

Australia: Queensland shootout highlights dangers of far-right

Oscar Grenfell
17 December 2022

A shooting that left six people dead in the rural Queensland locality of Wieambilla last Monday has underscored the growing radicalisation of a right-wing milieu, which has been actively emboldened by sections of the political and media establishment during the pandemic.

All details of the incident remain murky. The killing of the three suspects by tactical officers means that almost all of the information has been provided by the police.

According to their account, on Monday afternoon four officers attended a Wieambilla property. They were there to locate and perform a welfare check on Nathaniel Train, after he had been reported as missing in the neighbouring state of New South Wales (NSW).

The police version is that when the four officers arrived, they were set upon by Nathaniel Train, his brother Gareth Train and sister-in-law Stacey Train. The trio were allegedly wearing military-style fatigues and reportedly lying-in-wait in bushland near the property entrance.

The police have claimed that the property had been fitted out with motion sensors and possibly cameras. This, they state, enabled the Trains to lure the four officers into “kill zones,” where they were shot repeatedly. Two officers died. Another was shot with non-fatal injuries. In order to try to kill the fourth officer, who had fled into bushland, the Trains reportedly started a fire aimed at smoking her out.

A neighbour, who sought to find out what was going on, was allegedly murdered by the Trains.

Heavily-armed officers from Brisbane, several hours away, arrived on the scene and engaged in a shootout with the Trains late on Monday night, killing all three.

Many questions remain unanswered. They include why four police were dispatched to the property if it was for a routine welfare check. The exact weapons that the Trains possessed, and their legal status, remains unclear.

Much of the initial coverage of the shootout focussed on

its bizarre character. Nathaniel and Stacey Train had for many years worked in the education system, with both serving as school principals in a number of regional and remote areas. Gareth Train, who also at times worked for the education department as a janitor and handyman, had once been employed as a social worker.

The unusual relations between the three have been the subject of substantial commentary. Stacey Train had married Nathaniel Train as a young woman, before wedding his brother Gareth.

The political character of the Trains’ actions, however, came into focus late this week, with the discovery of videos they had posted to YouTube. The videos combine ominous denunciations of the police, with a right-wing and apocalyptic Christianity proclaiming that the “enemies of God” would soon meet their fate.

One of the videos appears to have been filmed on Monday evening, after the initial killings but before the shootout with tactical officers. In it Gareth Train stated: “They came to kill us and we killed them. If you don’t defend yourself against these devils and demons... you’re a coward.”

The videos lent weight to claims that the Trains may have lured police to the property, with the intention of engaging in a firefight and martyring themselves.

Their political views were shown also by comments made by Gareth Train on various right-wing websites over several years.

In one comment, he warned: “If you are a conservative, anti-vaxx, freedom lover, protester, common law, conspiracy talker, alternative news, independent critical thinker, truther, Christian, patriot etc etc expect a visit from these hammers,” i.e., the police.

In other posts he claimed that the 1996 Port Arthur massacre, in which a deranged gunman killed 35 people, had been a “false flag” attack aimed at providing a justification for the population to be “disarmed.” That

assertion is common among right-wing conspiracy theorists.

Reflecting the Trains' particular brand of protestant Christianity, many of the posts spoke darkly of a "Jesuit cabal" that had taken over the world and virtually all institutions. Australia was at the forefront of this "Luciferian agenda."

Train also made comments about China, that dovetailed with an hysterical anti-Chinese campaign promoted for years in Australia and other US-allied states, aimed at justifying Washington's preparations for war against Beijing.

For instance, he warned that Chinese forces were "in Australia now controlling ports and airfields to control the Aust. peoples resources..." Such statements are entirely in keeping with a McCarthyite-type witch-hunt waged by the official corporate and political establishment, against purported "Chinese interference" in Australia.

Significantly, though, the comments demonstrate that hostility to COVID safety measures, including vaccination, was a key factor in the Trains' outlook. Gareth Train shared an article in one forum, entitled: "Canadian Government Erecting a Network of COVID Detainment Camps." He added: "forced testing and experimentation your new normal under the NWO [New World Order]."

Nathaniel Train appears to have posted comments solidarising himself with anti-lockdown protesters in Victoria. Stacey Train left the education sector in protest against a policy mandating that teachers and staff be vaccinated.

For the past three years, segments of the establishment have promoted such forces. They have been given extensive publicity, and open support from layers within the official parties, especially the Liberal-National Coalition. In late 2021, the anti-vaccine milieu was used as a battering ram against the public health measures, which enjoyed widespread support among workers and young people.

Politicians, including then Prime Minister Scott Morrison, cited small anti-vaccine protests as part of the justification for the wholesale lifting of anti-COVID measures, which has since led to more than 14,000 deaths in less than a year.

Other questions remain about the Trains, including how they were employed in the education sector for so many years. They almost invariably worked at impoverished schools, often in remote areas with substantial Aboriginal populations. Both Nathaniel and Stacey rose to the

position of school principals.

But since Monday's attack, parents, other teachers and students have reported uniformly negative experiences with the trio. Some claimed they issued complaints to the state education departments, but nothing appears to have been done.

Nathaniel Train left the sector in late 2021. He had been principal of a primary school in Walgett, an impoverished far-western NSW town with a majority Aboriginal population. It has emerged that Train repeatedly lodged complaints to the NSW education department about the situation at the school. He was not, however, speaking out against under-resourcing or the poverty inflicting students. Instead he accused some students and staff of cheating on the regressive NAPLAN standardised tests, which are skewed against schools in lower socio-economic areas.

When his complaints to the education department did not receive a favourable response, Train contacted Mark Latham of Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party. The outfit is notorious for its xenophobia.

In other words, while the media coverage has centred on the oddities of the trio, there is a definite political logic to their actions. They were part of a right-wing extremist milieu that has received succour from the official political parties and the corporate media.

While these issues have largely been buried, the shootings have been used to glorify the police and obscure their primary function in repressing workers and the poor. That the "deadliest shooting of police in decades" claimed only two lives, underscores the fraudulent character of claims that the cops are "putting their lives on the line" every day. Construction workers, firefighters, health staff and many other sections of the working class are at far greater risk of dying at work.

Having legitimised the right-wing anti-lockdown movement, the ruling elite is using the Queensland shooting to push for greater social media censorship. Such measures will inevitably be directed against left-wing opposition to war, inequality and the capitalist system.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)