



Prison ship disgrace

Latest asylum seeker debacle

Bob Briton

The Abbott government has gone to scandalous lengths to defend its sound bite claim to have “stopped the boats”. The 157 asylum seekers held in inadequate conditions aboard an Australian Customs vessel since early June have finally been transported via the Cocos Island to the Curtin Detention Centre in Western Australia. Federal ministers, headed by Immigration Minister Scott Morrison, have blustered that the hapless detainees will never settle in Australia. Journalists friendly to the government are insisting the rate of boat arrivals will probably settle at around the three to four per year that were intercepted during the Howard era.

The humanity and histories of the people seeking asylum are not considered. Prior to the weekend’s back down, Morrison had flown to Delhi in an effort to convince the Indian government to accept the return of the Tamils believed to be originally from Sri Lanka. The request was refused. A former Indian diplomat and visiting professor at the Delhi Centre for Policy Research G Parthasarathy told the media the plea must have appeared odd. “Australia is a country of 22 million, we are 1.2 billion, yet you’ve got a continent that is double the size of ours,” he said.

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Kiev junta disbands Communist Party of Ukraine: prelude to general suppression, ethnic cleansing

Chelman Lentz

Kiev, Ukraine: The speaker of the Ukrainian Parliament, Oleksander Turchynov, a member of the US backed junta that seized power in Kiev in March this year, has announced that he “corrected an historical error” and “fulfilled an historic mission” disbanding the Communist Party of Ukraine.

As well as parliament’s July 24 dissolution of the Communist Party, the Kiev junta has filed a court suit to ban Communist Party activity and to declare it a criminal organisation on grounds of supporting “separatism” and “terrorism”.

A statement by Communist Party leader Petro Symonenko in early May, that if he were president, he would immediately recall all troops from eastern Ukraine triggered these moves. He called the “special operations” in Donetsk and Luhansk

regions at the time a “war against the people.”

As a result right-wing thugs drove Symonenko out of the Presidential elections, culminating in an attempt to assassinate him.

The junta alleges that the Communist Party has been involved in “actions that led to Russia’s occupation of Crimea, involvement in supply of weapons and funding of terrorists in eastern regions, as well as in arranging separatist referenda in the Luhansk and Donetsk regions.”

Communist Party members are accused of “direct involvement ... in combat actions against Ukrainian forces of the anti-terrorist operation.”

The “anti-terrorist operation” is in fact the Kiev junta’s policy of ethnically cleansing eastern Ukraine of Russian speakers, in line with the call for “Ukraine for the Ukrainians” by the extreme right and Nazi elements that make up the junta.

The junta is even more determined to carry out this policy because of the east’s rejection of the fascist coup in Kiev, and the overwhelmingly endorsed referenda for self-determination in Crimea, Luhansk and Donetsk provinces.

The junta is also under pressure to restore “stability” in eastern Ukraine as part of the agreement to release IMF funding for the close-to-bankrupt country.

A draft bill “On the prohibition of communist ideology in Ukraine” is also before parliament. This “thought-crime” law, if passed, sets up the mechanism for suppression of all socialist and anti-fascist views and will drive all leftist movements and independent working class organisations underground.

It will make the IMF-imposed austerity policies and the accompanying ransacking of Ukraine’s resources and assets, so much more

difficult to resist, whether by workers and families in the western or eastern regions of Ukraine.

The banning of the Communist Party and “communist ideology” has been accompanied by murders, beatings, abduction and torture of communists, as well as the destruction of party buildings and desecration of monuments commemorating the victory of Ukrainians of the Soviet era over Hitler’s Nazis.

Members of other leftist organisations, activists and unionists have also been targets.

The suppression of the Communist Party in Ukraine signals the continuing descent of Ukraine into bloody dictatorship as the Kiev junta intensifies the vicious civil war against its own people on behalf of Ukrainian oligarchs – of which billionaire President Poroshenko is representative – and as it delivers Ukraine into the tender

mercies of the bankers of the European Union.

Progressive, democratic and peace loving forces internationally need to call for:

- condemnation of the banning of the Communist Party of Ukraine and similar moves against other opposition parties and organisations;
- a stop to the genocide being carried out against the people of Donetsk and Luhansk people’s republics and the violent suppression of opposition to the junta throughout Ukraine;
- solidarity with Ukrainian workers and all forces that stand against the neo-Nazi threat in Ukraine; and
- denunciation of the US/NATO conspiracy of aggression against Ukraine, and by extension Russia, which contains within it the threat of nuclear war. ✪

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Guardian

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Opportunism writ large

Prime Minister Tony Abbott offered condolences to the families who had lost loved ones in the “terrible tragedy” – the downing of Malaysian passenger jet MH17 – and demanded “justice for the dead.” He wasted no time in attributing blame to Russia for the “shooting down” of the MH17. Dennis Shanahan writing in *The Australian* (19-07-2014) proclaimed: “Tony Abbott has gone further than any other world leader in pointing the finger at Russia as being responsible for the ‘murder’ of 298 people including 28 Australians.” No examination of the site, no evidence whatsoever – blame Putin and in doing so, reinforce ongoing US demands for sanctions against Russia.

“Without bothering himself about evidence and operating only on speculation, Mr T Abbott assigned guilt,” the Russian foreign ministry said in a statement. “Abbott’s statements are unacceptable.”

Foreign Affairs Minister Julie Bishop was a little more circumspect, conscious of what was required to give Australia the international credibility to use its seat on the UN Security Council and hopefully become involved in the investigations.

In an act of opportunism of the lowest order, Abbott aided and abetted by the corporate media, is using the tragic deaths to play domestic politics. Abbott is strutting the world stage, negotiating with Russia and getting a motion through the UN on the MH17. “The nation has a true leader in Tony Abbott,” wrote Simon Benson in the *Daily Telegraph* (25-07-14). “There is no doubt that he has led the world. Those that know him will tell you that he is no ‘surrender monkey’.” Benson didn’t stop there, “The fact that he put a spine into US President Barack Obama and got Russian President Vladimir Putin on the phone – twice – may seem remarkable for a minnow such as Australia.”

In Australia, Abbott’s image as a “strong world leader” has been enhanced according to the media, but his government’s policies remain as unpopular as ever and the Coalition still lags behind Labor. Internationally, he is serving US strategic plans as the US increases pressure on reluctant European nations to impose sanctions on Russia.

At the same time another, even more horrendous tragedy is unfolding. For three weeks now Israeli forces have been bombarding Gaza. At the time of writing the Palestinian death toll had passed the 1,000 mark, a large percentage of them children. Thousands more have been seriously injured and seen their homes, hospitals and other facilities bombed to smithereens. More than 140,000 people have fled their homes (or the rubble that remains), many seeking protection and shelter in buildings run by the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA).

UNICEF official Osama Damo described the ongoing operation as “a war on children.” “There is literally no safe place for civilians in Gaza”, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) spokesperson Jens Laerke said. At the same time 40 Israeli soldiers have been killed inside Gaza and in Israel three Israeli citizens are reported as losing their lives.

When it comes to concern for Palestinian lives, there is deadly silence from our “strong world leader”. When three Israeli students were killed, Abbott extended his condolences to Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu. Daily, the media show the horror and tragedy of this ongoing massacre of the Palestinian people – flattened buildings, bodies in the rubble, people crying as they hold loved ones or dig through the rubble looking for child or mother. Surely such a humanitarian crisis is deserving of at least the description of a “terrible tragedy” from the Australian government. Why isn’t Abbott strutting the world stage in defence of Palestinian lives? Fortunately, the people of Australia are not so callous, as can be seen from the thousands who took to the streets around Australia on Sunday and in previous rallies.

In the case of the Palestinian people, there is overwhelming evidence of who is committing these horrendous crimes against humanity. The Australian government, the US and many of its Western allies are collaborators with imperialist interests in Israel’s aggression towards Palestinians and aims to build a “Greater Israel”. So don’t expect to hear Tony Abbott describing this slaughter of more than 1,000 innocent people as a “terrible tragedy” or demanding “justice for the dead”. Australia and the international community have a responsibility to protect the Palestinian people and bring Israel to justice. The Palestinians are prisoners in their own land with all borders closed by Israel and Egypt and no safe place to go.

PRESS FUND

This week the High Court will consider the case of 157 asylum seekers, including more than 30 children, who were imprisoned aboard an Australian customs vessel in the Indian Ocean for three weeks before the Abbott government finally sent them into immigration detention in Western Australia. The case may force Australia’s political leaders to rethink the cruel policies of mandatory detention and offshore processing, which the Communist Party of Australia has always opposed and which have sullied Australia’s reputation with regard to human rights. The *Guardian* intends to follow the case closely but we depend on contributions to the Press Fund to produce the paper, so please send us a contribution for the next issue if you possibly can. Our sincere thanks go to the following for their support this week:

Iranian cadres \$28, Ray Gillespie \$20, Mark Mannion \$5, “Round Figure” \$12

This week’s total: \$65 Progressive total: \$4,490

National Committee to Free the Cuban 5

Dear Friends,

We are all aware of the horrendous devastation in Gaza. As we write this, 797 Palestinians have been killed and 5,118 injured. The dead include 190 children and 75 women. With each day, the numbers grow. What is happening is truly genocide.

On July 8, the Cuban government issued the following statement:

- Cuba strongly condemns the latest Israeli aggression against the population of the Gaza Strip.
- Israel uses its military and technological superiority to implement a policy of collective punishment with a disproportionate use of force that causes loss of innocent civilian lives and massive property damage.

We call on the international community to demand that Israel put an end to this new escalation of violence. Only talks on an equitable basis can lead to a just peace that allows the Palestinian people to exercise their

inalienable rights and the definitive establishment of a Palestinian state with its capital in East Jerusalem.

On July 17 Fidel Castro wrote, “I only wish to express my solidarity with the heroic people who defend the last sliver remaining of what was their homeland for thousands of years.” Cuban Five Hero René González, free in Cuba and active on Twitter, sent a tweet message of support for the Palestinian people.

In the United States and around the world, people are standing up for Gaza. The National Committee to Free the Cuban Five urges everyone to join the protests in your area to demand an end to Israel’s aggression and an end to the military, financial, and diplomatic support that the US and other governments give to Israel.

Stop the massacre in Gaza!

End US aid to Israel!

Free Palestine!

Free the Cuban Five Heroes Now! ✪

Prison ship disgrace

Continued from page 1

In another very irregular development, Indian Consular officials will now interview the detainees in Australia to determine if there are any Indian nationals among them. The fate of the asylum seekers and the concept of assessment on the high seas is now in legal limbo. The cabinet’s “national security committee” was hoping to sidestep international and Australian law by intercepting asylum seekers in international waters and repatriating them after the most peremptory “processing” imaginable.

A directions hearing will be held in the High Court next week. A document has been lodged seeking to prevent the government sending the asylum seekers to PNG, Nauru or Sri Lanka against their will. The Director of International Protection, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr Volker Turk, says the Abbott government’s policy of “enhanced screening” is increasing the risk of refoulement – returning asylum seekers to the danger they were fleeing. “You can only ensure respect for the principle of non-refoulement if you have in place proper and fair procedures that identify, with due process, who is in need of international refugee protection and who is not,” he said.

A trail of victims

“Respect” is not in the Abbott government’s vocabulary when it comes to asylum seekers. Claims by Salvation Army support worker

Nicole Judge of a “rape dungeon” and widespread sexual harassment at the detention facility on Manus Island have stunned an inquiry into the violence that claimed the life of 23-year-old Iranian asylum seeker Reza Barati in February. It has also come to light that the PNG police have not interviewed a single person in connection with the death in the five months that have past since the riots at the camp.

Ms Judge told the inquiry she had received no training prior to commencing her work among suicidal detainees on Nauru. On Manus Island the experience was much worse. “I spent lengthy amounts of time trying to convince people that their lives were still worth living and there would be hope at the end of all of this ... In my head at times I didn’t believe what I was saying,” she said.

When she complained to Salvation Army supervisors of the rampant sexual harassment from local and ex-pat guards at the centre, she recalls being told “this kind of stuff happens behind bars all the time, so I just had to go with it.”

Christmas Island has also been in the news for tragic reasons. Fairfax Media obtained a document detailing injuries sustained by at least 11 women on July 7. They had tried various methods for suicide and self-harm after being told by immigration officials that they would not be resettled in Australia. Professor Gillian Triggs of the Australian Human Rights Commission visited

the island recently and noted 13 women on suicide watch.

Their conditions were said to be deteriorating rapidly. Even the plight of asylum seekers like these has become subject to government spin. “The government has redefined acts that many of us would describe as suicide attempts to self-harm and this is less than honest in terms of the public’s right to understand what these conditions are doing to the people on Christmas Island for longer than a year,” Professor Triggs said.

The government would prefer the public believed the asylum seekers were playing on the sympathies of supposedly soft Australian authorities to grant asylum. Authorities have not been persuaded to transfer the women on suicide watch to the Australian mainland where they could get suitable care. The Immigration Minister wouldn’t be drawn on any questions regarding suicide or self-harm in off-shore camps. “It is longstanding government practice not to confirm or comment on reports of individual acts of self-harm,” a spokeswoman said.

The world is watching the shameful behaviour of the Abbott government towards the small proportion of the planet’s displaced people arriving in Australian waters seeking protection. The moralising and hurling of threats to others about crimes against humanity and lack of decency would have been well and truly noted. So would the hypocrisy and opportunism of it all. ✪

Sydney

Free the Cuban 5 Campaign

Australian Speaking tour

August 3-18

FREE THE CUBAN 5



Political prisoners in the US since 1998

Aili Labañino-Cardoso

Activist and daughter of Ramon Labañino, one of the Cuban Five political prisoners held in the US. Aili has been politically active in the UJC (young communists) since she was a teenager and is a youth leader in Cuba. As a fighter for the freedom of the Cuban Five she has spoken at many meetings and conferences in Cuba and internationally.

Sydney – Saturday 16 August

6pm Reception 7pm Speakers

CFMEU Headquarters Level 2, 12 Railway St, Lidcombe (close to Lidcombe train station)

Contact: Jennifer Glass 9749 0400 or info@sydney-acfs.org

Summit targets suicide

Mez Fisher

WA: Putting Indigenous people in charge of their own affairs and creating strong connections with culture are the prime ingredients for making happy, healthy communities that can protect young people from taking their own lives, a recent roundtable summit on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicide heard.

The Perth summit, held last month at the Nedlands Yacht Club, also saw the launch of a new National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group in Mental Health, said to signal a new era in Indigenous leadership in the areas of mental health and suicide prevention.

Professor Pat Dudgeon, from the University of Western Australia's School of Indigenous Studies and Australia's first Aboriginal psychologist, hailed the roundtable as an "absolute success" in bringing together people from all walks of life to tackle the alarming rate of Indigenous suicide – twice the rate of other

Australians and among younger age groups up to six times higher.

Professor Dudgeon said the summit heard from a mix of people, Indigenous and non-Indigenous: community members, grassroots campaigners including several contributors to the recent Elders Report on youth suicide, academics, policy makers, mental health professionals and government representatives.

A pivotal point of the summit was an address by Canadian academic Michael Chandler, a noted expert in suicide prevention among Canadian First Nations communities. His research points to a sense of "cultural continuity" as a key protective factor against a community's risk for suicide.

"The Canadian experience has done a lot of research with colleagues to show communities with low suicide rates have a whole bunch of factors," Professor Dudgeon said. "They call it cultural continuity but if we translate it to the Australian context it's about self-determination, or preserving cultural activities."

Other factors identified by Professor Chandler's research include communities that have achieved a measure of self-government; been quick off the mark to pursue Aboriginal title to traditional lands; promoted women to leadership roles; constructed facilities that preserve their culture; and worked to gain control over their own civic lives, including health, education, policing, and child welfare services.

The WA roundtable was Professor Chandler's "third conversation" with his Australian counterparts since 2010 – hence its title, "The Third Conversation: Has Anything Changed?"

When asked by the *Koori Mail* if anything had changed, Professor Dudgeon said things had changed "a little bit, with a lot of action happening in the community and Indigenous people gaining more of a voice".

She said it was important that the national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicide prevention strategy be reactive to the

roundtable's outcomes, which will be presented to government in coming weeks.

"I think that ministers will be really keen to see what the outcomes of the roundtable are. They are keen to hear and get concrete ways forward," Professor Dudgeon said.

"Governments – whether state or federal – want to do something; they do want to do something but they're not sure how to go about it."

In some communities, suicide clusters involving up to 20-plus deaths in a short timeframe had devastated those left behind, Professor Dudgeon said.

She said good case management was needed following a suicide to prevent more such tragedies. She said she believed clusters occurred because of grieving and loss in the community.

She also points to broader concerns about identifying what is wrong with society itself. "Chandler says suicide is the miner's canary," Professor Dudgeon said.

"So we have high rates of suicide, which in itself is a terrible and tragic thing, but what are the reasons?"

On the last day of the summit, Professor Dudgeon launched the new National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group in Mental Health, endorsed by NSW Mental Health Commissioner John Feneley and Western Australian Mental Health Commissioner Timothy Marney.

The body has coalesced around a core group of senior Indigenous people working in the areas of social and emotional wellbeing, mental health and suicide prevention. Many of the group's representatives are involved with the state and national mental health commissions and other leading Indigenous health organisations.

If you would like to speak with someone about suicide, call the 24-hour Lifeline crisis service on 131 114 or the Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467.

Koori Mail ☺

"Free Palestine" rallies continue in Perth

Richard Titelius

For the third time in as many weeks the Friends of Palestine WA organised a rally to call an end to the attacks on Palestine by Israel and an end to their occupation of Palestinian land. Around 400 people attended the rally in the Murray Street Mall.

MC Nick Everett of Friends of Palestine WA reminded the protesters of the bombing of a UN-run school in the northern Gaza Strip which killed a number of civilians. The bombing of Gaza was causing not only deaths and injuries amongst the Palestinian people but was also creating more refugees, amongst the millions already thrown up by the conflict in nearby Syria. Millions of people were protesting around the world said Everett, in Europe and the Americas but also on the West Bank where 20,000 protesters marched from Ramallah until they were stopped by Israeli Defence Forces.

A Palestinian woman read three statements she had received from friends in Gaza about what day-to-day

life is like during this period of chaos and destruction of people's lives, homes and communities.

Linda Morich, a Safety Officer with the Maritime Union of Australia, one of the first unions to pass a resolution condemning the attacks, spoke of the murder, genocide and outrage of these attacks. "Our government needs to have a stronger voice in this conflict and to do more," said Morich.

An Aboriginal woman, Nicole Culbong, of the Nyoongar Tent Embassy, addressed the rally on the similarities between the struggle for recognition of sovereignty of her land and her people and that of the Palestinian people in their David and Goliath fight with Israel.

Emma Norton of the National Union of Students based at Curtin University Guild noted the unfettered support which the Australian government had given Israel.

After the rally people marched to the call, "In their thousands and in their millions, we support the Palestinians." ☺



(Photo: Richard Titelius)

Pete's Corner



Sydney

Delegates to the Five Days for the Cuban Five

WASHINGTON REPORT BACK



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Elizabeth Hulm and Vinnie Molina, delegates to the 3rd Five Days for the Cuban Five, held in Washington DC, will report back and provide first hand information on the international campaign to free the Cuban Five.

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For more info: 0419 812 872 or info@cpa.org.au

Organised by the Communist Party of Australia Central Committee

Touch one, Touch all

Attack on unions underway

Anna Pha

Imagine a large workplace with 600 workers but no direct employees. Where all the workers are employed by sub-contractors or body hire companies. Where there are no penalty rates for weekends, no holiday pay, no paid sick leave or rostered days off (RDOs). Where the gains of generations of workers and their trade unions, including health and safety, have been thrown out and union agreements have been replaced by non-union collective agreements or individual contracts.

And employers have all the flexibility they could dream of. This is happening right now, in the building and construction industry. At the same time the Abbott government is spending \$100 million on a Royal Commission witch-hunt into trade unions and not a cent on employer corruption, intimidation, bullying and harassment of workers to cop such conditions if they want work.

The government released the text of its *Building and Construction Industry (Fair and Lawful Building Sites) Code 2014* on April 17. It has still to be passed by Parliament and then will only officially come into effect when *Building and Construction Industry (Improving Productivity) Bill 2014* is passed and comes into force. It is presently stalled in the Senate.

The "Improving Productivity" bill sets out to strengthen the already draconian, anti-union powers of the notorious Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC): To return them to the Howard days.

"Improving Productivity" is spin for increasing profits and reducing labour and other related (eg health and safety measures) costs.

Employment Minister Eric Abetz claims the Code is "designed to restore the rule of law and fairness to Australia's construction sector." "Fair, productive and lawful building sites are critical to Australia's competitiveness, and job creation potential," Abetz said. The term "lawful" applies to trade unions and their compliance with repressive, anti-union legislation. "Competitiveness" and "job creation potential" are spin for lower labour costs, in particular wages.

"It is important that contractors that want to work on projects funded by the taxpayer have the ability to

operate efficiently and flexibly to ensure projects are delivered on time and on budget," Abetz continues.

Flexibility for employers is central to the Code, along with heightened exploitation of workers and deunionised building sites.

New building code

The Code seeks to prohibit long-standing practices and entitlements won over years of struggle. Any building company or contractor who wants to tender for or do work funded by the government will be required to adhere to the Code, not only on projects with government funding but on all of its private work as well. The legislation is backdated and will (if passed) apply to enterprise agreements made after April 24.

At present there are large construction companies with contracts for \$600 million or \$1 billion projects. They might directly employ 20 or 25 workers, but to avoid negotiating a union collective agreement, often keep them away from those projects. Tower crane crew or labourers and peggies are hired through labour hire instead to carry out the duties that otherwise their direct labour would carry out.

The building unions negotiate national, site or Greenfield agreements with major construction companies. The agreements also contain provisions regarding Right of Entry for union officials, offices and other facilities and the employment of full-time union delegates by the company. They often contain provisions requiring subcontractors and body hire outfits to adhere to them to avoid wage disparity or discrimination in the workplace.

This ensures that all workers on site are employed under the same agreement, have the same entitlements and cannot be pitted against each other in a race to the bottom.

Past gains wiped

The aim of the Code is to put an end to all the protections that trade unions have won, deunionise building sites and destroy the Construction Division of the CFMEU. Its provisions prohibit agreement clauses that:

- Require contractors to employ a "non-working" shop steward or job delegate
- "One in, all in" clauses where if one worker is offered overtime, all workers must be offered overtime
- Specify that subcontractors must comply with the site or national agreement
- Oblige contractors to consult with unions before engaging subcontractors
- Give unions a say in redundancies and demobilisation or redeployment of workers, eg. "last on, first off"
- Providing shop stewards with an area or office for their use
- The right of entry except under the strictest of conditions that undermine union activity. The employer must not allow a breach of these conditions. At present some employers have less formal relations
- Directly or indirectly encouraging union membership or other measures suggesting union membership is anything other than a matter of individual choice
- Preference to union members
- Employers doing anything that would have the same effect as a prohibited clause in an enterprise



Union members march in solidarity for jobs and local content in Perth.

agreement. At present it is allowable to have agreements around other matters such as trade union training, income protection or conversion of sick leave

In addition employers will be required to report any threatened or actual unprotected industrial action. No more short actions, such as following the death of a worker – builders are currently required to report this. They must take steps or action to actually prevent or bring to an end any unprotected industrial action – such as commencing legal action in the Fair Work Commission or a court.

It virtually outlaws industrial action and "coercion" to obtain over award payments. The ABCC with its increased powers will police workers and trade unions, confirm new agreements comply. The only sin they can commit is not hit workers hard enough.

It should come as no surprise that employers are already on the offensive enforcing the Code, using the excuse that it is retrospective.

Labor's Fair Work Act requires the inclusion of "individual flexibility clauses" ostensibly for the purpose of meeting the genuine needs of the employer and employees. These flexibility clauses are supposed to result in a worker being better off overall, but in reality, they are increasingly being used to rob building workers of their legal entitlements. The ABCC seems to have turned a blind eye to these illegal practices.

Individual contracts by another name

In one example, there are seven big contractors employing labour, all but one has a non-union collective agreement. In the name of flexibility, workers have lost their penalty rates for weekends, their holiday and sick pay and RDOs. They are pressured

into signing individual agreements or take the road. But the boss makes the same or more profit.

This legislation will affect all workers. It is a sign of what is to come when the Abbott government guts the Fair Work Act.

According to public sector unions, civilian employees in the Defence Department will be offered only a 2.65 percent salary increase over the next three years – 0.8 percent per annum. This "increase" amounts to a reduction in real wages (CPI is around 3%) and is conditional on "productivity offsets".

These "productivity offsets" include extending the working week by 30 minutes, two days cut from leave provisions, making it easier to sack staff and removal of a one percent bonus for satisfactory performance.

The Department of Human Services has offered 2.3 percent over three years.

Other departments can expect similar demands as workplace agreements expired in June across the public sector.

F-word

Catholic schools (under the guise of "flexibility") have proposed an EBA that would cut conditions like sick leave, force teachers to work longer hours (reducing wages) and hurt students by scrapping restrictions on class sizes.

"Flexibility: the five syllable f-word that strikes fear into the hearts of every worker!" said Independent Education Union secretary John Quessy as Catholic school teachers took strike action for the first time in a decade on Tuesday last week.

Readers are urged to lobby their MPs and Senators as well as the Palmer United Party and independent Senators. The new ABCC legislation and the Code must be blocked in the Senate and public servants supported in their struggle to protect jobs and conditions. ✪



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Journal of the Communist Party of Australia

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Public food safety is important

Silvia Salisbury

Approaching the age of 80, I find one of the few political activities I'm physically able to do, is to sign petitions on all sorts of social justice issues. When I signed the petition to stop the closing of NSW Department of Health's Food Testing Laboratory at Lidcombe, I was taken back over 45 years to when I applied to work as a part time laboratory assistant in the Division of Analytical Laboratories as the Forensic Analytical Science Services (FASS) were then called.

After being at home for ten years as a full-time mother, and needing to support my family with the financial expenses of three school aged children and a mortgage, I had applied for the job. The laboratory complex was close to home and the job was part time. I did not want to raise 'latchkey kids' and I wanted to be part of the school's P&C and be part of my children's school activities.

The laboratory complex had moved from crowded small premises in Macquarie Street, Sydney only six months previously and the people working there were proud of their new state-of-the-art facility. I worked in the food laboratory for many years and saw much of the great work done there by the analysts in safeguarding public health. The analysis of foreign matter in food products, the large scale surveys of salt and sugar content in baby foods, the mercury content, as well as other heavy metals, in fish following the Minamata disaster, the percentage of fruit juice content

in fruit juice drinks, the amount of preservatives in processed foods, along with food complaints identified and brought to the laboratory by Food Inspectors (employed by local councils throughout NSW) - the list is endless.

The analysts also had to give expert advice where prosecutions under the Pure Food Act 1908, were brought before the court.

I was proud of the work that the NSW government did in looking after the public's health. I wanted my children to grow up without being adversely affected by substandard preparation or questionable additives to food. Many health experts are questioning the long-term effects of putting corn syrup, a cheap additive, in a vast array of processed foods.

With many mothers needing to work to cope with the financial pressures of getting the basic necessities of life and time being at a premium, the temptation is great to use take away meals and precooked/processed foods with all the extra additives for preservation, taste enhancement, and visual attractiveness.

As food production becomes increasingly globalised, it is essential that an independent government body be responsible for the monitoring of how this food is produced and marketed to the consuming public (salamis and soft cheeses). As the cost of competition increases, cheaper alternatives and poorer quality ingredients will be used. For example cheap peanuts would be attractive to food processors. However cutting corners with storage could lead to the development

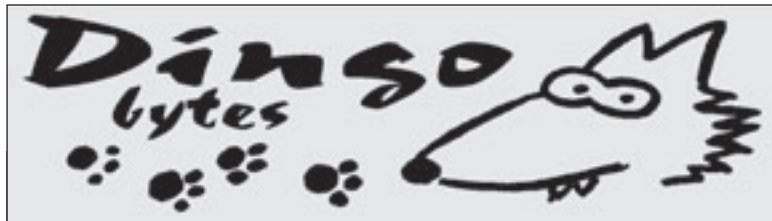
of aflatoxins, and so monitoring by trained analysts is crucial to safeguard the health of the public by preventing companies from compromising processing standards.

The diversity of food available makes it very expensive to monitor the safety of all foods. Private analytical companies, which have to make a profit, are unlikely to do time consuming and complex analyses. Food production from the growing of crops with pesticides, meat production with the use of growth hormones and antibiotics, storage of staples with the use of mould inhibitors and preservatives, all can have serious long term effects on people's health.

It is vital that an independent government body have the capabilities to run a large analytical laboratory that can; monitor all foods produced for public consumption; research and establish new analytical techniques to stay abreast of new methods of food production; and to work with other health organisations in protecting the overall health of the community.

Public health is too important an issue to be left to private companies which have to deal with the external pressures of the market (profits, shareholder support and maintaining market share). I find it impossible to understand this state government and how they can compromise something as important as food safety.

I want my children and grandchildren to grow up in a country where scientific skills can be used for the benefit of all: That our food is not only safe to eat, but beneficial to our health well into old age. ✪



Victoria's jobs market is not the best, and the impending closure of the three major car makers will make it even worse. The official unemployment rate in May was 6.2 percent with a loss of 26,000 jobs in seasonally adjusted terms. There is one sector in Victoria which is growing and that is prisons. More than 1,000 prison beds have opened since the elections; another 2,000 are in the pipeline, including the new 1,000-bed medium-security facility at Ravenhall in Melbourne's west. So the government is spending \$1.5 million on an advertising campaign to recruit prison and community correction officers over the next year. Victoria's Minister of Correction, Edward O'Donohue said the government's investment in the prison system would generate about 1,477 full-time ongoing prison jobs and up to 2,780 construction jobs. It is a pity we do not see the same enthusiasm when it comes to building public housing and providing people with meaningful jobs.

Slum landlords are alive and well and thriving in Sydney. Sixteen Japanese, Korean and New Zealand nationals had a lucky escape from a ferocious fire that destroyed what they called home - shipping containers, a bus with no wheels and decrepit caravans, all on an industrial complex in the inner city. The landlord charged \$160 a week plus \$260 bond to live there and share one porta-loo. Fire and Rescue NSW Commissioner Greg Mullins said he was "outraged that there would be something like this in the heart of Sydney". Fire crews were inspecting a routine industrial fire and were shocked to see 11 people crawling out of the thick smoke. Four people had to be rescued from a shipping container which was ablaze. They were lucky to have been noticed and rescued. President of the Council of International Students Australia said illegal and slum-like housing was so common in Sydney that most foreigners thought the living conditions were normal. The City of Sydney Council has only six rangers who can look into the unauthorised use of commercial properties in the city, but they have to have evidence of a breach of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act to gain access to a property.

About 30 people with disabilities were ejected from the ABC Melbourne foyer this month for protesting against its decision to freeze the Ramp Up website. The ABC had received seed funding for the site dedicated to giving a voice to disabled people in 2010 by the Labor government. It was extended for two years in 2012. The grant is worth just over \$1 million which is 1 percent of the ABC's \$1 billion editorial budget. The site's editor, comedian Stella Young, said that "the point of Ramp Up is that we had a place for our own voice, not one from the people writing about us, but who aren't disabled. If you listen to the mainstream media, we're either lazy bludgers or climbing Mt Everest". A spokesman for the ABC said it never intended to carry the site once funding ran out.

Restore funding: Peris

Northern Territory Senator Nova Peris is demanding Prime Minister Tony Abbott restore funding to the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA) office in East Arnhem before he visits the region in September.

NAAJA has announced that due to federal funding cuts of around \$1 million they have no option but to close the office from next year.

Senator Peris has slammed the government for forcing the closure.

"The closure of this office will increase crime and increase Aboriginal incarceration rates which are already at shockingly high levels," she said.

"NAAJA provides a critical legal service that has been proven to reduce reoffending.

"The closure of the NAAJA office is further proof that the Abbott government's cuts are

impacting on real frontline services, today."

In Parliament recently, Indigenous Affairs Minister Nigel Scullion again tried to claim that the cuts "would have no impact on frontline services". "Senator Scullion sits in Canberra pretending his cuts won't have an impact while out on the ground frontline services are closing," Senator Peris said.

She called on the Prime Minister to intervene and immediately ensure the long-term future of the NAAJA East Arnhem office.

"Mr Abbott claims to be the Prime Minister for Aboriginal Australians but so far he has done nothing - all he has is words," Senator Peris said. "The levels of Indigenous incarceration rates in Australia are a national disgrace and Mr Abbott's cuts will see further increases."

Senator Peris said all Australians should be shocked to learn that there has been absolutely no assessment by the Abbott government of the impact of their Budget cuts on Closing the Gap targets.

"Mr Abbott announced he will spend a week in East Arnhem in September. Before he does he must guarantee this funding cut will be overturned," Senator Peris said.

She said the funding cuts will actually end up costing money with incarceration costing around \$100,000 annually per person. Senator Peris thanked all NAAJA staff for their efforts, described by NAAJA CEO Priscilla Collins as providing "true justice, dignity and respect for Aboriginal people in the East Arnhem region".

Koori Mail ✪

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Redefining politics

In an age of toxicity and moral va

Barry Jones

The formative influences in my childhood and adolescence were the Great Depression, which I can just remember, World War II, and the brief period of post-war optimism when organisations such as the UN, UNESCO, WHO and FAO were set up, just before the onset of the Cold War in 1948.

I was a convinced anti-Nazi by the age of six, and my first political hero was Franklin D Roosevelt. Charles Darwin was an early inspiration and he has never let me down. I was deeply devoted to the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi.

The year 1950 was a big one for me: I became an undergraduate at Melbourne University, the only one in Victoria at the time, joined the Australian Labor Party (despite it being under growing National Civic Council influence) and read James Joyce's *Ulysses*.

Ulysses aside, the intellectual high point was hearing the philosopher Bertrand Russell give three lectures at the Assembly Hall for the Australian Institute of International Affairs (AIIA) in July.

I observed him at close quarters, as an enthusiastic groupie.

He said: "Three passions, simple, but overwhelmingly strong, have governed my life: the longing for love, the search for knowledge, and unbearable pity for the suffering of mankind."

I have never forgotten his words and they inspired my own priorities in public life. All three goals are now under challenge.

In public life now, love is essentially self-love (including the immediate family), short-term economic advancement, at whatever the social or environmental cost.

As to the search for knowledge – on paper the current Australian population is by far the most highly educated cohort in our history, with 4,000,000 graduates and the unprecedented capacity of the ICT revolution to give us immediate access to the world's greatest libraries, universities, laboratories, observatories, concert halls, giving us unparalleled access to profound understanding of the visible world, and ourselves. I jest of course. Every day on the tram I see young people mesmerised by the smart phone, yearning for communication, with such profound messages as "I'll see you in five minutes."

The suffering of mankind? Medicine and disaster relief aside, campaigning for human rights, that is, the rights of others, is now regarded as a certain vote loser in the age of retail politics, most clearly demonstrated in the case of our treatment of asylum seekers/refugees – nameless, faceless, outside the law, unreachable, without a history, without an identity.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, then the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the USSR and China's adoption of a state-controlled version of capitalism, the Western liberal democratic model seemed to be the only paradigm left standing but; 25 years later political institutions generally seem to have lost authenticity/legitimacy.

A values deficit

We live in an age of unprecedented prosperity, in which the major influences have been secularism,

materialism, utilitarianism, urbanisation, remoteness from nature, institutional failure, emphasis on immediate economic self-interest, the rise and rise of managerialism which has displaced community engagement in ideas and values, the impact of mass media, with its emphasis on immediacy, the cult of personality, promoting sensation, entertainment and an often vicious and destructive political agenda, in which the truth of a proposition ("The carbon tax forced closure of Ford's manufacturing in Australia"; "Standard & Poors is reassessing Australia's AAA credit rating") is irrelevant. Greed, drugs, problem gambling, domestic violence, child sexual abuse, covert and overt racism, all distort our moral compass.

Churches, like political parties, are losing numbers, commitment and moral authority, and have been shaken by the apparent institutionalisation of sexual abuse of children, where for decades the reaction has been to protect the institution and disregard the victim. Some political leaders act as if all values have a dollar equivalent, that forests are essentially woodchips on stumps, and that the value of a tree is as lumber, disregarding aesthetic factors or the contribution to clean air.

The current obsession is that if projects will make money for somebody, for example, grazing in national parks, or oil drilling, or the dumping of mine tailings near the Great Barrier Reef, logging in World Heritage sites, or the export of live animals, often under unspeakable conditions, they should go ahead. The appeal of money and growth in the gross domestic product are irresistible, with a refusal to contemplate the downside. The need for more cars on more freeways outweighs the values associated with Melbourne's Royal Park. Recreational shooters and four-wheel drives are now welcome in New South Wales national parks.

Much of the mainstream media (especially the Murdoch empire), emphasises advocacy, entertainment, shock factors and reinforcing prejudice, rather than providing information or carrying out investigative reporting.

Moral issues underlie the protection and preservation of the planet, and its biodiversity, for the long term, which we ignore in our pursuit of greed. The relief of poverty is one thing, but consumption is not an end in itself. The decay of formal religion and the long-term decline in church going intensifies the need to stimulate debate and understanding about values, the transcendental and the numinous.

Toxicity in politics

In the past decade, political life in Canberra has become toxic, with a breakdown in personal relationships, recourse to incessant personal attack, wild exaggeration and the endless repeating of slogans, having abandoned the practice of debating with ideas, and sentences with verbs. People with long political experience, many on the Coalition side, volunteer that the Abbott government is the most vindictive they can recall. Supporters are rewarded and opponents punished in unprecedented ways.

Kevin Rudd appointed Brendon

Nelson and Tim Fischer as Ambassadors, and chose Robert French, once a Liberal Party member, as Chief Justice of the High Court, in preference to Jim Spigelman, who had once worked for Whitlam. It is almost inconceivable that the Abbott government would appoint anybody from the ALP to high office.

Politicians are no longer constrained by a moral obligation to tell the truth.

John Stuart Mill coined the term "fractional truths". As a practice, it has caught on alarmingly. Something that was true yesterday, and might well be true tomorrow, is not necessarily true today.

There is a retreat from evidence, rational argument, analysis, and the use of statistics, and in controversial areas such as climate change and asylum seekers, "opinion" carries more clout than "evidence."

Deliberate ignorance; invented narrative

The Abbott government endlessly promotes the myth that in 2013 Australia's economy was a burning ruin; that taxation levels are crippling high; and that levels of public debt could simply not be sustained.

The IMF and Nobel Economics Laureate Joseph Stiglitz praised the Rudd government as having handled the global financial crisis better than any other OECD nation. Australia had lower unemployment than most OECD countries, with low interest rates, a AAA credit rating from all three major international agencies, enjoyed by very few national economies, a low level of international debt, high levels of foreign investment, ranking next to Norway on the Human Development Index (HDI). In the 2013 election, *The Economist* endorsed Kevin Rudd and the ALP government.

What is repeatedly described as a Budget crisis, or disaster, compared by the Prime Minister to a bushfire, with a mounting deficit, can be handled in four ways: (i) recognising the changing nature of the population, living far longer but with increasing demands for education, health, employment, disability services, infrastructure development and coping with a series of social and/or environmental problems, (ii) increasing taxation to meet the needs of a changing society, (iii) cutting taxation to satisfy political promises and (iv) cutting services.

Australia has the fifth lowest rate of income tax in the OECD: only Mexico, Chile, the US and South Korea are lower. If the cost of compulsory superannuation and the Medicare levy is added, it takes Australia up to the OECD average. Our GST is currently on the low side at 10 percent, compared to GST/VAT in most OECD countries. However, it has to be recognised that our taxation rates are higher than our Asian neighbours.

I agree with the maxim, "Taxes are the price we pay for a civilised society."

According to Credit Suisse (admittedly under a cloud at the moment, but they certainly know how to pursue wealth), Australia has the highest per capita income in the world, although this may only mean that including Gina Rinehart and dividing by 23,000,000 will produce



a high figure. The IMF says that our debt/income ratio is the second lowest in the OECD: only Luxembourg's is lower. But you will never hear these international comparisons raised by the government, nor – oddly – from the Opposition.

There has been a complete failure to explain the significance of population change in increased levels of expenditure and falling revenue. Life expectancy is increasing by 2.5 years in every decade, and the gap between retirement from paid work and death, once calculated as being in the 15-20 year range, is now increasing to 30-35 years. How is the gap to be met? Not, I suggest, by cutting taxation levels. The current Tea Party inspired fantasy is that if tax levels are cut to the bone, the market will work its magic and provide jobs for everyone who needs one. Well, we shall see ...

The NDIS (National Disability Insurance Scheme) will inevitably demand more expenditure: Gonski [education reform] too, even in its crippled form. But these issues are not being addressed by either side. It is striking that the four most important economic advisors from outside government, David Murray, Maurice Newman, Dick Warburton and Tony Shepherd have, in addition to gender and skin colour, one thing in common. All are climate change sceptics or deniers. This suggests that denialism may be a precondition for appointment. The question of having prudential policies, of evaluating risk, never comes up over the climate change issue.

Vice President Dick Cheney, who led the "dark energy" faction in the administration of George W Bush, proposed the "one percent doctrine": that if there is only a one percent

chance that nations are developing nuclear weapons then "we have to treat it as a certainty in terms of our response."

With climate change, supporters of the current carbon economy argue that even a 90 percent probability is not enough to warrant taking action.

There have been repeated attempts to secure an appointment with the Prime Minister so that our leading climate scientists can put their case and present evidence about climate change. All attempts have been rebuffed. It is better, it seems, for a prime minister, if he is caught out and has to backtrack in the future to be able to say: "Nobody ever put these arguments to me."

We seem to have a new Beatitude: "Blessed are the aspirational, for they shall be rewarded, whatever the social cost."

Fear and greed

Several significant factors have contributed to the Coalition's success, in winning power in the Commonwealth, five states and one territory.

The first has been the appeal to fear and greed in election campaigns – for example, by stigmatising asylum seekers as lawbreakers, and as economic migrants who casually break the rules by jumping the queue in search of economic advantage – and, by implication, threatening the immediate economic advantage of people born here, or already settled.

Second has been the success in appealing to people in the middle income bracket, people in small business, for example, to identify themselves with the people above them in the economic pyramid, as if they had a community of interest, and to spurn those below them, to accept

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compassion fatigue as normal, and that lower income taxes will be a major factor in transforming the economy and that they should feel no concern for cuts in access to education, health service and welfare generally because, after all, “we all have to share the pain.”

Third is the government’s being in permanent campaign mode, constantly campaigning against the Opposition, who are blamed incessantly so that a grossly exaggerated narrative is presented about Australia’s economic position, and this is entirely due to the folly of the previous government.

Fourth is the covert appeal to prejudice in the use of “dog whistle” language over refugees and Muslims – indeed, multiculturalism generally.

The Scanlon Foundation’s annual surveys of social cohesion indicate a core of 10 percent who are strongly opposed to cultural diversity in Australia and perhaps 20 percent more who are ambivalent. Capturing the votes of citizens who are driven by ethnicity and culture is critical to winning elections.

Redefining politics

We must redefine politics – and grasp its importance, not just at election times. Here is my attempt: it doesn’t exactly roll off the tongue but I think it captures the essence.

Politics is the fault line between tectonic plates in society and the electoral struggle is an expression of, or a metaphor for, unresolved, often unspoken, divisions within society – race, class, gender, religion, region, language, education, sexuality, consumption patterns and time use, self-definition and the expression of individual differences/aspirations (both positive and negative),

offering a choice between different moral universes.

It is amazing that the climate change debate has been so badly informed because large numbers of Australians are skilled observers in relevant areas. There is still some confusion between “climate” and “weather” but farmers are acute observers of changes in the seasons. Gardeners, millions of them, can report that flowers are blooming earlier in the season. Bird watchers keep detailed records. So do bush walkers. There was no attempt to enlist them in an information campaign, nor did they volunteer.

Tackling complex problems demands complex solutions (notably refugees and climate change) that cannot be reduced to parroting a few simple slogans (“stop the boats”, “stop this toxic tax”). “Retail politics”, sometimes called “transactional politics”, where policies are adopted not because they are right but because they can be sold, is a dangerous development and should be rejected. We must maintain confidence that major problems can be addressed – and act accordingly. This involves reviving the process of dialogue: explain! explain! explain! – rejecting mere sloganeering and populism. We need evidence-based policies but often evidence lacks the psychological carrying power generated by appeals to prejudice or fear of disadvantage (“They are robbing you ...”).

Most of all we need a higher level of citizen involvement in the whole process of public debate, not leaving it all to the political professionals.

The Beacon: An address given at the Melbourne Unitarian Church on May 25, 2014. ✚

Movie Review by Richard Titelius

Charlie’s Country

The history of contemporary iconic Australian Aboriginal actors will always have in it a reference to one man from his first film, *Walkabout*, in 1971 at 16 years of age. David Gulpilil has also appeared in *Mad Dog Morgan*, *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, *Crocodile Dundee*, *The Tracker*, *Ten Canoes*, *Australia* and now *Charlie’s Country*.

While *Walkabout* only hinted at the dispossession of Aboriginal people and the effects of colonialism, director Rolf de Heer’s third collaboration with David Gulpilil, portrays the full gamut of Aboriginal issues is portrayed in *Charlie’s Country*.

The film is set in the Northern Territory Aboriginal community of Ramangining, not far from the traditional Yolgnu lands (Arnhem Land) of Charlie (Gulpilil).

It is a movie made to remind white Australia that after years of this report and that commission of enquiry, “Closing the Gap” and Kevin Rudd’s apology, there has been precious little movement on anything in regards to addressing Aboriginal disadvantage – especially Aboriginal health issues which are writ large throughout the film.

The film starts with a lingering shot of a Liquor Control Act sign at the entrance to Ramangining Aboriginal Community, indicating that it is prohibited to bring alcohol onto the community.

From there the film goes into the community and the house of sorts in which Charlie lives – a well constructed elevated yet open shelter. There is a real housing shortage in the community of 800 Aboriginal people live, and Charlie makes the

point about a need for more adequate housing in his country.

There is a police station in the community amidst the many people from different tribal groups who have been thrown together. There are few employment opportunities, lots of time to kill, boredom, all making a meaningful existence a recurring challenge.

Charlie and a friend kill a buffalo on a hunting trip for tucker, but they are stopped by the police who take their guns and car with the buffalo for breaches of various white man laws. Charlie has made a good spear. The police also confiscate that as it is viewed as carrying a weapon through a residential area.

This constant and pointless interference forces Charlie to go bush for a few days but the experience is mostly harsh on a 60-year-old Aboriginal man whose body, although robust, has seen the effects of too much ganja (marijuana), cigarettes and alcohol. One of the movie’s most poignant scenes occurs when he prepares and eats a barramundi cooked in embers in the ground.

“It’s like my own supermarket”, he proclaims and adds that he is free.

But his sense of freedom is short lived when the rain comes and the continual wet forces him from his shelter to a rocky overhang where there are ancient Aboriginal rock paintings and then back to his lean-to shelter. He becomes weak and sick and would have died had his buddy not come to look for him.

But though his life is saved, at this point he must leave his country which holds him together, and go to a hospital – another institutional setting for Aboriginal people in which

they often do not fair well emotionally and spiritually – which is well portrayed in the film.

He does not stay long in the hospital. Once outside, he seeks consolation in alcohol which sees him go the route of two other familiar institutions – the courthouse and the jail. However, in prison, his time is structured, his life is organised and he gets good food (a great exercise in colour and texture by De Heer) as well as visits from people who care about him and one whose job it is to make sure he can return to life outside – his parole officer.

Through the film Gulpilil was not only able to work through the issues which had beset his life but also speak for how his people think and feel about Aboriginal health, the Intervention, land and housing, meaninglessness of life in the communities, police attitudes and treatment of Aboriginal people, and effects on Aboriginal people of institutionalisation.

The rest of the film moves towards an entertaining and uplifting ending.

De Heer has also given us a compelling script and beautiful and moving cinematography – a true work of art, good casting, a fitting musical score and great dialogue which is mostly in Gulpilil’s native Yolgnu tongue with subtitles. There is wit and humour throughout, though there are also slow, haunting and deeply moving scenes which bring home the movie’s profound and serious messages.

Charlie’s Country is now showing at cinemas around Australia and was also an official selection at the 2014 Cannes Film Festival where David Gulpilil won a best actor award. ✚



David Gulpilil as Charlie.

Israel kills relentlessly

John Hilley

The wickedness continues, with more than 800 Palestinians, mostly civilians, many children, now murdered by Israel. The names of those killed is being updated by the authorities in Gaza. In one of the most horrendous assaults to date, over 60 people have been massacred in the Al-Shejaia area of northeast Gaza.

Norwegian surgeon Dr Mads Gilbert has been at al-Shifa hospital, working in desperate conditions trying to save the dying and assist the injured.

In "A doctor writes from Gaza – There are lakes of blood", he observes:

"My respect for the wounded is endless, in their contained determination in the midst of pain, agony and shock. My admiration for the staff and volunteers is endless. My closeness to the Palestinian 'sumud' – or steadfastness – gives me strength.

But, in glimpses, I just want to scream, hold someone tight, cry, smell the skin and hair of the warm child, covered in blood, protect ourselves in an endless embrace – but we cannot afford that, nor can they."

Channel 4 News reporter Jonathan Miller has recorded much of the horror, a traumatic experience in itself.

He tweets:
(Jonathan Miller @millerC4)

"#c4news #Gaza Doctors at Shifa Hospital describe last night as 'a massacre'. I have seen there which I will never be able to unsee."

It's admirable that such journalists are there on the ground witnessing the killing and terror. But isn't it also just as vital that they bear witness, via their reporting, to the true cause and context of that killing and terror: Israel's enduring siege and the relentless Occupation of Palestinian land?

That needs to be said, clearly and consistently. Otherwise, we see the



A rally in support of ending the occupation in Palestine in Sydney over the weekend. (Photo: Linda)

We will keep protesting until Israel stops killing

Paddy McGuffin

BRITAIN: Peace campaigners will take to the streets again to demand an end to the ongoing massacre of civilians in Gaza. Hundreds of thousands of people are expected to take part in a series of demonstrations across Britain to condemn the slaughter which has so far cost over 800 Palestinian lives.

The largest demonstration will take place in London but similar events are scheduled for cities all over the country as the humanitarian crisis deepens.

Speaking to the *Morning Star*, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) general secretary Kate Hudson said: "The world has been rightly outraged at the massacre taking place in Gaza.

"One of the most highly equipped militaries in the world is bombarding a people without an army. A people held captive in an open-air prison. The number of civilian deaths in Gaza – with over 130 children already killed – has destroyed the myth that Israel is simply defending itself.

"CND rejects the indiscriminate slaughter of civilians in Gaza. And last week in London alone, 100,000 people marched to reject the continuing bloodshed. They were joined by many more around the world. But as long as Israel continues its barbarous campaign, we will stay out in the streets calling for an end to the massacre."

Among those who will be protesting is pro-Palestinian activist and officer with the Stop the War Coalition officer Kevin Ovenden. Mr Ovenden was one of those aboard the ill-fated *Mavi Marmara* – part of the 2010 Gaza flotilla which was attacked by Israeli troops in

international waters, leading to the deaths of nine civilians.

Mr Ovenden believes that the current assault on Gaza bears the hallmarks of Operation Cast Lead, the previous assault on Gaza in 2008, both in the scale of the civilian casualties, but also because that operation was a military and political failure.

Atrocities such as Operation Cast Lead, the attack on the *Mavi Marmara* and the current situation have served to shift public opinion, he argues, and the writing is on the wall for Israel "as an apartheid state."

"There is a fundamental dilemma for the Israeli political establishment," he said. "Either move towards meeting the Palestinians' political aspirations or move to a position of international political isolation.

"Israel can only do these things due to the cover and backing given them by Western governments, predominantly the US but also Britain. There is real public anger both internationally and here in Britain. Cameron and his government need to feel the heat."

Palestine Solidarity Campaign chairman Hugh Lanning said there was a real need to focus pressure on the British government.

"It is worse than complicit. It is saying that what Israel is doing is okay.

"What is happening in Gaza is premeditated and there is absolutely no justification. More and more people are seeing what's happening and there has been a major shift in the levels of support for the campaign."

He called for an escalation of the boycott, divestment and sanctions campaign and an arms embargo if Israel continued to breach international law.

Morning Star ✪

suffering – or what fraction of it the media deem permissible – but remain ignorant or mystified about the fundamental reason why it's happening.

All of which helps reinforce the spurious "two-warring-sides" line, the facile "tit-for-tat" narrative so seamlessly delivered by the BBC.

This vast media distortion provides invaluable cover for political evasion. As with previous mass attacks on Gaza, where's the outcry from the US, Britain and all those "responsibility to protect" liberals? Where's the international reaction we heard when NATO was rushing to "defend" and "liberate" Libya, that "Benghazi moment"? Would we ever remotely hear them talk now of an "Al-Shejaia moment"?

US Secretary of State Kerry has, apparently, been caught "off mic" reacting to Israel's blanket killing in Al-Shejaia: "It's a hell of a pinpoint operation", he said.

It was a small, but revealing, moment, confirming not just what craven elites like Kerry really do see, but, much more shamefully, what they pretend not to. As he continued flawlessly again into "we support Israel" mode, it confirmed the sheer venal deceit of his "peace-shuttling diplomacy".

Contemplating the poor victims of Al-Shejaia, the horrors being inflicted on Gaza, and the West's protection of the perpetrators, people may despairingly ask: how do those like Kerry live with their

wicked deceptions? Their work is not remotely about the promotion of peace and resolution, but the calculating mitigation of state terrorism.

Yet, as Jonathan Cook suggests, we should also think deeply about the seemingly "human motivations" behind Kerry's unguarded words, for, together with his pledge to keep supporting Israel's killing machine, they help explain the darker, delusional psychology that allows such people to rationalise mass slaughter in the "higher interest".

Alongside Israel's state gangsters, we can only hope such Western criminal complicity is one day exposed in the highest court of law. *Information Clearing House* ✪

Call for arms embargo on Israel

Sixty-four public figures, including seven Nobel laureates, have called for arms embargo on Israel. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Boots Riley, Chris Hedges, Ilan Pappé, John Pilger, Noam Chomsky, Roger Waters and others have accused Israel of war crimes and possible crimes against humanity. The statement reads as follows:

Israel has once again unleashed the full force of its military against the captive Palestinian population, particularly in the besieged Gaza Strip, in an inhumane and illegal act of military aggression. Israel's ability to launch such devastating attacks with impunity largely stems from the vast international military cooperation and trade that it maintains with complicit governments across the world.

Israel's military technology is marketed as "field-tested" and exported across the world. Military trade and joint military-related research relations with Israel embolden Israeli impunity in committing grave violations of international law and facilitate the entrenchment of Israel's system of occupation, colonisation and systematic denial of Palestinian rights.

We call on the UN and governments across the world to take immediate steps to implement a comprehensive and legally binding military embargo on Israel, similar to that imposed on South Africa during apartheid, the statement concludes.

Nobel peace laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu from South Africa was one of the signatories. He was a major opponent of apartheid practices in South Africa, and has compared Israeli policies

toward Palestinians with those of the South African government under the racist apartheid system.

The other Nobel laureates who signed the letter were Betty Williams, Federico Mayor Zaragoza, Jody Williams, Adolfo Peres Esquivel, Mairead Maguire and Rigoberto Menchu.

Two Israeli academics, Ilan Pappé and Nurit Peled, joined international colleagues in calling for an arms embargo against Israel.

Full list of signatories:

Adolfo Peres Esquivel Nobel Peace Laureate, Argentina, Ahdaf Soueif author, Egypt/UK, Aki Olavi Kaurismäki film director, Finland, Alice Walker writer, US, Archbishop Desmond Tutu Nobel Peace Laureate, South Africa, Betty Williams Nobel Peace Laureate, Ireland, Boots Riley rapper, poet, arts producer, US, Brian Eno musician, UK, Caryl Churchill playwright, UK, Chris Hedges journalist, Pulitzer Prize 2002, US, Cynthia McKinney politician, activist, US, David Palumbo-Liu academic, US, Etienne Balibar philosopher, France, Federico Mayor Zaragoza former Unesco director general, Spain, Felim Egan painter, Ireland, Frei Betto liberation theologian, Brazil, Gillian Slovo writer, UK/South Africa, Githa Hariharan writer, India, Giulio Marcon MP (SEL), Italy, Hilary Rose academic, UK, Ilan Pappé historian, Israel, Ismail Coovadia former South African ambassador to Israel, James Kelman writer, Scotland, Janne Teller writer, Denmark, Jeremy Corbyn MP (Labour), UK, Joanna Rajkowska artist, Poland, Jody Williams Nobel Peace Laureate, US, John Berger artist, UK, John Dugard former ICJ

judge, South Africa, John McDonnell MP (Labour), UK, John Pilger journalist and filmmaker, Australia, Judith Butler philosopher, US, Juliane House academic, Germany, Karma Nabulsi Oxford University, UK/Palestine, Ken Loach filmmaker, UK, Kool AD (Victor Vazquez) musician, US, Liz Lochhead national poet for Scotland, UK, Luisa Morgantini former vice president of the European Parliament, Italy, Mairead Maguire Nobel Peace Laureate, Ireland, Michael Mansfield barrister, UK, Michael Ondaatje author, Canada/Sri Lanka, Mike Leigh writer and director, UK, Naomi Wallace playwright, screenwriter, poet, US, Noam Chomsky academic, author, US, Nurit Peled academic, Israel, Prabhat Patnaik economist, India, Przemyslaw Wielgosz chief editor of *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Polish edition, Poland, Raja Shehadeh author and Lawyer, Palestine, Rashid Khalidi academic, author, Palestine/US, Richard Falk former UN special rapporteur on Occupied Palestinian Territories, US, Rigoberto Menchú Nobel Peace Laureate, Guatemala, Roger Waters musician, UK, Ronnie Kasrils former government minister, South Africa, Rose Fenton director, Free Word Centre, UK, Sabrina Mahfouz author, UK, Saleh Bakri actor, Palestine, Sir Geoffrey Bindman lawyer, UK, Slavoj Žižek author, Slovenia, Steven Rose academic, UK, Tom Leonard writer, Scotland, Tunde Adebimpe musician, US, Victoria Brittain journalist, UK, Willie van Peer academic, Germany, Zwelinzima Vavi secretary general of COSATU, South Africa. ✪

40th anniversary of Turkish invasion

This year marks the 40th anniversary since that terrible ill-fated day of July 20, 1974 – the day of the barbaric Turkish invasion of Cyprus by the Turkish Attila, colonisation of the occupied areas and the destruction of our cultural heritage. AKEL (Progressive Party of Working People) denounces and condemns in the strongest possible terms once again the crimes that have been committed and are continuing against the whole of the Cypriot people.

The invasion by Turkey represented the second part of the anti-Cypriot conspiracy that was designed and elaborated in foreign decision-making centres with the cooperation of Ankara.

The invasion by the Turkish armed forces caused havoc and devastation. It resulted in thousands of dead, war-stricken people, missing persons, the enclaved people in the occupied areas and refugees. We honour the memory of the fallen, who, although betrayed resisted the Turkish Attila and defended with their lives the independence of Cyprus. We express once again our unreserved support to the families and relatives of our missing persons, insisting on the verification of their fate. We support the refugees, the enclaved people in the occupied areas and those who have lost their

beloved, stressing that the woes of the economic crisis should not have reduced the state's help to them. We are on the side of the refugees in their struggle to safeguard the right of return.

Yet another black anniversary of the Turkish invasion finds the Cypriot people at the forefront of the struggle for liberation from the occupation and the reunification of our people and homeland. Our goal is to achieve a solution of the Cyprus problem as soon as possible.

The solution must end the occupation, the colonisation of the occupied areas and any foreign dependence, as well as safeguarding the human rights and basic freedoms of the Cypriot people as a whole.

The parameters of the solution are given and must be in line with International Law, the resolutions of the United Nations and the High-Level Agreements. The involvement of the Republic of Cyprus into a bizonal, bi-communal federation with political equality as set out by the UN resolutions and which shall safeguard that the reunified Republic of Cyprus will continue to have a single sovereignty, a single international personality and a single citizenship, is the only just solution.

Unfortunately, the intransigent stance of Ankara and the Turkish Cypriot leadership, together with the tolerance shown by Turkey's allies,

have not so far permitted the solution of the Cyprus problem. However, we believe that our stance at the negotiating table is a factor that can substantially influence the course of the solution.

The direct bi-communal negotiations underway are the only available way to find a solution of the Cyprus problem. More specifically, in a period when international factors are showing an increased interest in the stabilisation of our region, our own handling regarding the talks must serve to the greatest possible degree the prospect of an overall solution to the Cyprus problem based on just principles.

An indispensable prerequisite for the successful outcome of our struggle is unity on our domestic front.

Forty years after occupation, the barbed wire of division continues to cause us the same pain.

These 40 years continue, however, at the same time to remind us that the best memorial to those who perished and the most important promise to future generations will be given by uprooting the barbed wire of division; a free and reunified country that will safeguard a safe and secure future for all its citizens, Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots, Maronites, Armenians and Latins.

This is the vision that will continue to guide us and determine our struggles. ☘



Ukrainian army tortures journalists

A journalist released from the ANNA news agency, who was captured along with RT contributor Graham Phillips, told RT that they were abducted by the Ukrainian army and tortured and beaten. Phillips' fate remains unknown.

ANNA news agency cameraman, Vadim Aksyonov, has been released while RT contributor Graham Phillips, a UK national, is being held captive, ANNA news told RT.

According to the ANNA news press service, Aksyonov who was released in "terrible state" as he hasn't slept for a day and was tortured. The journalist told how he and his colleague Phillips were detained.

"We were captured in [Donetsk] airport. Graham [Phillips] ran to the parking lot, I ran after him. Then we were taken by people with guns. I saw the official army insignia before they put bags on our heads," Aksyonov told RT.

When they were taken to the cells near a checkpoint, they were tortured and beaten, he added. "At first we were kept together, then separately. I heard him [Phillips]

screaming from pain and he heard me screaming, too," he said. According to Aksyonov, their captors then took them to another location. He overheard that Phillips was dropped in the city of Krasnoarmeisk, in the Donetsk Region of eastern Ukraine.

Aksyonov thinks that Phillips might be taken to either Kiev, Ukraine's capital, or Zaporizhzhia, a city in southern Ukraine which borders on the Donetsk Region, or to the city of Uzhhorod in western Ukraine. The agency still hasn't revealed the fate of two other hostages – an employee of the press service of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic, and possibly an acquaintance of Phillips, who accompanied the journalist to the airport.

Phillips has been reporting about developments in Ukraine for several months now. According to research from Brandwatch social networks monitor, he has become the most popular author in Twitter reporting on the situation in Ukraine.

Seven journalists have also been killed while covering the unrest

in eastern Ukraine – making it the deadliest country for journalists this year, according to UN statistics.

In June, a Russian cameraman from Channel One TV, Anatoly Klyan, was shot by Kiev forces in Donetsk. Also in June, Rossiya TV journalist Igor Kornelyuk and his colleague, sound engineer Anton Voloshin, were killed in shelling near Lugansk.

In May, Italian journalist Andrea Rocchelli and his Russian interpreter Andrey Mironov were killed when they were caught in a mortar attack close to the village of Andreevka, a couple of kilometres from Slavyansk.

Russian journalists have been captured by Kiev's forces throughout the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

In June, journalists from Russia's Zvezda TV channel spent two days in captivity, after being detained by the Ukrainian National Guard.

In May, two LifeNews journalists were taken hostage for two days by the National Guard, prompting an online #SaveOurGuys campaign.

RT ☘



Region Briefs

On July 17, 800 people protested outside the South Korean embassy in Yangon, Myanmar. Seven hundred and fifty-five of the protesters were sacked employees of a South Korean owned shoe factory. They protested because they had not received compensation nearly a month after it was promised to them. The factory suddenly announced its permanent and illegal closure on June 26. Members of the Township Workers' Union joined the former employees gathered outside the factory at 8am. They then marched to the South Korean Embassy, asking the ambassador to solve the issue as the factory owner had already left Myanmar. A senior employee at the factory received a US\$185 monthly wage and a junior employee only US\$72.

On July 18, the Communist Party of Vietnam's General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong, Vietnam, President Truong Tan Sang, and former Party General Secretaries attended a ceremony in Hanoi to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the 1954 Geneva Agreement. The agreement marked Vietnam's victory in winning its independence and freedom from France. President Sang said that after having 31 meetings that took 75 days and nights, the signing of this agreement provided a legal international foundation for Vietnam's national liberation. He expressed his appreciation for the help other socialist countries offered in the past and present.

Five workers were killed and eight were injured in a chemical explosion at the Alang Ship-breaking Yard in Gujarat, India on June 28. The explosion occurred when the 13 migrant workers were trying to break up the scrap chemical tanker ship *DV Perin*, which increased the total number of fatalities at this shipyard to 15 so for this year. On July 21, the Alang Soshiya Ship Recycling and General Workers' Association (ASSRGWA) said that this accident highlighted safety issues at the shipyard. The ASSRGWA asked the government to fully investigate the cause of the explosion, insisting that the shipyard be closed until results of the investigation were known. It also demanded compensation be paid to the families of workers who had died and to those who were injured.

On July 23, by a decree from the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), the DPRK plans to establish several development zones across the country and one international economic zone in Sinuiju City. The DPRK stressed that it would still practise its sovereignty over these zones. High-technology development zones will be set up in some areas of Kawhak and Pyongyang's Unjong District. A green model zone will be set up in Kangryong County, South Hwanghae Province and an export processing zone in Nampho City. A number of industrial development zones and agricultural development zones will also be established.

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Offensive and insensitive

The day before Japanese Prime Minister Abe's address to Parliament, Chinese President Xi Jinping attended a major commemoration at Lugou Bridge in suburban Beijing on the 77th anniversary of the beginning of a brutal eight-year war that saw 35 million Chinese killed or wounded.

During the 1930s and 1940s, the Japanese empire, where many reckless militarist policies were born, invaded China and some Southeast Asian countries, causing huge pain to Asian people.

Seventy-seven years later, the psychological wounds of the Chinese people have not been fully healed, as Japanese rightists have repeatedly denied the atrocities of its aggression and taken a provocative approach in addressing ties with its neighbouring countries.

Even worse, these wounds are

once again touched recently as the cabinet of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe approved a resolution that would allow the country to exercise the so-called "collective self-defence right" by reinterpreting its pacifist Constitution, despite strong protests from home and abroad.

The Japanese government has played up hard the so-called China-threat theory, and dressed up itself as a victim of Beijing's peaceful development, paving the way for the country to develop its self-defence forces.

As one of the important players in Asia and on the world arena, it is high time for Japan to face up to its aggression in history and pursue the path of peaceful development instead of angering the region with rounds and rounds of irresponsible words and provocative policies.

T Southern
Brisbane

An imbalance

It is unacceptable that Catholic teachers are already being paid less than teachers in the public and independent sector.

To make their conditions even worse is just plain wrong! The Catholic Church is the richest institution in the world. Surely they can afford to pay their teachers a reasonable wage and give them, at least, the same conditions as other Australian schools.

Jenny Brown
Uralla

You can make a difference

While likes and people's comments and feedback on Facebook or other social media are a certain good, if there is some action you can do to help some of the dire situations going on around the world then please take a little time to act. Go to a protest rally, march or a meeting or talk, write or message your friends, family and to other people about these issues.

Signing petitions, writing letters to newspapers, politicians and companies, may seem a small thing and unproductive, but it does make a big difference, especially if they see it's not from the usual known activists or organisations, but ordinary people who are concerned enough to write to them or sign a petition. Likes are nice, but actions can change things.

So, if you want to stop occupation, repression, injustice in Palestine, West Papua, Cyprus, Kurdistan, Sahara, Puerto Rico and elsewhere in the world, to help support Indigenous peoples and political prisoners, stop poaching of endangered animals, save forests and other habitats from land clearing, etc, get active and play a part.

These actions are also a strong expression of solidarity to those who are oppressed, dispossessed, displaced, disinherited, suffering and struggling for survival, freedom and

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justice. Most importantly, your words and actions help make other people aware of vital issues the mainstream media and the ruling elite want to neglect.

Even if it didn't make a difference, you are at least trying to do something, but I do know it helps others to question what they have been told, to see the true situation and it adds to the pressure on those in power, when they see that people are starting to wake up and see the real way things are and are willing to speak up.

Politicians, companies and others are forced to listen and alter policies when they see the mood of the

people is changing on issues. And while words are certain good, concrete actions are even more powerful. Oppressive regimes, imperial wars, racism, poverty, inequality, and other social injustice will continue to exist until we challenge the system that perpetuates them.

So, please keep foremost in your mind that you can make a difference in your community and society by doing something, even a small act is better than doing nothing. Your deeds have a ripple effect and can yield positive results. From such small beginnings, much bigger things grow.

Steven Katsineris
Vic

Culture & Life

by Rob Gowland

Fascism is to blame

To judge by the way Julie Bishop and Tony Abbott have been strutting around making bold demands of the rest of the world's leaders, Australia must be a very Great Power indeed. Or could it be that the Abbott government is more than somewhat delusional in this regard?

Much of their grandstanding over the dreadful loss of life in the crash of Malaysian Airlines Flight MH17 has been a desperate attempt to claw back a few points in the opinion polls where they are doing appallingly badly. That they would so shamelessly use the incident in this way is no more than one expects from them, of course, but that does not make it any more acceptable.

Last week's *Guardian* listed a whole heap of questions that need to be answered before an accurate conclusion can be reached even about what happened to Flight MH17. But Abbott and Bishop have an agenda to pursue, and that agenda involves blaming Russia regardless of whether they have any evidence or not. Anyone who still thinks the Cold War ever ended needs only to look at TV any night to realise otherwise.

Abbott's mentor and revered former leader John Howard tried hard to assert Australia's "right" to be the imperial power in the South Pacific, intervening in several countries in the area and generally trying to chuck his weight around. Abbott and Bishop are following the same tactical line. They are spending a skip-load of money on armaments in readiness for armed conflict with countries

that don't see eye-to-eye with Washington and Canberra.

The US's President Obama has given emotional speeches about the loss of life in MH17, but these would carry more conviction if the man who bombed a Cuban airliner with the loss of life of all on board wasn't living in Miami under the protection of the US government. What's good for the goose, Obama.

The USA, of course, shares the same agenda as Abbott and Bishop: surround and isolate China and Russia. Destabilise and eventually overthrow their governments and seize their resources for Western corporations. The US naturally expects to get the lion's share, but Abbott and Co hope to get some valuable leftovers.

American commentators have been even keener than Julie Bishop to blame Russia. All our readers have probably seen (indeed, how could you miss it, they played it so many times) the supposed transcript of an intercepted phone conversation at the site of the crashed aircraft, in which someone on the ground is reporting what he finds to a superior elsewhere.

If the transcript is genuine, it shows that the people arriving at the site thought the plane would be a military one. "Did you get the pilots?" the distant superior wants to know. "What weapons are on board?" When the man on the spot indicates that it is clearly a civilian plane, the other (and you can hear the anger in his voice) exclaims "What is it doing flying over a war zone?" A question only Malaysian

Airlines can answer, but it has been pointed out that diverting around Ukraine would use more fuel and hence cost the airline more money. Several planes (mainly Ukrainian transport aircraft) had been shot down over the same area in the preceding week or so and several major airlines had decided to avoid flying over that region. Surely the airline must have at least considered the wisdom of such a flight path? Could cost have been a determining factor? One hopes not.

The most important determining factor should have been the one mentioned in the transcript quoted above. "There's fighting going on here." The elected government of Ukraine was ousted in an EU/US-backed coup supported by fascist groups (including supporters of Bandera, the puppet leader of Ukraine for the Nazis in WW2). The extreme right-wing government they installed was rightly seen as a tool for anti-Russian sentiment. Even the Russian language was threatened – and much of the Eastern part of the country is Russian-speaking.

Russians and Ukrainians have had painful experiences of fascist rule during the War. It is not surprising that much of the east of the country rose-up to reject the imposition of fascist rule from Kiev. For their part and in the best fascist tradition, the new rulers in Kiev immediately resorted to violence, sending air-strikes and ground attacks by the Ukrainian army against the anti-fascist regions. So far with little success but considerable loss of life.

Kiev has a vested interest in upping the ante, in provoking an incident that would allow the West to intervene. Russia says it was not involved and that the militias in the east of Ukraine do not have the anti-aircraft weapons that could bring down an aircraft at over 30,000 feet.

The transcript of the conversation already referred to, has since appeared with amended text. But the most amended version was that used by the US Public Broadcasting System (PBS) *NewsHour* program. This service is regularly used by the US State Department to disseminate its point of view as fact. *NewsHour* used a severely edited version of the transcript, with none of the questioning, so that the speaker appeared to be almost gleefully reporting that they had downed an aircraft, a civilian aircraft.

It was blatant manipulation of the material and amounted to outright dishonesty. But, of course, the important issue for them was to push the anti-Russia message as hard as they could.

Like I said before, the Cold War never ended and has now been stepped up to a level we haven't seen in several decades. This is a time for prudence, not sabre rattling about banning Russia from attending the G20 in Brisbane. While Abbott and Bishop were talking tough about MH17, Israel was invading Palestine and at time of writing (Tuesday July 22) had already killed over 500 people. [Now over 1,000 – Ed.] What had Abbott and Bishop to say about that? Precious little but pious wishes. ☺





Sunday August 3 –
Saturday August 9

As the disparity between rich and poor grows greater every year, a constant stream of poor people from under-developed countries (mainly former colonies) make their way by various means to the centres of capitalism in search of work. Once there, they are at the mercy of unscrupulous entrepreneurs who see their illegal status as an invitation to exploit them. Illegal immigrants have no rights and cannot go to the police if they are robbed or assaulted for fear of being deported.

In such circumstances it is hardly surprising that so many of the female immigrants are pushed into sex work. Prostitution – if a brothel is successful – can provide the entrepreneur with a lucrative income from workers who cannot complain about working conditions or wages or anything else.

There are thousands of brothels in London alone, the majority staffed by unfortunate immigrants. Working with Britain's Channel Four, Taiwan-born investigative journalist Hsiao-Hung Pai teamed up with filmmaker Nick Broomfield to unveil the terrible, grotty reality of the British sex trade in *Sex: My British Job* (ABC2 Sunday August 3 at 8.30pm). Armed with a tiny TV camera built into her spectacles, Hsiao-Pai gets employment as a housemaid in two brothels so she can be on the spot to gain sex-workers' friendship

and confidential information on the brothel business.

What emerges most noticeably is not just how gross and dangerous the sex trade is, but how utterly *mundane* it all is. And what nasty people the operators of the brothels reveal themselves to be when things become difficult for them.

In 2013, Benedict XVI became the first pope in nearly 600 years to resign. He did so after receiving a confidential dossier on troubles in the Catholic Church. Those troubles included a far-reaching clergy sex abuse crisis; revelations of money laundering and widespread corruption at the Vatican Bank; and the scandal known as Vatileaks – the unauthorised public release of internal Vatican documents revealing cronyism, power struggles, and allegations of blackmail within the Holy See.

The Papacy has always been a battleground between competing forces within the Church. With such huge sums of money and such tremendous political influence at stake it is not surprising that matters of a non-religious nature play a very important part in the functioning of such a secretive organisation as the Vatican.

Secrets of the Vatican (SBS ONE Sunday August 3 at 8.30pm), from award-winning director Antony Thomas, endeavours to expose the threats and scandals that rocked Benedict's papacy and led to its collapse. It also points to the extraordinary challenges facing Pope Francis if he is really going to try to reform the powerful Vatican bureaucracy, root out corruption, and chart a new course for the troubled Catholic Church.

The latest series to be labelled "Wild somewhere or other" is the three-part series *Wild Arabia* (SBS ONE Wednesdays from August 6 at 7.30pm). This covers all of Arabia, from the sand dunes of Saudi Arabia to the coastal mountains of Oman, the lush forests of Yemen to the warm waters of the Gulf Sea.

With beautiful visuals it reveals



Justin, Kirk & Sarah – *The Dreamhouse* (ABC1 Screening Thursdays from August 7 at 8.30pm).

Arabia to be a breathtaking mix of deserts, seas, astonishing landscapes and the creatures and remarkable people who have made this region their home. The series reveals the often surprising connections between the nature, people, landscape and history of this little known region.

Accounts of wildlife such as the snow-white oryx that inspired the myth of the unicorn to long-legged jerboa leaping ten times their own body length and horned vipers that hunt glow-in-the-dark scorpions are set against the background of rapid social change as new wealth floods into the area and the relationship between nature and technology is changing faster than ever – from ancient desert customs to the ultra-modern cityscapes of the Arabian Gulf.

The big question that confronts the parents of children with an intellectual disability is "How will they cope when we are gone?" In the Australian-made six-part observational series *The Dreamhouse* (ABC1 Screening Thursdays from August 7 at 8.30pm), three young adults with intellectual disabilities fly the nest and move into a new home for 10 weeks.

Experiencing life away from parents and learning to live more independently is a dream for all of them. And if it works out, they can stay on and call "The Dreamhouse" home.

Justin and Sarah have Down's Syndrome. While Justin, 32, is confident and cocky and keen to assert his role as house alpha male, Sarah, is a practising Christian, and more docile and conservative. Kirk, diagnosed

with autism aged four, is 21, and has a big heart and a loud voice. He hopes to make new friends but his autism means that social relationships can be challenging.

Supporting these three as they explore how to manage a house and how to live with each other is a large team of volunteer mentors. The series observes the trio and their helpers as the three party, fight, flirt, and above all grow exponentially in the process.

At the same time, the series observes their parents' reactions: Kirk's mum, Peta, worries that Kirk will be too noisy for the others to put up with. Sarah's Mum Julie worries how *she's* going to manage without Sarah. And Justin's mother Margaret is hit by grief as her son finally moves on. ☺

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Noah Bassil, Dr, Department of Modern History, Politics and International Relations, Macquarie University;

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RUSSIA UNDER PUTIN – EXPANSION OR CONSOLIDATION?

Graeme Gill, Prof, Department of Government, Sydney University;

Ben Goldsmith, Prof, Department of Government, Sydney University;

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AFTER MANDELA: WHAT NOW FOR SOUTH AFRICA?

Ken Davis, Union Aid Abroad – APHEDA;

Geoff Hawker, Dr, Department of Modern History, Politics and International Relations, Macquarie University;

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Phil Glendenning, Director, Edmund Rice Centre;

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UPDATE ON CUBA

Tim Anderson, Dr, Political Economy, Sydney University;

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Calls for urgent National Conference

Statement Iraqi Communist Party

The Iraqi Communist Party has called for holding a national conference as soon as possible, and setting up a temporary consultative body that enjoys effective popular support to defeat terrorism.

The editorial of *Tareeq Al-Shaab (People's Path)*, the newspaper issued by the Iraqi Communist Party, (June 2014), stated that the present government has now become a caretaker government, and the parliament's term has come to an end, while the new parliament (after the elections on April 30, 2014) has not yet been formed and taken up its role.

The editorial says in part, "In order that all the challenges are confronted in an effective manner, mobilising all efforts, ensuring the unity of patriotic forces, co-ordinating their positions and working in a collective spirit of solidarity, there has to be urgent action towards holding a National Conference with a clearly defined agenda and timetable.

"Active political parties and forces that are keen to achieve peace, security and stability, and strengthen democracy and build its institutions, and ensure public and personal freedoms, should be invited to attend this conference. The present conditions in our country necessitate convening the National Conference as soon as possible, and for the conference to set up a temporary consultative body that would work with the government to consider the developments and tackle the situation, and would also enjoy effective popular support, backing the national effort to defeat terrorism and terrorists."

The editorial dealt extensively with recent developments in Iraq. The following are extensive excerpts:

"Our country is witnessing grave developments as a result of the treacherous offensive by the criminals of ISIS on Mosul, the subsequent speedy and sudden military collapse, and the military-security, political, social and psychological impact on citizens, on society as a whole and on the prospects of resolving the deep crisis in the country.

"All responsible forces, parties and citizens are in agreement that our country has come to this catastrophic situation as a result of a host of interacting factors and reasons that are closely connected with the prevailing political, economic, social, cultural and psychological conditions and the deep crisis in the country.

"This is manifested in the state of deadlock, deep tensions, absence of confidence among political groups, the stale relations between the Kurdistan region and the central government, and also between the latter and several provinces. This is combined with the deepening of

the destructive consequences of the policy of sectarian-ethnic power sharing, the increasing manifestations of autocratic rule, the monopolising of power, political exclusion, marginalisation and accusations, fighting over government posts, spoils and influence, rampant corruption, mismanagement, poor services, high levels of unemployment and poverty, in addition to external interference and the clash of interests of other states on our territory, against the interests of our country and people.

"All this, along with other factors, have impacted the military and security institution that has been built on the basis of sectarian power-sharing, to serve specific political objectives and be subservient to the policy of the ruling authority. This institution has thus been used outside its constitutional tasks and as a tool to tackle internal matters.

"As a result it lacked a well-established national doctrine, and its internal cohesion was undermined, making it highly vulnerable to political changes, and to contradictions and the environment of infighting. This has affected the competence, effectiveness and discipline of the military and security institution, and had a negative impact on the ability of the armed forces to hold out in the face of big and sudden pressures. In addition, we point to poor training, ineffective intelligence effort, and cases of corruption and bribes.

"What happened in Mosul, on the other hand, has highlighted the importance of the existence of a positive relationship between the military/security institution and the environment in which it is operating, including the local authorities and citizens, and this relationship was lacking and was replaced by a negative one characterised by distrust and exchanging accusations.

"While mentioning the reasons and consequences of what happened, we must point out and draw attention to the lack of coordination and cooperation between the forces of the federal government and the forces of the Kurdistan region. A lot of unjustified suspicions, concerns and fear prevented building a mutual friendly and close relationship; of cooperation and support. The recent events have demonstrated the need for such a relationship, especially given that the forces of Kurdistan region proved their ability to confront terrorism effectively.

"On the other hand, insufficient attention was paid to the ongoing developments in Syria and their negative impact on the situation in our country. The borders were open and were exploited by ISIS to regroup its supporters, at the expense of the ability of the armed forces to provide



The Iraqi Communist Party marching on May Day last year.

support to those in Mosul at the right moment in order to avert the state of collapse. The latter was compounded by the presence of "a fifth column" that works to spread a spirit of defeatism and undermine morale.

"We must also not forget for a moment the regional support for ISIS and other terrorist organisations, which include material, logistic and media support that it continues to enjoy.

"Our people recognise, on the other hand, what the events have revealed; that ISIS was only the more pronounced title in the offensive. What took place was, however, an organised action of a broad alliance that had been coordinating to pounce on the democratic political process, overthrow the existing situation and return Iraq to the era of oppression, tyranny and dictatorship, for which the people are still paying the price.

"Attention was previously drawn to indications of this plan and warnings were given, but the counter-measures were unfortunately not up to the level of the big challenge.

"All this, however, does not change the fact that there were in Mosul those who fought and martyred, among the military and civilians, who were not few. Their sacrifices should be praised and their families must be taken care of.

"Today, during these critical moments which our country is going through, it must be emphasised that securing the unity of the homeland and confronting terrorism and its forces requires mobilising the forces of the people and the armed forces,

adopting a position that responds to the higher interests of the homeland and people; the interests of all Iraqis. The objectives must be clear; defeating terrorism and ridding our country of its evils, and opening up the prospect towards a better future that the Iraqis are aspiring to, and which they undoubtedly totally deserve.

"The broad masses of people have emphatically declared their position as demonstrated in the national rejection of ISIS and its crimes, the increased calls for confronting it on ideological and political levels, large-scale volunteering to join the armed forces, as well as political statements, positions and calls to unite the forces and overcome problems and differences.

"This enthusiasm and surge to confront ISIS and similar terrorist forces must be characterised with clarity, objectivity and realism, and should lead to drawing up a strategy that surpasses mistakes, shortcomings and all that has led to the current situation.

"This requires pursuing a policy that has nothing to do with sectarian-ethnic power-sharing and forming a government that is also free of it. In addition, an integrated plan should be drawn up that includes practical arrangements that connect the security action, which must be cleared from the factors of limpness, backwardness and corruption, to flexible political actions that bring forces together, remove the causes of tension in relations, resolve economic and social problems and improve services.

"This plan should ensure getting rid of all manifestations of discrimination and violations of rights and freedoms. Competence, professionalism, integrity and fidelity to the homeland should be the principal criteria in assigning administrative, military and security responsibilities.

"Now that the present government has become a caretaker government, and the constitutional period for the parliament has ended, while the new parliament has not yet been formed and taken up its role, and in order to confront all the challenges effectively and with united efforts, as well as securing the unity of patriotic forces, coordinating their positions and ensuring their serious participation in a collective and solidarity spirit, urgent action is needed to convene a National Conference with a clearly-defined agenda and timetable.

"Active political parties and forces, that are keen to achieve peace, security and stability, and strengthen democracy and build its institutions, ensure public and personal freedoms, and fulfil the aspirations of the Iraqi people for security, stability and dignified life, should be invited to attend this conference. The present conditions in our country necessitate convening the National Conference as soon as possible, and for the conference to set up a temporary consultative body that would work with the government to consider the developments and tackle the situation, and also enjoys effective popular support backing the national effort to defeat terrorism and terrorists." ✪



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