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**Australia-Cuba Friendship Society**  
**Melbourne NEWSLETTER**  
**March 2020**  
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**Next Meeting**  
**Monday 2<sup>nd</sup>**  
**March**  
 7.30pm  
 Unitarian Church  
 110 Grey St,  
 East Melbourne

Melbourne	Sydney	Perth	Brisbane	Canberra	Hobart	Adelaide	Central Coast	NSW/Vic Sthn Border	New Zealand
PO Box 1051 Collingwood Vic. 3066	PO Box k364 Haymarket NSW 1240	PO Box 1455 South Perth WA 6951	PO Box 5683 West End Qld 4101	PO Box 6139 Kingston ACT 2604	GPO Box 323 Hobart Tas. 7001	Box 381 N. Adelaide SA 5006	PO Box 1082 Gosford NSW 2250	PO Box 854 Albury NSW 2640	220a Adelaide Rd Newtown Wellington New Zealand

Dear Comrades

24 February, 2020

Peace in our time? Not bloody likely. A quick scan through the news makes one reach for a glass of wine or two or three. I still get the Age, mainly for the crosswords, because most of what passes for 'news' is syndicated right-wing crap from overseas. The other papers are even worse, especially the ones from the Murdoch stable. I spoke at a rally for Julian Assange last Friday outside the State Library, and did my best to be heard among the noisy crowds, Hare Krishnas and Swanston Street trams. There should have been a lot more taking part, but that's about where we're at in this country, a mixture of apathy, ignorance and stupidity. And where's the leadership? With all his flaws, Gough Whitlam was a leader with a programme who did his best to legislate for it. The one fly in the ointment was his support for State Aid and we've seen where that's got us.

And while I'm talking about Gough it's worth raising the 'Loans Affair', part of the conspiracy to oust Labor and still widely misunderstood. We were told that the government was about to sell us to the Arabs in return for massive bribes. The facts? OPEC countries had accumulated vast sums following the 1973 leap in oil prices and had invested thousands of millions of dollars in the United States and made loans to the governments of Britain, France, Denmark, Italy and Japan, without raising any fuss. An Executive Council meeting in Canberra on 13 December 1974 authorised Minister for Minerals and Energy Rex Connor to seek loans of up to \$400 million '... to strengthen our external financial position, to provide immediate protection for Australia in regard to supplies of minerals and energy...' In other words, to buy back our mineral resources from the multinationals. To buy back the farm.

The authority was not given to Treasury, because it wasn't trusted. 'Offers' came from everywhere. One came from Tirath Khemlani, a dodgy Pakistani 'financier'. Connor authorised Khemlani to scout for funds among OPEC countries, but it turned out that Khemlani was sent by a Hong Kong arms firm, Commerce International, part of a powerful Brussels-based outfit linked to the CIA. A short time later, Federal Treasurer Dr Cairns was approached by George Harris, a dodgy Melbourne 'businessman' with a similar offer of money, **whose principals were from the New York office of the same crooked firm, Commerce International.** Both Connor and Cairns were duded. Naive? Stupid? Certainly. Corrupt? No. Despite screams from the media, not one cent was paid to anyone by the government, nor did any member of the government profit from the affair. The anti-Labor forces, however, profited greatly. As we know from that date in infamy, 11 November 1975 when Whitlam was sacked, a watershed in labour history, which is why I raised it. On 24 February, fellow-Australian Julian Assange will front London's Woolwich Crown Court which will decide whether or not he will be extradited to the United States for publishing the Iraqi and Afghan War Logs and State department cables that exposed massive war crimes and corruption by the US military and intelligence establish-

ment, the first journalist to be charged under the Espionage Act. Especially damning was the video of the American helicopter crew laughing and joking as they machine-gunned and fired rockets at a group of civilians, including children and a Reuters journalist. If his last court appearance is anything to go by, he won't get a fair hearing. A shonky magistrate was virtually told what to do by five US government agents sitting behind the prosecution team. And it has now been disclosed on prime time German TV that while Julian was in the Ecuadoran Embassy, a Spanish private security mob made audio and video recordings of his meetings with lawyers, photographed passports of his visitors and took their phones, all of which were passed on to the CIA. **The programme also showed how allegations against Julian were a pack of lies to keep him in gaol. The one that led many to believe he was a rapist was also shown to be fraudulent** in the same way that George W. Bush, Tony Blair and John Howard lied that Saddam had 'Weapons of Mass Destruction' to justify the dreadful Iraq War that killed more a million people and destroyed a nation. **And WikiLeaks exposed Hillary Clinton's corruption and mendacity, getting millions from Saudi Arabia and Qatar, two major funders of the Islamic State, and being the main architect of the Libyan War.**

The publication of classified documents is not yet a crime in the US, but if Assange is convicted, it will be, even though he's not an American citizen and WikiLeaks is not a US-based publication. **It would mean the end of investigations into the inner workings of power and cement into place a terrifying, global, corporate tyranny under which borders, nationality and law mean nothing.** Our federal cops have already raided the homes and offices of the ABC and a commercial paper, with a federal court judge ruling the raids were valid. Community outrage? Nothing. But many voices are now speaking out for Julian. **Jeremy Corbyn urged Boris Johnson to back the Council of Europe demanding Julian's release just after Julian was nominated for the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize, along with Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden.** He's also won the 2020 Gary Webb Freedom of the Press award. Did you hear about that in our media? Throughout his protracted ordeal, to our shame, not one word of support from the Australian Government or the Labor Party hierarchy. But he was visited by two MPs, Independent Andrew Wilkie and Liberal George Christensen, to their credit.

While Daniel Ellsberg was treated as a hero for revealing the truth about Vietnam, Assange faces 175 years in prison for disclosing vastly more serious crimes than those in the Pentagon Papers. This is a critical moment for press freedom and our right to know. If there is any sense of justice left, this travesty of a case must be thrown out and Julian Assange must be brought home as a free man. If he isn't, then we're heading into darker times when the US Empire will continue on its destructive path unchecked and freedom of speech will be a thing of the past. As Julian said: **'People don't like wars. They have to be lied into them'.**

Joan Coxsedg, Commentator-in-Chief, ACFS Melbourne (03) 9857 9249

**Don't forget the subs are due at the beginning of each year...see the back page for details.**

## **[Russia and Cuba sign largest contract in recent history and Putin accepts Díaz-Canel's invitation to visit Cuba](#)**

During his trip to Russia last October, Díaz-Canel invited his Russian counterpart to visit Cuba. President Putin assured that he would take advantage of this invitation without fail



## **[Our diplomacy will continue to be one of Homeland or Death!](#)**

Cuban Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez presided an annual review of the Foreign Ministry's work during a year marked by brutal intensification of the U.S. blockade



## **[Díaz-Canel receives Panamanian political leader](#)**



Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez yesterday afternoon received Pedro Miguel González Pinzón, secretary general of the Democratic Revolutionary Party of Panama (PRD), who is visiting our country on the invitation of the Communist Party of Cuba Central Committee

## **[Raul heads honor guard for decorated Hero of the Republic Efigenio Ameijeiras](#)**

First Secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba Army General Raúl Castro Ruz, presided honor guard and military ceremony for Division General and Hero of the Republic, Efigenio Ameijeiras Delgado

## **[Marabou charcoal consolidated as a leading agricultural export](#)**

The Ceballos Agroindustrial Enterprise overcame obstacles created by the U.S. blockade and exported 21,951 tons of artisan-produced charcoal to Europe last year



## **[International prestige of Cuban higher education evident as "Universidad 2020" conference opens](#)**

President Díaz-Canel on hand for opening ceremony



## **[Cuban schools to launch automation and robotics studies](#)**

President Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez reviews progress being made on national educational programs

## **[The United States government's genocide targets the people of Cuba](#)**

The blockade has been their most persistent weapon and the central axis of aggression against Cuba since the revolutionary victory of 1959

## **[Fifty-eight years later, Cuba continues to resist U.S. blockade](#)**

The U.S. blockade on Cuba was imposed February 7, 1962, by President John F. Kennedy, and has recently reached increasingly extreme dimensions



## **[Cuba rejects the pretexts of Bolivian putschist authorities to suspend diplomatic relations](#)**

Declaration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cuba

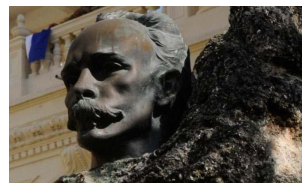
## **[Asela de los Santos Tamayo - 1929-2020](#)**

Asela de los Santos Tamayo, a prominent Cuban revolutionary, considered a founder of Cuba's emancipatory education, died in the dawn hours yesterday, January 23, at the age of 90



## **[José Martí, our ideal of good](#)**

That Martí is for Cubans the ideal of good is essential to Dr. Torres-Cuevas, director of the Martí Program office, who shares with readers his views on recent acts of vandalism involving busts of our national hero



## **[January to December: Committed to continue advancing](#)**

Granma presents a summary of events that took place in 2019 and the impact of government measures adopted as part of the updating of Cuba's economic model

## Russian tourist arrivals in Cuba increase by 30% in 2019

Of the more than 4.3 tourists who had arrived as of December, 178,000 were Russian, a number expected to reach 200,000 in 2020



## Virginia is back

Prospects for a new plant's start-up this year, with a primary focus on exports, has put Virginia tobacco back on the map

## The new Families Code, much more marriage

The most significant problems evident today, which must be addressed in the new Families Code, are related to recognition of all forms of family organization; parental and kinship relations, as well as protection of the elderly and disabled

## No one better than our workers to propose solutions

No one better than our workers to propose solutions and make the most of the resources we have; they are on the productions lines, said Ulises Guilarte de Nacimiento, Political Bureau member and general secretary of the Federation of Cuban Workers



## New horizons for honey

Sancti Spíritus concludes its individual size packaging plant, adding value to a high-demand product

## **FREEDOM CARAVAN REACHES HAVANA**



# **Cuba is counting on those elected to improve government work**

**After the vote count, electoral authorities announced that all nominees for the positions of provincial governor and lieutenant governor were elected**

Author: [Yaditza del Sol González](#) | [yadidelsol@granma.cu](mailto:yadidelsol@granma.cu) - january 20, 2020 12:01:06

The President of the Republic of Cuba, Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, tweeted his congratulations to governors and lieutenant governors elected on Saturday in all of the country's provinces. "We are counting on you to continue perfecting government work," he wrote.

For his part, Esteban Lazo Hernández, president of the National Assembly of People's Power and the Council of State, sent a message of congratulations to those elected in the January 18 vote.

"You have been elected in your respective provinces in a historic vote, with the unquestionable support of the people's representatives, gathered in their municipalities this morning.

"The attendance of almost all People's Power delegates in the country is an indication of the support and recognition you have, increasing your commitment to performing the duties of the office you will soon assume.

"Electoral authorities, for their part, completed the day's work with the transparency and organization that has characterized previous processes, complying on time and in the established manner, according to the letter of the new Constitution of the Republic.

"On behalf of National Assembly deputies, please accept a congratulatory embrace, offered in the certainty that you will carry out this new mission assigned by the people," Lazo stated.

Results of the January 18 election:

Saturday, January 18, 99.04% of Cuban delegates to Municipal Assemblies of People's Power participated in a legitimate exercise of democracy, as they voted to elect governors and lieutenant governors of Cuba's provinces.

Alina Balseiro, president of the National Electoral Council (CEN), announced

in a press conference that, of the total of 12,363 delegates to Municipal Assemblies, 12,244 were present at the 167 polling stations, and 100% of these deposited their ballots in the ballot box.

After the results of the vote were validated by Provincial Electoral Councils and the CEN, it was announced that 39 blank ballots were cast; two were annulled; with 12,203 valid, representing 99.67%. Also reported was that 11,625 ballots indicated Yes votes for both nominees and 578 were selective, Balseiro stated.

Given the results, and as regulated by Article 249.1 of the Electoral Law, when more than half of the valid ballots indicate Yes votes, those proposed for the two positions in each territory are elected, she noted.

"We must also highlight the work of the more than 3,000 electoral authorities involved, as well as the organization, discipline, tranquility and transparency that distinguished the vote, the count, and tabulation.

"With the novel election exercise of this January 18, the institutionality of the country is reinforced, and People's Power bodies continue to be perfected, in accordance with the letter of the Constitution," the CEN president emphasized.

In accordance with the Electoral Law, Balseiro recalled, the elected governors and lieutenant governors will be sworn-in by a representative of the Council of State designated for this purpose, on a date set by the latter, within 21 days of their election.

The Constitution of the Republic of Cuba establishes that each province has a provincial government, headed by a governor, lieutenant



**Photo:** Dunia Álvarez



governor and Provincial Council, functioning in close collaboration with the people.

The Magna Carta stipulates that provincial governments, as the state's representative, have as their fundamental mission "the economic and social development of their territory, in accordance with the general objectives of the country, acting as a coordinator between central state authorities and municipalities, thus contributing to the reconciliation of the interests of the province and its municipalities."

This election fulfills directives established in the Constitution's Fifth Transitory Provision, and constitutes a noteworthy example of work is progressing to implement the postulates of our new supreme law.

The Constitution states that the Governor is the highest executive-administrative official in the province.

- Article 176. To serve as Governor, one must be a Cuban citizen by birth and have no other citizenship, at least 30 years of age, reside in the province and enjoy full civil and political rights.

- Article 180. The Lieutenant Governor is elected in the same manner, for the same period (five years), and is subject to the same requirements as the Governor. The Lieutenant Governor assumes responsibilities as delegated or assigned by the Governor, and may substitute the Governor in the event of absence, illness or death, in accordance with established procedures.

## Cuba is recognized worldwide as a safe tourist destination, a fact the United States cannot obscure

Visitors appreciate Cuba's secure environment and the hospitality of our people

Author: [Ventura de Jesús](#) | [informacion@granma.cu](mailto:informacion@granma.cu) - february 13, 2020 10:02:21

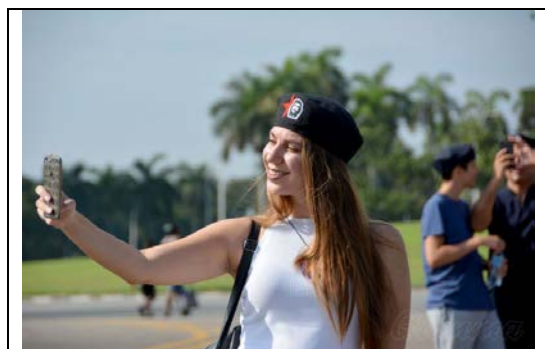


Photo: Juvenal Balán

Cuba is recognized worldwide as a safe tourist destination, with outstanding hospitality, evidenced by the Excellence Award as the safest country for tourism, awarded at the 38th International Tourism Fair, in Madrid, Spain, in 2018.

Such credentials cannot be obscured, despite the Trump administration's media campaigns and sanctions on Cuba, escalating since 2017, with the purpose of undermining this strategic sector, key to the economic and social development of our country. These measures, along with other blockade restrictions, have caused losses amounting to some 1.383 billion dollars - from April 2018 to March 2019 alone - in important areas related to travel, services, operations and logistics. It is estimated that 35% of the total number of annual visitors to Cuba would be from the United States, if the blockade did not exist.

But none of this discourages us. The country has reaffirmed the intention to perfect and expand our tourist facilities, while the interest in Cuba and respect from international industry leaders remains strong.

In this context, in addition to the great challenge posed by the development of the Oasis tourist center, a hotel complex that will feature some 1,000 rooms, in Varadero, Cuba's number one beach resort, work is advancing on other significant remodeling efforts, and plans for Josone Park and Plaza America, with a view toward hosting the International Tourism Fair (FitCuba 2020), in May this year.

Ivis Fernández Peña, Tourism Ministry representative in the province, noted that FitCuba 2020 will confirm Varadero's international prestige and attract tour operators and businesspeople, who will be able to see firsthand the progress of tourism in the country, based on our cultural and natural attractions, quality services, and security.

## Cuba working for longer and healthier lives

Ensuring that our people live not only longer, but also enjoy healthier lives is at the heart of work by institutions in Cuba, with 20.4% of its population at 60 or more years of age

Author: [Susana Antón](#) | [informacion@granmai.cu](mailto:informacion@granmai.cu) - february 11, 2020 09:02:28



Ensuring good health in all stages of life is key to Cuba's response to population aging. Photo: Yaimí Ravelo

Ensuring that our people live not only longer, but also enjoy healthier lives is at the heart of work by institutions in a society like Cuba's, with 20.4% of its population at 60 years of age or older.

In an effort to contribute to better quality of life for older adults, the Ministry of Public Health is working on training specialized personnel and incorporating elements of geriatrics into other medical specialties, to better serve an aging population in a comprehensive manner.

In this regard, it is worth mentioning the construction of several facilities, including the first unit for the evaluation of physical performance of older adults in Cuba - and one of the few existing in Latin America and the Caribbean - opened on October 1, 2019, taking into consideration the concept of healthy aging, promoted by the World Health Organization.

"This unit makes it possible to evaluate functional capacity based on variables such as walking speed and muscle strength, among other essential aspects. It also supports the diagnosis and rehabilitation of elderly persons with reduced functional capacity and promotes the development of research in key areas of aging and the training of competent human resources," explained Dr. Lilian Rodríguez Rivera, director of the Center for Research on Longevity, Aging and Health.

In previous statements, Dr. Iván Tápanes López, specialist in Geriatrics and Gerontology, and head of the Center's physical performance unit, reported that the facility has high-tech equipment which allows for better diagnoses and assistance, research and comprehensive assessment from the physical point of view, evaluating the performance of activities like walking and others requiring physical effort and strength.

Similarly, on November 21, last year, the Alzheimer's and Cognitive Disorders Center opened in the municipality of Habana Vieja, also the only one of its kind in Cuba, specializing in early diagnosis and treatment of Alzheimer's, support for caregivers, family members and professionals involved in the care of older adults who suffer from this health problem, and research that contributes to improving the care and management of these patients, as well as working with institutions associated with the BioCubaFarma state enterprise group, according to Dr. Rodríguez.

On the day of its inauguration, Dr. Niurka Casado Barralesuna said that a priority of the institution will be the preparation courses, to contribute to supporting the establishment of memory clinics at the municipal level, for the identification of the most complex cases, she explained.

With services including nursing, geriatrics, social assessment, neuropsychology and group therapy, the center is committed to comprehensive treatment and has computerized systems.

For its part, the Center for Longevity, Aging and Health is developing a training program for the specialty of Gerontology and Geriatrics; a new study plan for Master's degrees in Public Health and Aging; and clinical nutrition and sarcopenia consultation (a term that describes the degenerative loss of skeletal muscle mass and reduction of muscle strength that occurs with aging) have begun as outpatient services.

Likewise, at the Center for Research on Longevity, Aging and Health, 15 protocols for hospital care were updated and others approved for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, malnutrition, and related to the use of anesthesia in elderly patients at high surgical risk, with the goal of implementing these nationwide.

In relation to academia and the importance of lifelong learning, the new study plan for MSc in Public Health and Aging is in the design phase, as well as a professional development course in Gerontology and Geriatrics.

The National Program for the Care of the Elderly, with its three subsystems: community, hospital and institutional, is also in the process of being updated.

The committee and working group for the development of the specialty on the island was created at the Longevity, Aging and Health Center i, and the program for the development of the specialty of geriatrics for the period 2020-2025 is currently in the working phase.

Good health must be an essential component of society's response to the aging population, added Dr. Rodríguez Rivera, who recalled a thought expressed by Comandante en jefe Fidel Castro Ruz, who said, "The most humane thing a society can do is to care for the elderly."

#### ADDRESSING DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

In addition to these centers, in response to demographic trends, Cuba has continued to prioritize care for the elderly.

With advances made this past year, a total of 53 services in this specialty are now available in Geriatrics, with 1,063 beds destined for these patients, 53 more than at the close of 2018, according to the Minister of Public Health, José Ángel Portal Miranda, in a review of 2019.

During this period, the number of beds in the 155 nursing homes increased, for a total of 12,419, as well as two new community centers for the elderly, for a total of 295.

More than 973,000 older adults joined grandparents' circles during the year and 29 mental health departments were created, bringing the total to 178 nationwide.

#### IN CONTEXT

- In 2019, 675 patients were admitted by the Center for Research on Longevity, Aging and Health, a greater number than 2018.
- The occupation rate was 78%.
- The average stay was 7.9 days, 1 day less than in 2018.
- Some 7,579 medical consultations were provided, slightly less than the number reported in 2018.
- Some 401 surgical procedures were performed, higher than reported over the last five years and 123 more than in 2018.
- The clean surgical wound rate was positive, with no infections reported.
- The average preoperative stay was 1.7 days, less than in 2018.
- The introduction of minimally invasive surgery is advancing successfully.



Photo: acn.cu

# The real interest of the United States and transnational corporations in Latin America and the Caribbean

*What are the real interests of the U.S. and corporations in the region? Freedom, democracy, human rights? No. Their goal is to preserve imperialist domination of our natural resources*

Author: [Enrique Moreno Gimeranez](#) | [informacion@granmai.cu](mailto:informacion@granmai.cu) - december 13, 2019 15:12:12

Our America is again suffering escalating aggression by U.S. imperialism and local oligarchies. The region is experiencing a sad reality involving dangerous turmoil and socio-political instability, promoted by Washington. The hemisphere's most reactionary forces are attacking sovereign governments with coups, methods of unconventional war, brutal police repression, militarization, unilateral coercive measures, rigged judicial persecution of progressive leaders, while proclaiming the validity of the Monroe Doctrine and McCarthyism.

What are the real interests of the U.S. and corporations in the region? Freedom, democracy, human rights? No. Their goal is to preserve imperialist domination of our natural resources

## IS OUR AMERICA'S WEALTH ALSO OUR CURSE?

Since European empires first found important resources in the Americas, plundered and colonized our lands, the history of the region's countries has been the theft of their natural wealth, a story similar to that of other geographical areas on the planet. In our case, Spain, France, Portugal and England came first, in the colonial period; later, the United States and giant transnational corporations. Once our formal independence was won, imperialist economic domination continued, and continues, in most nations in the hemisphere.

"Just like the first Spanish conquistadors, who gave Indians mirrors and trinkets for gold and silver, the United States trades with Latin America. To conserve that torrent of wealth, to seize more and more of America's resources and exploit its suffering peoples: that is what is hidden behind Washington's military pacts, military missions and diplomatic lobbies," warned the historical leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro Ruz, in the Second Declaration of Havana, February 4, 1962.

Progressive governments challenged monopoly interests when they nationalized, and recovered for the people, a large portion of their natural resources. These economic emporiums, which see the world as a cake to be divided up, cannot accept losing the "juicy slice" that is Latin America and the Caribbean.

Suffice it to say that several countries in the region hold a significant portion of the world's mineral deposits: 68% of the world's lithium (Chile, Argentina and Bolivia), 49% of silver (Peru, Chile, Bolivia and Mexico), 44% of copper (Chile, Peru and, to a lesser extent, Mexico), 33% of tin (Peru, Brazil and Bolivia), 26% of bauxite (Brazil, Guyana, Suriname, Venezuela and Jamaica), 23% of nickel (Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela, Cuba and Dominican Republic), and 22% of iron (Brazil, Venezuela and Mexico), according to the Natural Resources report: Situation and trends for a regional development agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean, compiled by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

(ECLAC) and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

Hence the strategic importance to U.S. interests of this part of the world, also the region closest to its national borders. Any direct or indirect intervention, under any pretext, would be less costly as compared to others carried out in Africa or Asia, although these are not renounced either. A look back at regional history shows the astonishing clarity of the phrase expressed by Simón Bolívar in 1829: the United States "appears destined by providence to plague America with miseries in the name of freedom."

## WASHINGTON'S INTEREST IN VENEZUELA AND BRAZIL

The term petro-aggression refers to the tendency of oil-rich states to be targeted by foreign aggressors, using pretexts of all kinds. The recent wars in the Middle East (Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria) promoted by the United States and its allies have this character.

According to data from the Venezuelan corporation Petróleos de Venezuela S.A. (PDVSA), the Hugo Chávez Frías Orinoco Oil Belt is the largest oilfield in the world. On December 31, 2010, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) made official the certification of these reserves conducted by the country's Ministry of Petroleum and Mining. In this way, OPEC "revealed the true situation of the oilfields that exist in the Hugo Chávez Frías Oil Orinoco Belt, with the certification of 270,976 million barrels (MMbbls) of heavy and extra-heavy crude oil... With this certification, in addition to the certified reserves of 28,977 MMbbls of light and medium crudes, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela totals 299,953 MMbbls, attesting to the fact that the country holds the largest reserve of crude on the planet," states PDVSA in its Oil Sovereignty Notebooks Collection.

According to the publication, Venezuela has 25% of OPEC's reserves and 20% of those known on a world scale - oil that could provide for the country's development over the next 300 years, at a recovery rate of 20%.

Likewise, in 2007, Petróleo Brasileiro S. A. (Petrobras) announced the discovery of substantial oil and natural gas resources in reservoirs located beneath an impermeable layer of salt on the country's coastline, deposited 150 million years ago. The discoveries in Brazil's pre-salt reserves are among the most important in the world, during the last decade. These reservoirs contain a large volume of excellent quality light oil, with significant commercial value, according to information from Petrobras.

The Brazilian Ministry of Mines and Energy highlights that the pre-salt field is currently one of the most important sources of oil and gas on the planet, and that around 70% of the nation's reserves are located in these areas.



The history of Latin America has been one of plunder and the theft of our natural wealth.  
Photo: Heinrich Böll Foundation

## THE LITHIUM TRIANGLE IN SOUTH AMERICA

Who doubts that the recent coup in Bolivia, promoted by the United States, was motivated by economic and political interests? The nationalization of hydrocarbons and strategic companies led by President Evo Morales meant economic freedom for Bolivia, but also a blow to the energy monopolies. For imperialism it was intolerable that the Bolivian people recover earnings from oil and gas, or that U.S. companies lose out on the business of mining a coveted mineral like lithium, in the nation with 30% of the world's deposits.

This metal is referred to as "white gold" or "the mineral of the future" for many reasons. Its chemical properties make it the lightest solid element known, with half the density of water, excelling as an efficient conductor of heat and electricity. These electrochemical properties make lithium ideal for electric batteries (Li-Ion batteries), essential to the manufacture of electronic devices (cell phones, tablets, etc.) and electric cars, among other uses.

Access to this mineral is now at the center of global disputes. "Coincidentally," the world's largest known reserves are located in the so-called Lithium Triangle, in the border region between Bolivia, Chile and Argentina. Some 68% of the global reserves are concentrated here, and Bolivia has 30%, with the largest deposit on the planet in the Uyuni salt flats; Chile has 21%, and Argentina 17% of the total, according to a study published in the Revista Latinoamericana Polis, quoted by RT.

Some analysts are already predicting future wars over lithium, as has occurred with oil. Another sign to alert those of us south of the Rio Bravo, all the way to Patagonia, as to the importance of defending the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace, against the voracity of the United States and local oligarchies. Only regional unity can prevent a new predatory war and the balkanization in Our America.



# Two tornados, a year later

*A devastating tornado struck Havana, January 27, 2019, leaving six dead and damaging the homes of thousands, but the city responded, building 10,280 dwellings over the past year*

Author: [Susana Antón](#) | [informacion@granmai.cu](mailto:informacion@granmai.cu) - february 10, 2020 09:02:15

If we talk about challenging years, 2019 undoubtedly stands out for Havana. On January 2019, city residents lived a moment we will never forget. Just as the city was preparing to celebrate its 500th anniversary, we learned how the power of the wind could destroy everything in its path.

On the evening of Sunday, January 27, residents of the municipalities of Diez de Octubre, Regla, San Miguel del Padrón, Guanabacoa and part of Havana del Este experienced a phenomenon like no other, which left six dead and injured over 190, while 5,000 suffered damages and substantial material losses.

The natural disaster set another storm in action, unleashing a tornado of solidarity able to overcome all the damage caused.

## THE FIRST RESPONSE

The same path followed by the tornado was followed by brigades of communications, construction and electrical workers, municipal brigades and the people as a whole. All with the purpose of recovering, in the shortest time possible, a large part of the material losses.

## DWELLINGS

- 1,068 total losses
- 1,000 partial damage

After the tornado, activated were all mechanisms for technical assessment of the damages and points for the sale of construction materials, including for those with less income, who received subsidies and access to credit.

Additionally, steps were taken to speed up the paperwork related to this process, for all those who had suffered damages and material losses.

From the first moment, Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, ministers, and the highest authorities of the Party and government in Havana, were mobilized, working side by side with the people and, in only five months, repaired 95% percent of the damage.

By the end of December 2019, 10,280 homes, had been built, surpassing original plans for 6,166.

## HEALTHCARE

- 19 damaged facilities
- 1 Maternity Hospital (Diez de Octubre)
- 4 polyclinics
- 2 homes for the elderly
- 10 community doctors and nurses offices
- 1 community pharmacy
- 1 office for vector control in the municipality of Regla

A total of 196 patients were inside the Diez de Octubre maternity hospital the moment the tornado struck; 17 children were in the Neonatology Ward, with two in critical condition. Not one of these infants suffered any type of injury.

Destroyed were ninety percent of the hospital's windows, roofing, and plumbing; and 80% of 74 water tanks.

Recovery tasks were assumed by the Blas Roca and the Julio Antonio Mella construction brigades and in less than a month, the hospital reopened, offering 10% of its services.

As solid evidence of the priority the state gives to healthcare and authorities' determination to recover in the shortest time possible, all Ministry of Public Health (MINSAP) facilities damaged by the tornado were ready to offer their services to all the population by March 19.

## ELECTRICITY

-834,539 households were left without electricity services

-Within only five days, electrical service was restored in all affected municipalities, as follows: Diez de Octubre, 98 %; Regla, 95 %; and Guanabacoa, 99 %.

## COMMUNICATIONS AFFECTED

- 15,750 telephone lines
- 27 cell phone radiobases
- 23 wifi hotspots
- 9 integral service centers

In the case of communications, the 93-meter tower of El Sapo Radio and Medium Wave Broadcasting Center that broadcasts the signal of Coco and Radio Rebelde stations, was downed by the powerful winds, but service was reestablished through other facilities.

By April 1, the tower was back in operation. The current tower is shorter, 63 meters, but meets broadcasting needs and was designed to resist strong winds.

## EDUCATION

-78 damaged facilities

The Alfredo Aguayo school, located in the Diez de Octubre of Santos Suárez, was one of the most damaged by the tornado, as almost all of its carpentry was affected.

During the repair works, the theater was restored, along with sports areas and computer labs. These works returned the school to its heritage condition and enrollment was increased to 800 students.

Brigades from the Mayabeque's comprehensive construction enterprise also participated in the removal of debris from the roof of the Andrés Luján Polytechnic School, in the municipality of San Miguel del Padrón.

"All these issues were resolved in a short period of time thanks to the solidarity and the selfless support of everybody, from the top leadership to the grassroots," said Luis Antonio Torres Iríbar, first secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba in the capital, during the Havana provincial commemoration of the 66th anniversary of the assaults on the Moncada and Carlos Manuel de Céspedes garrisons.

**Sources:** Habana 500 government website, Tribuna de La Habana and Granma newspapers.



New homes for those who lost everything were inaugurated by President Miguel Díaz-Canel.  
**Photo:** Estudio Revolución

# The Roots of Fascism

*When political leaders brazenly flout the law, we are heading towards a very dark place.*

By George Monbiot, published in the Guardian 5<sup>th</sup> February 2020

It is not a sufficient condition for fascism to take root, but it is a necessary one. The willingness of political leaders not only to break the law, but to revel in breaking it, is a fatal step towards the replacement of democracy with authoritarian terror.

We see this at work in the United States today, where the Republican Party's blatant disregard for the constitution will allow Donald Trump to escape impeachment. If Trump is elected for a second term, he will test the potential for wielding unconstitutional power to the limit. But the phenomenon is not confined to the US. Several powerful governments now wear illegality almost as a badge of honour.

Fascist and pre-fascist governments share (among others) two linked characteristics: they proudly flout the laws that are supposed to restrain them, while introducing new, often unconstitutional laws to contain political opponents or to oppress minorities.

In Brazil, outrages against indigenous people, opposition politicians and journalists are encouraged and celebrated at the highest levels of government. Jair Bolsonaro won the presidential election with the help of a judicial coup, in which [due process was abandoned](#) to secure the imprisonment of the front-runner, Luiz Inacio Da Silva (Lula). He has been [photographed](#) embracing [two of the suspects](#) in the murder of the left-wing councillor Marielle Franco, and has [sought to block](#) corruption investigations into his son Flávio, who allegedly has close links with members of the paramilitary gang accused of killing her.

In response to democratic protests, Brazil's economy minister has [threatened to impose martial law](#). Bolsonaro has [called for the police](#) to execute suspected criminals: "These guys are going to die in the streets like cockroaches – and that's how it should be." His racist comments about indigenous people, and curtailment of the agencies supposed to protect them, could help explain [a new spate](#) of murders by loggers, miners and ranchers. Human rights groups are seeking to persuade the International Criminal Court [to investigate Bolsonaro](#) for incitement to genocide.

The investigative journalist Glenn Greenwald, who has published explosive reports about corruption and crime in Bolsonaro's government, and his husband, the left-wing congressman and Guardian columnist David Miranda, have received [repeated death threats](#), containing details about their lives that only the state could know. Greenwald has now been [spuriously charged](#) with cybercrimes.

In India, the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, after discovering that his alleged association with the 2002 Gujarat massacres no longer appeared to tarnish his name, is laying the foundations for a vicious ethno-nationalism. His new Citizenship Act deliberately [denies rights to Muslims](#), and could render millions of people stateless. People protesting against this act are brutally attacked by the police. Police and armed gangs have [raided two Delhi universities](#), randomly beating up students, to spread generalised terror. In Uttar Pradesh, political opponents are [routinely imprisoned](#) without charge and tortured.

Modi has ripped up the constitution to [annex Jammu and Kashmir](#). The police have fired on people protesting peacefully against this illegal action, [blinding some](#) of them with shotgun pellets. Political leaders have been arrested and communications shut down. Officials treat this illegality as a brutal joke. The chief minister of Haryana, Manohar Lal Khattar, a close Modi ally, [boasts that](#) "now we will bring girls from Kashmir", as colonial booty.

The president of the Philippines, Rodrigo Duterte, has bragged of riding around the streets of Davao on his motorbike when he was mayor of the city, [shooting people](#) he suspected of being criminals. Since becoming president, he has, in effect, turned the police into a giant death squad, empowering them [to murder people](#) they suspect of involvement in drugs crime. Unsurprisingly, this general licence has led to the murders of political opponents, [land and environmental defenders](#).

Even as he applauds the killing of drug suspects, Duterte jokes about [taking illegal drugs](#) to keep himself awake at international summits. Opponents are imprisoned, judges are sacked and replaced, [journalists are prosecuted](#) on trumped-up charges. The imposition of martial law on the island of Mindanao is used [to crush dissent](#): objectors are treated as terrorists and murdered.

Like these other killer clowns, Trump may now feel he can get away with anything. His legal team has in the past suggested he has total immunity, boasting that he could literally [get away with murder](#). A culture of impunity is spreading around the world. "Try to stop me" is the implicit motto in nations ranging from Hungary to Israel, Saudi Arabia to Russia, Turkey to China, Poland to Venezuela. Flaunting your disregard for the law is an expression of power.

It's happening in the UK too, though so far on a smaller scale. The Brexit vote, which eventually enabled Boris Johnson's government to take office, was secured with the help of [blatant illegality](#). The government intends to carry out [a legislative cleansing](#) of Romani and Travellers, knowing that this offends our own Equality Act, and is likely to lead to a case before the European Court of Human Rights. It's almost as if it welcomes the confrontation.

These are experiments in absolutism. They don't amount to fascism in their own right. But in conjunction with the elevation of preposterous and desperate men, the denigration of minorities and immigrants, political violence, mass surveillance and widespread mockery of liberalism and social justice, they suggest that some countries, separately and together, are beginning to head towards the darkest of all political places. The normalisation of impunity is possibly the most important step towards authoritarian rule. Never let it be normal.

[www.monbiot.com](http://www.monbiot.com)



# Trained U.S. torture architects

*CIA psychologists who designed torture methods, to be used at illegal U.S. Naval Base in Guantánamo, testify unapologetically in pre-trial hearings*

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Pakistani detainees in the Guantánamo prison, in January of 2002, when some 600 prisoners were held. **Photo:** Reuters

The United States used trained professionals to design torture for detainees at the illegal Guantánamo base prison, accused - not proven - of being involved in the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001.

Hundreds of detainees from several countries were held at the base, simply on suspicion or because they had Arabic features. Most never had access to a lawyer, or were informed of the charges they faced, that led to their arrest.

The truth is that the CIA experimented on them with the most terrible methods of torture. Some could not resist and died. Others committed suicide. And some remain in Guantánamo.

In January of 2020 the truth is coming out and it involves U.S. psychologists, who created the CIA's so-called "enhanced interrogation techniques."

Psychologists James E. Mitchell and John Bruce Jessen were in charge of creating cruel new methods such as waterboarding, sleep deprivation, confinement in small coffin-sized boxes and beatings, Russia Today reports.

The professionals involved in this unethical work of torture testified, unapologetically, in pre-trial military commission hearings, January 21, in the case against detainee Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and co-defendants.

Their testimony could influence the fate of detainees if it is determined - already more than proven - that the CIA and FBI were accomplices in torturing the detainees and that the "enhanced interrogation techniques" used by the U.S. government violated their human rights.

Five defendants are facing the death penalty. The legal status of prisoners and the torture used against them has led institutions like Amnesty International to state that the proceedings of the military commissions, which will make the final ruling, do not meet international fair trial standards.

There is more injustice in the U.S. judicial system and its non-credible "respect for human rights."

According to a CIA's secret report on the role of doctors in its torture program between 2002 and 2007, published in 2018 by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the CIA-hired professionals legitimized torture experiments carried out on the detainees.

Thus, the Agency's legal team convinced the Justice Department to legalize waterboarding, despite its representing an imminent risk of death, Russia Today reports.

Psychologists James Mitchell and John Jessen knew that, technically speaking, the torture methods they created were not considered illegal during their use under the George W. Bush administration, so both psychologists insist that they did nothing wrong, only what they were asked to do and what was considered absolutely legitimate.

Before the military tribunal hearing at the illegal base in Guantánamo, James Mitchell went so far as to declare that if he had the opportunity, he would do the same thing again.

This is just another instance of the United States and its "justice" system involving health professionals at the request of the Central Intelligence Agency and, of course, their very unique way of "respecting human rights."

## JULIAN ASSANGE MUST BE FREED, NOT BETRAYED

**18 February 2020**

On Saturday, there will be a march from Australia House in London to Parliament Square, the centre of British democracy. People will carry pictures of the Australian publisher and journalist Julian Assange who, on 24 February, faces a court that will decide whether or not he is to be extradited to the United States and a living death.

I know Australia House well. As an Australian myself, I used to go there in my early days in London to read the newspapers from home. Opened by King George V over a century ago, its vastness of marble and stone, chandeliers and solemn portraits, imported from Australia when Australian soldiers were dying in the slaughter of the First World War, have ensured its landmark as an imperial pile of monumental servility.

As one of the oldest "diplomatic missions" in the United Kingdom, this relic of empire provides a pleasurable sinecure for Antipodean politicians: a "mate" rewarded or a troublemaker exiled.

Known as High Commissioner, the equivalent of an ambassador, the current beneficiary is George Brandis, who as Attorney General

tried to water down Australia's Race Discrimination Act and approved raids on whistleblowers who had revealed the truth about Australia's illegal spying on East Timor during negotiations for the carve-up of that impoverished country's oil and gas.

This led to the prosecution of whistleblowers Bernard Collaery and "Witness K", on bogus charges. Like Julian Assange, they are to be silenced in a Kafkaesque trial and put away.

Australia House is the ideal starting point for Saturday's march.



"I confess," wrote Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India, in 1898, "that countries are pieces on a chessboard upon which is being played out a great game for the domination of the world."

We Australians have been in the service of the Great Game for a very long time. Having devastated our Indigenous people in an invasion and a war of attrition that continues to this day, we have spilt blood for our imperial masters in China, Africa, Russia, the Middle East, Europe and Asia. No imperial adventure against those with whom we have no quarrel has escaped our dedication.

Deception has been a feature. When Prime Minister Robert Menzies sent Australian soldiers to Vietnam in the 1960s, he described them as a training team, requested by a beleaguered government in Saigon. It was a lie. A senior official of the Department of External Affairs wrote secretly that "although we have stressed the fact publicly that our assistance was given in response to an invitation by the government of South Vietnam", the order came from Washington.

Two versions. The lie for us, the truth for them. As many as four million people died in the Vietnam war.

When Indonesia invaded East Timor in 1975, the Australian Ambassador, Richard Woolcott, secretly urged the government in Canberra to "act in a way which would be designed to minimise the public impact in Australia and show private understanding to Indonesia." In other words, to lie. He alluded to the beckoning spoils of oil and gas in the Timor Sea which, boasted Foreign Minister Gareth Evans, were worth "zillions".

In the genocide that followed, at least 200,000 East Timorese died. Australia recognised, almost alone, the legitimacy of the occupation.

When Prime Minister John Howard sent Australian special forces to invade Iraq with America and Britain in 2003, he - like George W. Bush and Tony Blair - lied that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction. More than a million people died in Iraq.

WikiLeaks was not the first to call out the pattern of criminal lying in democracies that remain every bit as rapacious as in Lord Curzon's day. The achievement of the remarkable publishing organisation founded by Julian Assange has been to provide the proof.

WikiLeaks has informed us how illegal wars are fabricated, how governments are overthrown and violence is used in our name, how we are spied upon through our phones and screens. The true lies of presidents, ambassadors, political candidates, generals, proxies, political fraudsters have been exposed. One by one, these would-be emperors have realised they have no clothes.

It has been an unprecedented public service; above all, it is authentic journalism, whose value can be judged by the degree of apoplexy of the corrupt and their apologists.

For example, in 2016, WikiLeaks published the leaked emails of Hillary Clinton's campaign manager John Podesta, which revealed a direct connection between Clinton, the foundation she shares with her husband and the funding of organised jihadism in the Middle East - terrorism.

One email disclosed that Islamic State (ISIS) was bankrolled by the governments of Saudi Arabia and Qatar, from which Clinton accepted huge "donations". Moreover, as US Secretary of State, she approved the world's biggest ever arms sale to her Saudi benefactors, worth more than \$80 billion. Thanks to her, US arms sales to the world - for use in stricken countries like Yemen - doubled.

Revealed by WikiLeaks and published in The New York Times, the Podesta emails triggered a vituperative campaign against editor-in-chief Julian Assange, bereft of evidence. He was an "agent of Russia working to elect Trump"; the nonsensical "Russiagate" followed. That WikiLeaks had also published more than 800,000 frequently damning documents from Russia was ignored.

On an Australian Broadcasting Corporation programme, Four Corners, in 2017, Clinton was interviewed by Sarah Ferguson, who began: "No one could fail to be moved by the pain on your face at [the moment of Donald Trump's inauguration] ... Do you remember how visceral it was for you?"

Having established Clinton's visceral suffering, the fawning Ferguson described "Russia's role" and the "damage done personally to you" by Julian Assange.

Clinton replied, "He [Assange] is very clearly a tool of Russian intelligence. And he has done their bidding."

Ferguson said to Clinton, "Lots of people, including in Australia, think that Assange is a martyr of free speech and freedom of information. How would you describe him?"

Again, Clinton was allowed to defame Assange - a "nihilist" in the service of "dictators" - while Ferguson assured her interviewee she was "the icon of your generation".

There was no mention of a leaked document, revealed by WikiLeaks, called Libya Tick Tock, prepared for Hillary Clinton, which described her as the central figure driving the destruction of the Libyan state in 2011. This resulted in 40,000 deaths, the arrival of ISIS in North Africa and the European refugee and migrant crisis.

For me, this episode of Clinton's interview - and there are many others - vividly illustrates the division between false and true journalism. On 24 February, when Julian Assange steps into Woolwich Crown Court, true journalism will be the only crime on trial.

I am sometimes asked why I have championed Assange. For one thing, I like and I admire him. He is a friend with astonishing courage; and he has a finely honed, wicked sense of humour. He is the diametric opposite of the character invented then assassinated by his enemies.

As a reporter in places of upheaval all over the world, I have learned to compare the evidence I have witnessed with the words and actions of those with power. In this way, it is possible to get a sense of how our world is controlled and divided and manipulated, how language and debate are distorted to produce the propaganda of false consciousness.

When we speak about dictatorships, we call this brainwashing: the conquest of minds. It is a truth we rarely apply to our own societies, regardless of the trail of blood that leads back to us and which never dries.

WikiLeaks has exposed this. That is why Assange is in a maximum security prison in London facing concocted political charges in America, and why he has shamed so many of those paid to keep the record straight. Watch these journalists now look for cover as it dawns on them that the American fascists who have come for Assange may come for them, not least those on the Guardian who collaborated with WikiLeaks and won prizes and secured lucrative book and Hollywood deals based on his work, before turning on him.

In 2011, David Leigh, the Guardian's "investigations editor", told journalism students at City University in London that Assange was "quite deranged". When a puzzled student asked why, Leigh replied, "Because he doesn't understand the parameters of conventional journalism".

But it's precisely because he did understand that the "parameters" of the media often shielded vested and political interests and had nothing to do with transparency that the idea of WikiLeaks was so appealing to many people, especially the young, rightly cynical about the so-called "mainstream".

Leigh mocked the very idea that, once extradited, Assange would end up "wearing an orange jumpsuit". These were things, he said, "that he and his lawyer are saying in order to feed his paranoia".

The current US charges against Assange centre on the Afghan Logs and Iraq Logs, which the Guardian published and Leigh worked on, and on the Collateral Murder video showing an American helicopter crew gunning down civilians and celebrating the crime. For this journalism, Assange faces 17 charges of "espionage" which carry prison sentences totalling 175 years.

Whether or not his prison uniform will be an "orange jumpsuit", US court files seen by Assange's lawyers reveal that, once extradited, Assange will be subject to Special Administrative Measures, known as SAMS. A 2017 report by Yale University Law School and the Center for Constitutional Rights described SAMS as "the darkest corner of the US federal prison system" combining "the brutality and isolation of maximum security units with additional restrictions that deny individuals almost any connection to the human world ... The net effect is to shield this form of torture from any real public scrutiny."

That Assange has been right all along, and getting him to Sweden was a fraud to cover an American plan to "render" him, is finally becoming clear to many who swallowed the incessant scuttlebutt of character assassination. "I speak fluent Swedish and was able to read all the original documents," Nils Melzer, the United Nations Rapporteur on Torture, said recently, "I could hardly believe my eyes. According to the testimony of the woman in question, a rape had never taken place at all. And not only that: the woman's testimony was later changed by the Stockholm Police without her involvement in order to somehow make it sound like a possible rape. I have all the documents in my possession, the emails, the text messages."

Keir Starmer is currently running for election as leader of the Labour Party in Britain. Between 2008 and 2013, he was Director of Public Prosecutions and responsible for the Crown Prosecution Service. According to Freedom of Information searches by the Italian journalist Stefania Maurizi, Sweden tried to drop the Assange case in 2011, but a CPS official in London told the Swedish prosecutor not to treat it as "just another extradition".

In 2012, she received an email from the CPS: "Don't you dare get cold feet!!!" Other CPS emails were either deleted or redacted. Why? Keir Starmer needs to say why.

At the forefront of Saturday's march will be John Shipton, Julian's father, whose indefatigable support for his son is the antithesis of the collusion and cruelty of the governments of Australia, our homeland.

The roll call of shame begins with Julia Gillard, the Australian Labor prime minister who, in 2010, wanted to criminalise WikiLeaks, arrest Assange and cancel his passport - until the Australian Federal Police pointed out that no law allowed this and that Assange had committed no crime.

While falsely claiming to give him consular assistance in London, it was the Gillard government's shocking abandonment of its citizen that led to Ecuador granting political asylum to Assange in its London embassy.

[www.johnpilger.com](http://www.johnpilger.com)

@johnpilger

*The march on Saturday, 22 February begins at Australia House in Aldwych, London WC2B 4LA, at 12.30pm: assemble at 11.30pm*

In a subsequent speech before the US Congress, Gillard, a favourite of the US embassy in Canberra, broke records for sycophancy (according to the website Honest History) as she declared, over and over again, the fidelity of America's "mates Down Under".

Today, while Assange waits in his cell, Gillard travels the world, promoting herself as a feminist concerned about "human rights", often in tandem with that other right-on feminist Hillary Clinton.

The truth is that Australia could have rescued Julian Assange and can still rescue him.

In 2010, I arranged to meet a prominent Liberal (Conservative) Member of Parliament, Malcolm Turnbull. As a young barrister in the 1980s, Turnbull had successfully fought the British Government's attempts to prevent the publication of the book, *Spycatcher*, whose author Peter Wright, a spy, had exposed Britain's "deep state".

We talked about his famous victory for free speech and publishing and I described the miscarriage of justice awaiting Assange - the fraud of his arrest in Sweden and its connection with an American indictment that tore up the US Constitution and the rule of international law.

Turnbull appeared to show genuine interest and an aide took extensive notes. I asked him to deliver a letter to the Australian government from Gareth Peirce, the renowned British human rights lawyer who represents Assange.

In the letter, Peirce wrote, "Given the extent of the public discussion, frequently on the basis of entirely false assumptions... it is very hard to attempt to preserve for [Julian Assange] any presumption of innocence. Mr. Assange has now hanging over him not one but two Damocles swords, of potential extradition to two different jurisdictions in turn for two different alleged crimes, neither of which are crimes in his own country, and that his personal safety has become at risk in circumstances that are highly politically charged."

Turnbull promised to deliver the letter, follow it through and let me know. I subsequently wrote to him several times, waited and heard nothing.

In 2018, John Shipton wrote a deeply moving letter to the then prime minister of Australia asking him to exercise the diplomatic power at his government's disposal and bring Julian home. He wrote that he feared that if Julian was not rescued, there would be a tragedy and his son would die in prison. He received no reply. The prime minister was Malcolm Turnbull.

Last year, when the current prime minister, Scott Morrison, a former public relations man, was asked about Assange, he replied in his customary way, "He should face the music!"

When Saturday's march reaches the Houses of Parliament, said to be "the Mother of Parliaments", Morrison and Gillard and Turnbull and all those who have betrayed Julian Assange should be called out; history and decency will not forget them or those who remain silent now.

And if there is any sense of justice left in the land of Magna Carta, the travesty that is the case against this heroic Australian must be thrown out. Or beware, all of us.



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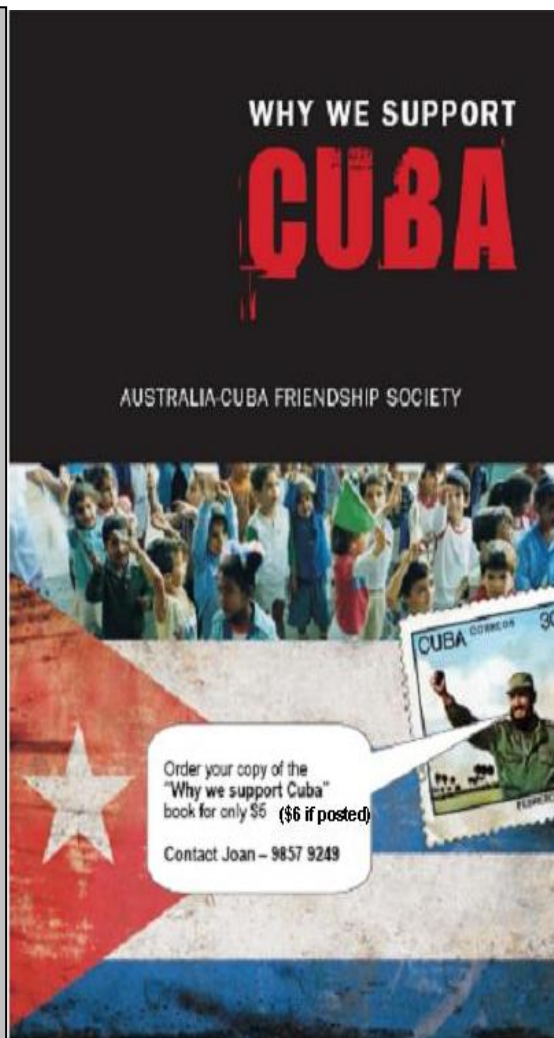
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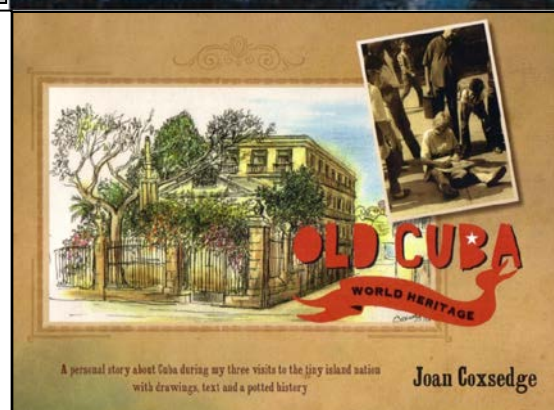
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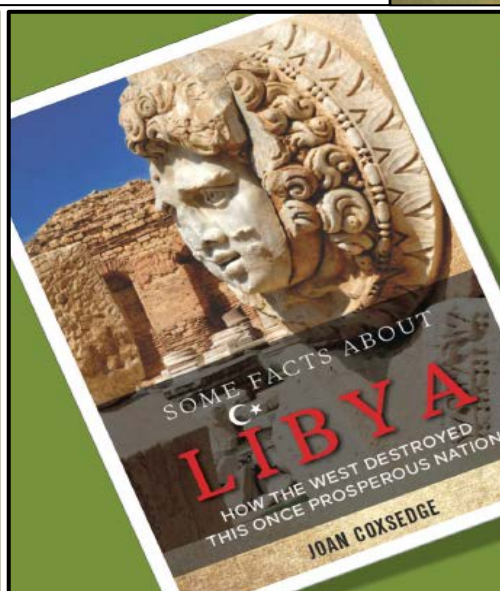


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