preparation run far deeper than their carbon footprint however. Countless sites around the globe bear testimony to warfare's destruction and pollution of land, sea and air. The US and Russia alone have contaminated literally thousands of military waste dumpsites with an array of toxic chemicals.

In Vietnam, 50 – 80 million litres of the defoliant Agent Orange was sprayed over the land, leaving an ongoing legacy of suf-

fering. In Kuwait in 1991, Saddam Hussein's forces sabotaged hundreds of oil wells, causing ruinous environmental destruction. In Kosovo in 1999, NATO forces bombed petrochemical plants and fertiliser factories, with a resulting barrage of chemicals reaching the River Danube. In Lebanon in 2006, the bombing of oil storage tanks filled the port of Byblos with black sludge.

Closer to home, the floor of the Pacific is still strewn with at least 1,000 2nd World War shipwrecks, including over 300 oil tankers that will eventually break up, with disastrous results, if no action is taken. Depleted uranium munitions, landmines and cluster bombs contaminate the land in dozens of former war zones. The list goes on and on.

Talisman Sabre might strengthen our relationship with the world's most powerful military force, but whether that makes us more secure is a different matter.

Of current interest, especially given the Government's efforts to stamp out whaling, is the harm caused to marine mammals by naval sonar, which will be used during Talisman Sabre.

Humanity's ultimate confrontation with our natural environment is in the form of nuclear weapons. Even their production leaves behind an environmental nightmare. In the former USSR, waste from nuclear weapons programs was "managed" by dumping it in the nearest body of water. At the British nuclear test sites at Maralinga in South

Australia, uranium and plutonium were spread over hundreds of square kilometres.

All this has far-reaching implications for how we view "security" and how we achieve it. The first task is to recognise what most threatens us.

There is currently no major military threat to Australia. The recent Defence White Paper confirmed this. The paper briefly recognised the threats that loom largest - climate change and resource security - and then proceeded to recommend an array of fuel-guzzling resource-depleting war machines that will intensify these threats.

Armed conflict and environmental security are of course global issues, and Australia cannot solve them alone. We could however be part of the solution, rather than part of the problem, by focussing our attention, energy and funds on the real threats we face, rather than the quest for military supremacy.

A fraction of the \$308 billion that was announced in the budget for a decade of military spending, and the \$48 million or more that will be spent on Talisman Sabre, could achieve major security benefits if channelled into renewable energies, environmental remediation and building regional goodwill.

Talisman Sabre might strengthen our relationship with the world's most powerful military force, but whether that makes us more secure is a different matter. Security in the 21st century will depend significantly on the extent to which we humans can cooperate, rather than compete, to salvage a liveable world.

Dr Sue Wareham is a Canberra GP. She is currently President of the Medical Association for Prevention of War (Australia); and on the Australian Management Committee of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons.

Source OnlineOpinion

Talisman Sabre protesters arrested

A number of nonviolent Christian activists entered a live-fire area of Shoalwater Bay Training Area to stop the Talisman Sabre exercises. One group calling themselves the "Bonhoeffer 4" after the anti-war theologian, Margaret Pestorius (44, Social Worker, Cairns), Jarrod McKenna (28, School Peace Educator, Perth) Jessica Morrison (33, University lecturer, Melbourne) and Rev. Simon Moyle (32, Baptist Minister, Melbourne) called on the Australian and US forces to cease their involvement in the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and the undeclared Pakistan war.

The group has released the following statement:

In his article in the Monthly, Australia's Prime Minister Kevin Rudd called Bonhoeffer "without a doubt, the man I admire most in the history of the twentieth century." We have taken the name of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, because he embodied a serious, costly commitment to peacemaking and ending injustice, "a costly grace". Yet Rudd's \$100 billion long-term military spending plan reveals the Prime Minister has forgotten his hero and is in need of some sisters and brothers to jog his memory.

That is why we will put our own bodies on the line in order to stop the U.S./ Australian Talisman Sabre Military Exercises and jam a spoke in the wheel of war. These exercises are implicated in killing and injuring our sisters and brothers in Afghanistan and Pakistan, including untold numbers of civilians. This "war without end", as George Bush put it, has no exit strategy and no end in sight. We will not overcome the violent terrorism of the poor with the violent terrorism of the rich.

The Christian activists spent over 30 hours on the Shoalwater Training Area during the Talisman Sabre live firing exercise despite the protocol

advised by Air Commander Meier who put it on the record in Parliament earlier this year that the exercise would stop if any one was found to be on the base.

The four activists were arrested at the Shoalwater military base and charged with Trespass. Ms Morrison and Rev. Moyle were also charged with obstruction.

For an update of their entry on to the base, the arrest and trial contact Jessica on e-mail below. Meanwhile here is Jessica's account of their first encounter with the US troops.

We moved in to the ritual that we'd planned, which was to remember the names of people who had died in Afghanistan - both civilians and soldiers. We would read a name and age of a person, then reply with "Lord have Mercy". Meditating on the needless deaths, mostly of people younger than us, amidst a military training area with guns in view was deeply powerful. As we continued to pray and remember, we were completely unprepared for what came next. Gently one of the US soldiers offered us a name of his friend. Our refrain "Lord have Mercy" was said through sobs as we shared in grief together. Suddenly there wasn't a them and us with war resisters and war participators, but human beings who grieved together, and sought solutions forward to our world.

I prayed for the soldiers around us, and for those who seek to resist war. The US soldier shared his respect for what we were doing, and encouraged us.. He asked to pray for us, and he asked God that our light would continue to shine. The tables had been turned.

For updates on the story:

Contact Jessica at
jessicaamorrison@yahoo.com.au

Offensive defence - White Paper on our Strategic military planning for the defence of Australia in the 21st Century.

By Dr.Sue Wareham MAPW

We can be grateful at least that the Defence Review White Paper found that Australia is one of the most secure countries in the world. Goodness only knows what it would have come up with if we were at any risk of attack.

A dozen new submarines, cruise missiles, eight new frigates, and 100 new F35 Joint Strike Fighter aircraft for starters - and all in a "relatively benign" security environment.

Of course things can change for the worse, as the White Paper points out. However, it's one thing to be prepared for change, and quite another to appear so militaristic that we help bring about a more hostile environment. Regional arms races then become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Given our relative security from invasion for the foreseeable future, one would have thought the time is right to declare a break from the offensive rhetoric and actions of the previous government, with a new defence policy that is just that: defence. The projected expenditure of possibly hundreds of billions of dollars on military acquisitions is hardly the way to do it.

Nor is the language of the White Paper reassuring for the region. While the phrase "pre-emptive strike" does not rear its ugly head again, the reference to "proactive combat operations ... as far from Australia as possible" is hardly any less threatening.

The paper recognises that Australia cannot be secure in an insecure world or neighbourhood, and states that not all responses to security challenges should be military ones. The logical next step, however, of examining current global insecurities and ways to address them, is lacking. Major factors that are shaping our world, such as environmental degradation, resource depletion and climate change (all of which are aggravated by military

activity), and the increasing problem of millions of displaced people throughout the world, are listed but then appear to be ignored.

Instead the White Paper appears stuck in a Cold War style time warp, where military spending takes priority no matter what the problem is.

Perhaps we should not be surprised. If you want a weapons-focused outcome, it's just a matter of asking the right people. The Defence Review Community Consultation Panel, in addition to its open forums, conducted around three dozen private meetings with chosen

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groups and individuals around the country, the vast majority of them industry representatives.

Very few among those consulted were people with expertise in peaceful conflict resolution, diplomacy, the root causes of terrorism and other threats, ways in which Australia can strengthen the role of the UN, and appropriate responses to the major threats of climate change and nuclear weapons.

In addition, the chair of the Community Consultation Panel, Stephen Loosley, is a Board member of Thales Australia, one of Australia's largest arms manufacturers and subsidiary of a major global arms company.

To put the Defence Review in context, it's of interest and concern to note another process that was happening concurrently last year,

and the Government's response to it. The Asia-Pacific Defence and Security Exhibition (APDSE) planned an arms fair for Adelaide, which was due to open on Armistice Day, November 11, 2008.

APDSE's website boasted that the Asia-Pacific region was "the significant growth market" for arms sales, and went so far as to list regional tensions as a guide to the best markets. Defence Minister Fitzgibbon wrote a glowing recommendation of APDSE, stating that the event would provide "a valuable opportunity for interaction between Defence and Security industries and professionals wanting to expand their business within the Asia Pacific region". A nice euphemism for re-arming the region.

The stunning ineptitude in choice of opening date led to APDSE's cancellation. However, the worry is that such a regional re-armament bonanza even got to first base.

Back to the white paper. For all that it does say, there are some startling omissions. The insecurity and repression of the people of West Papua, right on our doorstep, doesn't rate a mention, except as a veiled dismissal of their plight with reference to Indonesia's "territorial integrity". Within recent memory, and with chilling similarities, Australia also dismissed the plight of the East Timorese.

Surpassing all other omissions, however, was a serious appraisal of the threat posed by the most destructive and terrifying of all weapons, nuclear weapons. Apart from scattered references to "WMDs", the subject barely appears in the whole 138 pages.

This is despite the recognition globally that the possibility of use of nuclear weapons, either by state or non-state actors, is an increasingly urgent security risk of the highest order. The dismissal by the White Paper of any risk to Australia - a

country that is complicit with US nuclear war fighting policies - as "remote", is simply negligent.

The paper's clear statement of support for US nuclear "deterrence" perpetuates the dangerous stereotype of "good" and "bad" nuclear weapons. Globally, the view that nuclear weapons offer any security to anyone is coming under increasing scrutiny, and yet the implications of this for Australia were ignored totally.

The omission is compounded by ignorance. The paper refers (briefly) not only to nuclear deterrence, but to "stable" nuclear deterrence, as if such a thing exists. The same policies that the White Paper regards as "stable" are those that brought the world "a hair's breadth from absolute disaster" in the words of Robert McNamara, US Defense Secretary at the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis. While history has moved on, thousands of Russian and US nuclear weapons remain on high alert.

On a positive note, buried inconspicuously in the paper, was an unexpected and pleasing rejection of national missile defence systems, although how this rejection will play out in practice at Pine Gap in the Northern Territory is unclear.

Overall, the paper might possibly have made some sense in a bygone era. In 2009, however, its recommendations are an expensive and dangerous distraction from dealing with the threats we face.

Dr Sue Wareham is a Canberra GP who joined the Medical Association for Prevention of War out of a "horror at the destructive capacity of a single nuclear weapon". She has many interests and fields of expertise, including the contribution of peace to global sustainability. Sue believes that her work with MAPW is fundamental to her commitment to the protection of human life and the improvement of human well-being. She is currently President of the Medical Association for Prevention of War (Australia); and on the Australian Management Committee of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons.

Commemoration Franz Jägerstätter 9 August 2009 Conscientious Objector who Refused to Fight in Hitler's Army

Franz Jägerstätter, conscientious objector was the Austrian farmer who was beheaded in Brandenburg, Germany, on 9 August 1943, for refusing to fight in Hitler's army. Franz believed that he would be committing a sin if he acted against his conscience and agreed to fight for the National Socialist state. For him, this was a situation in which he had to obey God more than the commands of secular rulers. In following the commandment "you shall love your neighbour as yourself," Franz decided that he could not fight with weapons of war. For refusing to undertake military service he was sentenced to death in Berlin and was beheaded in Brandenburg on 9th August 1943.

lence and peace, a voice of warning against ideologies, a deep-believing person for whom God really was the core and centre of life. His prophetic witness to Christian truth is based on a clear, radical and far-sighted analysis of the barbarism of the inhuman and godless system of Nazism, its racial delusions, its ideology of war and deification of the state, as well as its declared programme of annihilating Christianity and the Church. His educated, mature conscience led him to say a resolute 'No' to Nazism and he was executed due to his consistent refusal to take up arms as a soldier in Hitler's war."

Pax Christi has long promoted the life and witness of this inspirational peace maker. In meditating on

While the poor of the world continue knocking on the doors of the rich, the world of affluence runs the risk of no longer hearing those knocks, on account of a conscience that can no longer distinguish what is human.

**- Pope Benedict XVI,
from his 2009 encyclical, Caritas in Veritate**

When Franz Jägerstätter received beatification in October 2007 in St Mary's Cathedral in Linz, the Bishop said: "Franz Jägerstätter is a prophet with a global view and a penetrating insight which very few of his contemporaries had at that time; he is a shining example in his fidelity to the claims of his conscience, an advocate of nonvio-

his remarkable stand against war we discover a good deal about spirituality and how resistance of this nature can make us fully human.

More at website:
www.dioezese-linz.at/redaktion/index.php?page_new=871 or check Wikipedia.

Take Action: Challenge BHP's plans for the world's largest uranium mine

BHP Billiton, the world's largest resource company, plans to make Australia in to the global nuclear industry's uranium quarry - fuelling nuclear risks and unresolved nuclear waste management around the globe. The proposed expansion of the BHP Olympic Dam (Roxby Downs) uranium and copper mine in northern South Australia is really for two mines in one - a new open pit mine with the existing underground mine continuing to operate for decades to come.

For more information and for action visit www.acfonline.org.au/BHPsubmission

Despair and Defiance

- By Scott Ludlam, Greens Senator from Western Australia

Time To Bring Some Sanity to the Nuclear Industry

Intro: In an era where some Aboriginal communities have won their hard-earned land rights, a new battle is being fought. Communities are being asked to sacrifice country and culture for basic citizenship entitlements like healthcare and infrastructure. Nowhere is this confrontation uglier than when nuclear waste is involved.

In August of last year I was privileged to camp with Aboriginal elders and environment groups at the 'Australian Nuclear Free Alliance' meeting, which took place at Mary River, about 100 km south east of Darwin.

This was a remarkable gathering of Traditional Owners and campaigners impacted by uranium mining, nuclear weapons testing and radioactive waste dumping, supported by environment groups from around the country. It got started in 1997 as the 'Alliance Against Uranium' when the campaign to stop a uranium mine in Kakadu at Jabiluka combined the strengths of Green and Black organising.

The stories I heard were of the cruellest form of dispossession: the day black rain fell at Maralinga; the expanding groundwater sacrifice zone around the Beverley uranium mine; the cultural and ecological tragedy of Olympic Dam.

Trauma is not too strong a word for what people were feeling. The Australian community at large holds a distant but healthy suspicion about all things nuclear, but for the people gathered this weekend, the insidious poisoning of country and culture by nuclear blasts, nuclear waste and ura-

nium mining are matters of direct personal experience.

I heard about the brain tumours and breast cancers growing inside people far too young, of the legal entrapments of the Native Title Act which has set families against each other, and now the NT Intervention which has simply compounded and aggravated the despair.

At the meeting there was a huge hand-painted map on the wall showing the rash of proposed uranium mines from Meekatharra to Mount Isa and

waste in the Northern Territory. In opposition, the ALP promised to repeal this bill and start again.

Now the Federal Government is burning bridges up here. First it was Martin Ferguson's thuggish repudiation of Kevin Rudd's election promise on the waste dump. After that we witnessed the awful spectacle of former Oils frontman and anti-nuclear activist Peter Garrett meekly signing off on the expanded violation of groundwater at the Beverley Uranium Mine. In the pipeline: massive

expansions at the Roxby Downs and Ranger uranium mines. Where will it end?

According to the hardened campaigners and their

families here, it ends with final silencing of culture and language, and contamination of country for all time.

In 2009 we still have elders and senior law people willing to share their knowledge with us, and 'open doors to the country' as Kevin Buzacott puts it. The language is still alive. The law is still being passed on to the kids, and people want to get on with the healing that 'Sorry' went some way to enabling. Why, with so much potential,

According to the hardened campaigners and their families here, it ends with final silencing of culture and language, and contamination of country for all time.

everywhere in between. One participant observed: 'there's just nowhere left to run.'

In the back of everyone's minds in the Territory is the spectre of 60 years of nuclear waste from the Lucas Heights reactor. The Howard Government passed the highly coercive 'Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Act' in 2005 which suspended all forms of due process and democratic oversight in order to dump Australia's radioactive

are we still crushing Aboriginal people between chequebooks, bulldozers, police and Acts of Parliament?

Authorities have attempted to provide for the health treatment costs of police and military personnel present at Maralinga during British nuclear testing - those of them left. It is unlikely that there will ever be a 'sorry' and compensation for Aboriginal people who found themselves under a mushroom cloud. An area the size of England was fenced off by the British who then permanently contaminated an area the size of metropolitan London with seven nuclear blasts and hundreds of "minor trials". Aboriginal people did not give prior and informed consent to the weapons tests and were not warned that the black rain was laced with plutonium and radioactive fission products, or that the brilliant white flash would blind.

The Senate Inquiry into my bill to repeal Howard's Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Act 2005 received 103 submissions from various organisations and individuals. Two public hearings held in Alice Springs and Canberra provided thoughtful and considered input to the Environment, Communication and the Arts Committee's deliberations and final report.

The inquiry revealed an overwhelming consensus regarding the deficiencies and consequences of Howard's 2005 legislation which enables the Federal government to impose a radioactive waste facility on unwilling Territory communities and against the wishes of the NT government. The legislation does this through overriding laws generated by the Territory

government, preventing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984 from having effect during investigation of potential dump sites, excluding the Native Title Act 1993 from operating at all, overriding the Land Rights Act and wiping out procedural fairness through suspension of the Judicial Review Act.

This inquiry exposed just how contested the favoured nuclear waste site at Muckaty Station really is. Senior Ngapa traditional owners gave compelling evidence about the flawed nature of the consultation process and questioned the accuracy of a secret anthropological report that designates a small handful of individuals as speaking exclusively for that country.

The nuclear industry has no place in a sustainable Australia

It is now a year and a half since the ALP was elected on a promise of throwing out the Coalition's failed radioactive waste strategy. Eighteen months later, that strategy is still in full effect, run with ruthless efficiency by Martin Ferguson.

It is essential that sooner or later Australia faces up to its radioactive waste legacy in a deliberative and measured process. Any future legislation to this effect will be carefully scrutinised to ensure that it enables the kind of the scientific, transparent, accountable, and fair process the government has promised.

Ten years ago, the Jabiluka uranium mine was fought to a standstill by the Mirrar and thousands of their supporters. The Kungkas defeated the South Australian waste dump despite the full force of the Federal Govern-

ment being brought to bear. The Territorians working against the waste dump and their supporters are going to win as well, but only with a determined mobilisation made up of thousands of individual actions - write out a surprisingly generous cheque to the Australian Nuclear Free Alliance (ANFA), send a strongly worded letter to the Prime Minister or pick up the phone and find out how you can help more directly.

The nuclear industry has no place in a sustainable Australia - there is still time to bring some sanity back to this 60-year old conversation and institute a properly democratic and informed process for curing the country's radioactive migraine.

The people gathered in that shed just outside of Darwin have things they would much rather do than fight these undemocratic and toxic projects, but fight they will, and they deserve our support.

About the Author:

Senator Scott Ludlam has been involved in numerous campaigns including opposing uranium mining at Jabiluka and in Western Australia, nuclear weapons, foreign military bases and has supported Aboriginal land rights and disarmament, recognition of climate change and advocacy for fair trade and equitable globalisation as well as energy market reform.

If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.

Lilla Watson, Aboriginal elder, educator, and activist

Invisible History: Afghanistan's Untold Story.

A book by Elizabeth Gould and Paul Fitzgerald

In case you never read this book this extended review will give you an important glimpse of the complexity of the war in Aghanistan and why Australia should not be party to it.

Pandemic amnesia is a dangerous affliction for a democracy under any circumstances, but when it comes to our current - that is, our continuing - engagement with Afghanistan, the disorder may very well prove fatal.

Fortunately for us, there's still hope. History doesn't repeat itself; we repeat it, and we are only doomed to do so if we don't apprise ourselves of it. For this reason, I strongly recommend Elizabeth Gould and Paul Fitzgerald's new book, 'Invisible History: Afghanistan's Untold Story.' Thirty years in the making, this deeply researched book is bursting with overlooked facts and unauthorized insights. Through their erudition, prescience and passion, Gould and Fitzgerald have provided us with an urgent and necessary history, one that pierces through the haze of misinformation that has, for far too long, obscured the guiding light of an authentic past.

The timeliness of this book cannot be overstated. As the US government, still without a clearly articulated strategy, calls for a heavily militarized escalation of forces into a conflict that cannot be resolved through military means, we would be well advised to arm ourselves with the wisdom of the historical record. As it now stands, President Obama is being led into the graveyard of empires by the same misguided philosophers of war that helped spawn this disaster in the first place. It's time for new, empowered, alternative voices to rise up from an informed American public and enter the fray.

'Invisible History' is divided into three main sections. The first section, which covers Afghanistan's history from antiquity to 1970, is a bit difficult to keep up with, as it traverses vast

expanses of time at a whirlwind pace. Nevertheless, this section explores important historical movements and moments that are essential to understanding Afghanistan's modern condition: the drawing of the Durand Line; the Great Game; the drafting of a 1923 constitution that gave women the right to vote; Afghanistan's Hindu and Buddhist roots and the invasion attempts of Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan, the Arab armies, the British armies and about a dozen other major intruders.

Some of this stuff is, literally, ancient history, but its reverberations still pulse through the cultures and tensions of Afghanistan today. The aforementioned events, for example, find their expression in the border crisis with Pakistan, the Pash-tun nationalism issue and Afghanistan's inveterate disdain for uninvited, imperial guests. Viewing Afghanistan through the wider scope of time prevents us from forming ahistorical flash judgments, and helps to immunize us from the mythology and propaganda that currently dominate public discussions of Afghanistan and its relation to the West.

The second section of 'Invisible History' limits its focus to the years between 1970 and 2001. Many readers will find this section more immediately relevant to current events, as it deals almost exclusively with the prelude, battle and aftermath of the Soviet-Afghan war and the shadowed (yet starring) role that the United States played in this tragedy. This is a shameful chapter in US history, and one that remains largely unread. Gould and Fitzgerald provide an almost play-by-play account of the behind-the-scenes machinations of the po-

litical figures that helped to orchestrate this most ambitious and expensive of covert operations, whereby the CIA funneled billions of dollars through Pakistan's primary intelligence agency to recruit, arm and indoctrinate the fractious and fanatical militia forces collectively referred to as 'the mujahedin.'

Working in concert with Saudi financiers and ideologues like Osama bin Laden, and driven by the myopic zealotry of American Cold War hawks, the United States used Afghanistan as a sacrificial arena to, in the words of Jimmy Carter's national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, 'give the Soviets their Vietnam.' In what would later reveal itself to be the most tragic of ironies in our nation's history, the United States amassed and dispatched an army of international jihadists (we called them 'freedom fighters' back then) to storm into Afghanistan and bleed the Russians to death.

Already on the brink of implosion, the USSR collapsed soon after the conflict. But along with its demise came one of the most unfathomable humanitarian catastrophes in modern history. One million Afghans were killed during the war. Five million fled to neighboring countries. Two million were internally displaced. The nation's infrastructure was reduced to rot and rubble, and the landscape was scarred and pockmarked with landmines, many of which still claim victims today. In addition to the dead, over four million Afghans were horribly maimed or disabled.

But this was just the beginning of Afghanistan's nightmare. After the Soviet collapse, a 'victorious' United States abandoned the country it had just helped turn into a haven for violent extremism. America's sole objective had

been achieved, and it foolishly believed that it had no real strategic interest in a stable Afghanistan. Meanwhile, the mujahedin forces - steroidal with US-supplied military technologies - fought against the Afghan government, and then against one another, until the Taliban finally rolled into Kabul and took power. The Taliban, brainwashed in Pakistani madrassas indirectly constructed with US tax dollars, had more in common with the virulent pan-Islamism of al-Qaeda than with Afghanistan's traditionally moderate society. They brought a brutal, medieval agenda to Afghanistan, and provided sanctuary to a non-native terrorism that would eventually find its way back to American shores.

In this manner, the development and rise of the Taliban was a direct consequence of America's intentional destabilization and radicalization of Afghanistan. Yet, despite the shock-value and enormous pertinence of this story, it remains in the margins of our national narrative, even after the events of 9/11. This gaping hole in our national consciousness, aside from being unfaithful to the past, has set us on a course for disaster in the future. As Sima Wali, Afghan refugee and author of the book's introduction, writes, 'the void of accurate historical information on the origin of [the Taliban] has resulted in a succession of dangerous, counterproductive policy initiatives from Washington. The consequences of these initiatives have negated any chance for a successful restoration of an Afghan republic, opened Afghanistan to cross-border raids from Pakistan while at the same time providing a platform for the resurgence of Taliban.'

With this in mind, we turn to the third and final section of the book, in which Gould and Fitzgerald highlight the dramatic failures of the war in Afghanistan from 2001 onwards, and then offer prescriptions for an acceptable resolution to the conflict. Not surprisingly, what we

have been doing wrong is often the opposite of what we could be doing right. Here are a few of the authors' central recommendations to President Obama:

- 1.) Stop bombing innocent civilians. It's unconscionable, and it makes terrorists out of the people whose support we need.
- 2.) Stop destroying the poppy harvest. This also alienates Afghan civilians, as many of their lives depend on the sale of poppies. Create financial incentives for farmers to grow other crops, and consider purchasing the rest of the poppies for the legal manufacture of pain relief medications, of which there is currently a worldwide shortage.
- 3.) Get serious about reconstruction efforts and the effective deployment of desperately needed humanitarian aid. Gould and Fitzgerald interviewed an aid worker in Afghanistan who said that the US would have been more successful if we had just flown over the countryside and dumped money out of the window. Afghanistan needs schools and streets to function. Apportion more money for these purposes and less for weapons. Fire corrupt and inept private contractors.

- 4.) Bring fresh voices to the table. There are some disturbingly familiar faces in President Obama's circle of advisers. The very same people who led the crusade to arm terrorists and destabilize Afghanistan 30 years ago should not be in charge of disarming terrorists and stabilizing Afghanistan today. Ditch the coterie of failed thinkers who - through their hegemonic delusions and addiction to war - have led us to this ledge.

- 5.) Realize that what is good for the people of Afghanistan is also good for the people of the United States. As Gould and Fitzgerald explain: 'Cosmopolitan and friendly, [Afghans] are beautiful, funny, proud and smart. Think of them that way and how they can be helped to make the country safe again.' All actions should emanate from an understanding of this basic principle. Finally, after delineating about a

half dozen other concrete proposals, the authors call on us to do some deep thinking about our post-9/11 national identity. September 11 did not signal the beginning of a new world; it merely reminded us, savagely, that we live in the real one, which is an interconnected one, where nation affects nation, and where past affects present and future. The authors attune us to this connection because it is only at this locus that we can have a mature and fruitful conversation - free from hysteria and faux-patriotism - about who we are, who we've been and who we want to become.

'Invisible History' shows us that we now have an opportunity to transform ourselves through an honest confrontation with our past: a confrontation that would lead us to reorient our national policies around the tabernacle of our professed moral values. If we choose to ignore this opportunity, and once again turn a blind eye to history and its lessons, then we may find ourselves in grave danger, not just from the threat of terrorist attacks, but from falling victim to the same folly that has toppled empires throughout history. To this point, the authors conclude their book with a word of warning: 'If our government has no other purpose than to serve the fantasies of its own defense intellectuals in their desire to create new ways of making endless war, then we are in serious trouble and, like the Soviet Union, Afghanistan will be our final test.'

More information about the book, published by City Lights, and its authors is available at www.invisiblehistory.com.

Reviewed by Ryan Croken. *a freelance writer and editor based in Chicago. His essays and book reviews have appeared in The Philadelphia Inquirer, Z Magazine, and Religion Dispatches, among others. He can be reached at ryan.croken@gmail.com.*

Truthout Book Review 31/5/09

NOTICE BOARD

**NEW SOUTH WALES
Pax Christi Meetings**

We normally meet on the First Monday of each month at 6.00pm for shared meal that members bring and the meeting follows at 6.30 pm..
Contact: Claude Mostowik 0295503845 or 0411450953
 The venue: MSC Justice and Peace Centre, 15A Swanson Street, Erskineville. 2 minutes walk from Erskineville Station.

**QUEENSLAND
Pax Christi Meetings**

Pax Christi Queensland Branch meets monthly.
 Contact:
**Pancras Jordan OP
 0415 461 620
 panjordan@yahoo.com**
**Clare Cooke SSpS
 mccooke@msn.com**

**VICTORIA
Agapes and Public Forums**

Our activities include Public Forums and Agapes. The Agape is a gathering of Pax Christi members and supporters that involves sharing a meal around the theme of peace with reflection and prayer.

Agapes:
September 20th 4:30pm
 Kildara Centre 39 Stanhope Street Malvern

Guest: Joe Camilleri
 with update and discussion on the work of the Centre for Dialogue

October 18th 2:00—5:00
AFGHANISTAN
Public Forum
 [See box on this page]

November 15th 4:30pm
 Kildara Centre
Annual General Meeting

December 13th 4:30pm
 Kildara Centre,
 39 Stanhope Street Malvern
Guest: Dr. Visier Sanyu
 member of Magar - an ancient indigenous nationality of Nepal. Now an officer for the National Program on Refugees and Displaced Peoples

PUBLIC FORUM — All welcome

Where to for Afghanistan?
 - Prospects for a Just Peace
Serious Analysis and joint action for a better way forward for the Afghani people.

Time & Date: 2:00—5:00 Oct. 18th 2009

**Venue: Centre for Theology and Ministry
 1 Morrison Close, Parkville
 (between Ormond & St. Hilda Colleges)**

Programme and speakers to be circulated.

For more info: Contact
 Harry Kerr, Convenor Pax Christi Victoria
 03 9893 4946 or 0424 758 071

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