



# Ark Tribe victory

## The workers united will never be defeated



Photo: Fernando M. Goncalves

Bob Briton

Thousands of cheering workers greeted Ark Tribe as he left the Adelaide Magistrates Court last Wednesday. Magistrate David Whittle had just announced his verdict – “not guilty” of the charges brought by the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC). The scaffolder had endured 18 months of uncertainty and 11 court appearances. Six months jail had hung over his head as he became a target of the much-loathed building industry spy outfit.

Every step of the way to this victory, Ark had the support of his union (the CFMEU), the broader trade union movement and the community. The law in countries like Australia pretends that it operates in splendid isolation but there is no doubt that the judgement was achieved by the

magnificent campaign waged to ensure that Ark was not sent to jail for sticking up for his rights in the workplace.

The original charges were laid when Ark refused to attend an interrogation to be conducted by the ABCC regarding a workplace meeting at a construction site at Flinders University in 2008. At the meeting, the workers had drawn up a long list of hazards that they wanted fixed for their own safety. A building worker dies nearly every week on Australian construction sites but the Howard era ABCC has not targeted shonky contractors or unsafe working practices: it has gone gunning for union members. Ark Tribe was going to be made an example for others – organise on the job and you will be hounded and punished.

Every one of Ark's court appearances drew large and vocal demonstrations. Protests were held in

other Australian capitals and regional centres. Supporters even gathered in London to voice their support. Messages of solidarity were sent to the CFMEU from unions all over the world.

In the end, the magistrate found that the Deputy ABCC Commissioner had not conducted the investigation according to the relevant legislation and had not received lawful delegation from the Commissioner. This wasn't a matter of “getting off on a technicality”, however.

The case showed that the ABCC was prepared to go beyond what the magistrate called its “significant and intrusive powers” under section 52 of the Act to get Ark Tribe and others like him.

The ABCC is reported to have spent around \$1 million of taxpayers' money on the exercise. It has now squandered \$100 million on its war on building unions – money that should

have been spent on urgent social needs including workplace safety.

The verdict is a victory but the campaign must go on. The legislation is still on the books and the ABCC will no doubt learn from this experience for next time. Its reputation has taken a hit but even more pressure must be built to make sure it is abolished and not restored in some other guise. Newly appointed ABCC Commissioner Leigh Johns expressed “sympathy” for construction workers for being singled out for attention by a body like the ABCC. “We don't want his sympathy - we want equal rights,” CFMEU Construction and General national secretary Dave Noonan said.

The Gillard government tries to hide its shame over the issue by claiming a new body will be established within Fair Work Australia. It will still be a “tough cop on the beat” but will somehow shake off the appalling reputation of its forerunner. It will,

in fact, be a rebadged ABCC. The Greens are set to challenge Gillard over the matter in parliament and have consistently called for the abolition of the ABCC. As things stand, the Liberals would vote with the government to thwart any such effort. The movement in the community must be strengthened to show that there will be a political cost to the major parties if the anti-union outfit is not given a fitting burial.

“Today's verdict will see Australian unions redouble their efforts to have these unfair and unjust laws abolished. These laws criminalise legitimate industrial activity and deny building workers the right to silence,” ACTU secretary Ged Kearney said last week. It will be a challenge to do that without the focus of a case like Ark Tribe's but it must be done so that others are not put through the hell suffered by that courageous construction worker. ✘

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**Worth Watching**

## The Guardian

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### Public rejects “big business” Labor

Last week the NSW Keneally government finally abandoned plans to build a dam as big as Sydney Harbour on the Williams River in the Hunter Valley. Public disquiet over the cosy friendship between ALP governments and big business is exemplified in the vigorous local and state-wide protests against the Tillegra Dam proposal.

In 2006 the then Lemma government claimed the dam would guarantee fresh water for the Hunter Valley and NSW Central Coast. However, even allowing for climate change, much of its 230 billion-litre capacity was undoubtedly surplus, given that it met an anticipated water shortfall only likely to occur every 830,000 years. Moreover, its construction would have necessitated flooding 90 highly productive farms, and the presence of geological fissures cast doubt on its ability to actually retain water.

The government finally conceded defeat after two studies showed that the dam's construction would threaten migratory bird species, as well as sites of Aboriginal and European heritage significance, and that an enormous amount of water could be provided by subsidising the installation of domestic water tanks, augmenting existing dams and regulating Hunter and Central Coast water use.

In deciding to proceed with the \$450 million Tillegra project, one of the Lemma government's prime motives was undoubtedly the facilitation of a major development project. However, the project would also have facilitated residential and industrial development within the Hunter Valley and central coast, particularly coal mining, which requires enormous quantities of water.

The Hunter Valley is already suffering from mining overdevelopment. Huge, obscene open-cut mines pock-mark the landscape and coat it with coal dust, endangering public health. Many long-wall coal mines have caused extensive soil subsidence and the loss of aquifer water.

Nevertheless, new mines are being opened up throughout the state. The government has granted companies at least 20 licenses to drill exploratory mines for gas, coal or other minerals beneath the wonderfully fertile Liverpool Plains. The prospect has enraged local farmers, who see their livelihoods in the iconic “black soil plains” ruined by the loss of surface water and soil, the release of toxic fluids into aquifers and surface water, and the emission of greenhouse gas into the atmosphere.

Plans are afoot to mine for gas within a former brickpits site at St Peters, an inner Sydney suburb. One mining corporation even intends to use the highly dangerous “fracking” technique, which can result in subsidence and the release of toxic chemicals, for mineral exploration alongside Lake Burragorang, the principle source of Sydney's drinking water.

Currently, test wells can be drilled without the approval of the NSW Environment Department. The NSW Farmers' Association has demanded a moratorium on new mining projects until a plan has been prepared to safeguard food security, water resources and agricultural land.

The mining industry has haughtily dismissed such demands as stemming from “activism (which) has entrenched a trendy if uninformed cynicism towards our industry”. It has also launched a public relations “survey” that seeks strategic information about relationships between farmers and protest groups.

#### A changing landscape

Significant changes are occurring in the NSW political landscape. The Labor government's obsessive commitment to kick-starting major development projects, if necessary by overriding objections from local communities and councils, is a major factor in its astronomical fall in public popularity.

The disenchantment is not limited to the NSW ALP government. Some leading National Party members have shares in mining corporations, or are directly involved in their operations. In many states, small farmers and rural communities are beginning to abandon the National Party because of its allegiance to mining interests. The Greens are increasingly seen as a preferable alternative.

The federal government has also come under fire for approving coal-seam gas mining in Queensland's Surat and Bowen basins, despite reports that mining could cause several metres of ground level subsidence, as well as the loss of 45,000 gegalitres of aquifer water.

However, nothing matches the loss of popularity of the NSW Labor government. In the next state election in March it is expected to experience the biggest voting slump in ALP history.

And so it should. After all, you must expect to fall from grace if you're prepared to sup with the devil.

#### PRESS FUND

The Commonwealth Bank, the Bank of Queensland and Macquarie Bank now face prosecution over their involvement with the former Storm financial corporation. Storm's collapse impoverished thousands of small investors, including many elderly pensioners who accepted the company's promises of rapid riches, and subsequently lost their entire life savings. Storm and its backers now say they don't know where the money went. However, your contribution for the next issue – the final one for 2010 – will assist us in the struggle to reach the Fund's annual target, and that in turn will help us to continue highlighting big capitalism's scams, such as Storm's exceptionally cruel deception of its victims. Many thanks to the following, for their generous support this week:

Guardian Tin (RC) \$22.65, Guardian Tin (SG) \$12.70, MH \$300, Maria Pagliuca \$50, Anna Pha \$25, “Round Figure” \$18.65.

This week's total: \$429 Progressive total: \$6,400

# Attack on Glebe Public Housing

Denis Doherty

On Saturday November 27 the quiet streets of Glebe were rocked by chants of “Hands Off Glebe – Protect Public Housing” and ‘Stop the sell off!’ Local residents from the Hands Off Glebe group took their protest against the demolition of public homes to the office of the local State MP. The demonstration was just one of the many actions that have been undertaken by the community action group.

The area of the Glebe Public Housing Estate earmarked for development is a low rise medium density area with a long established community of 134 homes which are described as “robust and utilitarian”.

These are slated to be bulldozed and replaced by a high density development with 250 private units, shops, 80 “affordable” houses (also private) and 154 social housing units to be crowded into ten story tower blocks.

Redevelopment of the Cowper, Bay and Wentworth Streets public housing estate will bring smaller homes, over-crowding, more noise and traffic, loss of social networks and other problems – and the government is going to pay over \$100 million for this.

The noisy rally heard messages of support from the Millers Point Action Group which is running a similar campaign in their suburb. Activist Jack Munday sent a message which said:



Photo: Denis Doherty

Locals gather outside the office the local State MP to protest the selloff of Glebe Public Housing.

“What you are doing here in Glebe is not just about saving your homes and your community.

“It is also about helping to stop the state government selling off public homes and public land, increasing profits for developers and pushing public tenants out to the outer suburbs – out of sight out of mind.

“In Glebe it is yet another case of private profit winning out over community needs and wishes.”

The rally was addressed by local residents and by Jamie Parker, the

Mayor of Leichhardt. He promised to approach the NSW Minister for Housing to stop the bulldozers. He also indicated that the Greens Sydney City Councillors have swung their support in behind the protection of the present arrangement rather than supporting the government's plans.

The State government is ruled by neo-liberalism so it does not provide services but assists the private sector to make more money. There is a great deal to be done to protect public housing across NSW. ☘

## Wetland cams show just what we stand to lose

With newly-installed web cameras showing floodwaters flowing back into the Lower Lakes, the Australian Conservation Foundation has called on the Murray-Darling Basin Authority to safeguard South Australia's fragile environment from the ongoing threat of water over-allocation upstream.

The cameras at Hunters Creek, Narrung wetland and Loveday Bay wetland have been installed by the Australian Conservation Foundation to capture and show the partial recovery of the internationally significant Coorong and Lower Lakes.

“Some water is flowing back

into the Coorong and the Lower Lakes after drought-breaking rain, but these unique wetlands face an uncertain future unless adequate environmental flows are returned to the river,” said ACF's Healthy Ecosystems Program Manager Dr Paul Sinclair.

“Healthy rivers and wetlands provide enormous benefits through tourism, recreation, water filtration, habitat, floodplain restoration and water storage. No one understands this better than communities living at the mouth of the river.”

Dr Sinclair said the Murray-Darling Basin Authority can safeguard the future of the wetlands

by making sure the Basin Plan is scientifically robust.

“Without increased flows, the river won't be flushed, salinity levels will increase, soil will be degraded and wetlands further degraded.

“The Murray-Darling Basin Authority must consider scenarios from across the 3,000 to 7,600 billion litre range in its next draft of the Basin Plan.”

The SA Department for Water and the SA Murray-Darling Basin NRM Board have supported this initiative. The cameras and technology have been provided by Victorian company Observant. ☘

Sydney

Latin America Social Forum presents

## International Human Rights Day

Speakers looking at the violation / advances in human rights in Latin America and around the world. Including screening of short film on the school of assassins.

### EVERY HUMAN HAS RIGHTS

Noon til 5:00pm Saturday December 11  
Addison Road Art Gallery Community Centre 142 Addison Rd Marrickville

Free Entry – Food and drink available  
For more info call Federico on 0412 556 527

# Korean peninsula on the brink

Anna Pha

Tensions on the Korean Peninsula escalated last week with the exchange of fire between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the Republic of Korea (South Korea) and the deaths of four South Koreans. Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao described the situation as "grim and complicated". He said that "Relevant sides should maintain the utmost restraint and the global community should do more to relax the tense situation."

The DPRK warned that the US was driving the peninsula to the "brink of war" with "reckless military provocation". If a single shell of the enemy is fired inside its territorial waters, a resolute DPRK government promised prompt retaliatory action.

are rehearsing for war against the DPRK. The nuclear-powered *USS Washington*, with 75 warplanes and a crew of 6,000, joined the exercises on Sunday.

The military exercises are provocative acts of aggression, preparations for war against the DPRK which lives in constant fear of a real attack on its shores. They also pose a serious threat to China which has repeatedly requested the US not to hold exercises in its exclusive economic zone in the Yellow Sea without first gaining permission – as required under international law. Imagine the US response if China were to hold similar exercises within US territorial waters!

The US's immediate target is the DPRK, with the aim of counter-revolution and incorporation in the capitalist state of the Republic of Korea so that it can establish bases

around the north's coast in a westerly and then northern westerly direction.

Not surprisingly the DPRK refuses to accept the US drawn border which excludes the five islands from its maritime territory and contravenes international law. The most northern of the islands lies 180 kilometres from South Korea, but just kilometres off the mainland of the DPRK. According to the *China Daily*, there are around 5,000 South Korean marines based on the islands and South Korea has now announced it will step up its military forces on them.

When the Armistice Agreement was signed in 1953, it should have been followed by political discussions for the peaceful resolution to the conflict, including the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Korea. The US walked away from the Agreement, refusing to sit at the table. In total abrogation of the Agreement, the US turned South Korea into a US military and nuclear base. Since then the people of Korea have been faced with the daily threat of nuclear war.

The DPRK described the firing of shells from the island into what it recognises as its territorial waters as "politically motivated provocation". It said it acted in self-defence, making a prompt and powerful strike at the artillery positions from which the enemy fired the shells. It did not, as the Australian government and media would like us to believe set about to attack civilians.

## Nuclear threat

The raising of tensions on the peninsula suits US interests, giving it a "justification" to retain and strengthen its military presence in South Korea. There has been a considerable escalation of military exercises over recent months and ongoing refusal to come to the table for the Six Party talks to find a peaceful resolution, including cooperation and eventual unification. The former South Korean Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan back in April said Seoul had no intention of hosting US nuclear weapons again. Now the question is back on the table.

The US officially removed its tactical nuclear weapons in 1991, under international and local political pressure. Their removal strengthened arguments for a nuclear-free North. When questioned last week Defence Minister Kim Te-young did not rule out reinstallation of US nuclear arms. It is on the agenda of the newly formed US-South Korean Extended Deterrence Policy Committee when



## Yeonpeyong island is just 12 kilometres off the border of the mainland of the DPRK.

The US added oil to the fire, commencing a new round of even more aggressive and provocative military exercises on Sunday, November 26, just five days after last week's exercises. The DPRK, Russia and the People's Republic of China have called for a resumption of the Six-Party Talks on denuclearisation, but so far the US has refused. (The other two parties are South Korea and Japan.)

Far from heeding calls to relax the situation, South Korea has threatened retaliation, with one military leader promising "revenge". The South is increasing its maritime forces on the islands off the west coast of the DPRK. The Australian government has fallen into line behind the US and promised to support South Korea's response. The US is beating the war drums emphasising the DPRK's nuclear capacity.

The US has described this week's joint four-day exercises with South Korea as a "show of force" to "deter the North" – an admission that they

on the border with China.

The land, air and sea Hoguk Exercise last week involved 70,000 South Korean troops, 600 tracked vehicles, 90 helicopters, 50 warships and 500 aircraft. Yeonpeyong island is just 12 kilometres off the border of the mainland of the DPRK. South Korea uses Yeonpeyong as a permanent military base. The South admitted firing live artillery from the island during the military exercises with the US last week but said the fire was not directed at the DPRK. The North then fired on the island aiming at the marine base there. The South then fired shots back at the North. The order of events is not disputed, but the maritime border between the north and south is.

Yeonpeyong is one of five islands off the coast of the DPRK which the South lays claim to. Following the Armistice that ended fighting in the 1950-53 war, the US drew up a maritime border between the north and south. Instead of the border being drawn straight out to sea it wraps

it meets in December. The aim of the Committee is to "enhance deterrence against North Korea's nuclear programmes". The US's concept of "deterrence" is military might and aggression.

The US consistently thwarts attempts to find a peaceful, political resolution which would of necessity mean removing its troops from Korean soil. Its aggression and resultant heightening of tensions in the face of recent progress in cooperation between the north and south provides a "need" for it to retain its bases and up the ante with the reinstallation of nuclear weapons. Its military bases in the South are an important part of its military encirclement of China. The unfortunate death of four Koreans, in particular the two civilians, played into its hands, fuelling hostility and anger in the south towards the DPRK.

The escalation of tensions and other actions by the South, such as cancelling food aid and the Red Cross indefinitely pulling the plug on humanitarian activities, have buried the question of unification - something which is strongly supported by the majority of Koreans. Instead of One Korea, the peoples of the peninsula are now living in fear of another war. Regardless of the US's immediate intentions – even if only to restore nuclear weapons to the peninsula – the situation could escalate out of control. How can the DPRK know whether or not an exercise would become the real thing? Australia should be doing all it can to ease tensions, such as pressing for the resumption of the Six Party Talks, the cessation of all military exercises in the Yellow Sea and for nuclear disarmament. ☸

Pete's Corner



Banjo Morton, Richard Downs and the Alyawarr Community of Central Australia invite you to a special fundraiser event

### Two Films: *Our Generation* and *The Alyawarr walk off*

7pm - 10pm Saturday December 4  
Leichhardt Town Hall 107 Norton St, Leichhardt  
\$25 waged / \$15 unwaged  
All proceeds go to the Alyawarr Community's Building Fund

Perth

## Rally for a Civil Society

HUMAN RIGHTS FOR EVERYONE – Primum Non Nocere – First Do No Harm  
BAN USE OF TASERS till all the recommendations of CCC have been implemented  
Refugees & Asylum Seekers– END MANDATORY DETENTION  
No more deaths in custody – Implement JUSTICE REINVESTMENT NOW  
JUSTICE FOR ALL – implement a Public Inquiry into All Australian deaths in custody

11:30am to 12:30pm Sunday, December 5  
Wesley Centre, cnr William Street & Hay Street, Perth City

SPEAKERS Ted Wilkes – Associate Professor, Curtin University, Aboriginal Elder  
Dennis Eggington – CEO of the Aboriginal Legal Services  
William Hayward – President of The Aboriginal Party  
Glenn Moore – Leader of The Aboriginal Party  
Victoria Iverson - Refugee Rights Action Network WA  
Dot Henry – Deaths in Custody Watch, & Chair of National ATSI Womens Alliance  
Elizabeth Hulm – The Communist Party Australia  
Gerry Georgatos (MC) – Human Rights Alliance  
and more ...

INQUIRIES: Gerry Georgatos – 0430 657 309

# Truck drivers call for Safe Rates support

The Safe Rates Safe Roads discussion paper, released last week by federal Parliamentary secretary for School Education and Workplace Relations, Senator Jacinta Collins, discusses remuneration and safety in the industry and calls for comments from the wider community.

Transport Workers' Union national secretary, Tony Sheldon, said that with 330 people killed on the nation's roads each year in truck crashes, it was right that the government put forward a proposal to make the roads safer.

"This is the chance owner-drivers and employee drivers have been waiting for – they have seen the government commit to reducing pressure on drivers and they are ready to act," Mr Sheldon said.

He said report after report has shown the death toll in Australia's trucking industry is at an all-time high. The NSW Injury Risk Management Research Centre has said that crash rates are up by 25 percent, and it has also confirmed the industry is driven by incentives and continuous pressure that require them to drive faster.

Further, in a report published in July, an RTA survey found that the rate of speeding trucks had increased by 35 percent over a 10 year period, showing that economic pressures on drivers has increased.

"Since 1989 there have been 3,835 deaths – there have been 330 in the last year. The deaths keep happening and it is time to fix this now," Mr Sheldon said.

In 2008, the National Transport Commission

prepared a report with the assistance of transport safety expert Professor Michael Quinlan and Lance Wright QC, the former president of the NSW Industrial Relations Commission.

The Quinlan/Wright report concluded that:

"Economic factors create an incentive for truck drivers to drive fast, work long hours and use illicit substances to stay awake." These economic factors include:

- low rates of pay;
- incentive based payment methods (such as per kilometre or per trip);
- unpaid working time;
- other factors include the hyper-competitive nature of the industry and the low bargaining power faced by drivers.

A study by a team of academics in the US led by Professor Michael Belzer found the probability of a truck crash fell by 36 percent for every 10 percent increase in wages.

"The link between rates of pay and safety is clear – whenever truck drivers are not getting full cost recovery, including paid waiting times or full fuel reimbursement, they are going to be pushed to make a living," Mr Sheldon said.

"A safe rate of pay and an independent tribunal would allow drivers and companies to come together for conciliation and to get a ruling, and if that tribunal was industry specific and includes client accountability, the outcomes would see large improvements in safety and the way the industry is run." ✪



## Nurses' strike shows the power of their case



Nurses gather and chant for better ratios before going into the union meeting.

Photo: Denis Doherty

Denis Doherty

In a dispute over the ratio of nurses to patients, nurses went on strike and gathered in force at Olympic Basketball Stadium in Sydney on November 24. Over 7,000 focussed and energetic nurses cheered their union leaders and the many messages of support from interstate and from Californian nurses. They booed any mention of the NSW Labor government.

The nurses were told the government had refused to talk to the union for the last seven months. The NSW Nurses Association stood up to the government and demanded that more nurses be hired and that their working conditions be improved.

The Victorian Health

Department has enshrined a ratio of one nurse to four patients. NSW nurses believe they should have the same ratio.

Rank and file nurses shared their stories with the assembled crowd. There were gasps of sympathy as nurse after nurse told stories of having to look after eight patients in an emergency ward, of one midwife for three mothers in labour.

A picture emerged of a public hospital system that is strapped for cash and failing. Public hospitals desperately need more funding instead of the federal government's plans to privatise health care.

The nurses promised to continue actions over the next week and to close beds by December 1 if the government does not start

negotiating. The determination and unity of the nurses was plain for all to see.

By Sunday November 28, the government had agreed to negotiate and the nurses called off their action.

While privatisation of the health system continues there will be more of these black spots where nurses face massive professional and personal work based stress.

Patients too are in danger in a system under financial constraint because profits are being put before providing services.

The CPA is campaigning for the health system to be nationalised. Members and supporters are urged to take part and get our health system back to a healthy level. ✪

## Protesting the mining of uranium

Richard Titelius

Last month both inside and out of the Perth Convention Centre protesters let the board of directors of BHP Billiton know that they were seeking transparency and accountability for all Australians and not just those hoping to increase the rate of exploitation of workers and of the mineral resources.

Inside the hall, former Nuclear Disarmament and Greens Senator Jo Vallentine was putting depleted uranium on the agenda when she asked BHP Chairman Jac Nasser, "I am wondering whether members of the BHP management and shareholders are aware of the role played by Australian uranium in the huge spike in cancer incidents and birth deformities experienced in Fallujah and elsewhere in Iraq since the massive strike against them by allied forces since 2005. Can management describe why there are no safeguards for the use of Australian uranium in depleted uranium munitions and whether BHP Billiton supports such safeguards coming into force?"

The question drew a stunned silence from the 500 plus crowd in the auditorium and only a muted reply from Nasser who said he was unable to comment on a war situation – though BHP Billiton does profit from war as a resource giant that feeds various sectors of the military industrial complex.

Ms Valentine's clearly audacious question in front of the resource Goliath emboldened others to ask questions. They were either shareholders or proxies of the corporation and Aboriginal elders who asked about safeguards and whether mining should go ahead at the BHP's Yeelirrie uranium mining deposit in the WA's northeast. There were also concerns expressed about

the large amount of water needed to extract and process the uranium ore and what safeguards existed for the tailings and leaching ponds to ensure that these did not poison the environment.

There was also a deputation of villagers from la Guajira region of Colombia present at the AGM who were angry about BHP's role in the displacement of villagers in the area of the Cerrejon Coalmine of which BHP has a 33.33 percent stake.

Unions WA secretary Simone McGurk sought a commitment from BHP Billiton for a National Register of Workers who are exposed to radiation from working in mines extracting and processing uranium

As the colourful copies of a glossy annual report were being presented to shareholders, outside protesters could obtain a 24 page copy of the Alternative Annual Report 2010. "Other sides to the story", also available online at [www.bhpbillitonwatch.net](http://www.bhpbillitonwatch.net).

Noongar Elder Ken Hayward, a member of WA Nuclear Free Alliance and one of the organisers of the protest along with the Conservation Council, Ban Uranium Mining Permanently (BUMP) and ANAWA (Anti Nuclear Alliance of WA), asked, "What is the point of having resources into the future when there is not a liveable planet on which to have this future?"

Further rallies are planned for November 28, at the Cottesloe Civic Centre at 11am to protect the Kimberley region and especially its coastal environment and on Saturday December 11, at 12 noon outside the Wesley Church against greenhouse gas pollution and for a massive expansion of renewables. ✪

# The Communist movement in the 21st century (Part 2)

## Confronting the offensive from neoliberalism

Sitaram Yechury

**Before we proceed to discuss the manner in which imperialism has embarked on the process of strengthening its overall hegemony through globalisation and militarism, it is necessary to clear certain common misconceptions.**

Lenin had defined imperialism as the highest and last stage of capitalism – *Eve of the Socialist Revolution*. Many have mechanically sought to interpret this to mean the imminence of the collapse of capitalism and the rise of socialism. However, within a stage in the historical framework, there are and can be many phases through which imperialism or, for that matter, any social order can develop. Therefore, there are different phases of imperialism while it continues to remain the last stage of capitalism. These phases are determined by the unfolding of the fundamental laws of capitalist development and the attendant levels of capital accumulation and importantly within the political conjuncture where this is happening.

For instance, in the immediate post-Second World War period, when the balance of class forces in the world favoured socialism, imperialism moved into a different phase to meet that specific political conjuncture. Within the capitalist world, in France and Italy, the Communists emerged as, by far, the most significant political force.

In several other countries, the social democrats came to power on working class support, including in Britain where Winston Churchill, a wartime hero, was defeated in the post-war elections. Apart from the Soviet role in the defeat of fascism, the growth of socialism in Eastern Europe, the imminent Chinese revolution and the rise of third world nationalism following decolonisation meant that in order to maintain its dominance, imperialism had to meet this threat.

This resulted in the Keynesian demand management, the rise of the welfare State as measures to defend capitalism from the socialist threat. State intervention to manage capitalism and thereby meet the threat of socialism was the specific phase of immediate post-war capitalism. This, however, allowed capitalism to

go through an unprecedented boom which led to massive levels of capital accumulation eventually through the internationalisation of finance capital which set the stage for the emergence of a new – the current – phase of imperialism.

Given the fact that the political correlation of forces internationally has shifted in its favour, imperialism has been permitted circumstances whereby the quest of profit maximisation can proceed unhindered aided by colossal levels of capital accumulation leading to the emergence of international finance capital (IFC). This is one of the salient features of the post-Cold War world capitalism. Lenin in *Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism* had defined finance capital as capital “controlled by banks and employed by industrialists”. Further, unlike in Lenin’s time, IFC operates not in the pursuit of specific strategic interests of specific nations but internationally.

It also operates in a world not riven by intense inter-imperialist rivalry but in a world where such rivalry is muted by the very emergence of this international finance capital which seeks to operate over the entire undivided world. This does not suggest the cessation of inter-imperialist contradictions. These not merely exist but are bound to intensify in the future given the basic capitalist law of uneven development. This leads to conflicts of interests between capitalist centres given their relative future strengths.

This international finance capital is no longer separate or detached from the world of production. The financial structure is a superstructure of capitalist production, but it is not detached, but it is enmeshed with industrial capital in its pursuit of profit maximisation. The IFC now leads the commonality of purpose to unleash fresh attacks to vastly increase levels of capital accumulation and profit maximisation, further.

### Attack of neo-liberalism

It is the new attacks and the reordering of the world for profit maximisation, under dictates of IFC that defines neo-liberalism. It operates, firstly, through policies that remove

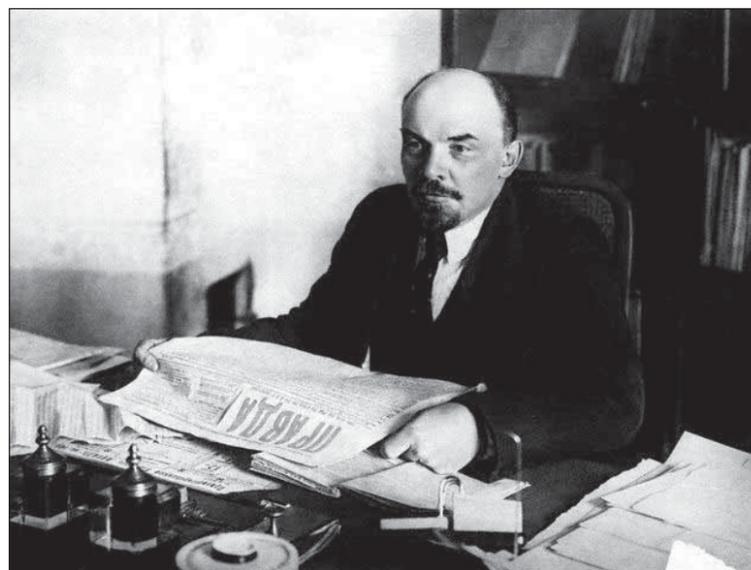
restrictions on the movement of goods and capital across borders. Trade liberalisation displaces domestic producers engendering domestic deindustrialisation. So also liberalisation of capital flows allows multinational corporations to acquire domestic productive assets vastly enlarging capital accumulation.

The second way of consolidating capital accumulation is through the imposition of deflationary policies, to which we shall return shortly, like restrictions on government expenses in the name of fiscal discipline which leads to the lowering of the level of aggregate demand in the world economy, a shift in terms of trade against the peasantry in the third world and a rolling back of the State sector globally, more pronounced in the third world, which increasingly becomes privatised and the opening up of huge new areas for private accumulation. Thus, the new feature of current imperialism is the prising open of new and hitherto non-existent avenues for profit maximisation.

The imposition of such neo-liberal policies by browbeating the developing countries is achieved by imperialism through the agencies of IMF, World Bank and WTO. The structural conditionalities imposed by the IMF and separately by the World Bank while disbursing loans to the developing countries ensures compliance to neo-liberal reforms. The WTO similarly is used for further prising open the markets of the developing world for imperialist profit maximisation.

This new phase of imperialism turns large segments of the third world bourgeoisie into collaborators. In several of these countries, the struggle for decolonisation had been fought under the leadership of the domestic bourgeoisie which, after independence, had tried to pursue a path of relatively autonomous capitalist development.

While allying itself with domestic landlordism, while compromising with the big capitalist powers, it had nonetheless retained a degree of autonomy, pursuing non-alignment in foreign policy which enabled it to use the Soviet Union to keep imperialist pressures in check. But the internal contradictions of such regimes, combined with the collapse of the



Vladimir Ilyich Lenin.

Soviet Union and the emergence of international finance capital keen to prise open third world economies, altered the perspective of the third world bourgeoisie. From a position of relative autonomy, it moved towards greater collaboration with imperialism to embrace neo-liberalism.

All through the history of capitalism, accumulation takes place in two ways: one is through the normal dynamics of capital expansion (appropriation) through the unfolding of its production process and the other is through coercion (expropriation) whose brutality Marx defines as primary accumulation of capital. Historically, these two processes continue to coexist. The process of primary accumulation has taken various forms, including direct colonisation. In the current phase, the hallmark of contemporary imperialism is the intensification of such brutal primary accumulation assaulting a vast majority of the people of the world’s population, both in the developed as well and all other countries.

It is the unfolding of such neo-liberal offensive under globalisation that has precipitated the current global economic crisis.

All over the capitalist world, especially in the third world, disinvestment and privatisation of the State sector is nothing else but the private accumulation through the expropriation of State assets. Public utilities like water and energy, public services like education and health have increasingly become domains of private accumulation of capital.

Control over mineral resources are increasingly becoming private, agriculture is increasingly being opened up to multinational seed and marketing companies leading to the virtual destruction of traditional agriculture in the third world throwing the peasantry into acute distress. The removal of trade tariffs and Free Trade Agreements is leading to deindustrialisation in many third world countries. Common resources like forests, water etc are increasingly being taken over as private property. This “accumulation through encroachment” (expropriation) as opposed to “accumulation through expansion” (appropriation) is the hallmark of contemporary imperialism. (Based

on analysis by Professor Prabhat Patnaik.)

No capitalist economy can function without a stable medium of holding wealth. This role is performed by money backed by the State. In the concrete capitalist world, the money of one particular economy, typically the most powerful economy of the time, is chosen to constitute this medium.

Its *de jure* stability used to be assured, though not any longer, by linking it to gold which historically has been the most favoured medium of wealth holding but its *de facto* stability is assured by ensuring that commodity prices do not rise abnormally in its terms. This requires, in the first place, that the working class in this leading economy must not be strong enough to precipitate a wage price spiral. Further, primary commodity prices must be kept in check, so that no inflation can occur on this score.

This, however, requires not merely control over raw material sources in the third world but additional control over world demand which should not be allowed to rise to levels that lead to inflation. This explains the neo-liberal prescription for deflation. In the period of hegemony of international finance capital, the maximisation of profits through such deflation encompasses the entire world, except the leading economy, i.e., USA whose currency being “as good as gold” places it under no obligation to pursue deflationary policies.

Therefore, inflation control is essential for the stability of the wealth holding medium and, hence, for the stability of the capitalist system. If, in the process of achieving price stability, much higher levels of unemployment are generated due to deflation, then so be it. This is the logic of profit maximisation. It is precisely this feature that explains the sharply widening economic inequalities and the global decline in aggregate demand due to the shrinkage of purchasing power amongst the majority of people. Sitaram Yechury is a member of the Polit Bureau of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and editor the Party’s newspaper, *People’s Democracy*. This the second part of a three part series. ☼



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## Film Review – Dan Margolis

# Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows

The 20th century wasn't a particularly good one in historical terms: more people were killed in war than in previous centuries combined; we saw fascist states for the first time; and the century ended with multiple wars raging around a world cowed by the threat of terrorism.

Still, it was that same century that, among other historical breakthroughs, brought us Nelson Mandela and the overthrow of apartheid, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr and the US Civil Rights Revolution, women began to assert their rights and the United Nations was established.

Clichés are only clichés in that they are truths repeated too many times, and it therefore would not be a total loss to use one here: it was an age of extremes.

The preceding 100 years or so brought the world great evils never before imagined – who could have conceived of the awesome terror of the nuclear bomb? – but those same evils produced an opposite, if not yet equal, reaction. Humanity began to assert and reassert its generally cooperative nature, though how things will turn out in the long run is anyone's guess.

Perhaps we'll move on to better society; perhaps we'll wipe ourselves away in a cloud of greenhouse gases.

Given that background, JK Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, most especially in its original written form but also in its film version, provides a literary finale to the century. Begun in 1998, these works can be interpreted as something of a summing-up.

Children's tales have always dealt with good vs evil, but Rowling's work, while acknowledging a timeless feature of all that which is bad, gave evil a modern feeling: the villains were totalitarians and fascists, racists and bigots, dictators and environmental destroyers – all in magical form.

Another question is brought to the fore as well: what is the nature of good and evil? Where do they overlap? Can the "good guys" have evil tendencies?

The series, of course, chronicles the story

of Harry Potter and his two best friends, Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger (in the film version, Daniel Radcliffe, Rupert Grint and Emma Watson respectively) growing up under the threat of Voldemort, an evil wizard bent on world control, and his Nazi/KKK-like minions.

Their journey from innocent wonder at a magical world to scared fighters under siege parallels humanity's loss of innocence.

The most recent film, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part One*, is the darkest of the series. While the series had been growing increasingly serious, *Deathly Hallows* represents a qualitative change. At the movie's opening, Hedwig, Harry's owl and long-time companion, is struck dead by evil wizards, as is another member of the Order of the Phoenix, a sort of magical guerrilla army working to defeat Voldemort. Hermione, in order to protect her family, casts an "obliviate" spell, wiping her parents' memories away – including any thought of her.

The wizard world's government, the Ministry of Magic, falls near the beginning of the movie, only to be replaced by a puppet regime. The new government, under control of Voldemort, is essentially an enchanted Third Reich, bent on enslaving or exterminating "inferiors" – non "pure blood" wizards.

Harry Potter and his friends don't return to Hogwarts this time; instead they spend their time "underground" attempting to plan their strategy.

The acting is superb. The adult characters, since the series began, have been played by British A-list actors, including Alan Rickman. But Radcliffe, Grint and Watson were sorely lacking in credibility during the early films. Now, however, they have seemingly magically transformed into actors. Aside from one particularly unfortunate scene in which Ron sees a truly silly vision of Harry and Hermione scolding him, the trio are able to pull off a high degree of emotional intensity.

This intensity is surprising for a series that started out as a children's story. Previous films shyly explored the characters' budding sexuality, but in the current instalment, that sexuality is in



On previous outings, they had been full of hope and a syrupy-sweet you-can-do-anything-with-your-vacillates between hope, despair and cynicism.

bloom – and, like in the real world, is preyed upon by enemy armies. At several points in the film, one gets the impression that Hermione is about to be raped. Of course, this is a PG film, and such things are implied only, but the shock felt by the audience is no lesser.

The action sequences are also top-notch. But perhaps the most interesting aspect of the film is the way the characters deal with their quandary. On previous outings, they had been full of hope

and a syrupy-sweet you-can-do-anything-with-your-friends attitude, but in *Deathly Hallows*, each of them vacillates between hope, despair and cynicism. Is it better, Hermione asks while she and Harry are in the woods alone, to continue the fight, or to just give up, "to stay here and grow old?" The future of their world is very much up in the air.

The film, being the first of a two-part finale, doesn't offer any resolve to this question. In

# Pope's condom statement offers Rorschach

Teresa Albano

**Pope Benedict XVI set off a firestorm last month when the Vatican released excerpts from a new book in which the pontiff obliquely says that HIV prevention might be a reason for condoms.**

"There may be a basis in the case of some individuals, as perhaps when a male prostitute uses a condom, where this can be a first step in the direction of a moralisation, a first assumption of responsibility," he said in Peter Seewald's book, *The Light of the World*.

The author then asks him, "Are you saying, then, that the Catholic Church is actually not opposed in principle to the use of condoms?" To which the Pope replies, "She of course does not regard it as a real or moral solution, but, in this or that case, there can be nonetheless, in the intention of reducing the risk of infection, a first step in a movement toward a different way, a more human way, of living sexuality."

Jon O'Brien, president of Catholics for Choice, which has often tangled with the Vatican, welcomed Pope Benedict XVI's acknowledgment that "condoms have a role to play in preventing the transmission of HIV".

"We are delighted that the pope has acknowledged that condoms can help reduce the risk of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. It is a marvellous victory for common sense and reason and a major step forward towards recognising that condom use can play a vital role in reducing the future impact of the HIV pandemic," O'Brien said in a statement to the media.

O'Brien said it was an "admission" by the Catholic hierarchy in "addressing the realities about sex and sexuality".

The Catholics for Choice leader said condoms should be available for men – and women.

The Catholic Church, through its global network of aid agencies and other charities, is, despite its official stance, one of the largest HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention programs in the world.

O'Brien, whose organisation has been involved in HIV prevention for 25 years, said the ban on condoms by the hierarchy forces Catholic aid workers to hand out condoms in secret.

The Pope's statement will be "especially significant for the many, many people who work for Catholic aid agencies and have been secretly handing out condoms while fearing that they will lose their jobs," O'Brien said, adding that US taxpayer money earmarked for Catholic agencies should "be used to fund comprehensive prevention programs".

The Pope's statements are evasive enough to be open to other interpretations.

Writing for *Foreign Policy*, Joshua Keating says the pope did not justify the use of condoms in HIV prevention. "I don't read this as arguing that male prostitutes are justified in using protection, but rather that it could be a stepping-stone toward giving up their behaviour," he said.

Andrew Sullivan of *The Daily Dish* focused on the angle of homosexuality. "His holiness thought of male prostitutes for some reason," he says with tongue in cheek.

But Sullivan claims it was a "revolutionary" step in church thought that any kind of gay sex may even be on the church's moral spectrum. "Previously, it was simply: whatever you do is so vile none of it can be moral. Now, it appears to be: even in a sexual encounter between a prostitute and his john there is a spectrum of moral conduct."

There were reports that blamed translation problems and the pope actually referred to a female prostitute.

Regardless, the Vatican was quick to walk back from any liberal interpretations. An official spokesman said condoms could be used only in "exceptional" situations.

But the Pontiff's statement seemed an about face from his utterance last year during a trip to Africa, when he said condom use "increases the problem" of HIV/AIDS.

The church forbids condom use as a method of birth control and says only abstinence and/or fidelity are the only way to prevent HIV.

Some analysts see the most recent uproar as part of a larger pattern of erratic behaviour by a church hierarchy in decline, caught in a turmoil caused by the global paedophilia-and-cover-up scandal. In addition, the church leaders worry about a decline of membership, a shortage of new priests and demands from the rank-and-file for modernisation of church doctrine to be more relevant to real life.

"It seems that the Pope is trying to move in different directions, appease different sectors of the Church, and all the while claim he's never changed his point of view," one analyst said.

*People's World* ✪



Pope Benedict XVI.

OWS



friends attitude, but in *Deathly Hallows*, each of them

that sense, it mirrors a humanity embarking on the 21st century. For me and perhaps the non-magical world, Voldemort is environmental destruction, war and terrorism, the tea party, increased poverty and wealth gaps. And, for the first time in history, people question the viability of humanity going forward.

*Deathly Hallows Part 1* mirrors us; hopefully *Part 2* will inspire us.  
*People's World* ✪

n theology



# Germans get rowdy to stop nuclear waste



Victor Grossman

**DANNENBERG, Germany** – Using ropes, some young people descended halfway from railroad bridges to force the train to stop. Others hastily grabbed stones out from under the tracks to make the tracks unusable. Far more young and old from all over Germany, simply sat down on the tracks until police carried them away.

Banners and witty, sarcastic signs were everywhere, also the many-coloured tents of those spending two, three or four days here in this cold, damp, flat stretch of North German landscape. The big yellow X standing here for “NO” was on thousands of caps and coats; it stood out in windows and, giant-size, on crossed poles and beams in surrounding fields.

The long railroad trip with 123 tons of radioactive uranium waste in 11 containers could not be stopped on its long journey from northern France, but committed crowds, in well-coordinated actions, forced route changes and 14 hours of delays in both countries. As the train slowly neared its destination, an estimated 50,000 protesters (only half that, police officials insisted) spread out around the rail line.

At one point 2,000 sat down on two kilometres of tracks, while at least 16,000 unfortunate, mostly unhappy cops, also from all over the country, had to put in 12, 16 and 20 hour shifts, costing many million euros. Some tactics were legal, some were not, confrontations remained non-violent for the most part, but one evening tempers ran high and horses, night sticks, water cannon and pepper spray were sent in. Hundreds were arrested.

All Germany watched in near disbelief as news reports overflowed on the latest actions in opposition to the “Castor transport,” as it was named. When the big tanks with their potentially fatal contents did at last reach the end of the rail line they had to be reloaded onto trucks for the last 20 kilometres to their final destination, a salt mine deep under the little town of Gorleben. Blocking the way, in addition to protesters sitting and lying on the road or dragging logs or whole trees across it, were over 600 tractors of angry farmers – and even a big flock of goats. The shipment will certainly get to Gorleben, but the government will not soon forget and perhaps never repeat what occurred.

There have been protests here since 1995, sometimes more violent but never so huge. To begin with, the underground storage dump is not safe. It may be gradually heating up, and it is highly probable that contaminated wastewater is seeping out. It was chosen, many are convinced, because it was in a thinly populated, out-of-the-way area right across the Elbe from what was once East Germany; the river formed the boundary here.

So why should good West German citizens complain? But they did, and they do! The mine was always declared to be a temporary solution, but more and more metal containers with uncertain durability are being piled up while the dangerous radioactivity of their contents will last thousands of years. Thus far, no other site has been proposed.

The reason popular outrage has been so very strong this year is that on October 28 Germany’s Angela Merkel government passed a law extending the lives of many nuclear power plants from an earlier government’s eight-year limit to a new wobbly limit of 14 years. This extension was so obviously based on a smiley handshake between Merkel and the country’s power utility giants that everyone could see how the two governing parties are endangering the whole country to satisfy the greed of four huge companies. It was simply too clear and too much.

The physical protests up north follow huge autumn demonstrations in Berlin and other cities, with over 100,000 people protesting the extension of nuclear production rights instead of investing more in alternate energy. They also follow giant, month-long protests in the usually peaceful, staid city of Stuttgart in the south against the demolition of a popular old central railroad station and a neighbouring park with beautiful, ancient chestnut trees – in a dubious deal which would bring billions to favoured investors. Somehow, a surprising number of people in Germany are leaving their sofas and demonstrating, angry at being ignored by ruling cliques. As a result, Merkel’s government would find it very difficult to remain in power if elections were held today rather than in 2013.

Of the three leading opposition parties the Social Democrats, though still diminished in poll figures, have gained self-confidence with the knowledge that a coalition with their likely partner, the Greens, could now get a majority. This is because of the swift, almost unprecedented growth of the Greens, who have been very active in both the dramatic Stuttgart events and the anti-nuclear movement.

Their leaders have constantly been in the limelight. In fact, public television channels have been supporting them to an unusual extent, and the weekend bid by a prominent Greens leader, Renate Kuenast, to lead her party in next year’s Berlin elections, with hopes of overtaking the gay, once so popular Klaus Wowereit, mayor since 2001, was planned so cleverly and treated so favourably that it dominated Berlin’s local news coverage for weeks, until overtaken by the Gorleben events.

And the Left Party? It, too, has taken part in all the protests and demonstrations.

At one point 2,000 sat down on two kilometres of tracks, while at least 16,000 unfortunate, mostly unhappy cops, also from all over the country, had to put in 12, 16 and 20 hour shifts, costing many million euros.

Bundestag caucus leader Gregor Gysi himself drove one of the tractors for a while near Gorleben. But its numbers in the West German states were never too large, and more important, the media are united in downplaying it, except for an occasional obligatory sound bite. More importantly, the Left is still caught up in internal disagreement, which seems to have occupied the most attention among top leaders.

A congress in Hanover on November 7 tried to patch up disputes and the 600 attending tried to demonstrate a policy of peacefully agreeing to disagree. The centre of debate is the draft party program. It is far too militant for a group of leaders joined in a Forum of Democratic Socialism, and strong among party officials holding office in the Berlin coalition government. Also those hoping to win out in other East German states, join coalition governments there and possibly even join a coalition national government with Social Democrats and Greens after the 2013 elections.

The militants insist that the party reject any and all military expeditions in future. They demand that the party refuse any further privatisation of public utilities or housing, and they warn of basic compromises demanded by the Social Democrats and Greens. The party’s eventual goal must be to overcome rule by huge capitalist monopolies and banks and, eventually, to achieve socialism.

They fear that watering down these principles would put the Left on the same downhill ramp which corrupted both the Social Democrats and the Greens, who despite their current militancy have largely become a party of well-off professionals, interested in the environment but far less in urgent social issues. The “reformer” group calls such demands unrealistic, utopian, and harmful to their attempts to gain positions of government power where they can ease the worst economic woes.

The party co-presidents, the popular, calm and collected East Berlin leader Gesine Loetsch and the West German metal union leader Klaus Ernst, said that healthy debate was a good thing and differences would certainly be resolved before the members vote on the new program next year.

But regardless of rights or wrongs in the debate, the disagreements have undoubtedly restricted activities of the party in terms of the public, and this has shown up in diminished poll popularity. Many friends of the Left feel that if the party wants to maintain pressures which proved so significant in recent years it must move beyond internal debates or quarrels and get into action. An amazing sector of the German population now seems more inclined towards militant action than in many, many years.

*People's World* ✪

# Haiti cholera crisis provokes street protests

Emile Schepers

**The cholera epidemic in Haiti has now spread to the capital, Port au Prince, and has killed over 1,000 people while sickening up to tens of thousands.**

Street protests have arisen against the United Nations peacekeeping force that has been in Haiti since 2004, with protestors blaming troops of the Nepalese contingents of the "Blue Helmets" for the epidemic.

On top of this crisis, there will be very controversial and problematic elections on November 28 (*The Guardian* will report on the election results next week).

The cholera epidemic which began a month ago in the Artibonite

disruption caused by the earthquake forced a postponement. But reconstruction has been going very slowly, so the country is still disrupted and it is going to be very difficult to carry out the election.

To make things worse, a number of political parties and their candidates have been denied the right to run. Former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide's party, Fanmi Lavalas, is among them. The reasons given are technical. Support which would have gone to a Fanmi Lavalas candidate might instead go to another candidate, Henry Ceant, who has been holding big rallies to which many Aristide supporters have been thronging to the web site Forum Haiti ([www.forumhaiti.com](http://www.forumhaiti.com)).

**To make things worse, a number of political parties and their candidates have been denied the right to run.**

Valley and now has spread to the capital, Port au Prince, is being blamed by rumours on the Nepalese United Nations Stabilisation Mission in Haiti, part of the United Nations military contingent. Cholera had not been seen in Haiti in many years and is known to be mostly in Asia.

Though MINUSTAH – the United Nations Stabilisation Mission in Haiti – has denied that the Nepalese brought cholera into the country, rioting against the UN mission started on November 17 in Cap-Haitien on Haiti's northwest peninsula and elsewhere. Three civilian protestors are reported to have been killed.

These elections, to choose a new president, 10 of the 30 senators, and all 99 members of the lower house, had originally been set for February 28 last. However, the massive

Haitian-American musician Wyclef Jean has also been denied the right to be on the ballot as a presidential candidate, on the grounds that he has been living mostly in the United States for several years. However, there will be 19 candidates in all. In Haiti there is a requirement for a runoff if no candidate for president gets a majority the first time round.

The current president, Rene Preval, appears to have lost popularity due to perceived slowness in coping with the earthquake crisis.

There is background as to why there is the anger towards the "Blue Helmets." The United Nations Stabilisation Mission in Haiti was sent there after the 2004 overthrow of President Aristide.

Many Haitians and others



Street protests have arisen against the UN peacekeeping force.

suspect that both the French and US governments were complicit in the overthrow, and Aristide supporters accuse MINUSTAH of being biased against them.

Aristide now lives in exile in South Africa, but his supporters have not ceased to demand his return. While president, Aristide abolished the army, which had a record of coup plotting and human rights violations, and which had also overthrown him in 1991. In the resulting power vacuum, numerous armed street groups

developed, which have often clashed with MINUSTAH forces.

MINUSTAH's 7,000 peacekeeping "Blue Helmets" have been under mostly Brazilian command, and include troops from that country, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Canada, Croatia, France, Guatemala, Jordan, Nepal, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Uruguay and the United States. There are civilian and police personnel from an even greater number of countries.

In January 2006, MINUSTAH's Brazilian commander, General Urano Teixeira da Mata Bacellar, committed suicide. The previous year MINUSTAH forces had been accused of attacking supporters of President Aristide and his Fanmi Lavalas party with a number of deaths to civilians (up to 80, by some accounts).

So the MINUSTAH troops were unpopular with Haiti's poor to begin with. In January of this year, MINUSTAH itself suffered heavily from the massive earthquake which may have caused the death of as many as 300,000 Haitians. Its civilian head at the time and a number of its military and civilian personnel were killed.

The desperation of the Haitian people is rising because only a small amount of the aid promised in the wake of the earthquake has been deployed, because hundreds of thousands of people are still living in tents and squatter camps, and because more misery was caused when Haiti was sideswiped by Hurricane Tomas with its torrential rains. The spread of the cholera epidemic adds to this. *People's World* ☼

## The EU and the IMF are the determining forces

### Communist Party of Ireland

**This government, like the Irish economy, is holed below the water line and is sinking. The life-raft being constructed by the EU and the IMF is not designed to solve the deepening problems facing our people but only to save the rich and powerful, in particular the German, French and British banks, as well as the euro.**

The IMF-EU policies will not only not solve our problems but can only make them worse. Around the world there is vast experience of the consequences of the imposition of the policies of the IMF. It has left a trail of destruction, with hundreds of millions of lives driven into abject poverty and hunger.

It has taken decades for countries in Latin America to recover from the ravages of the policies imposed on them by the IMF, and it is only by rejecting those policies that any recovery has been achieved. Much of the improvement in the last decade is due to the emergence of radical governments committed to putting the people first and not the banks and finance houses.

It is clear that all the main political parties are content to allow the EU and IMF to decide the future of our people and the destiny of our country. They have all agreed, to a greater or lesser extent, that whatever the European Union wants and needs for Ireland they will comply.

Unless there is a radical political departure and the development of a people's alternative economy, tens of thousands of people will leave our country, while tens of thousands more will be driven into poverty.

None of the main political parties has anything to offer that will be different from what this government is prepared to implement. All the talk from Fine Gael and the Labour Party of alternatives and renegotiating with the EU and IMF is just hot air and more election promises.

The EU and the IMF are not negotiating, they are ordering, and they are sure of an obedient government, as long as there is no strong popular movement in defence of the people's sovereignty.

We know what to expect from Fine Gael, and to hold illusions that the Labour Party will do anything different, other than be obedient to the needs of big business and the EU, we need look no further than the role of Blair in Britain and Schröder in Germany and now Papandreou in Greece to see how Labour governments carry on with the program of the Conservatives.

The trade union movement needs to break with its present dead-end approach and to begin to act independently and develop its own political demands. Working people can no longer afford to remain passive but must become an independent political force and not be subsumed into mere voting fodder.

A good starting point is to call for the repudiation of the debt. It does not belong to the people. Working people need to come out in their thousands to show the political parties in the Dáil that they will not accept the diktats of the EU-IMF. ☼

## Artists protests in the Netherlands

**Singers, painters and television presenters demonstrated across the Netherlands against government plans to slash funding and subsidies for the arts as part of an €18 billion (\$24 billion) austerity package.**

Around 75,000 people attended anti-cuts events across the country.

The protests followed the Dutch parliament's approval of plans to raise the sales tax from six percent to 19 percent on tickets to theatres, movie theatres, rock concerts and other cultural events.

The new right-wing administration has also pledged to cut arts funding by €200 million (\$272 million) in the next five years.

In Amsterdam musicians, presenters and comedians gathered on the Leidseplein to hear one-minute speeches, sing protest songs and scream against the regressive plans.

Members of the public gathered in The Hague after theatres and cinemas closed to listen to a trumpeter from a local orchestra play "The Last Post" and hold a minute's silence.

Organisers warned that the cuts will narrow access to culture.

"A 13 percent rise in sales tax hits all of the public because tickets get more expensive," they said.

"By cutting culture budgets and raising tax on tickets, culture will become an elitist pastime and less accessible for people with less money."

Prime Minister Mark Rutte of the neo-liberal VVD party presides over a right-wing coalition with the Christian Democrats and the xenophobic Freedom Party, led by Geert Wilders.

Wilders has characterised state-sponsored cultural programs as a "left-wing hobby." *Morning Star* ☼

# Obama surrenders Palestinian rights

Ramzy Baroud

**The Middle East policies of US President Barack Obama may well prove the most detrimental in history so far, surpassing even the rightwing policies of President George W Bush. Even those who warned against the overt optimism which accompanied Obama's arrival to the White House must now be stunned to see how low the US president will go to appease Israel – all under the dangerous logic of needing to keep the peace process moving forward.**

Former Middle East peace diplomat Aaron David Miller argued in *Foreign Policy* that “any advance in the excruciatingly painful world of Arab-Israeli negotiations is significant.” He further claimed: “The Obama administration deserves much credit for keeping the Israelis, Palestinians, and key Arab states on board during some very tough times. The US president has seized on this issue and isn't giving up – a central requirement for success.”

But at what price, Mr Miller? And wouldn't you agree that one party's success can also mean another's utter and miserable failure?

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton reportedly spent eight hours with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu only to persuade him to accept one of the most generous bribes ever bestowed by the United States on any foreign power.

The agreement includes the sale of \$3 billion worth of US military aircrafts (in addition to the billions in annual aid packages), a blanket veto of any UN Security Council resolution deemed unfavourable to Israel, and the removal of East Jerusalem from any settlement freeze equation (thus condoning the illegal occupation of the city and the undergoing ethnic cleansing).

But even more dangerous than all of these is “a written American promise that this will be the last time President Obama asks the Israelis to halt settlement construction through official channels.”

Significant. Achievement. Success. Are these really the right terms to describe the latest harrowing scandal? Even the term “bribe”, which is abundantly used to describe American generosity, isn't quite adequate here. Bribes have defined the relationship between the ever-generous White House and the quisling Congress

to win favour with the ever-demanding Israel and its growingly belligerent Washington lobby.

It is not the concept of bribery that should shock us, but the magnitude of the bribe, and the fact that it is presented by a man who positioned himself as a peacemaker (and actually became certified as one, courtesy of the Nobel Peace Prize Committee).

Equally shocking is the meagre return that Obama is expected to receive for hard-earned US taxpayers' dollars. According to the *Atlantic Sentential*, this will be “a measly three month extension of the settlement moratorium that originally expired in late September.”

Acknowledging from the onset that these are mere “midterm manoeuvres”, Noah Feldman, writing in the *New York Times*, asks the question: “Can Obama succeed where so many others have not?” He precludes his answer with: “Israel and the Palestinian Authority will not, of course, make things easy.”

Seriously, Mr Feldman?

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, whose mandate has already expired, must be living the most humiliating and difficult moments of his not so distinguished career. At one stage he had hoped that the advent of President Obama would spare him and his authority further embarrassment. Imagining the president would side with his “moderate” position, he placed all his eggs in the Obama basket, even bidding against the democratically elected government of Palestinians in the occupied territories. He went as far as to halt an international investigation into Israeli crimes in the recent Israeli war on Gaza so as not to frustrate Netanyahu's government or upset the pro-Israeli sensibilities in the US Congress.

True, Abbas tried to appear as a confident and self-assertive leader at times. He asked for a chance to think about the resumption of peace talks, conditioned his acceptance on Israeli actions that never really actualised, and finally sought the help of the Arab League, a beleaguered and muted organisation without any political mandate.

How did Abbas and his authority make things “difficult” for the US, Mr Feldman? Would any self-respecting government agree to concessions that are made on its behalf without the opportunity to offer its own input? This is exactly what the PA has repeatedly done under Abbas.



What happens now that Obama has finally shown he really is no different from his predecessors?

Still, many Israelis are not happy with the barter. Caroline B Glick, writing in the *Jerusalem Post*, described the freezing of construction in the illegal Jewish settlements in the West Bank as “discriminatory infringement on the property rights of law abiding citizens (that) is breathtaking”. She had the hubris to consider the pitiable moratorium as equivalent to “land surrenders.”

As for the major F-35 deal, it is “simply bizarre”, she argued, for after all, “Israel needs the F-35 to defend against enemies like Iran.”

Mind-boggling. The US generously hands Palestinian rights to Israel on a silver platter, and the far-right mentality, which now governs Israeli mainstream politics and society, still finds it unacceptable.

But aside from this arrogant Israeli response, and the US media's attempts to find the positive in Obama's latest scandal, one question must be raised. What happens now that Obama has finally shown he really is no different from his predecessors? That the United States has lost

control of its own foreign policy in the Middle East? That, frankly, Netanyahu has proved more resilient, more steadfast, and more resourceful than the American president?

Shall we go on making the same argument, over and over again, or has the time finally arrived for Palestinians to think outside the American box? Can Arabs finally venture off to seek other partners and allies in the region and around the world who understand the link between peace, political stability, and economic prosperity?

It may perhaps be time for them to further their relationship with Turkey, to reach out to Latin America, to demand accountability from Europe and to try to understand and engage China.

The latest US elections have shown that the Obama hype has run its course in the US itself. One can only hope that Palestinians, Arabs and their friends will realise that it was all indeed hype – before it is too late.

Information Clearing House ✪

## Crow: Fight back against the EU

**No to EU campaigner, RMT (National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers) general secretary Bob Crow last week urged working people across Europe to rise up and fight against attacks from a system “teetering on the brink of collapse.”**

He hailed Portuguese workers who were hitting back with a one-day general strike.

And he voiced solidarity with Irish workers “as they fight back against EU-led attempts to seize control of their economy on behalf of the banks.” Mr Crow spoke out as British Chancellor George Osborne prepared to shell out billions of pounds in loans to Ireland despite his claim that Britain is facing an unprecedented debt crisis.

Britain's Con-Dem government fell into line with an £80 billion EU and IMF bailout package supposedly aimed at holding back the contagion already engulfing Greece and threatening Portugal, Spain, Italy and the entire eurozone.

Mr Crow declared: “By holding a general strike, Portuguese

workers are making clear they are not going to accept endless euro-austerity and the Irish should not accept the destruction of their welfare and democracy as the price for the EU bailout.

“The chattering classes, the bankers and the EU elite have dragged the whole of the continent into a political and economic experiment which is now teetering on the brink of collapse. And it will be ordinary working people in their tens of millions who pay the price as their lives are ripped apart.” Mr Crow proclaimed: “The time to stand and fight is now.”

Communist Party of Britain international secretary John Foster issued an emergency statement condemning the British government for its part in “the rotten deal currently being imposed on the Irish people”.

He warned: “It is penal, mercenary and stupid, because it won't achieve even its own objectives. It will deepen recession and worsen Ireland's finances.” Mr Foster expressed full support for the demonstration called by the

Irish Congress of Trade Unions to demand that the speculators bear the costs, no more cuts and a halt to infringement of Irish sovereignty.

He pointed out that the British government had put up £6 billion directly and another £6 billion through its contributions to the EU fund and the IMF.

“This comes to more than the amount being cut from the incomes of Britain's poorest through the benefit changes to pay for the failed speculations of our super-rich,” said Mr Foster.

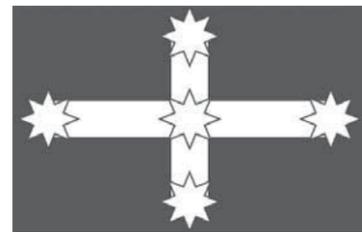
The whole operation was designed to rescue British banks and the super-rich, he added.

“British banks have been the biggest lenders to the now bankrupt Irish banks. They are owed over £100 billion in total.

“Lloyds and the Royal Bank of Scotland alone lent £80 billion to secure super-profits in the Irish property boom. After them in the queue of creditors come the German and French banks.”  
*Morning Star* ✪

Melbourne

## Eureka Stockade Rebellion Anniversary



*On the anniversary of the Eureka Stockade rebellion, the fight for justice and democratic rights is not over yet.*

**Tax the Super-Profits of Mining Monopolies, Not the People!  
Abolish the ABCC**

**Friday December 3**

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**6:00pm Old Council Chamber (upstairs), refreshments**

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Humphrey McQueen - Historian and activist

Brian Boyd - Secretary, VTHC

Luke van der Meulen - President, CFMEU - Mining, Energy Division, Vic. and others

Organised by Spirit of Eureka Committee – [www.spiritofeureka.org](http://www.spiritofeureka.org)  
contacts: 0417 456 001, 0421 957341, 0418 328833

Letters to the Editor  
The Guardian  
74 Buckingham Street  
Surry Hills NSW 2010



email: tpearson@cpa.org.au

## Misconceptions abound

**China's economic development is the result of applying Marxism-Leninism to reality, not to our imagination. The Chinese Party realised that something akin to Lenin's New Economic Policy was necessary but on a much larger scale to revitalise the ruined country. The Chinese people achieved much of this on their own through tremendous personal sacrifice as well as through mutually beneficial trade with other countries. Unlike the predatory trade and "investment" carried out by imperialist countries, China engages in mutually beneficial**

### projects with developing countries and provides real support instead of debt traps.

Socialism is not poverty. A Party cannot claim to be socialist if nothing is done to build the productive forces and raise society out of poverty, both materially and spiritually. No Party has made a greater contribution to humanity in this respect than the CPC. Dogmatists however see nothing but capitalist roading because this incredible feat was not achieved by copying the Soviet Union verbatim.

I find it very interesting that comrade Steven Katsineris has chosen to attack China on the grounds of "human rights". These are the words the Dalai Lama, Xinjiang Terrorists, Falun Gong cultists, anti-communists and the bourgeois media use to attack the CPC and these are the words they use to assault all true bastions of socialism. Before the Chinese people were liberated in 1949 they did not know what rights were (in fact there was no word in Chinese for human rights). I am interested to know what rights Steven believes the Chinese people are being denied, since I happen to live in China and I do not feel the iron heel of an oppressive regime crushing me! I would also invite him to read the White Paper 2009

which explains in detail the manifold freedoms Chinese people enjoy.

I am deeply disappointed that comrades have not read Bob's article properly and continue to come up with the same objections to China's development. I have raised these same objections with the Chinese and they are shocked that overseas comrades have such a poor grasp of dialectical materialism and lack a long term historical perspective. Perhaps it is time for the Central Committee to start sponsoring study tours to China so that these basic misunderstandings can be resolved.

Regardless, I doubt anyone in Beijing will be kept awake by a lack of support from Steven Katsineris.

**Michael Hooper  
China and the Future**

## No shock in Labor's "betrayal"

**"Last week unions were shocked to find the federal government lining up with employers" (Guardian 24/11/2010)**

When will unions, their members and other workers, stop being shocked by such acts of betrayal? The Gillard government is Australia's largest employer so it is natural for them to act this way.

Labor supported the Cole Commission and the subsequent recommendations which led to the establishment of the ABCC. It is still a crime for workers to withdraw their labour on mining and construction sites. Labor governments across

the country still refuse to pay the stolen wages [to Indigenous workers]. It has stopped the employment and training programs essential to Aboriginal workers, forcing them to lease out their lands to territorial and commonwealth governments in the seldom fulfilled promise of new homes, and schools.

It is not good enough for the unions to protest in Labor Conferences. Not good enough for the unions to consider quitting the party. Unions must work together, with the various socialist/Marxist groupings and parties to jointly establish a genuine worker's alternative.

**Luke Weyland  
Strathfield NSW**

## The deadly Taser

**It has been argued that Tasers are not lethal weapons. At last count there have been 455 Taser related deaths in the United States, 354 in seven years alone. More than 800 around the world and four police Taser related deaths in Australia. A pregnant woman and an 11 year old child have been tasered. Last year a Townsville man was tasered 28 times to his death. In Perth Kevin Spratt was tasered more than 30 times spread out over five incidents.**

Tasers were issued to WA police in 2007 with the intent to minimise the use of police firearms. During the last thirty years in WA there have only been two direct firearm deaths by police officers. However, since the general issue of police Tasers injuries

have gone up 22 percent and firearm use has increased.

Because of the police's zero tolerance practices Tasers appear to be used as a front line of "defence" rather than a last line of "defence". There seems to be little effort to mediate, talk down and de-escalate a situation.

Some police officers I know believe that the indiscriminate use of Tasers is wrong and that more emphasis should be on de-escalation techniques. They believe there is a culture of thinking that Tasers don't lead to death and that they merely cause temporary neuromuscular incapacitation. Prior to Tasers police officers were hesitant to resort to firearms as a first line of defence.

Another police officer acquaintance confided that Kevin Spratt had it coming. No-one has it coming. WA Judge Bruce Goetze reinforced this pervasive discriminatory thinking when he defended the actions of the police officer who tasered Ronald Mitchell, the Warburton man. Ronald Mitchell was carrying a container of petrol and a lighter.

The tasing caused him to be engulfed in flames and resulted in severe burns and skin grafts. I appreciate the police officer tried to put out the flames. The Judge indicated that Ronald was at fault for his tasing and burns and said, "You really have yourself to blame." Zero tolerance polices by the police, the criminal justice system and the state government are to blame. What year are we in? 1066 or 2010?

**Gerry Georgatos  
WA**

DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

*Write a letter to the Editor*

# Culture & Life

by

Rob Gowland

## Indonesia Calling

**Joris Ivens was already a renowned left-wing documentary film-maker when he came to Australia in 1945. A Communist and anti-fascist, he had made *Spanish Earth* with Ernest Hemingway in defence of Republican Spain. His *The 400 Million* celebrated China's struggle (ultimately victorious) against both Japanese and Western imperialism.**

In the euphoria and uplifted hopes of the victory over Nazi Germany of the war-time anti-fascist alliance, Ivens was appointed by the Dutch government to the position of Film Commissioner for the Netherlands East Indies (now Indonesia). His brief was to make films about the liberation of the region from the Japanese and then to make follow-up films about the region achieving independence.

Capitalism, however, had no intention of letting such a populous, resource-rich area as Indonesia gain independence except on its own terms. The achievements and stated goals of the Chinese and Soviet Red Armies had sparked an anti-imperialist, anti-colonial up-swell from Europe to Africa, Asia and South America.

Imperialism's puppet Chiang Kai-Chek was in retreat in China while attempts to re-install colonial regimes in South-East Asia were being met with armed resistance – against the British in Malaya and against the USA in the Philippines. Ho Chi Minh was leading the people of Indo China in opposing the return of the French and in Indonesia Dr Soekarno unilaterally declared his nation's independence from the Netherlands.

The reaction of the Netherlands government was the same as that of the other imperialist governments: they resorted to military intervention. Or, to put it another way, they did as they always had: they went to war.

The imperialist governments were acutely aware that their people had just celebrated the end of the world war and were not keen on

seeing another one start. So the British and the Dutch insisted on calling their wars of neo-colonial re-conquest in Malaya and Indonesia not wars but "police actions". Imperialism persisted with this euphemism after 1945 for virtually all conflicts up to and including the Korean War.

Australian maritime unions had strong links to the Indian and Chinese seamen's unions that covered the men who crewed the ships carrying "medical supplies" from Australia to the Netherlands East Indies. They soon learned that the supposed medical supplies were in fact munitions for the Dutch "police action".

The Australian maritime unions declared the Dutch ships black. The capitalist press was solid in its support for the Dutch colonialists, but the labour movement was just as solid in its support for the Indonesian people's struggle for independence.

Joris Ivens resigned as film commissioner for the Netherlands' East Indies. Even before his resignation took effect he was busy making a film about the Australian waterfront solidarity actions for Indonesia.

His new film was called *Indonesia Calling*, from the call-sign of the independence broadcasts from the Indonesian anti-colonialists. A number of Communist Party members and supporters worked on the film, some officially, some otherwise. Actress and radio-playwright Katie Duncan wrote the script, and Leonard Teal narrated it.

My former colleague, Edmund Allison, an actor/regisseur and scenery builder with New Theatre, joined the production crew whenever he could get leave from the Air Force. As soon as he was demobbed, he was taken on board full time, becoming production manager.

Eddie told me later, that at this time when Ivens was nominally still under contract to the Netherlands East Indies administration, he had to direct the film from "around the corner", so that he would not be seen to be there.

A year after *Indonesia Calling* was finished, Eddie directed his own documentary *Coal Dust*, about the struggle of the NSW South Coast miners against government inaction over the dangers of "dusting" to the lungs of coalminers. That film's script was also by Katie Duncan.

Several left-wingers from the British film industry also became involved in Ivens' production. Harry Watt was out here directing his feature film *The Overlanders*. He insisted on being allowed to shoot a sequence.

Another leftie from the British documentary scene, Stanley Hawes, had just been appointed to head up the Department of Information's



A still from *Indonesia Calling*.

film unit, that would before too long become the Commonwealth Film Unit. Hawes was very aware that his political reputation from England had followed him and that his position as a public servant made him vulnerable, so he proceeded with extreme caution.

Nevertheless, he did assist the production of *Indonesia Calling* – under the lap and off the record – with the loan of equipment, facilities and even personnel.

Stanley Hawes, like Ivens, knew when he arrived that he already featured in intelligence dossiers in London and Washington (and in Ivens' case also in The Hague). Everyone else who worked on the film, if they did not already have a Police Special Branch file, quickly acquired one with the newly formed Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), although in those days it was known simply as "Security".

That a Labor government would authorise the keeping of dossiers on everyone who worked on a film about trade union support for the struggle against colonialism in our region says much about the true attitude of social democracy towards the working class movement.

After the film was finished, Ivens left Australia to work on his next project, filming the development of the new socialist countries in Eastern Europe. Meanwhile, *Indonesia Calling* was banned for export on the grounds that it was hostile to a friendly country (The Netherlands).

Jim Healy, the national secretary of the Waterside Workers' Federation (WWF), announced that he was taking a copy of the film with him to a conference in New Zealand. Faced with the prospect of the total disruption of the waterfront, the government caved in. Cabinet decided on a face-saving formula (lifting the ban for other, more innocuous, reasons).

The WWF, which had played a major part in the union action, had nevertheless declined to contribute any money to the production of the film. Once it was finished, however, and had become something of a *cause célèbre*, they became justifiably proud of its depiction of their role in the dispute.

A few years later, and partially under the influence of the success of Ivens' film, the WWF set up its own film unit. ☘



Sun 5 Dec -  
Sat 18 Dec

No, the dates above are not a mistake: this week's *Worth Watching* will actually cover two weeks worth of ABC programming. Next week's instalment will cover the two weeks after that (four weeks in all). This is because *The Guardian* will shortly close down for the year to allow our very limited staff to recharge their batteries and get ready to resume the task next year.

The rugged terrain of the New Guinea highlands has resulted in extremes of isolation, and consequent diversity of cultures and beliefs. Many languages are spoken, differing from valley to valley, some as different from one another as Chinese is from English.

Similarly, much of the unique wildlife shows considerable diversity, especially the birds of paradise that are the symbols of the country. Even today, much of New Guinea is still unexplored, and it is hardly surprising that the range and habits of these exotic birds are still largely unknown.

The island is free of significant predators, but when human beings first arrived they became entranced by the beautiful plumage of the various birds of paradise and killed many thousands of them to acquire feathers for the elaborate headdresses used in their ceremonies and festivals.

Today, the threat has been increased by the addition of commercial farming and forestry, and other "development", all of it placing pressure on the natural habitat of the country's wildlife.

Back in the 1950s, David Attenborough filmed the region and its famous birdlife for the BBC. In *Birds Of Paradise* (ABC1 Sunday December 5 at 7.30 pm) he is back, narrating a new documentary for the BBC on the same subject.

A significant change is that the naturalists investigating the prospects for the survival of birds of paradise are native to New Guinea: Paul Iqag and Miriam Sumpa. Educated in Australian universities, they hope their research can help to preserve their country's wildlife that is coming under increased pressure from mining, deforestation and the spread of plantations.

In 1945, the renowned Dutch documentary filmmaker Joris Ivens arrived in Australia with his notebook full of ideas for a series of films about the bringing of democracy and independence to the colonial people of the Netherlands East Indies. In the event, he made only one film here *Indonesia Calling* (see this week's *Culture & Life*).

Although only a short, *Indonesia Calling* was an important film in the history of film in Australia; especially it galvanised the production of documentary film here, classical documentary that depicted reality, in particular the reality of life for ordinary people.

The people depicted in *Indonesia Calling* were Indian and Chinese seamen, Indonesian students living in exile and, above all, Australian wharfies and seamen taking industrial action to defend the newly-proclaimed republic of Indonesia.

*Indonesia Calling: Joris Ivens In Australia* (ABC2 Sunday December



Wilson's Bird of Paradise male displaying to females on twig above - *Birds Of Paradise* (ABC1 Sunday December 5 at 7.30pm).

5 at 7.30 pm) is a new film by Australian filmmaker John Hughes, that examines the history of Ivens' time in this country and his reaction to Dutch attempts to recolonise the region.

All Ivens' sympathies were with the people of Indonesia, not with Dutch imperialism. He resigned as Film Commissioner for the Netherlands East Indies and, with the help of a group of progressive Australian and overseas artists and filmmakers, made a film about international working class solidarity and rejection of colonialism.

Hughes' film is a reasonably factual account of both the background to *Indonesia Calling* and the making of the film itself. Hughes does not stress the class significance of the film adequately, and considering its subject matter his film is insufficiently polemical.

Overall, however, it is a very worthwhile contribution to progressive Australian documentaries.

It is interesting to speculate whether John Lennon would have retained his iconic status if he had not been murdered on a New York street by an obsessed nutter but had simply grown old instead.

We shall never know, of course. But Lennon's life was certainly the stuff of modern legends, from the meteoric rise of the band he formed in Liverpool, *The Beatles*, to his well-publicised experiences with hallucinogenic drugs, his indulging in Eastern mysticism, and the extreme adulation and media attention that the Beatles experienced wherever they went.

They were four working class boys who made good - made very good, in fact - but if, like Lennon, you yearned for more than just material success, then life was a constant source of dissatisfaction.

More than somewhat politically naïve, he was nonetheless heartfelt in his opposition to war, in particular to the Vietnam War. His outspoken but unfocused opposition to the War did not rattle the establishment the way Jane Fonda's overtly political

opposition did, and Lennon was never subjected to the kind of media hostility that Jane Fonda suffered.

*Lennon: Naked* (ABC1 Sunday December 5 at 8.30 pm) is subtitled *Five turbulent years in the life of an icon*, and covers the period from 1967 when the Beatles' manager Brian Epstein topped himself through to the break-up of the Beatles and Lennon's decision to leave the UK with Yoko Ono and go to New York to live.

Not a documentary but a docudrama, the film stars Christopher Eccleston (*Doctor Who*) as Lennon and Naoko Mori (*Torchwood*) as Yoko Ono. Mori seems softer than Ono ever appeared, but Eccleston is spot on as John Lennon: he sounds right and looks startlingly right in the part.

But if the film is sympathetic to Yoko Ono, it is ambivalent about Lennon's father Freddie, who abandoned him at a very young age. At first, when the successful Lennon takes the homeless Freddie into his vast house, the relationship of father and son seems likely to grow afresh, but Lennon harbours too many bitter memories and when his father finds a new girlfriend Lennon throws him out.

Continued page 12

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Continued from page 11

Lennon's confused attempts to find some spiritual clarity in his life are well presented, but they don't contribute to making Lennon into an "icon". Self-obsessed, a perception no doubt aided immeasurably by the non-stop media attention, John Lennon clearly struggled to break out of the boxes the commercial world wanted to pigeonhole him in.

It's an interesting film, for its subject and for Eccleston's *tour de force* performance.

The drama and trials of a boutique chocolate factory are the stuff of the three-part documentary series *Willie's Chocolate Revolution* (ABC1 Mondays from December 6 at 9.30pm).

As all chocolate lovers know, the popular chocolate in England and Australia is wildly different to the popular chocolate of Europe. My wife is a chocoholic but she won't touch genuine Swiss or Belgian chocolate: it's "too bitter".

English chocolate enthusiast Willie Harcourt-Cooze wants to change that. He owns a cocoa bean plantation in Venezuela, and a small factory in England. He points out that real chocolate is not bad for you: he says it's the added fat, milk, sugar and other "additives" that make chocolate unhealthy.

To prove his point he gets an English university to do some testing of his chocolate and their conclusion is that it would make you feel better without putting any weight on you. Exactly what he wanted to hear.

Determined to persuade British people to forsake Cadbury's in favour of real chocolate, he establishes a chocoholic focus group to research taste preferences, and sets about obtaining a guaranteed supply of cacao from Venezuela (his own plantation is not nearly large enough for commercial purposes on its own).

The fate of small businesses under capitalism is dependent on economic factors that have little to do with the innate quality of the product or the high ideals of the manufacturer.

After the first episode, one wonders if the best that Willie can expect to achieve is a takeover offer from Cadbury's at some stage in the future if he successfully establishes a market for "European style" chocolate in Britain.

But one has to admire his determination.

Stand-up comic Jeff Green is the star of two specials this fortnight: *Jeff Green Up West* (ABC1 Saturday December 11 at 9.35pm) and *Jeff Green: Back From The Bewilderness* (ABC1 Saturday December 18 at 9.35pm).

Both shows consist of Green doing a monologue on a bare stage before a large audience. It is a tribute to his comic skills that the two shows do not cover the same ground, although they occasionally come close.

Jeff Green is an old-fashioned comic: his shtick is to talk about himself, his girlfriend, other people's children, sex and other things that everyone can relate to and which do not require an up-to-date knowledge of current events to appreciate.

Angharad (Eve Myles) and Lester (Trevor Eve) - *Framed* (ABC1 Sunday December 12 at 9.05 pm).

Both shows are worth watching, but of the two, the second is the better one, producing the bigger laughs. He pillories British behaviour abroad (summed up with the universal excuse "Fuckit, I'm on holiday!"), takes the mickie out of playing the tuba and demonstrates the advantages of playing a child with asthma at blow football.

He makes full use of the bare stage in presenting his routines, peopling the stage with imaginary subsidiary characters using only his voice and a bit of body language.

There was a rather charming film in 1995 with Hugh Grant set in Wales and called *The Englishman Who Went Up A Hill And Came Down A Mountain*. Now we have another, also set in Wales and with a similar shaggy dog feel to it,

*Framed* (ABC1 Sunday December 12 at 9.05 pm).

Written by Frank Cottrell Boyce and directed by Andy De Emmony, the film was made for BBC Drama and stars Trevor Eve (the tough as nails head of the team in *Waking The Dead*) and Eve Myles (the Welsh policewoman in *Torchwood*).

Trevor Eve plays Lester, a curator from England's National Gallery who acknowledges that he prefers paintings to people. When a rising water table combines with ancient plumbing to flood the National Gallery, the entire collection is shipped to Wales, to the same tunnels in which they were stored during the Blitz.

A happy Lester is sent with them to look after the collection, until such time as it can be brought back. In the meantime, the Gallery will

bring back one painting a month for exhibition.

To his surprise, Lester discovers that the former slate mine that houses the collection is not surrounded by loneliness and sheep but by a village full of people. The locals penetrate the secrecy of the operation almost at once, and Lester finds himself having to interact with them, especially with the attractive but pushy local school-teacher Angharad (played by Eve Myles).

In a tradition of British films going back half a century or more, the villagers triumph in their way over the city folk, however there is no animosity. People on both sides learn lessons, and all ends happily - even if there is no way the arrangement at the end of the film would be tolerated by any museum's insurance provider! ★

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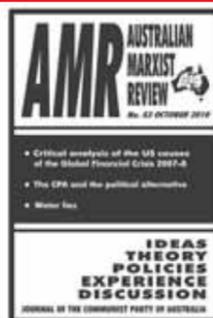
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## #53 - October 2010

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