



Gillard and Asia

Locked into a dangerous US alliance

Bob Briton

Despite the regular platitudes about our country's place in Asia, Australian governments have never been convincing about their embrace of our neighbours. The discourse may have come a long way since the days of the White Australia Policy but in recent decades we have seen Prime Ministers like Paul Keating regularly fly over Asia to get to preferred European destinations, heard John Howard talk regularly and passionately about Australia's British roots and US connections and supposed China expert Kevin Rudd sling off using a racially offensive remark when negotiators from the People's Republic wouldn't roll over during climate change discussions in Copenhagen in 2009.

And despite the talk of regional "partnerships" and being in the box seat for development due to our proximity to emerging economic powerhouses in Asia, official pronouncements have always been followed closely by reference to the centrality of the US alliance and the need to bolster Australia's own defence forces.

Julia Gillard recently addressed the AsiaLink and Asia Society Lunch in Melbourne and devoted her speech to Australia's future in Asia. She announced the commissioning of a government White Paper to be called *Australia in the Asian Century*. Former Secretary to the Treasurer, Dr Ken Henry, will embark on an extensive process of consultation and then report on this burning question.

Gillard's address already set out a lot of the government's current thinking on various economic, social and "defence" issues. So is her government any different, any more independent of US influence and more inclined to find its own way in our region? Will her government take its hand away from the holster when dealing with our neighbours in the foreseeable future? No is the short answer.

Facing realities – looking for opportunities

Gillard's address conceded some remarkable facts. China's economy has grown by a factor of 20 in the last 25 years. India's economy is projected to overtake the size of the US economy by mid-century. Even Indonesia's economic growth rate is putting that of developed countries in the shade. Asian economies have become net lenders while dominant first world nations, like the US, have become needy borrowers. Australia's economy used to be as big as the combined economies of ASEAN. It is now only two thirds of that size.

Gillard stressed that the changes that have

taken place are not just quantitative; they are qualitative. "Australia hasn't been here before," she said. The address was keen to downplay the nervousness these developments would be causing in the planning circles of a mid-ranked imperialist power. The US and Japan, she noted, might be down but should not be counted out. The clouds of change might be gathering over US imperialism but the rise of Asia's middle classes are said to present opportunities for the Australian economy which, she acknowledges, is suffering "patchwork pressures". The decline in education, retail and particularly manufacturing were mentioned.

"The new Asian middle class will give Australia an opportunity to make our whole economy strong," the PM claimed. The future of the resource sector is taken for granted. Gillard noted that every tonne of steel requires one and a half tonnes of iron ore and more than half a tonne of coking coal. Every new kilometre of railway needs 7,000 tonnes of steel, a typical Asian apartment block uses six tonnes of steel.

"... the new Asian middle class lives in apartments and catches urban trains built on our iron and coal. But they'll do more. They'll fill those apartments with high-end manufactured goods, dine on clean, high quality produce and drink premium wine."

That, presumably, is where Australia steps in.

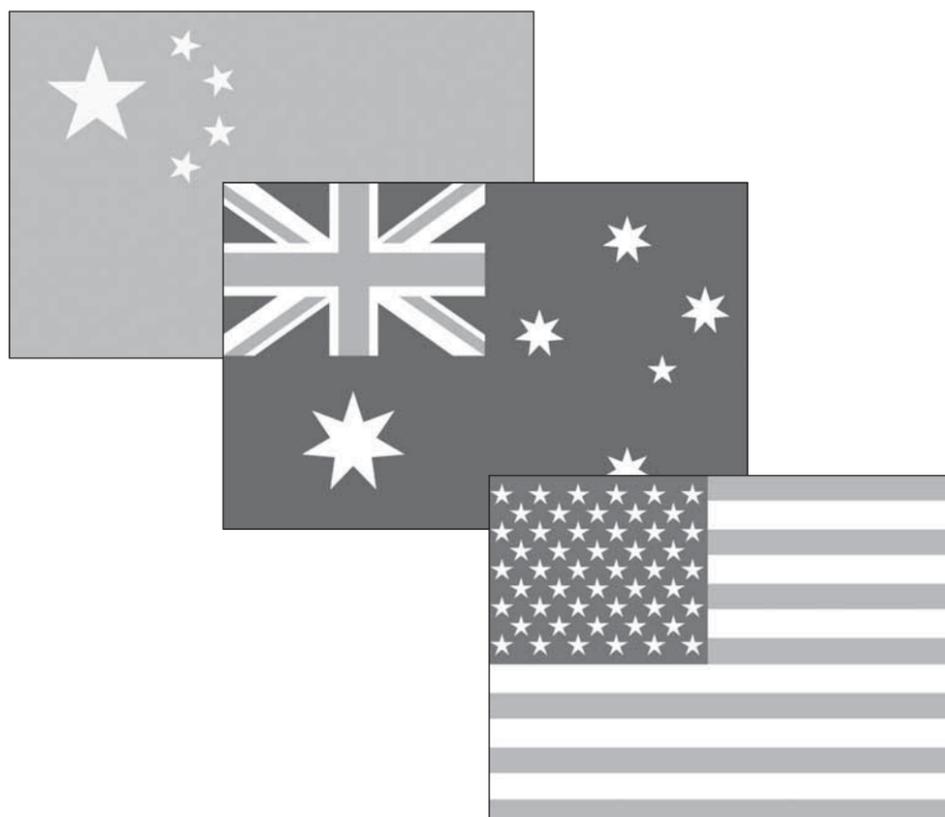
"They'll look to countries like Australia for tertiary education and technical skills. They'll travel in new ways, seeking new custom-made holiday experiences, not the package tours of former years and through life they'll want sophisticated financial advice and the benefits of the world's best medical services as well," Gillard said.

The assumption is that Asian countries will not be able to satisfy the sophisticated tastes of their growing middle classes. "Innovative" and "clean" are adjectives to be applied to the US and Australia respectively, not to Asian countries. Stereotyping of this sort infects the Australian government and bureaucracy and is evident in the Gillard lunchtime speech.

The PM flagged "structural adjustments" that will have to be made to stimulate the Australian supply of "high-end" Australian goods and services such as health and education. Public ownership and trade unions in those sectors will be targeted in the next phase of neo-liberal shock therapy. It won't stop there.

China – a special case

For all its recognition of China's spectacular rise, Gillard's speech was cautious in her praise of that undeniable phenomenon. Aside from North Korea – described as a rogue state



threatening the region – she is generous in her congratulations of Asian achievement. But it is different in the case of China.

"Here, with our largest export market and largest trading partner neither a democracy nor part of our alliance system, a nation whose economic transformation is in turn transforming the economic and strategic balance of our world," she said.

The adjudication of which countries are "democracies" and which are not is insulting enough but she follows this with the more crucial observation that "... it's certainly true that the United States' absolute lead in military power will remain clear for some time to come." In this age of open markets and "globalisation", might still makes right.

Gillard followed this rattle of the sabre up with an outright lie: "... there is nothing in our Alliance which seeks to contain China..." In fact, it is now the bedrock of Australia's pact with the US. The PM made it plain that Dr Henry's Asian Century white paper will not be able to alter the priorities established by the *Force 2030* Defence White Paper of 2009 that sparked the subsequent rapid growth of Australia's military spending.

That report locks us into the overall US

strategy of containing China with a special role for Australia in the immediate Asia-Pacific region: "We have a deep stake in the maintenance of an Asia-Pacific regional security environment that is conducive to the peaceful resolution of problems between regional countries and can absorb the rise in strategic and military power of emerging players."

It is the US, not China, that backs up its economic reach with warships and military bases. China's growing economic influence in the region is at issue here and when comparing future relationships, Gillard is at once frank and elusive – "Strong in the Asian century – with an ally in Washington and respect in Beijing." The word "ally" is unambiguous. "Respect" can mean to regard highly. It can also mean to treat with caution.

Gillard's speech indicates that, in the face of the shifting balance of economic forces in the world, Australian governments will remain locked into an alliance with an increasingly reckless and aggressive US. It also foreshadows "structural adjustments" and policy change in virtually every portfolio area. That has spelt very bad news in the past for workers and other less privileged Australians. It was far from a breath of fresh air. It was more of the same. ❄

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The Guardian

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Tax reform a class issue

Taxation is the principal source of government revenue. The method by which it is raised and how it is spent is a class issue. Government income can be raised in a progressive manner, with those on higher incomes or making fatter profits paying a larger share of their income in tax or the reverse. Government spending can be used to transfer wealth in a progressive direction which helps ordinary people and the most disadvantaged by such means as the age pension, unemployment benefits, free public health services, public education, public housing, funding for community services, etc.

It can also be transferred to the benefit of the capitalist class by such means as huge subsidies to the corporate sector and the spending of billions of dollars on military equipment and weapons. The key issues at this week's taxation forum will be who pays the taxes, how they are spent and who benefits.

The Business Council of Australia and other employer bodies are demanding reductions in corporate and personal tax rates, no carbon or mineral taxes and abolition of state stamp duty and insurance taxes. They are pushing for the GST to be increased from its present 10 percent to 15 or 20 percent or for the removal on existing exemptions such as on fresh food, education, health and medical services. This would compensate the states for the loss in income with the abolition of stamp duty and insurance taxes.

The GST is a flat, regressive tax which is paid at the same rate in the dollar by consumers (but not corporations) regardless of personal income. Employer demands would shift more of the burden of taxation from the corporate sector and the rich onto the backs on ordinary working people, pensioners, the unemployed, the sick, the disabled and others on low incomes – making it a far more regressive system.

The personal income tax system is relatively progressive, with higher marginal rates for those on higher incomes. But it could and should be made far more progressive with increases in the marginal rates on the very rich. This would increase government revenue for such things as expansion of community services, equal pay, public education and health.

The corporate tax rate of 30 percent is also a flat, regressive tax which taxes small, struggling businesses at the same rate as the largest corporations and banks raking in super profits. Corporate taxation could be reformed with the introduction of a super-profits tax across all industries, including mineral resources and the parasitic finance sector or the introduction of marginal rates.

Apart from paying lower taxes and increasing net profits, the private sector has another, neo-liberal agenda that eats at the heart of the present role of government and what is known as the welfare state. The net result of their demands would be a large reduction in federal government income and savage budget cutting. *Sharper Axes, Lower Taxes: Big steps to a smaller state* (Editor Phillip Booth) is the title of a book recently released by the Institute of Economic Affairs, a leading British "free market" think tank. (The equivalent outfit in Australia is the Centre for Independent Studies.) It sums up what big business is after.

"Sharper axes and lower taxes" would open up new profit-generating opportunities through privatisation. Lower taxes (less income) provides the "its unaffordable" excuse for governments to wind back their involvement in the provision of health, education, social welfare, community and other services. Sharper axes are the cuts (austerity measures) that open the way for the private, for-profit sector takeover.

This process of budget cutting and privatisation has been under way for some time at state and federal level. The delivery of unemployment benefits has undergone partial privatisation. The compulsory nine percent superannuation guarantee laid the basis for the winding back (privatisation by stealth) of the age pension.

The tax talkfest in Canberra this week is not expected to change government policy, it will take much more to turn around the pro-private sector, neo-liberal agenda of federal and state governments. It will require a pro-people government of a new type to implement a progressive restructuring of the taxation system and to protect social spending.

PRESS FUND

Federal treasurer Wayne Swan has warned that the government's next budget will be very tough. Watch out! One of the nasty little tricks used by some treasurers is to predict drastic action in all areas of government. They then introduce a budget with only one or two really disastrous initiatives, which people grumble about but accept, because things are not so bad after all! That's how the present government got away with the outrageous act of raising the retirement age. However, in order to keep you up to date on such matters we need your help by way of contributions to the Press Fund, so please send us in something for the next issue if you possibly can. Many thanks to this week's contributors, as follows:

Marie Maclintock \$5, "Round Figure" \$15, Shane Talbot \$50

This week's total: \$70 Progressive total \$12,235

Senior UK figures call for release of Lilianny Obando

Over 100 British parliamentarians, lawyers and trade unionists have called for the immediate release of Colombian trade unionist, human rights defender and academic, Lilianny Obando, who has been imprisoned since August 8, 2008 without being convicted of any crime. Ms Obando is currently held in a high security yard of the Buen Pastor (Good Shepherd) prison in Bogota, where she is allowed to exercise outdoors once a week for an hour.

The petition addressed to President Santos has been signed by Lords and MPs from all three major

UK political parties, including some members of the governing coalition. Over 40 UK lawyers and the leaders of all the major UK trade unions also added their names. Their statement says, "Ms Obando has been jailed for her political beliefs rather than for any crime; she is being deprived of her liberty in order to silence her and discourage others like her from speaking out about human rights abuses."

Steve Cavalier, CEO of Thompsons Solicitors and a signatory to the letter has said, "Lilianny has been in prison for more than three years without being convicted of any crime. This is unacceptable

under international standards. The Santos government has done nothing to stop this injustice despite claiming to respect human rights."

Tony Lloyd MP, former UK foreign minister and Chair of the Parliamentary group Friends of Colombia, has said, "We know that in Colombia there are hundreds of cases like that of Lilianny Obando, innocent people who are imprisoned by the Colombian authorities as a means to silence them. The international community must bring pressure to bear on the Colombian state to put an end to these most gross injustices." ✪

Grand final weekend for the Freedom of the Cuban Five in Perth

Vinnie Molina

With a welcome to country by Balladong Noongar Man Barry McGuire the exhibition of Gerardo Hernandez cartoons opened at the Kurb Gallery in Northbridge, WA.

On Saturday October 1 around eighty people defied the grand final weekend and gathered to see the political cartoons sketched inside a US prison cell by Gerardo, one of the Cuban five incarcerated since 1998.

Gerardo Hernandez was sentenced to double life imprisonment plus 15 years. He referred to his sentence in these words: "But I have only one life to give for my country".

The case of the Cuban Five took a recent twist when under the Freedom of Information Act members of the solidarity movement in the US uncovered information that confirms the US government had paid a number of journalists to publish negative articles designed to damage the integrity of the Five Cubans. These five men were tried and sentenced in the media even before going on trial. This new evidence has allowed Gerardo's legal team to seek leave to have his case reviewed based on this new evidence under a habeas corpus appeal.

The exhibition is made up of 30 of Gerardo's political cartoons which have been displayed in



several cities in the US, Belgium, Ecuador and now Perth. Many of his works are devoted to the frustrations of the Miami mafia seeing the Cuban Revolution grow older. Another section of the exhibit portrays the double standards that the US has shown in its war on terrorism. The final selection is dedicated to comandante Fidel Castro marking his birthday each year since the incarceration. In particular there is one that refers to Fidel's reflections by depicting his pen as a different weapon in the same struggle; the struggle for Cuba's self determination.

As part of his welcome Barry McGuire dedicated a message in song of oneness and solidarity to the Cuban Five.

This exhibition will go national in Australia; it attempts to break through the deafening silence of the media. A small piece was picked up in the community newspaper

the *Guardian Express* and media attended the event in Perth.

In his intervention Cuban Consul General to Australia Reinaldo Garcia gave an update on Rene Gonzalez, one of the Five, who is due for release this Friday, October 7. His security is under threat from new orders that will place him under a three year control order to remain in Miami and extends the inhumane deprivation of the 13 years he has been denied his human right to access to his family.

Several people left messages in a book for Gerardo acknowledging his courage and expressing solidarity. The Exhibition will remain open until October 7.

People in solidarity with the cause of the Cuban Five will continue the struggle until the Five are free and returned to Cuba. We renew our calls to President Obama to free the Cuban Five. ✪



The launch in Perth on Sunday September 25 by the CHOGM Action Network of their protest against CHOGM to be held in Perth beginning October 28. Activist groups representing the four major issues for which the protest in being organised were represented by over 40 people at the launch including, Aboriginal Rights, End the mandatory detention of refugees in offshore facilities, End the imperialist war in Afghanistan and Climate Justice-Renewable Energy Now. There were four speakers representing Rights for Tamil people in Sri Lanka, Free and Fair Elections in Malaysia, End Deaths in Custody for Aboriginal People and Equal access for Gay and Lesbian people to civil marriage rights.

Asylum seekers' hopes still hang in the balance

Peter Mac

Last week Matilda Bogner, the Pacific area representative of the UN Human Rights Commission, severely criticised Australia's mandatory detention policy. She declared: "Thousands of men, women and – most disturbingly of all – children have been held in Australian detention centres for long periods, even though they have committed no crime".

The government has a policy of releasing children into community housing, but about 401 children are still being held in detention. Of those held in the Northern Territory, 119 are being held in the Darwin airport Lodge, including 58 unaccompanied minors.

Ms Bogner commented: "I urge the leaders of all Australian political parties to take a principled and courageous stand to break this ingrained habit of demonising asylum seekers."

Mental cruelty and child abuse

Ms Bogner's comments were made in response to a statement on behalf of the Australian Medical Association by Dr Peter Morris, to the effect that detention of children in detention centres was equivalent to child abuse.

Addressing a federal commission of inquiry, Dr Morris pointed to an alarming incidence of mental health problems among children held in detention centres, which has led to a rising rate of attempts to commit suicide. In one most unusual case an unaccompanied nine-year old boy recently attempted suicide while being held in detention in the Northern Territory.

For a number of reasons statistics are not available for suicides of children under the age of 15. According to the Bureau of Statistics for 2009 (the most recent date for which figures are available) young people between 15 and 19 who committed suicide represented a large percentage of all those

who died from all causes in this age category, but they were nevertheless the smallest age group of all people who committed suicide.

The rising rate of suicide attempts by young detainees is therefore a matter of deep concern. Dr Morris claims that a third of the children held in detention are suffering from depression. The federal immigration health service provider, International Health and Medical Services, has requested that more psychiatric services should be provided for detainees in the Northern Territory. This might be a good short-term move, but it ignores the fact that the major underlying cause of the deteriorating mental health of detainees is the policy of mandatory detention.

Splits in the ranks

The Gillard government's latest advertising campaign is intended to pressure the federal opposition into supporting the government's proposed offshore processing policy, under which asylum seekers who arrive in Australian waters by boat would be forcibly transported to indefinite detention in Malaysia.

The government is blocking its ears to all objections over its immigration policies of mandatory detention and off-shore processing of applications for asylum. The federal opposition is continuing to attack the government, with good cause, over the abuse of human rights involved in the Malaysian proposal. Nevertheless, the opposition still intends to tow back asylum seeker vessels to sea, even though they are unwanted in the nations from which they sailed, and

might drown in the attempt to find a port that will accept them.

A number of federal MPs from the two largest parties have been exhibiting signs of discomfort with their party's immigration policies. One of them is Senator Eric Abetz, who has spoken out in support of asylum seekers from Iran, the majority of whom are Christians who fled religious persecution in Iran. After receiving reports of a death sentence passed by an Iranian court on Christian pastor Youcef Nadarkhani, Betz talked of "the extreme nature of the religious intolerance in Iran" and commented: "One can understand why people are fleeing Iran".

In marked contrast, the Immigration Minister, Chris Bowen, has stated openly that he had tried repeatedly to reach an agreement with the Iranian government to accept the return of Iranian asylum seekers detained in Iraq, even though they would "simply be killed" by the Iranian regime, as the chairman of the Iranian Community Association remarked bluntly.

Meanwhile, the Commonwealth Ombudsman, Allan Asher, is conducting an investigation into the rising rate of self-harm among detainees. There were 1,132 attempts or threats of self-harm in the past year, including 20 incidents on Christmas Island in one week last June, which occurred while Asher was inspecting detention facilities on the island.

The situation there is so bad that detention centre staff have been requested to carry knives at all times, to cut down detainees who have attempted to hang themselves.



Detainees are not allowed to have razors. If they want to shave they must request a razor, and hand it back to staff afterwards.

The government has introduced into parliament an amended bill to enable the Malaysian proposal to go ahead, but a vote on the bill is not expected to take place for several weeks. Prime Minister Julia Gillard has promised to examine the Asher report seriously, in order to determine the proper course of action.

Meanwhile, she should bear in mind the advice of Louise Newman,

an independent adviser to the government on mental health in detention centres. Regarding the current evidence of deteriorating mental health among detainees, she stated during a recent ABC TV interview:

"The government is not wanting to consider, at the present time, the fact that mandatory detention itself, prolonged detention of vulnerable people, is producing this damage. I think that's a very unpalatable and difficult political message, but it's certainly one ... that is absolutely vital for us to consider." ✪

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Pete's Corner



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Barossa Council EBA dispute

Members of the Australian Workers Union employed at the Barossa Council in South Australia achieved a landmark victory in their dispute with the Barossa Council for a new enterprise bargaining agreement.

The Barossa Council encompasses the renowned wine growing region of the Barossa Valley, a semi-rural regional area of South Australia and blue ribbon conservative territory.

The current EBA expired on June 16 with the major concerns of the workforce centred on cost of living pressures and job security caused by the increasing practice by Council to contract out work traditionally done by its own workforce.

Accordingly a claim was presented to Council for a 15 percent wage increase over three years along with improvements to call-out provisions, overtime payments and a "no forced redundancy" clause. Council's initial response was to offer a 10.5 percent wage increase over three years, a broader mandate to contract out work and the rejection of the union's other claims.

After negotiating some improvements including the no forced redundancy clause, gains in penalties and call-out provisions and a 12 percent wage offer Council insisted on this being put to a ballot. The union recommended a no vote to this offer on the unsatisfactory

wage component and accordingly the result of the ballot was a 99 percent rejection.

In response, the Council withdrew all matters agreed to in the negotiations and directed that a four percent increase to wage rates take effect immediately, despite no new agreement, and that the terms and conditions of the previous EBA continue indefinitely.

In response, and in what was a first and unheard of in the history of the Council, the union members, who represent 95 percent of the affected workforce, voted unanimously to take industrial action. Accordingly, a stop work action was carried out with a protest at the Council's offices, with the local paper in attendance, on September 20, to greet the Mayor and elected Councillors arriving for a Council meeting.

This action generated a high degree of public interest, concern by the elected Councillors that an industrial dispute was occurring and an increase in determination by the workers that the dispute would continue until a satisfactory outcome was achieved.

The following morning Council management declared that their position would remain unchanged, no improved offer would be forthcoming and anyone who did not like it could look for another job anytime they wanted! After strong representation was presented to management in response to this from the workers



"Super Mayor" Brian Hurn – part of the scarecrow competition, Barossa Vintage Festival, 2009.

through their union delegate, a new offer was presented the following day.

The offer, comprising a 13.5 percent wage increase over three years, a no forced redundancy clause, significant improvements to call-out provisions, meal allowances and improved penalty rates. It was endorsed by a meeting of the workforce and subsequently carried in a ballot. Management achieved greater flexibility

to contract out work but not to the full extent aimed for.

The union sees the outcome a major victory in the context of a small workforce, in what is hostile anti-union territory, who up until now have had no experience in testing their collective strength and achieving what would be one of the best EBA outcomes in the state. ✪

Carbon Tax Roundtable

Richard Titilius

On September 27 at the Teachers Union headquarters in Perth about 30 people gathered to hear the panel of WA Greens Senator Scott Ludlum, Conservation Council of WA director Piers Verstegen, State School Teachers Union secretary Tony Mullen and Socialist Alliance organiser Alex Bainbridge present their arguments for and against the Carbon Tax and whether it would deliver a climate change solution. The forum was chaired by Communist Party of Australia State President Elizabeth Hulm.

Alex Bainbridge opened the discussion by outlining the urgency

of the climate change situation that confronted the planet and that the Clean Energy Future package which included the Carbon Tax "is so far removed from what is necessary that it amounts to nothing." Bainbridge added that "It was a false argument politically to suggest that if we don't pass this package then the Gillard government will collapse and we will get Liberal leader Tony Abbott and the climate change deniers." Instead Bainbridge offered, "The climate movement should call the shots by putting pressure on both conservative parties for if we fear a future of Abbott then Gillard will do nothing."

Greens Senator Scott Ludlum

countered this by posing the polemic, "Where or who is the climate movement as there are only individual activists and various activist groups and non-government organisations." If anything Ludlum suggested the only climate movement that existed was one being run by Tony Abbott on behalf of the coal and gas producers. Ludlum reminded the forum that during the first Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme those who supported it were painted as extremists who were going to sabotage jobs and the economy.

Piers Verstegen continued on from Senator Ludlum's proposition by suggesting, "Our support for the

Clean Future package does not lock out future reform-while not locking it in either". Though it is not a perfect package Verstegen added, "It is the most important environmental policy in this nation's history, as this policy starts us on our path of fundamental structural change of economy to achieve our environmental and ecological goals."

Teachers Union secretary Tony Mullen spoke of the importance of teachers teaching children about the environment and sustainability. The education which they currently receive however, which is thrust upon them through the curriculum determined by government, often does not encourage critical thinking. "If we are not being taught to think critically at the right time when confronted with the pressing problems of our times we cannot come up with the appropriate responses or solutions."

A lively Q & A followed which included a few eminent figures in the audience as the former Greens Senator Jo Vallentine who suggested that technology had changed the way in which social and political activism was perceived re: Get Up! and others. "People think they are activists when they push a few buttons on a computer." Vallentine, the veteran of many

anti-nuke, anti-logging, and anti-war campaigns added, "We need to talk about change, real change and the need to act to bring about this change."

Maverick economics academic from Curtin University Dr Dave Western who led his own Carbon Tax forum earlier this year declared that there are "Twenty-five topics here and we haven't talked about carbon yet." Western also said that the struggle to bring about real change on the climate issue amounts to class warfare ... the owners of the means of production versus the workers.

It is an urgent struggle as noted by National CPA President Vinicio Molina, "The planet cannot wait another 10-15 years."

As the last urgent discussions carried on well into the night as people left the forum one could sense that the issue of climate change had a long path still to run and that it was forums such as the CPA's roundtable which would bring diverse and passionately expressed ideas into the public policy debate arena.

It also demonstrated that there is a space for a united socialist left to participate and contribute to this public policy formation. ✪

Future jobs forum must focus on manufacturing

Australian manufacturing unions will use this week's Future Jobs Forum to continue the push for a broad-based agenda to support the domestic manufacturing industry.

In a joint paper to be released on Thursday, the Australian Workers' Union and the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union will call for:

- Accelerated depreciation: An accelerated rate of depreciation for resource sector companies – and other sectors such as construction – to write down assets that include a percentage of Australian local content;
- Local content transparency: Increased transparency from proponents on resources sector projects – including detail procurement processes, the supply chain, the expected percentage of local content and potential for regional development;
- Clean technology development: Ensuring the Clean Energy Future plan delivers a local manufacturing base, not just a technology and research base;

- Productivity improvements: A high-level, tri-partite body to coordinate genuine, industry-wide, productivity improvements with a focus on management skills and systems and innovation;
- Anti-Dumping: Swift and full implementation of the federal government's reforms to the Australian anti-dumping regime, as well as robust enforcement of the new system.

AWU national secretary Paul Howes said: "We can't just bury our heads in the sand – we've got to face the reality of the manufacturing crisis that is before us."

"Australia is currently facing complex and challenging macro-economic factors as a result of the mining boom, and these factors are driving clear structural changes to our economy."

"But manufacturing employs a million people, five times that of mining – the mining sector can never hope to replace jobs lost in manufacturing over the course of the boom."

"That's why the AWU and AMWU are putting forward a

practical plan to ease the pinch being felt by domestic manufacturers – focusing on local supply, innovation and productivity, a strong anti-dumping regime and every effort to stem international currency manipulation."

AMWU national secretary Dave Oliver said the Future Jobs Forum should focus on how to keep manufacturing as the base on which a diverse, sustainable and prosperous economy is able to benefit all Australians.

"If you're talking jobs, you're talking manufacturing," Mr Oliver said.

"Put simply, Australia needs manufacturing jobs if we are to maintain an economic base that provides a high standard of living for all Australians."

"Right now, what Australia's one million manufacturing workers most want to hear is that the federal government has a plan for the future of their jobs and industries."

"Manufacturing makes an invaluable contribution to training, research and development, employment in other sectors, and local communities. Nobody knows that more than these workers". ✪

Perth

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Facing facts on the fate of the earth

Review of CPA pamphlet *Hot Earth*

Dr Hannah Middleton
CPA General Secretary

"Until very recently, the discussion revolved around the kind of society we would have.

"Today, the discussion centres on whether human society will survive."

Fidel Castro

For those concerned with the fate of the earth, the time has come to face facts – not just the environmental crisis but the need for fundamental social change.

Hot Earth, a new pamphlet just released by the CPA, joins the debate about the environmental crisis at a time when the Gillard government's carbon tax is being discussed in Parliament and Coalition Leader Tony Abbott is parading his "direct action" plan which allows polluting corporations to get away with murder.

Hot Earth rejects both options, demanding instead regulations and penalties to control carbon emissions by corporations – before it is too late.

It is beyond debate that the earth's environment – the source of life for humans and all other species – is under sustained and severe attack by human activities. It is also clear that the effects of continuing down the same path will be devastating.

Speaking at the 1992 UN Conference on the Environment and Development, Fidel Castro commented:

"Never in the history of mankind has such a generalised and destructive aggression taken place against all of the world's vital systems ...

"For the first time in his history, man is capable of altering the equilibrium of the principal vital systems and breaking the natural laws that have governed evolution on the planet.... For the first time man is capable of changing the course of life."

Humans have always impacted and changed the natural world through their productive activities from the burning off practised by Aboriginal hunter-gatherers in Australia to grazing herds, ploughing and irrigation.

However, changing nature does not necessarily mean damaging or destroying the environment.

With the development of productive forces, the creation of surpluses and the emergence of private property and classes, an ideology of exploitation and mastery developed which began to be reflected in attitudes towards nature.

A separation between humankind and nature grew in people's ideas and nature began to be a thing to be used. The uncontrolled exploitation of the environment and the plundering of natural resources intensified under feudalism and reached its peak under capitalism.

Today developed capitalist countries are using all the achievements of science and technology to "master" nature.

A consumer and predatory attitude to natural resources is characteristic of capitalism and, with the scientific and technological revolution, not only leads to their exhaustion but also brings with it a train of negative and, in some cases, possibly irreversible consequences for the environment.

The environmental crisis arises from social and philosophical attitudes rather than from technology which is a creation of human endeavour.

The system that directs the whole course of scientific and technological progress to the making of profit and the exploitation of humankind and nature is mainly to blame for the environmental crisis.

Capitalism's basic driving force and its whole reason for existence is the amassing of profits. The environment exists as a realm to be exploited in a process of growing economic expansion. Corporations, and the system itself, must either grow or die.

Companies have no loyalty to anything but their own bottom lines. For the capitalist it is a matter of indifference whether what is produced is useful or harmful for individuals or society. They will be produced if a market exists or can be created for them and if they yield an adequate

profit. The environmental damage their production may cause is equally a matter of indifference.

Leaders of the capitalist system are unable to conceive of or promote a different economic which gives priority to human and environmental needs, as opposed to profits.

There is nothing in the nature of the system that will allow it to pull back before it is too late. To do that, other forces are needed.

Continuing "business as usual" is the path to global disaster.

"Solutions" which allow the current system of production and distribution to proceed, are not real solutions. They will actually make things worse by giving the impression that the crisis will be overcome when the reality is quite different.

The overwhelming environmental problems facing the world and its people will not be effectively dealt with until we institute another way for humans to interact with nature.

We need a system of sustainable human development. This means *enough* for everyone and no more. Within the capitalist system, some things have been done and more can be done to lessen capitalism's negative effects on the environment and people.

Hot Earth presents the case for steps to start resolving the climate crisis by challenging the power of the corporations and introducing laws and penalties to restrict their activities which are killing the planet.

It also argues for protection of workers' employment, public ownership, nationalisation, price and profit controls, expanding public transport, cutting military spending and other steps which campaigns can begin to win within the capitalist system.

But the environmental crisis cannot be solved within the present system. The various suggestions for doing so have no hope of success. The system of world capitalism is clearly unsustainable. The transition to a sustainable – and socialist – economy will be a complex and hard fought process.

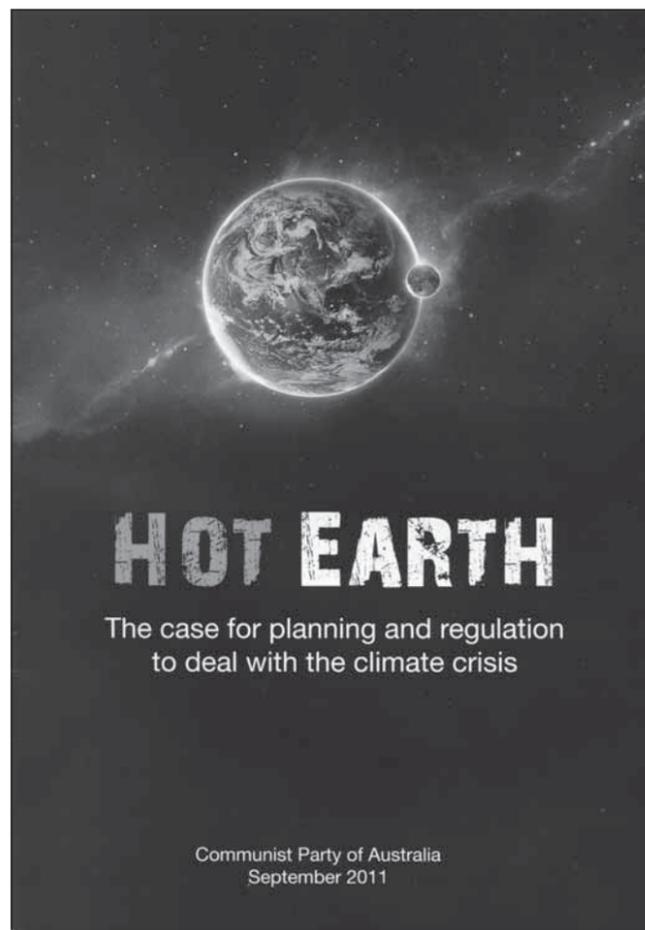
Fundamental change is needed. This means economic and social change, and a new politics built on the new economic base.

Hot Earth concludes: "The struggle for sustainable development is in essence a struggle to restrain and restrict capitalist corporations and to compel an end to environmentally damaging production processes.

"It is a struggle to fulfil human needs through more creative, democratic and ecologically respectful practices. The contrast with uncontrollable capitalist growth is stark."

A new world is not only possible, it is essential. And a broad popular movement, united in action, working to protect the planet and humanity, can and must bring about the necessary social change.

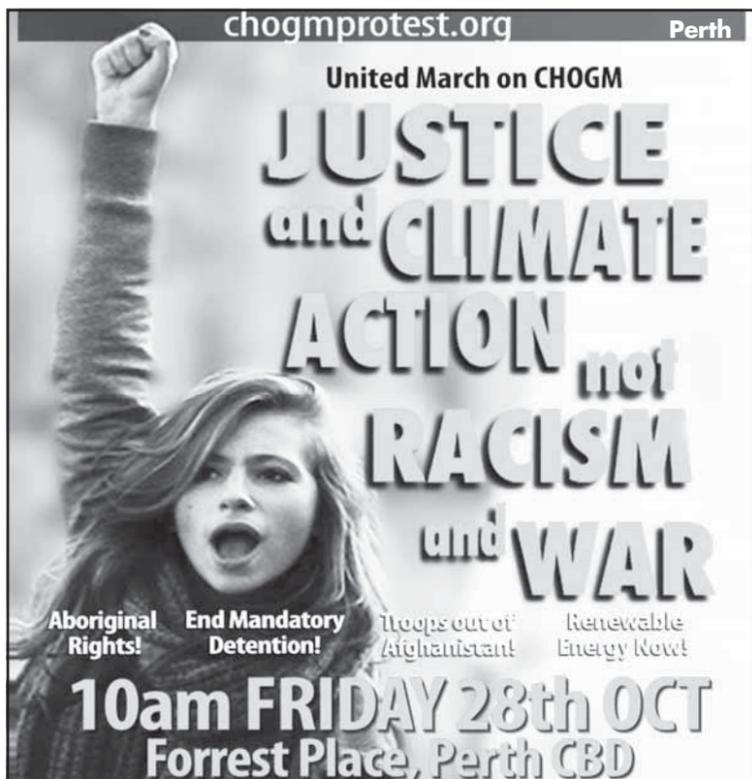
This is where Communists have a responsibility. We have to work as hard as we can to help expand, unify and galvanise this movement to bring about social change. We have only ten to 15 years to address the crisis of climate change and prevent catastrophe. What we do now will determine the future of planet Earth. ✪



Mercury vapour leaked from the Orica plant in the Sydney suburb of Botany last week once again putting both the plant and the NSW government under scrutiny for slack environmental laws. As one of the local residents who was affected by the pollution pointed out – "We know to report crime to the police but do we know where to go when threatened by pollution?" It is a good question which the NSW government keeps ignoring. Orica has been notorious for breaching its licence many times but continues to get away with it. It is clear that environmental laws must be revised and strengthened. It is up to the government to take serious measures to protect citizens from pollution and make sure companies follow strict procedures.

We all go to supermarkets and pay up for fresh produce. However, when we complain about the prices we seldom think about the farmers who get very little for their hard work. The latest research from the NSW Farmers Association shows that Coles and Woolworths could be paying as little as 35 cents a kilogram for potatoes and pumpkins and selling them for \$3 a kilogram. Coles and Woolworths are Australia's supermarket giants who can easily manipulate prices to their advantage. It is farmers and consumers who pay in the end. The middleman is always a winner. Coles supermarket boss Ian McLeod has become Australia's highest paid executive, reportedly getting a total remuneration of \$15.6 million. That's a lot of carrots and potatoes! One wonders for how long farmers can survive on the sort of money the supermarkets are paying them. Many will have to leave farming which will inevitably lead to increased fresh food imports.

The Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) has notified Customs and Border Protection management of further industrial action between October 5 and 8 which will include two-hour stoppages and overtime and work bans. Customs workers will include staff involved in intercepting asylum-seekers if there is a failure to negotiate on pay claims. The CPSU has been involved in protests at a 9 percent pay offer over 3 years which does not cover cost-of-living increases. International passengers arriving at major airports faced delays during staggered protests but according to CPSU national secretary Nadine Flood there was a strong support for the action which sent a clear message to the management about the need to improve the pay offer. Qantas engineers also extended their ongoing industrial action. Meanwhile Qantas chief executive Alan Joyce is under pressure to defend a 71 percent rise in his total pay to \$5 million.



Domination and plunder in North Africa and Middle East

Speech delivered by Cuban Foreign Affairs Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla to the 6th session of the UN General Assembly, September 26.

Mr President:

Allow me to congratulate you on your election. We welcome the government of South Sudan for becoming the 193rd member of the United Nations. I join the appeal by all African leaders to give an urgent response to the famine in the Horn of Africa

Mr President:

While we are deliberating here in this hall, another "preventive" war is taking place in Libya using as a pretext "the protection of civilians". The United States and NATO, supposedly to avoid a massacre, launched a military attack against a sovereign State without there being any threat to international peace and security, and unleashed a "change of regime" operation.

NATO imposed on the Security Council a dubious resolution authorising "member State ... acting nationally or through regional organisations or arrangements ... to take all necessary measures to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under the threat of attack."

Afterwards, NATO violated this same resolution in order to supply weapons, fund one of the parties to the conflict and deploy operatives and diplomatic personnel on the ground. Now everybody has a better understanding of the concept of "responsibility to protect" and what it can be used for. In this war, waged with the most advanced and lethal military technologies, the means of communication have been used as combat weapons by the financial and media emporiums which are profiting from the war and the reconstruction operations as if they were anti-crisis instruments.

As early as February 21,

and the Middle East, the emergence of genuinely popular movements in Tunisia, Egypt and other countries, in order to secure huge reserves of oil and water and confiscate financial assets in times of global economic and social crisis.

It is the task of this General Assembly to exercise its powers to prevent military aggression against Syria. Public opinion should receive objective information and speak up against war.

Mr President:

According to *Foreign Affairs* magazine, the White House has rushed to describe what happened in that Northern African country as a model. It is said that the new US strategy is more efficient and less costly ... that the Bush administration strategy considered occupation as an option ... that the Obama administration strategy is that of national liberation ... that the military intervention strategy in Libya could also be applied in other cases.

With full cynicism, reference is made to a military aggression without casualties or the use of infantry troops, the costs of which would be mainly borne by Europe. The destabilisation of a country through subversion, covert operations and economic sanctions is described as the "development of a national movement".

This new "change of regime" operations model shows that the current US and NATO military doctrines are ever more aggressive than the previous ones, and that the so called "Euro-Atlantic periphery" comprises the entire planet.

No one should doubt that Latin America and the Caribbean are included in that conception. The re-deployment of the Fourth Fleet, the

In developed countries, the terrible burden of its consequences is borne by the workers, the unemployed, the immigrants and the poor, who are brutally repressed whenever they peacefully defend their rights.

We, the countries of the South, which are incessantly despoiled, are suffering the distortions of a world order that excludes our legitimate interests.

We are suffering the terrible impact of protectionism and the steady increase in the prices of foodstuffs and hydrocarbons. The peoples of many developing countries are victims of worn out neo-liberal economic models and their sequels of plunder and exclusion. The social and political consequences are being felt in all continents.

Mr President:

In the face of a global economic crisis and the exhaustion of the natural resources of the planet, what would be the response of the extreme right-wing forces that are in power or may reach power as a result of the punishment and hopelessness of voters?

In the face of a growing and universal threat of a war, a new distribution of the world and climate change, could we, the countries of the South, act together as an indispensable condition to save ourselves? In the face of so many and serious threats, the Latin America and Caribbean region, the one that Bolívar and Martí fought for, is integrating and determined to finish what they left unfinished. It would be impossible either to divide us or to turn us against each other. ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas) is a small but morally powerful group of peoples and the new Community of Latin American and Caribbean States is already a fact. The entire force of the Andes will very soon be expressed in a Summit that will be an epoch-making event in Caracas, the epicentre of the independence of the Americas, where a Bolivarian people



The United Nations Security Council, New York.

capital, as a full member of the United Nations Organisation.

If there's recognition of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to independence, sovereignty and self-determination; if there is recognition of the need to re-establish the exercise of the human rights of Palestinians; if the blockade of Gaza, the economic coercion and segregation symbolised by the infamous wall are recognised as crimes; if the subjugation of a nation to conditions jeopardising its

true and fair for Europe to denounce that those crimes would not be happening if not because of the military supplies, the financial support and the impunity ensured by the US to the Israeli government.

Mr President:

On September 11, 2011, we Cubans shared the pain of the American people who were victims of those atrocious terrorist actions and offered our selfless solidarity, encouragement and cooperation. As usual, Cuba made some crystal clear statements against terrorism and against war. Ten years after, the world is even more insecure because instead of turning international consensus against terrorism into a system of international cooperation to cope with it, the United States has invaded and occupied Iraq and Afghanistan, taking a toll on the lives of thousands of persons and causing pain to tens of millions.

Deception, torture, extrajudicial executions or assassinations, the disappearance of persons, arbitrary detentions and the CIA secret renditions and prisons in Europe and other regions were impossible to hide. The US government offends the memory of the victims of September 11 when it maintains the prolonged and inhumane imprisonment of the Five Cuban anti-terrorists, who were unjustly sentenced to serve extreme sanctions at spurious trials for seeking information about the terrorist activities of the groups that have operated with absolute impunity from the US territory against Cuba, thus causing the death of or physical disabilities to 5,577 fellow Cuban citizens.

Once again, with all due respect, I urge President Obama to make use of his prerogatives to set them free as an act of justice or as a humanitarian gesture which will be highly appreciated by their children, wives, mothers, fathers and all of our people.

Mr President:

The destabilisation of a country through subversion, covert operations and economic sanctions is described as the "development of a national movement".

Commander in Chief Fidel Castro Ruz had warned that NATO was irremissibly preparing a war against Libya. Since then, Cuba engaged indefatigably not in the defence of a government, but of a principle: the assassination of thousands of innocent people with the dubious objective of protecting other civilians is something unacceptable. History has eloquently shown that peace can not be imposed either by war or by force.

It is only up to the Libyan people to decide upon its destiny, without any foreign intervention, in the exercise of its right to self-determination and independence, its sovereignty over its natural resources and its territorial integrity.

The military intervention in Libya and the growing threat against Syria have been the opportunistic and defensive responses given by the United States and Europe to the collapse of their system of domination and plunder in Northern Africa

installation of military bases and the sending of troops and military means to intervene anywhere in the region; the coup d'état against Venezuela in 2002, followed by an oil coup; the sedition in Santa Cruz, Bolivia; the military coup in Honduras and the attempted coup in Ecuador fit perfectly well in the "new strategy".

Can the US and NATO give guarantees today that the use of force and this concept of "regime change" are not applicable in the case of the Latin American and Caribbean countries that do not yield to their interests? Can the European Union say something about it? What would the United Nations do in the event of such circumstances?

Mr President:

The weakness of the global economy, particularly the economies of the United States and of the European Union, continues to show that the crisis that began in the year 2008 has not been yet overcome.

has conquered power and the stature of a continental leader, President Hugo Chávez Frias, is growing bigger.

More than ever before we have to defend the United Nations, but the biggest challenge would be to turn it into an organisation that serves the legitimate interests of all States, instead of catering for the arbitrariness and abuses of a handful of rich and powerful countries. We must see to it that International Law as well as the Purposes and Principles of the UN Charter prevail in the face of the brute force that attempts to wipe them out. It is necessary to re-establish the leading role of this Assembly and relaunch the Security Council.

Mr President:

The General Assembly has the inescapable moral, political and legal obligation to ensure the recognition of an independent Palestinian State, with the boundaries established before 1967 and with East Jerusalem as its

existence is described as genocide; if all member States are supposed to adopt all legal measures within their reach to protect Palestinian civilians, then the General Assembly should take action now. Cuba, a country with a small Jewish community, condemns the historical injustice of anti-Semitism, the crime against humanity which was the Holocaust, and recognises the right of the State of Israel to exist. Our people only harbour fraternal feelings towards the Israeli people, who are also a victim of this conflict.

Cuba likewise proclaims that the United States has the moral, political and legal obligation to stop vetoing the Security Council resolutions destined to protect the Palestinian civilians.

The European Union should oppose this veto and abstain from supporting the empire's brutal pressure on the members of this Assembly and the Council itself. It should also be

The new scramble for Africa

Conn Hallinan

Is current US foreign policy in Africa following a blueprint drawn up almost eight years ago by the right-wing Heritage Foundation, one of the most conservative think tanks in the world? While it seems odd that a Democratic administration would have anything in common with the extremists at Heritage, the convergence in policy and practice between the two is disturbing.

Heritage, with help from Joseph Coors and the Scaife Foundations, was founded in 1973 by the late Paul Weyrich, one of the most conservative thinkers in the US and a co-founder of the Moral Majority. While the Moral Majority whipped up the culture wars against abortion and gays, Heritage lobbied for an aggressive foreign policy and American military supremacy.

In October 2003, James Carafano and Nile Gardiner, two Heritage Foundation heavyweights, proposed a major shift in US military policy vis-a-vis the African continent. Carafano is a West Point graduate who heads up the Foundation's foreign policy section, and Gardiner is the director of Heritage's Margaret Thatcher Centre for Freedom.

In a "Backgrounder" article entitled "US Military Assistance for Africa: A Better Solution", the two called for the creation of a military command for the continent, a focus on fighting "terrorism," and direct military intervention using air power and naval forces if "vital US interests are at stake." Such interventions should avoid using ground troops, the authors argue, and should include the participation of other allies.

Almost every element of that proposal has come together over the past year, though some pieces, like African Command (Africom) and the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative, were in place before the Obama administration took office.

The Libya war seems almost straight off of Heritage's drawing board. While the US appeared to take a back seat to its allies, NATO would not have been able to carry out the war without massive amounts of US military help. It was the US who took out the Libyan anti-air craft systems, blockaded the coast, collected the electronic intelligence, fuelled the warplanes, and supplied munitions when NATO ran low.

While the UN resolution forbade using ground troops, US special forces and CIA teams, along with special units from Britain, France, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates organised the rebels, coordinated air strikes, and eventually pulled off an amphibious operation that sealed Tripoli's fate.

The Heritage scholars were also clear what they meant by vital US interests: "With its vast natural and mineral resources, Africa remains strategically important to the West, as it has been for hundreds of years, and its geostrategic significance is likely to rise in the 21st century. According to the National Intelligence Council, the United States is likely to draw 25 percent of its oil from West Africa by 2015, surpassing the volume imported from the Persian Gulf."

It was a sentiment shared by the Bush Administration. "West Africa's oil has become a national strategic interest," said US Assistant Secretary



of State for Africa, Walter Kansteiner in 2002.

The UN tasked NATO with protecting civilians in Libya, but France, Britain, the US and their Gulf allies focused on regime change. Indeed, when leaders of the African Union (AU) pushed for negotiations aimed at a political settlement, NATO and the rebels brusquely dismissed them.

The NATO bombing "really undermined the AU's initiatives and effort to deal with the matter in Libya," complained South African President Jacob Zuma. More than 200 prominent Africans released a letter on August 24 condemning the "misuse of the United Nations Security Council to engage in militarised diplomacy to effect regime change in Libya," as well as the "marginalisation of the African Union."

The suspicion that the Libya war had more to do with oil and gas than protecting civilians is why the AU has balked at recognising the rebel Transitional National Council. For much of Africa, the Libya war was a "shot heard 'round the continent," and there is a growing unease at the West's "militarised diplomacy."

Through the Defence Department's African Contingency Operation Training and Assistance Program, the US is actively engaged in training the militaries of Mali, Chad, Niger, Benin, Botswana, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Gabon, Zambia, Uganda, Senegal, Mozambique, Ghana and Malawi, and Mauritania.

In June 2006, NATO troops stormed ashore on Sao Vicente island in the Cape Verde archipelago in operation "Steadfast Jaguar" (an odd choice of monikers, since jaguars are natives of the New World, not Africa). The exercise, which brought together a host of nations, including France, Germany, Spain, Greece, the US and Poland, was aimed at "protecting energy supplies" in the Niger Delta and Gulf of Guinea.

Major oil producers in the region include Angola, Nigeria, Cameroon, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Chad and Mauritania.

Protecting energy supplies from whom?

In the case of the Niger Delta, it means protecting oil companies and the Nigerian government from local people fed up with the pollution that is killing them, and corruption that denies them any benefits from their resources. Under the umbrella of the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), locals are waging a low-key guerrilla war that at one point reduced oil supplies by 20 percent.

MEND is certainly suspicious of American motives in the region. "Of course, it is evident that oil is the key concern of the US in establishing African Command," says the organisation's spokesman, Jomo Gbomo.

The Nigerian government labels a number of restive groups in Nigeria as "terrorist" and links them to Al-Qaeda, including Boko Haram in the country's north.

But labelling opponents "terrorists" or raising the Al-Qaeda spectre is an easy way to dismiss what may be real local grievances. For instance, Boko Haram's growing penchant for violence is more likely a response to the heavy handedness of the Nigerian Army than an Al-Qaeda inspired campaign.

Terrorism and the protection of civilians may be the public rationale for intervention, but the bottom line looks suspiciously like business. Before the guns go silent in Libya, one British business leader complained to *The Independent* that Britain was behind the curve on securing opportunities. "It's all politics, no commercial stuff. I think that is a mistake. We need to be getting down there as soon as possible."

The Spanish oil company Repsol and the Italian company Eni are already gearing up for production. "Eni will play a No.1 role in the future," says Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini. Almost 70 percent of Libya's oil goes to four countries, Spain, Germany, France and Italy. Qatar, which is already handling oil sales in Eastern Libya, will also be on the ground floor as production ramps up.

A major loser in the war – and some would argue, not by accident – is China. Beijing had some 75 companies working in Libya and 36,000 personnel, and accounted for about 11 percent of Libya's pre-war exports. But because China complained that NATO had unilaterally changed the UN resolution from protecting civilians to regime change, Beijing is likely to suffer. Abdeljalil Mayouf, information manager of the opposition oil firm AGOCO told Reuters that China, Brazil and Russia would be frozen out of contracts.

Brazil and Russia also supported negotiations and complained about NATO's interpretation of the UN resolution on Libya.

For Heritage, keeping China out of Africa is what it is all about. Peter Brookes, the former principal Republican advisor for East Asia on the House Committee on International Relations, warned that China was hell-bent on challenging the US and becoming a global power, and key to that is expanding its interests in Africa. "In a throwback to the Maoist revolutionary days of the 1960s and 1970s and the Cold War, Beijing has once again identified the African continent as an area of strategic interest," he told a Heritage Foundation audience in a talk entitled "Into Africa: China's Grab for Influence and Oil."

Beijing gets about one third of its oil from Africa – Angola and Sudan are its major suppliers – plus important materials like platinum, copper, timber and iron ore.

Africa is rife with problems, but terrorism is not high on that list. A severe drought has blistered much of East Africa, and, with food prices rising, malnutrition is spreading continent-wide. The "war on terrorism" has generated 800,000 refugees from Somalia. African civilians do, indeed, need help, but not the kind you get from fighter-bombers, drone strikes, or Tomahawk cruise missiles dispatched at the urging of right-wing think tanks or international energy companies.

Political Affairs



The Cuban government reiterates its willingness and interest to move towards the normalisation of relations with the United States. Today I reiterate the proposal of beginning a dialogue aimed at solving bilateral problems, including humanitarian issues, as well as the offer of negotiating several cooperation agreements to combat drug-trafficking, terrorism, human smuggling, prevent natural disasters and protect the environment, even in the event of oil spills as the one occurred at the British Petroleum platform in the Gulf of Mexico.

However, we know that the electoral race has already begun in this country while the economic situation is getting worse.

The economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba has been tightened and the damages it has caused have totalled US\$975 billion according to the present gold price. The attempts to subvert the constitutional order that Cubans have freely elected have intensified.

There are increasing pressures on the part of the extreme right and the Cuban American mafia to revert the minimal steps taken by the US government that, to some extent, favour the links between the Cuban émigrés and their home country and the exchanges between both peoples.

In Cuba, President Raul Castro has reiterated that we will continue to change, in a sovereign way, everything that needs to be changed so that our economy is more efficient and our socialism is better, in order to conquer "all the justice" and be able to fully preserve our independence.

As Marti said, "before ceasing in our endeavour to have a free and prosperous homeland, the South Seas will merge with the Northern Seas and a serpent will hatch out of an eagle's egg."

Thank you very much. ✪

What's the point of the Wall Street protests?

Protesters have been occupying Wall Street and dodging mace-wielding police for two weeks. Why are they there? Commentators looking for one single demand are missing the point

Young women being pepper-sprayed by cops on Wall Street? A protest movement claiming to represent 99 percent of the population? Missed it? Last week the #occupyWallStreet campaign kicked off, initially organised by the magazine *Adbusters* but now administered by a vertical cohort of groups and individuals on social media. Groups in more than 40 cities across the US and internationally have joined in.

The protests have been getting bigger and bigger, and they've been graced by progressive luminaries such as Susan Sarandon and Michael Moore, but unless you closely follow alternative media the protests might have escaped your attention.

They haven't been widely reported in the mainstream media, and when they have, reports have turned on police brutality rather than what the protest is all about. This isn't altogether surprising. Read Jeanne Mansfield's account of getting maced at the protests and the alarm about police responses makes sense.

One protester told the *NY Daily News* "I was shocked because it seemed like one person after another was being brutally tackled, and it wasn't clear why". The many videos in circulation of protesters getting zapped with pepper spray provide clear evidence of police zealotry – but have also served to distract media outlets from why the protesters were there in the first place.

The *New York Times* has been criticised for missing the point in the article. Gina Bellafante wrote: "The group's lack of cohesion and its apparent wish to pantomime progressivism rather than practice it knowledgeably is unsettling in the face of the challenges so many of its generation face."

Some progressive media outlets have been less than enthused too. Lauren Ellis in *Mother Jones* says the campaign is "lacking traction" and lists four reasons why – including police brutality being in the spotlight rather than the protesters' concerns, and for a "kitchen-sink" approach she summarises thusly: "First make



noise, then decide what the noise is all about."

National Public Radio Ombudsman Edward Schumacher-Matos explains why the radio network hadn't given the protests any coverage in this post. He quotes NPR's executive director for news, Dick Meyer: "The recent protests on Wall Street did not involve large numbers of people, prominent people, a great disruption or an especially clear objective."

Inadvertently, Bellafante and Meyer might have got it right. It's very apparent that there is no one single reason drawing protesters to Wall Street and to other protests. One "clear objective" and group cohesion just isn't the name of the game – so perhaps it's not surprising that the media has taken a while to twig to what's going on.

The protests started very small and not all the protesters who turned up have the same reasons for doing so. As Eli Schmitt in *n + 1* wrote a few days after it all started: "We still don't know exactly what the demands are. One of the members of our group, in discussing the criteria for a good demand, noted that Americans like

to 'get something' out of a political action. Repeal, enact, ban. We want visible, measurable outcomes."

The 99 percenters did get around to issuing a list of their "one demands" in response to the media's desire for "one clear demand". It's not one objective, but many – some of which are extremely abstract.

As Schmitt observes, the protests underway in Wall Street and across America don't look much like the anti-globalisation protests of the early 2000s. The protest movement is changing and even though the original *Adbusters* call referenced Tahrir Square, the Occupy Wall Street movement gestures to a far more diffuse set of goals:

"Compared to other large-scale protests I'd attended in my life – the WTO protest in Washington DC in 2000, various anti-war protests throughout the early naughts – the aggravating causes here were less abstract. These were not Americans decrying foreign policy. They were Americans in debt, Americans out of work. This 'day of rage' was inspired by personal injustices, best illustrated by anecdote rather than data. Along

with all the familiar righteous ire at corporate sway in our supposedly democratic political system, there were tales of joblessness, debt, and desperation."

Ed Pilkington in UK *Guardian* concurs, writing, "The protests were a lament for a nation in which, despite the 2008 meltdown, the financial system remains largely unregulated, where 46 million Americans live below the official poverty line, and where inequality is greater now than at any time since 1929."

David Weidner, writing in *Market Watch*, is in touch with the same rage and desperation; he just placed a slightly different emphasis.

"If you want to know how a

nation supposedly by and for the people has become uprooted, one only needs to see how common young people, who are suffering so badly in this recession, were humiliated further by trying to exercise their given right to peacefully protest.

"If this is justice, I'd rather break the law.

"The bankers who brought us this mess not only walk free, they drive free in Bentleys paid for by money looted through toxic mortgages, trading debacles and derivative madness. Regulators, prosecutors and an administration patsy to big finance do nothing except hand out US\$1.3 trillion in bailout cash and guarantees."

New Matilda ☺

Freeport strikers to rally after talks stall

Yoga Rusmana

Workers at Freeport-McMoRan Copper & Gold Inc. (FCX) in Indonesia's Grasberg mine rallied on September 29 after failing to agree on pay increases in government-brokered talks last week, as the strike continues, a union official said. About half of 8,000 non-staff workers at Grasberg in Papua province, who have walked out of jobs since September 15, joined the protest, said Virgo Solossa, head of organisational affairs at PT Freeport Indonesia's labour union.

Workers in Peru, Chile, Bolivia and Indonesia have gone on strike at copper, gold and zinc mines this year, seeking improved conditions

and a bigger slice of record profits after metal prices more than doubled since the end of 2008. The strike at Grasberg, which has the world's largest recoverable reserves of copper, has raised concern it may widen a global deficit and boost prices.

"We have conducted a peaceful stoppage in the 12 days of strike, but the management doesn't appreciate that and has declared that our activity is illegal," Solossa said in a telephone interview from Timika, the closest town to Grasberg. "We want to show that we remain solid and question the 'no work no pay' note from management as well as sanctions against several strikers."

Freeport, based in Phoenix, will

uphold its legal right not to pay employees on a day where workers do not report to work, Freeport Indonesia said in an internal newsletter posted on its website dated September 22. The right is stated in the 2003 labour law, Ramdani Sirait, a Jakarta-based spokesman at Freeport, said.

Freeport and the union at Grasberg ended 38 days of talks over 2011-2013 contract terms on August 26 after failing to agree on wages. Negotiations started after the workers put down tools for eight days in July. The mine is located in Papua province, 3,120 kilometres east of Jakarta. ☺

Cuba and Brazil strengthen health cooperation links

The health ministers of Cuba and Brazil, Roberto Morales Ojeda and Alexandre Rocha Santos Padilha, have signed a memorandum of understanding as part of exchanges between the two countries to increase collaboration in the field of health.

They likewise signed a technical cooperation project for extending cancer screening and the principal lines of the Cuban public health system were outlined to the Brazilian delegation.

The Brazilian Health Minister affirmed that the visit to Cuba, in addition to strengthening friendship and cooperation between the two nations, is part of a commitment to Latin America.

"We hope to take concrete steps in terms of cooperation, not just among our peoples but also for the rest of the world, which is waiting to have closer access to medicines as a fundamental health right," he stated.

Rocha Santos described as very

positive what he had seen in the area of technological innovation and expressed the Brazilian delegation's interest in studying Cuban experiences and strategies.

He commented that the exchange between the two countries has added relevance at a point when a new chapter is being opened within the global health agenda, given that the UN General Assembly recently discussed at the level of heads of state and government aspects such as chronic non-transmissible diseases like cancer, hypertension and diabetes.

Cuban Health Minister Roberto Morales Ojeda highlighted the importance of human resources as the principal capital for guaranteeing a competent health system.

The governments of Cuba and Brazil initiated cooperation in the field of health in 1996, with joint projects in biotechnology and sanitary vigilance, among others.

Granma ☺

Pakistan and the "Haqqani Network"

Dr Paul Craig Roberts

Have you ever before heard of the Haqqanis? I didn't think so. Like Al-Qaeda, about which no one had ever heard prior to 9/11, the "Haqqani Network" has popped up in time of need to justify America's next war – Pakistan.

President Obama's claim that he had Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden exterminated deflated the threat from that long-serving bogymen. A terror organisation that left its leader, unarmed and undefended, a sitting duck for assassination no longer seemed formidable. Time for a new, more threatening, bogymen, the pursuit of which will keep the "war on terror" going.

Now America's "worst enemy" is the Haqqanis. Moreover, unlike Al-Qaeda, which was never tied to a country, the Haqqani Network, according to Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, is a "veritable arm" of the Pakistani government's intelligence service, ISI. Washington claims that the ISI ordered its Haqqani Network to attack the US Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan, on September 13 along with the US military base in Wadak province.

Senator Lindsey Graham, a member of the Armed Services committee and one of the main Republican warmongers, declared that "all options are on the table" and gave the Pentagon his assurance that in Congress there was broad bipartisan support for a US military attack on Pakistan.

As Washington has been killing large numbers of Pakistani civilians with drones and has forced the Pakistani army to hunt for Al-Qaeda throughout most of Pakistan,



The US intends to use the "Haqqani Network" to justify an attack on Pakistan.

producing tens of thousands or more of dislocated Pakistanis in the process, Senator Graham must have something larger in mind.

The Pakistani government thinks so, too. The Pakistani Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani, called his foreign minister home from talks in Washington and ordered an emergency meeting of the government to assess the prospect of an American invasion.

Meanwhile, Washington is rounding up additional reasons to add to the new threat from the Haqqanis to justify making war on Pakistan: Pakistan has nuclear weapons and is unstable and the nukes could fall into the wrong hands; the US can't win in Afghanistan until it has eliminated sanctuaries in Pakistan; blah-blah.

Washington has been trying to bully Pakistan into launching a military operation against its own people in North Waziristan. Pakistan has good reasons for resisting this demand. Washington's use of the new "Haqqani threat" as an invasion excuse could be Washington's way of overcoming Pakistan's resistance to attacking its North Waziristan province or it could be, as some Pakistani political leaders say, and the Pakistani government fears, a "drama" created by Washington to justify a military assault on yet another Muslim country.

Over the years of its servitude as an American puppet, the Pakistan government has brought this on itself. Pakistanis let the US purchase the Pakistan government, train and

equip its military, and establish CIA interface with Pakistani intelligence. A government so dependent on Washington could say little when Washington began violating its sovereignty, sending in drones and special forces teams to kill alleged Al-Qaeda militants, but usually women, children, and farmers. Unable to subdue after a decade a small number of Taliban fighters in Afghanistan, Washington has placed the blame for its military failure on Pakistan, just as Washington blamed the long drawn-out war on the Iraqi people on Iran's alleged support for the Iraqi resistance to American occupation.

Some knowledgeable analysts about whom you will never hear in the "mainstream media," say that the US military/security complex and their neoconservative whores are orchestrating World War III before Russia and China can get prepared.

War is the lifeblood of the profits

of the military/security complex, and war is the chosen method of the neoconservatives for achieving their goal of American hegemony.

Pakistan borders China and former constituent parts of the Soviet Union in which the US now has military bases on Russia's borders. US war upon and occupation of Pakistan is likely to awaken the somnolent Russians and Chinese. As both possess nuclear ICBMs, the outcome of the military/security complex's greed for profits and the neoconservatives' greed for empire could be the extinction of life on earth.

The patriots and super-patriots who fall in with the agendas of the military-security complex and the flag-waving neoconservatives are furthering the "end-times" outcome so fervently desired by the rapture evangelicals, who will waft up to heaven while the rest of us die on earth.

Global Research ☪

Mass and organised popular defiance

Thousands of people participated last week in the demonstrations organised by the class-oriented trade unions in Athens, Thessalonica and other Greek cities against the new tax robbery which leads the people to bankruptcy. Workers, the unemployed, self-employed, students and pensioners rallied by their trade unions, popular committees in the neighbourhoods and the mass organisations carried out the organised refusal to pay the head taxes by burning the payment orders and demanded that those who created the crisis go bankrupt-the plutocracy and its representatives.

It should be noted that the new law for the property tax was passed in parliament while the government is pushing forward a new draft law on taxation to serve the plutocracy. Indeed, this tax will be incorporated into people's electricity bill, with the threat that those that do not pay it will have their electricity cut. In addition, the new predatory measures included a reduction of the tax free threshold to 5,000 euros – something which means that the tax threshold is 357 euros income per month, abolition

of tax relief (e.g. rent expenses), VAT increases etc.

The Press Office of the Central Committee of the KKE (Communist Party) notes in its statement: "The uncontrolled bankruptcy of the popular family is a reality" and adds: "The government's tax rampage is one more piece of evidence that the anti-people offensive is not temporary and will escalate without an expiry date. The poor pensioners on 400 Euros per month are being called on to pay taxes, people who are trying to survive on incomes lower than the official poverty line. The workers must only possess the basics, simply to be able to turn up again at work. All the rest must be returned to the industrialists, the bankers, the ship-owners..."

At the same time, the government, after the provocative reduction of the tax rates on the profits of big capital, is studying further cuts to its taxation. It has already announced special zones-tax havens for big capital, where the taxation of profits will be reduced even further and there will be no collective bargaining agreements. This political line is the only way for the monopolies. Continued the KKE: "The only way for the people

is for the crisis to be paid for by big capital, which today contributes less than 2.8 billion euros of taxes annually, when the overall tax income is more than 50 billion euros. The ship-owners, banks and industrialists must be substantially and directly taxed.

The only duty the people have is to lift up their heads, to fight for their rights.

"Every conscious person from the popular strata has a responsibility to refuse to pay the unjust head taxes. To impede the implementation of the barbaric measures. To take part in the organised working class-people's struggle in the workplace and popular neighbourhoods so that a strong popular alliance is formed of the workers, the self-employed in the city and countryside, of the youth, of the women, for the overthrow of the power of the monopolies, withdrawal from the EU with people's power."

The activity for the overthrow of the barbaric political line continues with the preparation of the strike in the public sector and former state enterprises on the October 5 and the nationwide general strike on October 19. ☪

International Action Day

The call of the World Federation of Trade Unions for international coordination of the class-oriented trade union movement with common slogans and national activities has reached every country of the five continents.

The messages that are reaching the WFTU Central Offices are a prologue of a successful International Action Day (October 3), a strong response and counterattack of the international working class.

We have already received information for the organisation of strikes, rallies, demonstrations, mobilisations, meetings, seminars and press conferences that are being organised in different cities of the following countries: Austria, Bangladesh, Basque Country, Brazil, Catalonia, Centrafrique, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, Finland, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Lebanon, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Panama, Philippines, Poland, Puerto Rico, Russia, Senegal, Spain, Sri Lanka, Venezuela.

Dozens of messages are

arriving in the Central Offices every day.

The international working class is joining voices on the slogans: Working week of 35 hours – 7 hours a day – 5 days a week, public social security for all, collective bargaining, trade union and democratic freedoms, solidarity to the Palestinian People, Freedom to the Five Cuban Heroes.

The WFTU affiliates and friends are organising:

- Transport Strike in Brazil
- Rallies and demonstrations in Bangladesh, Brazil (Rio de Janeiro and Salvador), El Salvador, Cyprus, Pakistan (Gujrat), Spain, Puerto Rico, Panama, Guatemala, India, Brazil
- Mobilisations and protests in Basque Country, Chile, Centrafrique, Dominican Republic, Finland
- Workshops, seminars and meetings in Austria (against the crisis and the privatizations), Costa Rica (workshop of 200 participants), Lebanon, Panama, Puerto Rico, Sri Lanka, Russia. ☪

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



email: tpearson@cpa.org.au

Of the military and mercenaries

I have no problem with women serving in the army if they wish to do so, especially when their country is under attack from enemy invaders. However, in the circumstances Australia finds itself in globally, the military serve as mercenaries sent to whatever place the ruling international elite chooses to destroy and conquer.

The loot comes in natural resources and stunted development for the defeated country. In essence, it's an army for hire nowadays with taxpayers paying for multinationals' interests, as usual.

So in the circumstances I personally think that both men and women might find more fulfilling jobs than endangering their lives for somebody else's profiteering.

Mati English
Sydney

Education disgrace

Congratulations to *The Guardian* for its interview/article on the struggle of WA teachers for an equitable and qualitative public education system. Being such a wealthy commodity-export state, one would expect public schools in WA to be a lot richer than they are. So much for "redistribution of mineral wealth for the benefit of all"!

It's true that Australia has one of the highest rates of privatised education in the world. Under the Howard government, with its massive subsidisation of private schools, the outcomes gap between rich and poor widened further, with no overall improvement in standards, according to PISA results.

The Gonski Review promises

to redistribute the education dollar on a more equitable basis. If it ever sees the light of day, it needs to be assessed with a microscope. If it fails to deliver, massive nationwide action to save public education becomes a necessity.

Bob Treasure
Warrimoo

Australia, Don't Lift Burma Sanctions

Burma activists are calling on the Australian government to maintain targeted financial sanctions on Burma until there has been genuine change in Burma, following reports that Burmese authorities are trying to bargain the release of 300 political prisoners for the lifting of sanctions.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that Burma's Foreign Minister Wanna Maung Lwin told the UN that the President Thein Sein would approve the release of prisoners at "an appropriate time in the near future", at the same time the military-dominated government is calling on western countries, including Australia, to lift sanctions.

If the new military-dominated government in Burma was genuinely committed to change they would have released all political prisoners by now, and they certainly would not be trying to haggle with the international community about what they will get for the release of just 300 of the country's 2,000 political prisoners.

Australia maintains financial sanctions against over 400 named members of the military regime,

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their families and supporters. These sanctions were introduced in 2007 following the violent crackdown on peaceful demonstrations led by Buddhist monks.

Earlier this year Aung San Suu Kyi's party the National League for Democracy conducted a review of sanctions against Burma. The review set out three benchmarks for the lifting of sanctions: the release of all political prisoners, human rights violations stopping and for genuine dialogue between the government, the democracy movement and the ethnic nationalities.

None of these benchmarks have been met.

Thousands of people are being held as political prisoners in jail in Burma. Human rights violations continue and military attacks targeting civilians in north and north eastern Burma have escalated since March. And whilst there has been some ad hoc dialogue between Aung San Suu Kyi and the authorities, no concrete plans for further dialogue or for including the ethnic nationalities has been made.

The Australian government should not consider lifting sanctions on Burma until these benchmarks are met and there is real change in Burma.

Zetty Brake
Burma Campaign Australia

DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

Write a letter to the Editor

Culture & Life

by Rob Gowland

Gorby and others of his ilk

A correspondent in the British Communist paper *The New Worker* recently caused a bit of a flap by quoting Gorbachev to back up the claim that the USSR was responsible for massacring Polish officers in the Katyn forest in WW2. Invoking Gorbachev to support anti-Soviet statements is hardly radical, of course: Gorby himself makes no secret of his longstanding anti-Sovietism (indeed, he bragged about it, and still does).

Like Gorby's attacks on Stalin, his grovelling apology to post-socialist Poland for the "Soviet massacre" was part of Gorby's overall stratagem for polishing his own image by denigrating socialism. As I wrote at the time, his revival of attacks on Stalin had nothing much to do with Stalin and everything to do with Gorby's internal struggles within the CPSU (of which at the time he was still General Secretary): by identifying his Party critics as "Stalinists" rather than "anti-Gorbachevites" he successfully sidetracked the debate in the CPSU so that he was able to continue on his "reforming" way – straight towards dissolution of the Party and the USSR both.

The destructive part of his plan

worked all too well, but when he ran for President he discovered that the Russian people viewed him with disdain. He got rid of the Soviet Union, leaving the US and NATO more or less unchallenged strategically, and yet he seems genuinely surprised that no one in Russia cares tuppence what he says or does now. Only the media of the West, which owes him big time, still gives him space for old times sake.

As for using Gorby to provide proof of historical accuracy, I think that falls into the category of a sick joke.

Russian Communists have denounced the Gorbachev claims, repeated by the Putin government, pointing out that the motive for this attempt to swing the blame for the Katyn atrocity from the Nazis to the Communists is to try to curry favour with the reactionary, Church-dominated Polish government.

Dave Danton, responding in *The New Worker*, noted that "documents, purporting to be orders signed by Beria, sanctioning the execution of thousands of interned Polish POWs, have been seriously challenged by Russian scholars and by the man who appeared on Moscow TV last year claiming to have been part of a team that forged them in the early 1990s on Yeltsin's orders."

That would seem to dispose of "Beria's orders", but Danton also notes that "the issue has been further muddled by a report of conversations between Lazar Kaganovich and a Russian academic between 1985 and 1991 in which the former top minister in the Stalin government admits that several thousand Polish prisoners were shot for war crimes committed during the Soviet-Polish war (1919-1921) and general serious offences during their period of internment in the USSR. But these were not those executed in the Katyn Woods."

From slaughter in the Katyn Woods to slaughter in the stock-market: the chaos and losses on Wall



Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev.

St and other stock exchanges have played havoc with many workers' superannuation funds, wiping out investments that were supposed to "look after them in their old age". Emergency measures to deal with the crisis (or more accurately the series of crises) have less than unanimous support from within the capitalist camp, as some countries try to use it to strengthen their position vis à vis other capitalist groupings, searching as ever for a way to make a profit from any and all eventualities.

Greece has been "squeezed until the pips squeaked" and its government – which no one would describe as "left wing" – has actually dropped hints about leaving the Euro Zone, opting out of the monetary union created by the imperialist states of Europe to ensnare the smaller European countries. This went down very poorly with Germany and France, who are now striving to find a satisfactory formula that will keep Greece in the Eurozone while not upsetting the imperial ambitions of France and Germany. A tough call.

So tough indeed that many commentators see it as already stillborn.

Although at time of writing, Angela Merkel and Nicolas Sarkozy were still promoting their "plan", which was basically predicated on the German and French governments using public money to prop up Greek banks (and other European banks holding wads of Greek IOUs) while setting a tax on financial transactions (guess who that will be passed on to). Just why the people of Europe should subsidise the machinations and schemes of Europe's banks is something most people in Europe fail to see.

As Radio Havana reported, "actually, what less developed countries really wanted was to put to work the Eurobonds and increase their contingency fund to seek emergency funds in case of need.

"Faced with the grim and sinister scenario in the global economy, Venezuela's initiatives, such as nationalising the gold industry to recover the international reserves in this metal and instead to redistribute the money in other geographical areas, are reasonable.

"The world is changing rapidly, and countries – especially those that prioritise the welfare of their people

– have the full right to defend themselves against the darkness that lies ahead, whose death throes will strike everyone."

The global financial situation is of course affected by the colossal diversion of funds from constructive production to war. I saw a photo recently of a demonstration against the ongoing war in Iraq. It was very simple: two people holding up a large banner saying "THE COST OF WAR" and underneath three lines of figures.

"US funding \$387 billion.

"US troops killed 3,011.

"Iraqis killed 655,000."

It's worth noting (as Radio Havana did) that "in 2002, the average number of reported violent deaths in Iraq was 14 every month. Since the bombing started in late 2007, more than 1.2 million have been killed and another million wounded."

And that does not include the people who will die from the effects of the 1,100 to 2,200 tons of weapons laden with depleted uranium that the US dropped on Iraq in 2003. A public health ticking time bomb. ☛



Sun 9 Oct –
Sat 15 Oct

Just one program in this column today, but it is an important program. Something that is not talked about too much these days is the way Fascism and the more reactionary part of the Christian Church worked hand in glove for decades. Mussolini reached an understanding with the Catholic Church in Italy. Other Fascist or extreme reactionary regimes before or during WW2 were even more closely integrated with their national Churches: in Hungary, Spain, Portugal, Slovakia, Croatia, Poland, Vichy France.

The Catholic Church supported Fascist political movements in developed capitalist countries before the War and actively helped Nazi war criminals and collaborators to escape to Canada, the USA, South Africa, South America and Australia at the end of the War. In Australia's case, it probably helped the Immigration Minister, Arthur Caldwell, was a staunch Catholic.

Anti-Communism was the basis of these churches' embracing of Fascism, but here the Catholic Church, despite its tenacity, was easily outpaced by the ferocity of the American evangelical churches, especially the Baptists. I remember

reading one Baptist propaganda leaflet about the terrible wrongs supposedly done to religious believers "behind the iron Curtain" that included such refinements as nuns having their tongues nailed to the tops of tables!

With the addition of music, electronics and broadcasting, the evangelical churches in the USA (and Australia) today are a powerful, growing overtly political movement that continues almost a century of reactionary indoctrination, and a credo that preaches exclusion, superiority, ignorance and fear. All in the name of the God of Love.

Jesus Camp (ABC2 Sunday October 9 at 8.30pm) is a horrifying feature-length glimpse inside this movement in its US heartland. A large percentage of evangelical children today are "home-schooled", which keeps them from being contaminated by Satan, of course, but also by non-evangelical teachers and godless scientists (who are synonymous with Satan anyway).

In many ways the program is illuminating: before the bible camp gets underway, the female pastor whose forte is brainwashing children leads the other adults in praying over the seats in the auditorium, asking Jesus to make sure that there are no blackouts or technical faults that might interrupt the work of the camp. And they are *serious*: technical hiccups at such a camp are not bad luck or a lack of maintenance but "the work of Satan". And praying will probably prevent it.

It is quickly noticeable that these people act like they are in a war. In fact, they *boast* that they are. They are going to "take back America for Jesus". Take it back from whom? Well, from all of us, it seems.

This is the new form of clerical Fascism. It may be Protestant, but it

is still clerical Fascism. They justify their intense indoctrination of youth by saying that that is exactly what the Islamists do in Palestine and Pakistan, and they have to do the same.

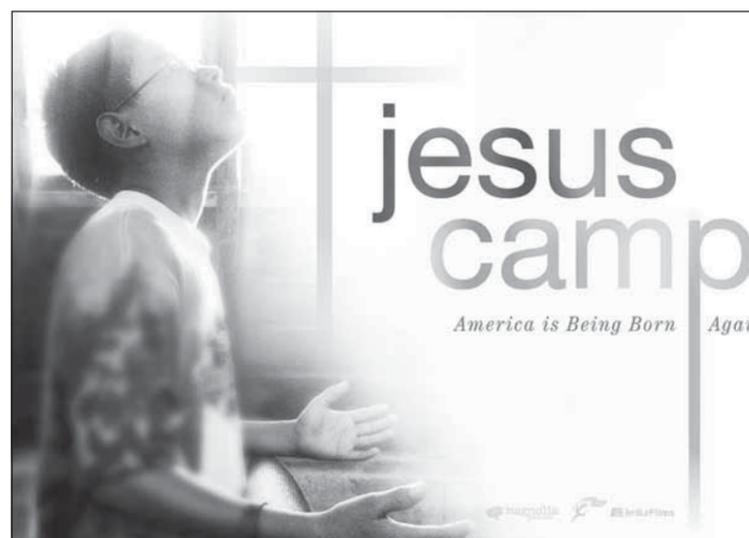
The father in the family that is the centrepiece of the coverage is in the US Army, away fighting the Islamists in a modern day crusade as GW Bush called it. Bush of course is held in the highest regard, because he was so public about his evangelical Christianity (ergo, he must be a good person and a great leader).

One fears that the grossly simplified, self-righteous power trip that is the essence of the evangelicals shown here must be very alluring to people kept in ignorance of how the world *really* works. These young people are being groomed for a future of obedience and respect for authority that would have been right at home in the Hitler Youth.

Tolerance has no place in their lexicon, and since non-believers are going to burn in Hell anyway, one wonders how reluctant they would be to exterminate unbelievers here on Earth (or would they be reluctant at all?)

The parts of the program that give one cause for hope are the sections that deal with *other* Christians. They too have their radio programs and their talk-back shows, but their line is totally at odds with the evangelicals. The anti-scientific approach of the "Born Again" folk who are the main subject of the film, is rubbished by these other "old fashioned" Christians, who criticise their lack of compassion, their ignorance of their own Bible, and especially their radical rightwing political agenda.

And it *is* a radical rightwing agenda, complete with its own flag (the US flag is everywhere, of course, like the McDonald's golden arches,



Jesus Camp (ABC2 Sunday October 9 at 8.30pm)

but so too is the "Christian flag"). At the camp, children as young as six are taught to hone their "gift of prophecy" and to become religious *political* activists in readiness for "taking back America".

One of the saddest sequences is that in which we watch the family's young daughter, just a little girl, dancing for the sheer pleasure of it and then telling us proudly that she dances for Jesus, before admitting sheepishly that sometimes she dances just for her own enjoyment ("for the flesh" as she self-consciously puts it, confiding to us that she has to correct that and is working on it).

Several times during the program we see the "Born Again Christians" in this program babbling nonsense syllables and assuring one another that they are "speaking in tongues", that the gibberish they are mouthing is in fact God Himself speaking through them!

It is tempting to laugh at them because their beliefs are so hokey, so appallingly ignorant, but really the temptation does not last long, because these latter-day clerical Fascists are so visibly if unconsciously evil, as they promote obscurantism and denigrate science itself. They do not say so here, but it is obvious that given a chance they would close every institute of learning that did not accept Creationism and would cry "Rejoice!" at the closures. They would condemn the whole world to ignorance and superstition and call it "the word of God".

This is no time for progressives to be complacent. *The Guardian* has commented before on the huge audiences these all-singing, all-dancing evangelical churches (like Hillsong in Sydney) already attract. Watch and learn. ☺

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October 7

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October 14

FOOD SECURITY – THE LOOMING CRISIS

Bill Pritchard, Economic Geography, Sydney University;
Brigit Busicchia, Macquarie University

October 21

BEYOND THE CARBON PRICE – WHAT SHOULD THE NEXT STEP BE & HOW TO EFFECTIVELY CAMPAIGN FOR IT

James Goodman, UTS & Friends of the Earth;
Georgina Wood, Director, Climate Action Network Australia

October 28

THE MALAYSIAN/PAPUAN "SOLUTION" DEAL – ONLY A CYNICAL GOVERNMENT PLOY – CONSEQUENCES!!

Julian Burnside, Barrister, Human Rights advocate;
Phil Glendenning, Director, Edmund Rice Centre

November 4

TIBET: THE ONGOING HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES, THREATS TO ITS PEOPLE & CULTURE – EMERGING GLOBAL OUTRAGE

Tenpa Dugdak, The Tibet Effect;
Tenzin Tsundue, Tibetan Youth Congress & Friends of Tibet

November 11

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FRETILIN Here to Stay

The Third National FRETILIN Congress

Chris White

Thomas Mayor, Maritime Union of Australian Darwin, gave his solidarity greeting to more 700 men and women delegates in bright red, yellow and black shirts.

FRETILIN has used its time since the 2007 elections in opposition well, to reorganise its base from Dili and 13 districts and build a contemporary professional political party. It has 167,000 members.

On elections to the Central Committee, after vigorous debate, the leadership list was decided. We had to wait as the voting was conducted individually in booths in the hall.

The popular Party President Francisco Guterres Lu'Olo and Secretary-General Mari Alkatiri were both re-elected pre-Congress by direct ballot by all members. Total number of votes 165,570: in favour 147,064 valid votes 95.87%; against 4.13%; invalid votes: 4.21%; votes with no tick: 3.13%. FRETILIN is one of the few political parties to hold a national secret and direct vote by all members for top leadership positions.

Party leaders talked of a transition era to 2017, when the new generation of leaders will be voted in.

The Congress was live on TV so that supporters and the public could follow proceedings.

This Congress debated their program exhaustively. They move amendments so there is much debate publicly. Privately they debate into the early hours of every morning. This Congress worked hard for democratic processes. Any repeat of the 2006 Congress divisions was not apparent.

As an observer, I have many memories of years of Australian party and union conferences. Inspiring political addresses, singing of national songs, aiming for unified outcomes, being media savvy using social media, questions to settle over credentials, exhaustive voting and counting processes, arguing to the early hours resolving factional disputes, and celebrations at the end with a cake and international guests joining in the toasts.

International parties giving solidarity greetings included Australia, Indonesia, Portugal, Mozambique, Angola, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, China, Vietnam, Laos, Cuba and Japan. Mari Alkatiri said that international support was crucial to winning and now in defending their independence.

Lu'Olo invited all who wore FRETILIN colours before to rejoin the party.

"Come together now because our beloved country needs us all. FRETILIN has an idea that where there is peace, there will also be stability and vis-à-vis."

Lu'Olo recounted the success of the Alkatiri government and its responsible budget with proceeds from the oil/gas negotiations with the corporates and Australia.

I cite one vigorous political exchange against the government, a release during the Congress:

DILI (AFP) from Jose Teixeira MP and FRETILIN spokesperson.

East Timor's opposition called for Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao to step down as his cabinet faces scrutiny over corruption claims.

The anti-corruption commission said Monday it had handed six dossiers to the Attorney-General's Office, which has since called on two cabinet members for questioning.

"Because of his mistakes, I ask Xanana to step down so that we can eradicate corruption in the government. If we can't, then we are stealing our people's money," FRETILIN

Secretary-General Mari Alkatiri told party members at a congress meeting.

Alkatiri accused Gusmao of weak leadership and said corruption was making the poor in East Timor poorer.

"In my era, any mistake by FRETILIN or any minister was my fault. Now it is never the fault of the prime minister – the ministers themselves are blamed."

Australian Resistance radios cheered

Introduced in a speech by Mari Alkatiri, two historic radios used in the 1970s radio link between Fretilin and Darwin and the world were handed over by Rob Durbridge, Bob Boughton and myself to a standing ovation. The party is an astute user of social media, so images were on YouTube shortly after. (youtube.com/watch?v=x4pYivWkYew)

Congress delegates applauded the role of Darwin co-ordinator Brian Manning from the

National Front CNRT. Jose Ramos Horta, overseas, leaves FRETILIN. Lu'Olo continues FRETILIN leadership in the mountains, as does Mari Alkatiri from Mozambique.

FRETILIN survives to the 1999 independence YES vote. The planned Indonesian State-sponsored terrorism has the TNI massacre thousands, move over 250,000 to West Timor and destroy over 80 percent of infrastructure and houses in an attempt to destroy the democratic outcome.

The then Australian Prime Minister John Howard and his Foreign Minister Alexander Downer had only prepared the Australian army to airlift Australians from Dili. Eventually they are forced by mass Australian protest action, union bans and international outcry pushing US President Clinton to move against the Indonesians. Howard and Downer reversed to be in the UN military intervention. Clinton Fernandes has a detailed account in "The Independence of East Timor Multi-dimensional Perspectives – Occupation, Resistance and

For 24 years the resistance survived the Suharto fascist regime's brutal occupation and army's genocide.

Communist Party of Australia and Waterside Workers Federation and those who staffed the radio under difficult conditions, including Estanislau da Silva, who joined us on stage. The CPA established and maintained the radio link for which Alkatiri thanked all concerned.

Some of Brian Manning's story on the clandestine radio broadcasts can be found in "Rough Reds" (roughreds.com/rrone/manning.html).

Rob Durbridge from SEARCH expressed solidarity, as did Deborah Duman and the ALP's Assistant Secretary Nick Martin.

Fretilin survives after 35 years

As political and military forces have been trying to destroy FRETILIN, "FRETILIN here to stay" resonates. FRETILIN's survival over 37 years is historically critical. Their leadership presented to the delegates a document signalling important FRETILIN events, dates and those in the leadership and this was vigorously debated by delegates.

Here is my account of FRETILIN's survival. The East Timorese suffered under East Timor's Portuguese colonial masters ruling for 400 years and in WW2 from the Japanese fascists. They lived in dire poverty into the 1970s. FRETILIN began as a resistance movement fighting for independence from Portugal's fascist regime until in 1975 with de-colonisation and then against Indonesian military occupation. This unique guerrilla war linked to their international solidarity strategy led by FRETILIN's Diplomatic Front based in Maputo. For 24 years the resistance survived the Suharto fascist regime's brutal occupation and army's genocide.

In 1978 Nicolau dos Reis Lobato, then the FRETILIN leader, was killed. The armed military wing of FRETILIN, FALANTIL, changes. Xanana Gusmao becomes the commander in 1979 but leaves FRETILIN to lead the broad

International Political Activism" 2011 (Sussex Press).

After UN stability, the 2002 Independence celebrations come with all the political leaders and people and international guests united in this new nation. All parties and political leaders agreed on their Constitution.

In their new democracy in the first Parliamentary elections in 2001, Fretilin polls 57.4 percent of the vote with 55 seats in the 88-seat Assembly and forms the first government with Mari Alkatiri as PM. Ramos-Horta is appointed Foreign Minister. Xanana Gusmao wins the votes as the popular President. The FRETILIN government begins the enormous challenge of economic and social development of this, one of the poorest nations, and with struggles over their oil/gas in the Timor Sea.

In 2006, the violent "crisis" erupts and culminates with powerful anti-FRETILIN forces pressuring Alkatiri to resign as PM. President Xanana Gusmao appoints Ramos-Horta PM.

Readers may be aware of Peter Symonds arguing "How Australia orchestrated 'regime change' in East Timor" in *Australian Options* Spring 2006 (australian-options.org.au/issues/options_46/article_symonds.php).

Tim Anderson similarly in "Timor-Leste: The second Australian Intervention" in the *Journal of Australian Political Economy* No 58 page 62 begins with a FRETILIN press release, June 26, 2006.

"We did not expect that the elected leader of a party with an overwhelming mandate could be forced to stand down in this way in a democracy."

He said there are two stories over the second Australian intervention in Timor-Leste. The first has it that the small, newly independent country, beset with leadership and ethnic divisions, and led by an arrogant and even despotic Prime Minister, out of touch with the people, called once again on Australian assistance to avoid collapse into a "failed state".

The second maintains that the losing leadership faction, in a struggle for control of the senior ranks of the army, initiated a coup, then drew on the support an Australian oligarchy that had distanced itself from Timor Leste's ruling party and the then Prime Minister, Mari Alkatiri.

Paul Cleary in *Shakedown: Australia's grab for Timor oil* (2007, Allen Unwin) shows Howard and Downer despising PM Mari Alkatiri due to his successful stance on oil negotiations. Howard was the only government leader urging Alkatiri resign.

On September 9, 2011, this new *Sydney Morning Herald* report was circulated to us at the Congress from Jose Teixeira.

"Four Corners accused over story that hastened the fall of Alkatiri".

"A new documentary about East Timor has raised questions about a Gold Walkley-winning ABC TV program that led to the resignation of Mari Alkatiri as prime minister in 2006.

"*Breaking the News*, directed by Nicholas Hansen, examines the relationship between local and foreign journalists in East Timor and examines the *Four Corners* program "Stoking the Fires". Hansen, who spent four years researching and filming the documentary, says *Four Corners* painted a potentially misleading picture of the government's alleged involvement in arming civilian militia – an issue that remained clouded in uncertainty. He told the *Herald* the willingness of *Four Corners* to accept the testimony of unreliable characters and its failure to investigate possible links between the militia and the then president Xanana Gusmao put its report "on a very shaky trajectory".

Patrick O'Connor reported that WikiLeaks' cables revealed Gusmao's statements to US officials that support claims that the Australian media and spooks promoted stories to destabilise the FRETILIN government. "Portugal's intelligence chief accused Australia of 'fomenting unrest' in East Timor" (wsws.org/articles/2011/apr2011/iimo-a25.shtml)

In the June 2007 elections FRETILIN gets a reduced vote and the highest percentage with 29 percent. But Xanana Gusmao with his new CNRT party (National Congress for Timorese Reconstruction) wins government with the majority alliance of other smaller parties in Parliament the Alliance Majority. Ramos Horta is elected President.

No political institution or leader from the national liberation struggle won a clear majority based on program, ideas or leadership.

FRETILIN MPs go into opposition and are acknowledged as a quality opposition needed in a democracy.

Union launch

During a lengthy count, we left the Convention Centre to meet the Timor-Leste unions and launch their KSTL Konfederasaun Sindikatu Timor-Leste information newsletter. President Zito da Costa and General Secretary Rigo Monterio outlined their workplace issues. One major union demand is job creation given the 43 percent unemployment.

For the two rounds of elections next year probably April and June/July FRETILIN welcomes solidarity activists nominating to the Electoral Commission as observers.

See also my APHEDA 2011 study tour report. (chriswhiteonline.org/2011/09/apheda-timor-leste-2011-study-tour/)

Chris White, former secretary of the United Trades and Labor Council of SA, now lives in Darwin. A longer version is posted on his blog (chriswhiteonline.org)



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