

T News and Views on the Pacific Islands TOKBLONG PASIFIK

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The American Dream: A PACIFIC NIGHTMARE

Written by | Kevin Barr

After the September 11, 2001 bombing of the World Trade Center in New York City, Americans were in shock. They began to ask themselves, "What have we done to deserve this?" "Why do people hate us so much?" While the bombings were totally unacceptable and were abhorred worldwide, they did present Americans with an opportunity for deep questioning and soul-searching. Unfortunately, this opportunity was lost on the Bush administration, which emerged like a wounded bull, hungry for vengeance and eager to begin its so-called "War on Terror."

The War on Terror

The American government failed to reflect upon what it had done to other parts of the world, especially the developing world – how it had imposed its chosen right-wing dictators on South America, how, through the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), it had enforced structural adjustment programmes and brought great poverty to so many people, and much more.

Rather than seize the opportunity after September 11 to change its direction and attitudes, and help bridge the gap between rich and poor nations, the U.S. became even more determined to pursue its political and economic agenda with renewed vigor. The War on Terror became an excuse to re-order the world to its own advantage and to do away with alternative ways of thinking. While global insecurity is based on unequal access to resources and unjust power relationships, the War on Terror is being used to justify power imbalances, not to address them.

The Bush administration's war against terrorism has taken precedence over the war against poverty and underdevelopment, undermining development efforts worldwide and threatening the rights of nations and individual civil liberties. Very often, anti-terrorist legislation is not only disrespectful of human rights, but also stands in the way of development and freedom.

Anti-terrorism legislation has been used to demonize peoples' movements, trade unions, the religion of Islam, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) seeking to challenge the status quo. The victims of this type of legislation are often ordinary workers, peasants, women, and indigenous people who are fighting for their human rights, yet not through violent or underground means. The immediate danger is that any struggle that is unacceptable to a government can be targeted by anti-terrorism legislation; for example, a union strike may be deemed a terrorist activity because it may turn away potential investors. This repressive legislation has allowed discrimination on the basis of nationality, ethnicity, and religion, and has failed to protect the rights of detained persons and the rights to freedom of expression and assembly. And, despite international conventions, the War on Terror has been an excuse for torture. The great paradox is that a war fought in the name of freedom and democracy has actually become justification for seriously eroded human rights and civil liberties all around the world.

The Threat of Terrorism in the Pacific

When President George W. Bush declared war on terror, he launched a worldwide, multi-year, open-ended conflict under the ultimate command of the United States. He identified Iraq, Iran, and North Korea as the "axis of evil" and declared Southeast Asia to be the war's "second front."

In the South Pacific, international terrorism was never really viewed as a problem and, consequently, was never considered a top priority. As Stanley Simpson notes, a 2002 report from the Pacific Islands Forum Regional Security Committee "identified ethnic differences, land disputes, economic disparities, and a lack of confidence in governments' ability to resolve these differences fairly as key factors underlying political unrest in the region." The report "made no mention at all of terrorism". However, after the September 11 bombings, the threat of international terrorism

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WHO WE ARE

Established in 1975, Pacific Peoples' Partnership is a unique non-governmental, non-profit organization working with communities and organizations in the South and North Pacific to support shared aspirations for peace, cultural integrity, social justice, human dignity, and environmental sustainability by:

- Promoting increased understanding among Canadians on issues of importance to the people of the Pacific islands.
- Advocating for social, political, and economic policy change at all levels.
- Fostering the development of sustainable communities in the Pacific.
- Facilitating links between indigenous peoples of the Pacific islands and Aboriginal peoples of Canada.
- Strengthening relations between Canadian and Pacific island communities and civil society organizations.

British Government Admits

West Papua 'coerced'

Into Joining Indonesia

On December 13th 2004 the UK became the first major country to admit that the people of West Papua were forced into Indonesia against their will. Papuans are calling this a significant milestone on the long road to peace. Until now the voice of a million Melanesians has been ignored by the big powers. In Britain, the tide appears to be changing.

Baroness Symons, Foreign Office Minister and spokesperson for the Government on foreign affairs in the House of Lords, replying to a question from the Bishop of Oxford, fully agreed with the Bishop's analysis of the 1969 "Act of Free Choice" as Suharto's Indonesia going through the motions of consulting the Papuan people about their future - independence or Indonesia:

"He [the Bishop] is right to say that there were 1,000 handpicked representatives and that they were largely coerced into declaring for inclusion in Indonesia."

While Papua New Guinea will be celebrating their 30th year of independence from Britain and Australia, Papuans on the western side of the line, which arbitrarily divides the Melanesian people into two halves, keep alive the memory of over 100,000 men, women and children killed since the Indonesian military arrived in 1963.

Baroness Symons went on to say: "Their (the Papuans) answer is to find a way forward towards peace, not through confrontation with Indonesia, but through peaceful all-inclusive dialogue between Papuan leaders and the Indonesian Government, supported along the way by the international community. Papuans are pleading that violence must never again be seen as the way to settle the dispute. Just like the Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine conflicts, West Papua desperately needs a genuine internationally-sponsored peace process ... in which the British Government could play a prominent role."

Perhaps in years to come, 13th December 2004 will be remembered by future generations of West Papuans as a significant date in their history in a West Papua in which the Papuan people have something to celebrate at last. ■

Source: Richard Samuelson Oxford University
Papuan Rights Campaign PRESS RELEASE
12/14/2004.

China Eyes Pacific Islands

Airline Startup

SUVA, March 11 - The People's Republic of China wants to set up a US\$61 million Pacific Islands regional airline. It has already raised the issue with the Fijian government but has yet to consult other Pacific Island states.

Vuetasau Buatoka, the chief executive officer for the transport and civil aviation ministry says Fiji has no intention of selling its controlling shares in Air Pacific to the Chinese government to kick-start the regional airline. He went on to call it a subtle attempt to impose its influence in the region.

Asked whether China is trying to control the civil aviation sector within the region, Buatoka warned Pacific states to tread carefully to ensure their sovereignties are not sold out in the process.

Mr Buatoka says the exercise is expected to run in the millions and would entail a feasibility study that will include Niue, Tonga, Cook Islands and Samoa. Niue, Tonga and Cook Islands are seeking to establish their own airlines.

Another option for Fiji is to sell the Chinese the Fiji government's fifty-one percent shares in Air Pacific, changing the status of the airline to a regional one as required by China. The government, however, says this won't be done.

Earlier in March it was also revealed that China has offered the Fijian government a FJD\$50 million (US\$30 million) loan to develop the country's information and technology sector.

Information Minister, Senator Dr Ahmed Ali was cautious with the offer saying that government was looking at ways to diplomatically reject the Chinese proposal. He told Fiji TV that the offer was a risky one and Fiji will not commit itself because taxpayers will eventually repay the debt.

Dr Ali sounded the same warning as Mr Buatoka, saying the Fijian government must tread carefully before it makes a decision to accept the loans. ■

Source: Yahoo! Australia,
au.news.yahoo.com /050311/3/tger.html
03/11/2004, 03:46 PM.



Yavusa Vuaniivi Tribe

Contests Gibson Island Sale

Villagers in a remote part of Fiji are planning a legal challenge against the Hollywood star Mel Gibson over the sale of 5,411-acre Mago island in Fiji's Northern Lau group.

Gibson reportedly bought the island for £7.8m from Japanese hotel chain, the Tokyu Corporation, through the property agent Colliers International.

The Yavusa Vuaniivi tribe on the neighbouring island of Namalata claim they are Mago's rightful owners. They say the sale has no validity because their ancestors were violently evicted from Mago in the 19th Century. The original Magoans were assured that the island was being leased to a cotton planter and not sold outright.

"Our island was sold for 2,000 coconut plants," Timoci Waqalevu, chairman of the Namalata Development Committee, told the *Fiji Times*.

"Stories told by our forefathers are that they were forced to leave at gunpoint. There is still evidence of those who refused to leave and were killed. There is a dugout hole where their skeletons still remain."

The descendants of Mago's original inhabitants hope to hire a lawyer to fight Gibson for ownership. They also hope the Fijian government will assist them as part of their ongoing scheme to help dispossessed islanders buy back ancestral lands.

So far, however, the authorities have refused to get involved. "The government cannot do anything because it is a freehold property," said Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase. "The sale was between the owner who has found a willing buyer."

"No one was educated then or bothered to check the records," said Mr Waqalevu.

The island is currently home to 35 sugar plantation workers and their families. ■

Pacific Island Nations

among "Dirty Dozen"

The Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru and Palau made the "the dirty dozen" list of countries that have no women in parliament in a report to the Women's Environment and Development Organisation conference "Beijing+10 and Beyond." The message was clear, starting with the title: "Beijing Betrayed."

The report from the high-level UN meeting of delegates from 130 countries concludes that women all over the world are worse off today than they were 10 years ago and accuses governments of failing to keep their promises to achieve gender equality.

In 1995 United Nations member countries at the women's conference in Beijing pledged to put more women in decision-making positions and set a target of having 30 percent of government and public administration jobs filled by women by 2005.

But the report said 10 years later "not much" has happened, noting that only five countries had reached 30 percent in 1995, 10 in 2000, and 15 in 2004.

"Across all regions, women are often still considered unequal to men - in the workplace, at home, in government - and assigned roles accordingly," the report said. It goes on to accuse governments of a "piecemeal and incremental" approach to furthering women's rights that cannot achieve the goals in the landmark platform of action adopted by 189 nations in 1995.

Launching the report at a news conference, WEDO executive director, June Zeitlin lamented that the "realities women document often contrast sharply with the official reports of their governments. What we see are powerful trends - growing poverty, inequality, growing militarization, and fundamentalist opposition to women's rights. Trends that are harming millions of women worldwide." ■

NEWS AND VIEWS



Photo | Quentin Shaw

Source: BBC World Service
03/01/2005.

Source: Pacific News Service, Suva, Fiji
04/03/2005.

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FAIR TRADE WORKSHOPS

Written by | Ali Donnelly
PPP Educational Outreach
Coordinator



Gerald Warbrooke

is a Catholic Brother with the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart based in Suva, Fiji. For the past 12 years Gerald's pastoral ministry has revolved around underprivileged youth, specifically 40 young men who live on the streets of Suva and shine shoes to support themselves. The boys come from backgrounds of poverty, rejection and broken homes; because of this, they have received minimal levels of education with no skills training that would ensure employment.

Gerald aims to be a supportive presence to the boys - on the streets, in court, and in prison. He states, "On the streets I sit and chat with the boys, and have built friendships with them. I attend their court-cases, mitigate on their behalf, and visit them when they go to prison."

Gerald is delighted to be a part of Pacific Peoples' Partnership, and is enjoying his time in Victoria, despite some rain and cold! Gerald is the star of the Fair Trade workshops that PPP and our partner organization, VIDEA are offering to high schools, youth groups and First Nations students in the Victoria area. Gerald is enjoying sharing with the students stories of the street boys, the history of Fiji and the state of the declining sugar industry. ■

In the blustery fall of 2004, Pacific Peoples Partnership collaborated with the Victoria International Development Education Association (VIDEA) to develop a Fair Trade Deliberation guide. With guide in hand, we held 15 Public Deliberations and engaged over 200 participants in 15 communities throughout BC including Vancouver, Victoria, Courtenay, Comox, Squamish, Whistler, Tofino, Uclulet, Nanaimo, Powell River, Salt Spring, Nelson, Sooke and Prince George. The outcome of this project was policy recommendations to all levels of government as well as institutions and the creation of a Fair Trade Tool Kit entitled *Trade My Way - Getting A Head in the Global Trade Market*. Through the creation of this rockin', funky, highly interactive and attractive Fair Trade Kit, young people will be educated about their relationship to global trade. It introduces them to the fair trade movement, and empowers them to take action in their own communities!

During the month of April, Ali Donnelly, the Educational Outreach Coordinator for PPP, and Elizabeth Wallace, the Educational Outreach Coordinator for VIDEA, our partner organization on this project, invaded high schools, youth groups and First Nations classes in the Victoria Area to deliver workshops. These workshops included the Fair Trade toolkit, aimed directly at youth, including a facilitators' guide, case studies, a section devoted to the benefits of cooperatives and a youth-directed background introduction to World Trade. PPP's fantastic graphic designer, Blair Kennaley, has developed a brandnew, interactive website that will follow from the given workshops and the youth-oriented guide. The guide has been designed for youth to use on their own; however, there is also a teachers component which teachers or youth leaders can use to direct the workshops.

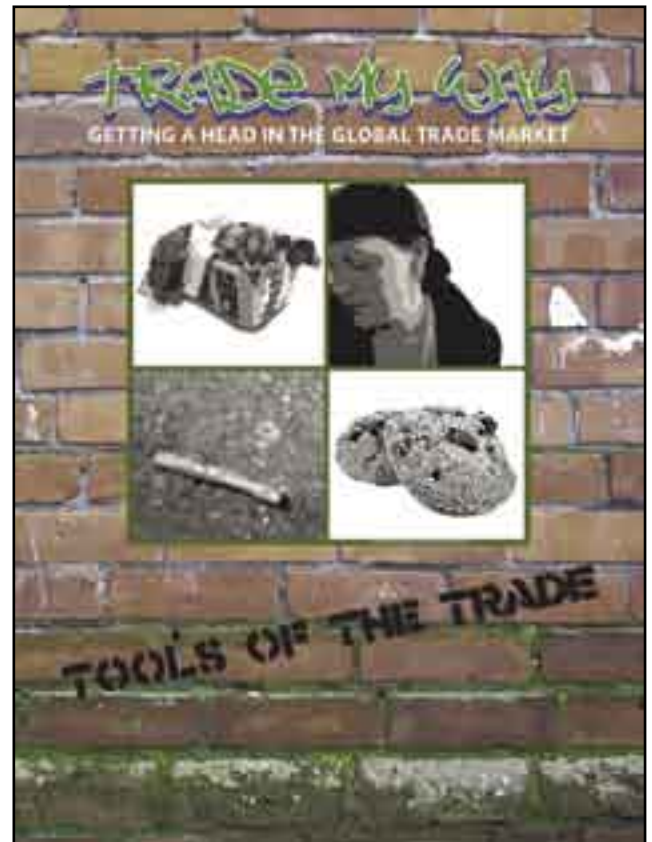
The workshops help engage young people in a discussion about the world trading system - about who wins, who loses, and how futures get determined - by putting themselves at the centre of it. By seeing how

trade relates to them directly, youth are challenged to see themselves as agents of positive change in the world, and offered

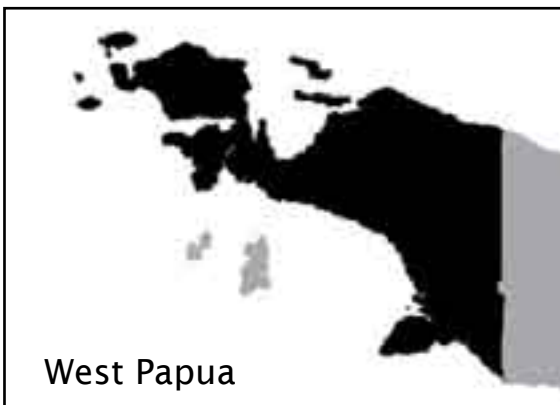
tools with which to act on their knowledge. Ali and Elizabeth had another ally when facing youth in the schools, Gerald Warbrooke, a native of Fiji and a Catholic Brother. Gerald works in Suva, Fiji, with street youth (boys) as well as prisoners. This has been a unique opportunity for Gerald, who has never been to Canada, to have had the opportunity to network with other NGOs and Church groups for solidarity and support for his work. "The workshops should help me help the boys put some organization, focus and discipline into their economic livelihoods, thus keeping them away from crime and from prison. I should be in a better position to help them make informed choices," states Gerald. This has also been a fantastic opportunity for building links of solidarity between Canadian and Fijian/Pacific Island youth.

Here at PPP, we are excited at the opportunities that this Fair Trade Project has opened up for our organization. Not only have we had the chance to talk to British Columbians about trade, but also to youth, English as a Second Language Students, church and community groups, first nations youth as well as Pacific Islanders. We are thrilled that Brother Gerald agreed to join us and have enjoyed learning from each other, as well as the youth, through the workshops given during the month of April. ■

Fair trade kit cover.



PAPUAN ZONE OF PEACE REMAINS ELUSIVE



Peace advocates and church groups warn of an impending East Timor-like scenario in West Papua unless urgent action is taken to defuse the situation. Rather than benefit from world attention on Aceh, where international tsunami relief efforts have shone a spotlight on the military, forcing some measure of accountability at least in areas open to relief agencies and journalists, West Papuan hopes for peaceful solutions give way to even more human rights abuses. Indonesian Military operations in the Puncak Jaya Highlands have killed hundreds of Indigenous tribal villagers since August 2004 while leaving thousands more internally displaced people.

In response PPP's West Papuan human rights advocacy remains a key priority. Besides committing staff time and resources, PPP has supported the creation of a new dynamic website, www.westpapua.ca, designed to allow for easy and open information sharing and network building. Destined to become a vital tool for the international Papuan solidarity community, the site allows for efficient information sharing in real time. It features clearer graphics, new posting and article sorting options, a news aggregator and syndication service.

PPP also continues to take the lead in building a broader based coalition for Canadian based advocacy. In March PPP brought Canadian partner NGOs and concerned individuals together in Montréal. From this meeting emerged renewed solidarity, plans to work with US partners to nominate a Papuan Human Rights defender for a prestigious international award, bringing the Papuan cause world attention and enhancing his personal security. The meeting also resulted in funds being raised to send two Papuan and two Canadian representatives to the 5th International Papua Solidarity Meeting in the Philippines in April to further link Canadian based advocacy with international efforts.

At the same time PPP has taken the lead in fostering closer coordination between Canadian and US solidarity networks. In February programme officer

Glenn Raynor represented PPP and WestPAN at a Summit of US groups, hosted by the Robert F Kennedy Memorial Center for Human Rights in Washington DC. The summit included three days of visits to Senate, Congressional and State Department offices, briefing senior staff on the ongoing military campaigns and urging them not to resume controversial IMET military aid to Indonesia. Meetings also resulted in building support for nearly two hundred parliamentarians from around the world calling on the UN to review the deeply flawed 1969 "Act of Free Choice" that saw West Papua ceded to Indonesia (referred to as an act of coercion in a declaration by the UK House of Lords in December).

Actions in coming months include involving exiled Papuan leaders in consultations with Ministers and MPs, urging them to join their parliamentary counterparts worldwide in calling on the UN to review the "Act of Free Choice." Further actions include urging the Government of Canada, at every opportunity, to press the new Indonesian Government to honour its promises of Special Autonomy and an end to violence in West Papua.

Papua is an ark of outstanding cultural, linguistic and biological diversity. We at PPP are deeply concerned about the destruction of this incredible world heritage site. We therefore join with governments and solidarity groups around the world in calling on the Indonesian Government to end impunity and hold the Indonesian Military accountable for human rights abuses and environmental destruction in West Papua. The rights of Indigenous Papuans must not be sacrificed for political goals nor put in jeopardy for the sake of economic development.

PPP takes no position on the political status of West Papua. We neither endorse independence claims nor Indonesian sovereignty but instead we call on the Government of Indonesia and all armed groups operating in Papua to immediately cease military operations against Indigenous Papuans and begin negotiations for the creation of a "zone of peace." ■

Written by | Glenn Raynor
PPP Programme Officer

PPP GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES THE FOLLOWING SUPPORTERS



Photo | Rita Parikh



Australian ship off coast of Solomon Islands.

Father Kevin Barr

is a Roman Catholic priest who has lived in Fiji since 1982. He is a member of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. He founded the Chevalier Hostel, a home for underprivileged youth. He also taught psychology at the University of the South Pacific. His published works include: *Poverty in Fiji, Let's Change the World, Blessed are the Poor and Fire on Earth*. He presently works for the Ecumenical Centre for Research, Education and Advocacy (ECREA) based in Suva, Fiji.

Condensed from a key note speech at the CCIC Asia Pacific Working Group Symposium in Ottawa in December 2004. The full text of Father Barr's Speech is available from PPP upon request.

suddenly came to the forefront in the discourse of a number of Pacific leaders, and the 2004 Report of the Pacific Forum Eminent Persons Group listed terrorism as one of the "latest menaces to worry Pacific leaders." Our major donors – Australia and New Zealand – began to take the lead in funding and introducing new anti-terrorism initiatives and policies through a range of development assistance programmes aimed at strengthening legal systems, police forces, border controls, and customs operations. As well, a Forum expert group was to develop a regional framework of proposed legislation to deal with terrorism.

Of course the fight against terrorism is important and must be taken seriously. However, there is need to see the surge of anti-terrorist activity in some sort of perspective, for, as Forum Secretary-General Greg Urwin told Reuters news, "more people [in the Pacific] die from and are threatened by poverty, hunger and disease, and natural disasters than from wars on terrorism." Overseas development assistance funds that are needed for education, health, and poverty alleviation are being diverted to peace-keeping operations and military assistance. Although these operations are allegedly aimed at establishing stability and security, they often serve donor countries' geo-political, military, and economic interests – not the people of the Pacific.

While strong legislation and appropriate policing are necessary, issues of security and terrorism must not be used as an excuse to put in place harsh measures that override freedom and responsible criticism. In Fiji, our government has actually become quite paranoid about any perceived opposition. Any watchdog group in society that questions government's actions or policies is immediately branded. Academics from the University of the South Pacific who question government's economic policies are told they are teaching wrong ideas. NGOs in general are said to be "full of sick people" and are threatened with new legislation concerning their activities. Trade union leaders are said to be unpatriotic and seeking to destabilize the country. The Citizens' Constitutional Forum was actually deregistered. And government is particularly paranoid if anyone from the above groups who voices opposition comes from the Indo-Fijian community.

Serious concern has also been raised about the recently proposed anti-terrorist legislation in Fiji. Human rights activists have voiced their concern that such legislation must not override basic human rights, but all NGOs, trade unions, churches, women's groups, and people's organizations are alert to the very real danger that government can use such legislation to silence any legitimate opposition from its critics, as has happened in the U.S. The watchdogs of society do not want anti-terrorism to be used as an excuse for governments to repress opposition and criticism, to disallow demonstrations in the name of "national

security," or to impose its own interpretation of what security demands. Our main danger in Fiji is not terrorism, but governments that refuse to accept criticism and find excuses to repress dissenters.

Australia – Deputy for U.S. Interests

Just as the U.S. is using the war on terrorism to re-order the world, so Australia is using the possible threat of terrorism involving "failed states" to re-order the Pacific and make it more secure for the advancement of the new global economic agenda. Seemingly, Australia's newfound concern for Pacific Island countries (PICs) stems not only from national self-interest, which was always present, but also from its strong ties to the Bush Administration's neo-liberal economic agenda. On his recent visit to Australia, George Bush affirmed an earlier media observation that Australian Prime Minister John Howard was his "deputy sheriff" for the Pacific.

While it is true that Australia spends millions of dollars every year on aid to the Pacific and has an interest in seeing that good governance is observed across the region, it has always claimed that it does not wish to impinge on the sovereignty of the PICs. Even when asked by the Solomon Islands to intervene in their state of near civil war, Australia was hesitant to do so. Then came George Bush's war on terrorism, and, almost overnight, Australia accepted the invitation to become involved, not only in the Solomons, but also by suggesting that a number of its neighbors – Papua New Guinea, East Timor, Fiji, Vanuatu, and Nauru – were close to becoming "failed states" and potential havens for terrorists. Consequently, the Howard Government is now pushing a policy of more direct government and perhaps even military intervention in the southwest Pacific. It is becoming clear that terrorism and the perceived danger of "failed states" are providing an excuse for political and economic interference by Australia and, ultimately, the United States.

Living the Dream

It appears that the war on terrorism declared after the events of September 11, 2001 has provided the Bush Administration with an excuse to re-order the world and rid it of all obstacles that might stand in the way of the globalization agenda. As the major world power, the U.S. seeks only to make the world more secure for the advancement of the global economic agenda, from which it will be the major beneficiary. No alternative philosophies or economic visions will be allowed to stand in the way.

As some have suggested, the war on terrorism is a war for the rich of the world that is fought on the basis of military supremacy and the assumption that "might is right." In the process, it has caused "a dangerous sleep of reason" in the nations of the world and has become a serious threat to human rights and civil liberties. The so-called "American dream" for political and economic supremacy has, in fact, created a global nightmare. It is not difficult to see who benefits and who loses, who gets to live the dream and who must endure the nightmare. ■

PPP LAUNCHES NEW WEBSITE

PPP proudly launches a new look for its website. Changes to the website include a volunteering with PPP page and a useful links page. A more detailed map of the South Pacific replaces the previous one on the map page of the website. When asked her opinion, staff member Ali Donnelly said, "It's much easier on the eyes". "Fantastic job" responded board member, Nora Aarajs of the Victoria Independent Film & Video Festival.

PPP's website offers a comprehensive overview of issues and links to a broad assortment of organizations and resources.

It features:

- Issues and resources covering human rights, women, the environment, and more.
- Expressing your global citizenship: Get Active!
- Tok Blong Pasifik: Pacific news and views
- Indigenous Peoples Abroad Programme
- Reports from Pacific Networking Conferences
- Video catalogue and ordering
- Secure on-line donation system

Visit PPP's website at www.pacificpeoplespartnership.org.



Photo Top | Randall in Victoria, British Columbia.

Photo Left | Randall with his former Afghan staff on his last day in Kabul.

PPP WELCOMES NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Pacific Peoples' Partnership is pleased to announce its new Executive Director, Randall Sach, who comes to us straight from Afghanistan where he spent a year as the Director of the CIDA Program Support Unit in Kabul. Previous international postings for Randall include two and a half years in Manila, The Philippines where he was Country Director for CHF-International, a US-based NGO; work in Nampula, Mozambique for Cooperation-Canada Mozambique (COCAMO); and in Mexico City with the Habitat International Coalition. Randall also has extensive experience with the cooperative sector in Canada, most notably with Rooftops Canada Foundation, a Toronto-based international development NGO that provides technical assistance for non-profit and cooperative housing projects in countries of the global south, and as a volunteer board member with local and provincial cooperative federations. ■

AU REVOIR ET BONNE CHANCE, RITA!

They say that if you've ever experienced the South Pacific, it is with you for life. The culture, the warmth, the vibrancy, the scent -- you carry them with you in your heart, under your skin. And so, though I leave PPP with a gentle sense of sadness and loss, I know these four years as executive director will remain with me for many more.

It has been a privilege to serve our partners in the South, and to work with them, in solidarity, to strengthen their efforts for change. In its 30th year, PPP is a mature organization, with ambitious and energetic programmes promoting economic and social justice and development. I have been honoured to help shape these over the past four years.

I leave behind a strong and enthusiastic team of staff and board members, and am delighted to welcome Randall Sach as PPP's new executive director.

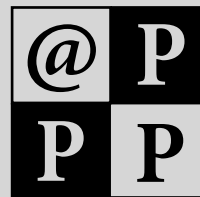
As for me, I am moving on to a more domestic challenge. I will serve as executive director for Canadian Parents for French - BC/Yukon Branch, a non-governmental organization working to enhance access to, and the quality of, French-language education in the public school system. Though it represents a shift in focus for me, as with PPP, this position offers the opportunity to work with caring, committed and creative Canadians affecting change in their schools and communities together. I will miss Pacific Peoples' Partnership, and the depth of commitment you have all brought to it. Thank you for your support! ■

Written by | Rita Parikh

WHO'S WHO

Executive Director
Randall Sach
Programme Officer
Glenn Raynor
Events Co-ordinator
Susie Charbonneau

Educational Outreach Coordinator
Ali Donnelly
Graphic Co-ordinator
Blair Kennaley



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BOOK REVIEW:

Written by | Nick Etheridge

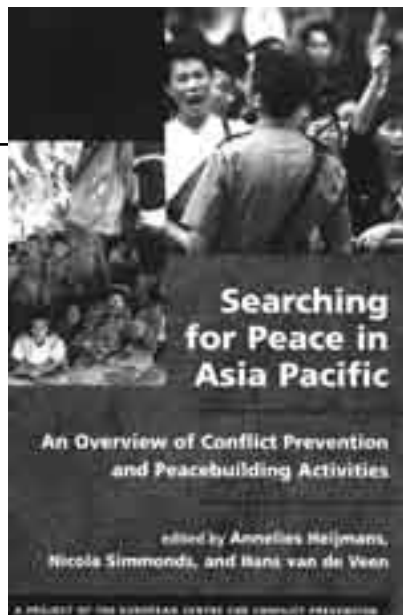
There is surely no area of the world in which the quest for security is more complex or the stakes higher than in Asia-Pacific. East and South Asia contain the world's scariest examples of competing territorial claims, clashing ideologies and interests and historical rivalries. On the intrastate level ethnic and religious tensions, poverty-driven corruption, malgovernance and human rights abuses afflict much of Southeast Asia, South Asia, China and North Korea.

And it may get worse. The relatively stable regional security situation that existed since 1945 as a result of Cold War rigidities and the economic success of much of the region appears to be yielding to a more fluid and perhaps dangerous phase of mounting local and cross border conflict, stoked by events external to the region like Iraq, as well as by indigenous factors.

To help us understand the complexities of the problem in East and Southeast Asia and the Pacific, and to suggest some avenues for dealing with it, the European Centre for Conflict Prevention has just published *Searching for Peace in Asia Pacific-An Overview of Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004, 848pp). In three parts, it reflects on prospects for peace and security in the region, discusses specific regional conflicts from a peacebuilding "lessons learned" perspective, and details some 350 organizations involved in conflict resolution in Asia-Pacific.

The authors whose "reflections" set the conceptual scene have a recurring theme, which is that 9/11 and the ensuing "war on terror" have trumped and largely derailed earlier efforts to develop effective conflict resolution and peace-building techniques in Asia-Pacific, as well as respect for human rights (and indeed the regional arms control and non proliferation agenda). There is a particularly useful chapter by Desmond Ball, a distinguished Australian academic, on the very limited progress so far in building badly needed regional multilateral security cooperation because of continuing resistance in Asia to any perceived diminution of state sovereignty. David Wright-Neville, another Australian academic, writes thoughtfully about how the "war on terror" risks driving moderate Islamists among the 300 million Muslims in Southeast and East Asia into the arms of those radicals who have espoused violence. Kennedy Graham has a very sensible piece on the distinctions between democracy, independence and self determination and has interesting thoughts on how to balance a traditional "Pacific Way" with modern concepts of pluralism.

Occasionally ideas and analyses appear ideological. Many have a "bottom-up" community-based bias. Is it really a solution to intrastate conflict to suggest it should be easier for disaffected regions to secede from existing states? Or does a proliferation of aenemic or failed states in a globalized world make their survival as viable economies and hence politics problematic? And does secession necessarily bring an end to violence, or might it, as happened in the former Yugoslavia and Ethiopia, only lead to new and worse violence? Walden Bello blames globalization for everything from the Asian economic crisis of



1997-8 to environmental degradation to the limited success so far of regional multilateralism.

The chapters in part two of the book that deal with the South Pacific focus on Fiji, Bougainville (PNG), Solomon Islands, East Timor and West Papua.

The authors (each chapter is co-written by a local activist) for the first three of these come to some very sensible conclusions. Make greater use of traditional structures and ceremonies that emphasize the community and do not rely wholly on western "statist" approaches involving treaties, intervention forces and disarmament measures.

Use civil society where it exists. Give a strong role to women in these largely matriarchal societies. Above all be patient. The wounds of conflict can take decades to heal, and artificial deadlines can be counterproductive. The long-running Bougainville secessionist crisis comes across as the conflict where these lessons have best been learned, while the Solomon Islands stands as the situation where order has for now been restored by outside intervention but where local healing remains problematic.

The chapters on East Timor and West Papua fascinate particularly. These former European colonial territories were both absorbed into the Indonesian state with little or no reference to the wishes of local inhabitants. A cycle of resistance and repression by the militarized Indonesian regime took hold in both territories, leading to violence and human rights abuses. Can this be reversed in West Papua or is it likely to follow East Timor down the road to independence? And how in the meantime does one heal lingering divisions in East Timor and try to set the stage in West Papua for self determination and respect for Papuan identity in a territory where more than 40% of the inhabitants are immigrant settlers who control the economy?

The authors of these chapters largely skirt this big picture, but do provide interesting detail on the role of civil society (NGO's, churches, media, womens' groups) in the two conflicts, concluding that greater networking among NGOs and stronger partnership with outside players like the UN is needed. The authors of the West Papua chapter however caution against romanticizing the role of local NGOs, indispensable as they are. Their weak internal management, tendency to be responsive and focused on the priorities of international donors, and their single-issue and turf preoccupations, sometimes limit their effectiveness in peacebuilding.

In all this is a book which offers many insights into the nature of conflict, and of Asia-Pacific societies. That it brings different viewpoints to bear is a strength. For all those interested in Asia-Pacific security and how different players can work together to achieve peace and justice, it contains a wealth of information and good advice. ■

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