

George Burchett

time/lines

to be opened by

John Pilger

musical performance by

Jon Rose

Opening: Wednesday 3 February 2010 6 – 8pm

Exhibition: 3 February - 24 February 2010

MORI GALLERY

morigallery@bigpond.com

168 Day Street

Sydney 2000 Australia

Wednesday – Saturday

11 to 6 or by appointment

Telephone +612 9283 2903

Facsimile +612 9283 2909



neri gallery, 3.2.10, Jon Rese



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neri gallery 3.2.10

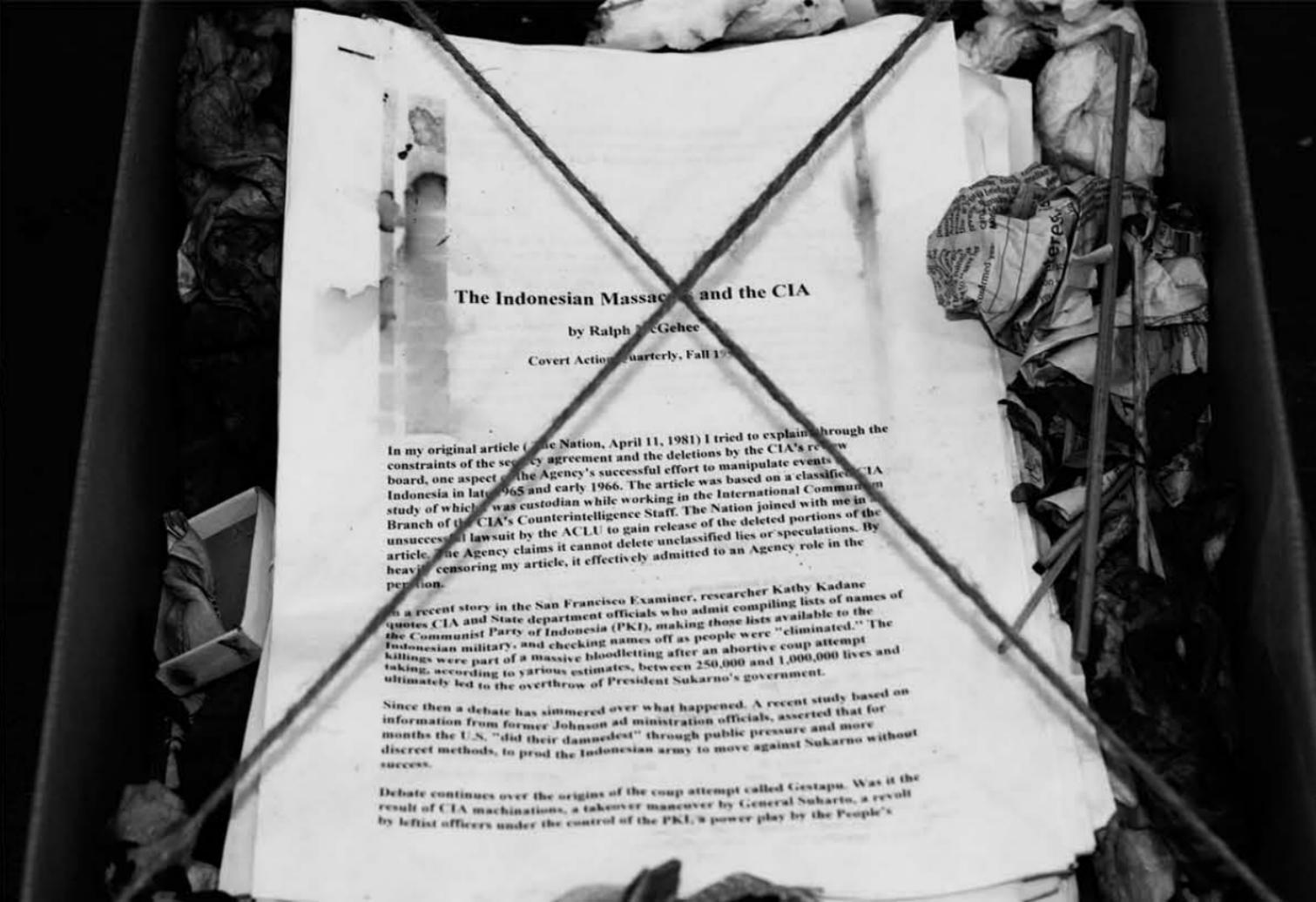


neri gallery, 3.2.10



george burchett & john pilger

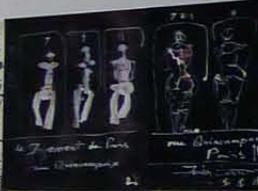
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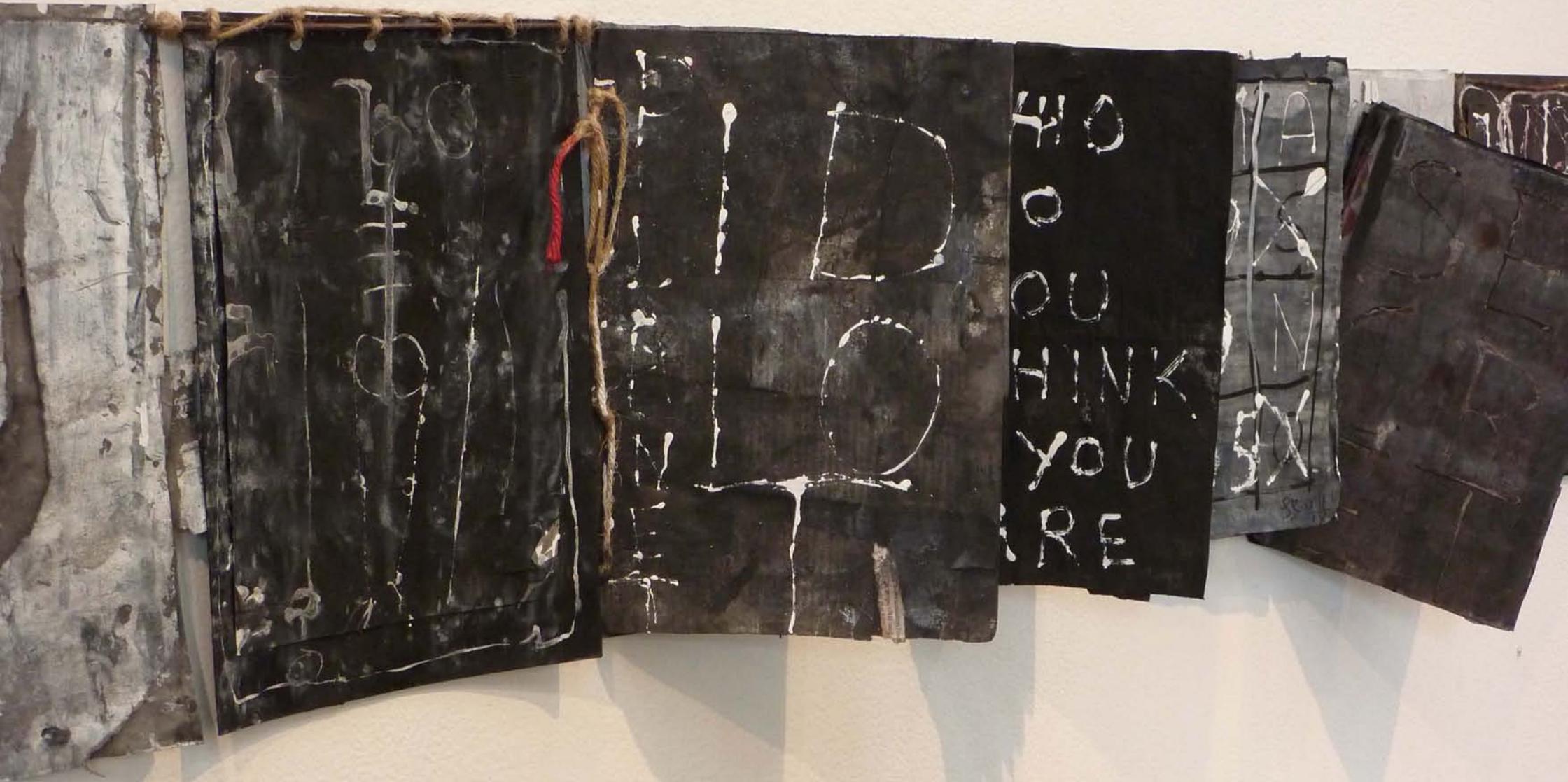












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Handwritten text on a dark, rectangular fragment of parchment or leather. The text is written in white ink and consists of several large, stylized characters. The first character is tall and arching, resembling 'M'. Below it are smaller characters, including a red mark and a character that looks like 'F'. The fragment is mounted on a wooden strip.

A dark, rectangular fragment of parchment or leather with a faint grid pattern. The text is mostly illegible due to fading and the dark background. Some faint characters are visible, but they do not form a clear message.

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A dark, rectangular fragment of parchment or leather with a faint grid pattern. The text is mostly illegible due to fading and the dark background. Some faint characters are visible, but they do not form a clear message.

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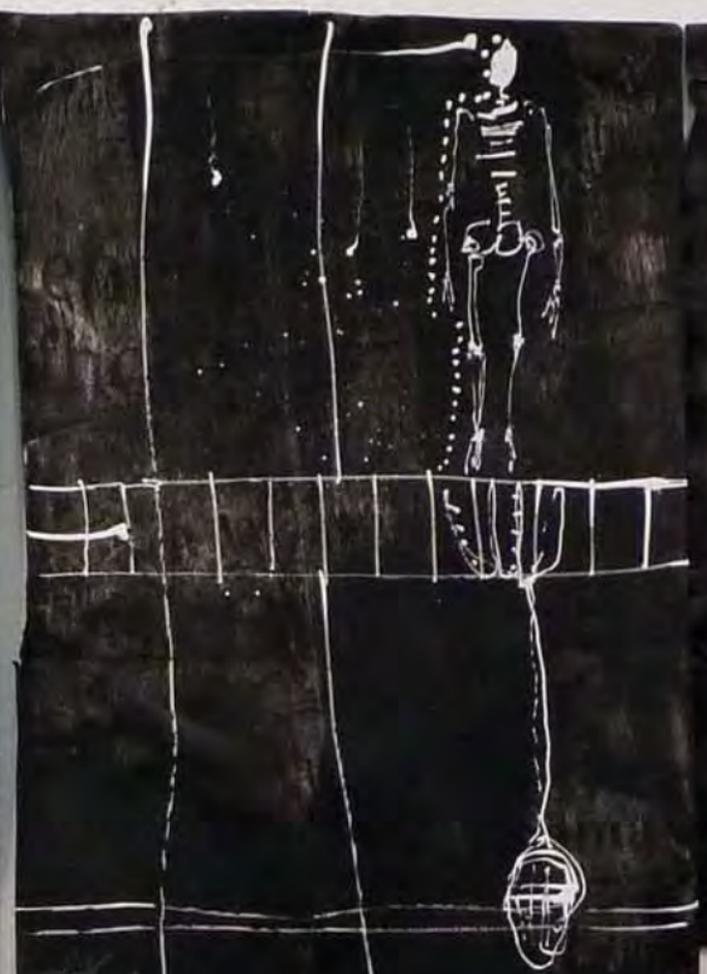
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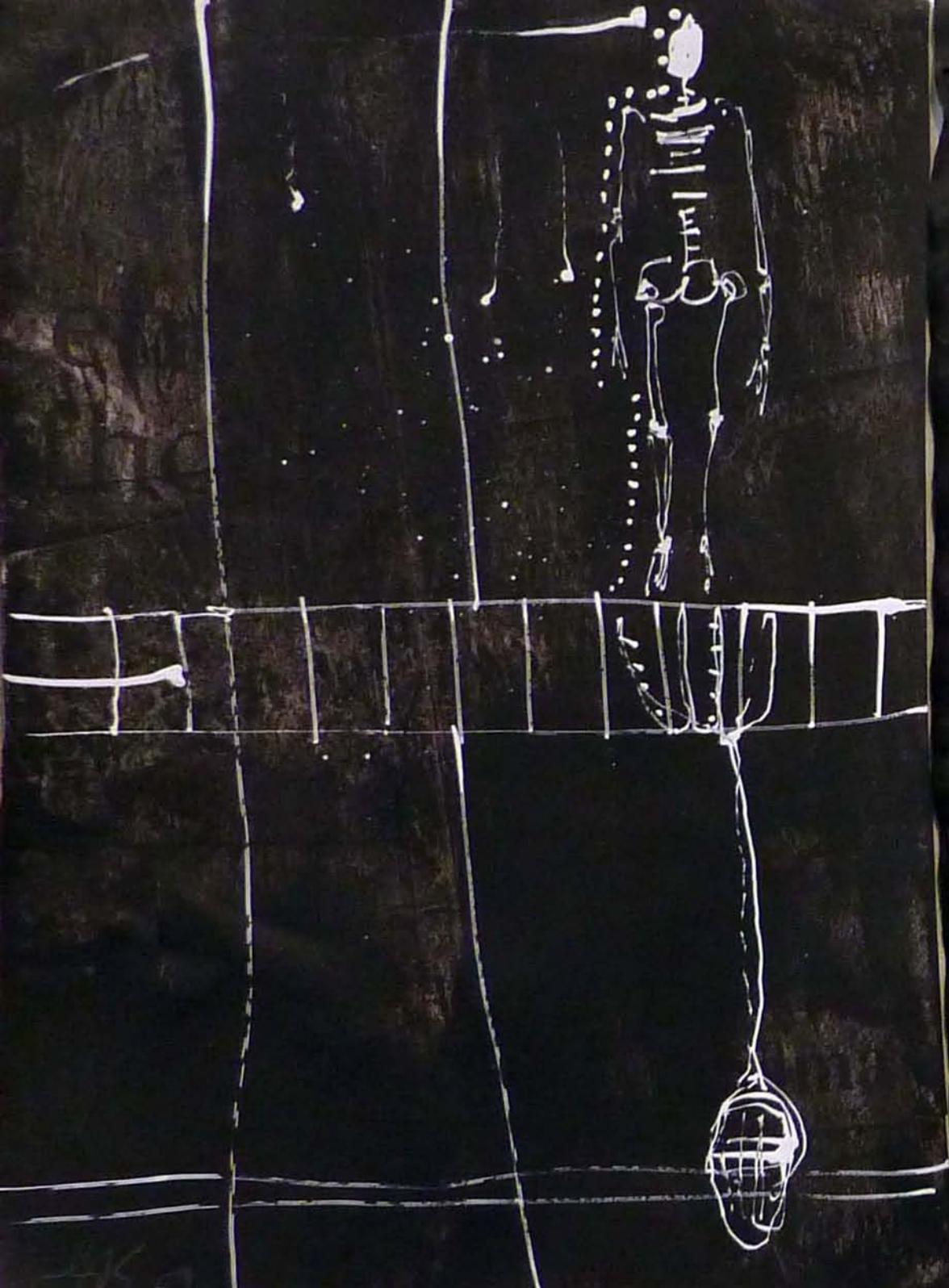


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Albert Camus



DELIBERATOR



SPOOKS

"We all have lain on us today
the duty to be prepared, to be strong.

Not with the strength of the bully,
but with the strength of a deliberator.

The world needs
the United States of America,
the world needs the British peoples
of the world, the world needs
every scrap of democratic strength.

May all that you stand for, and that
we stand for, be preserved
under the providence of God
for the happiness of mankind."

Robert Menzies

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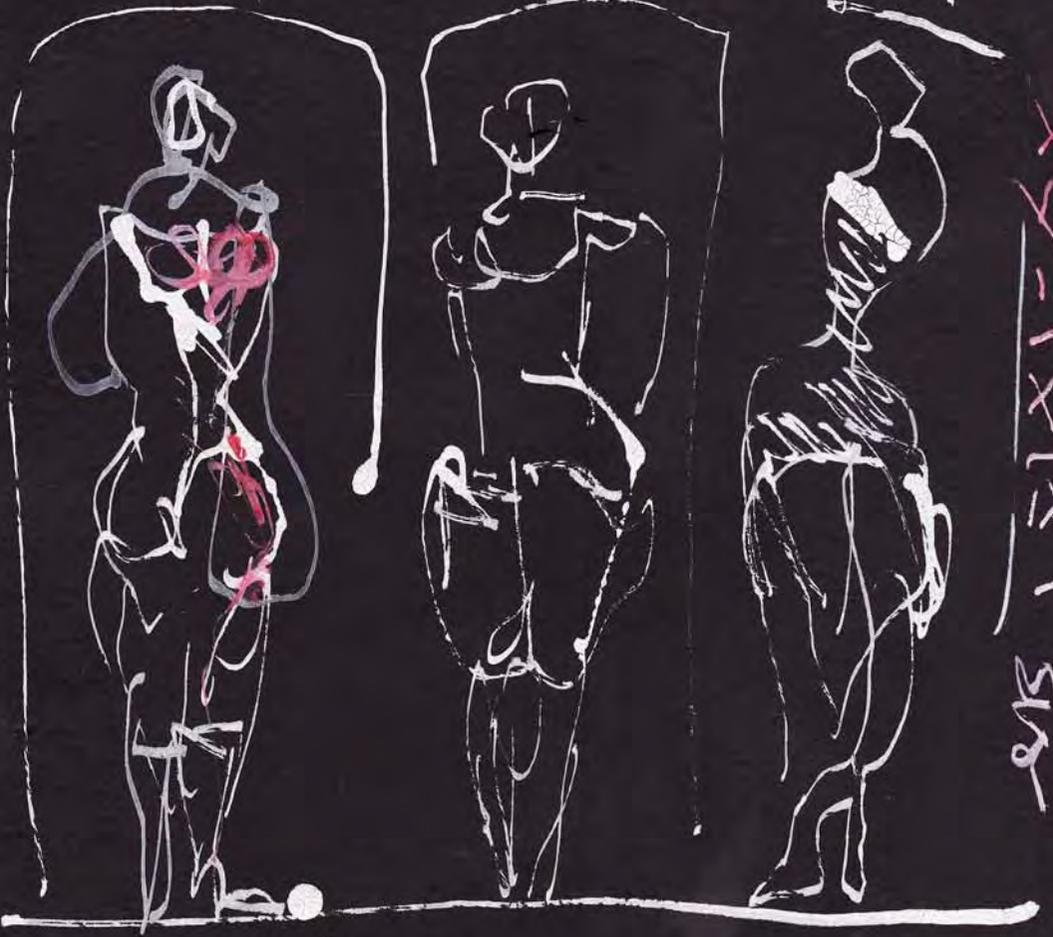
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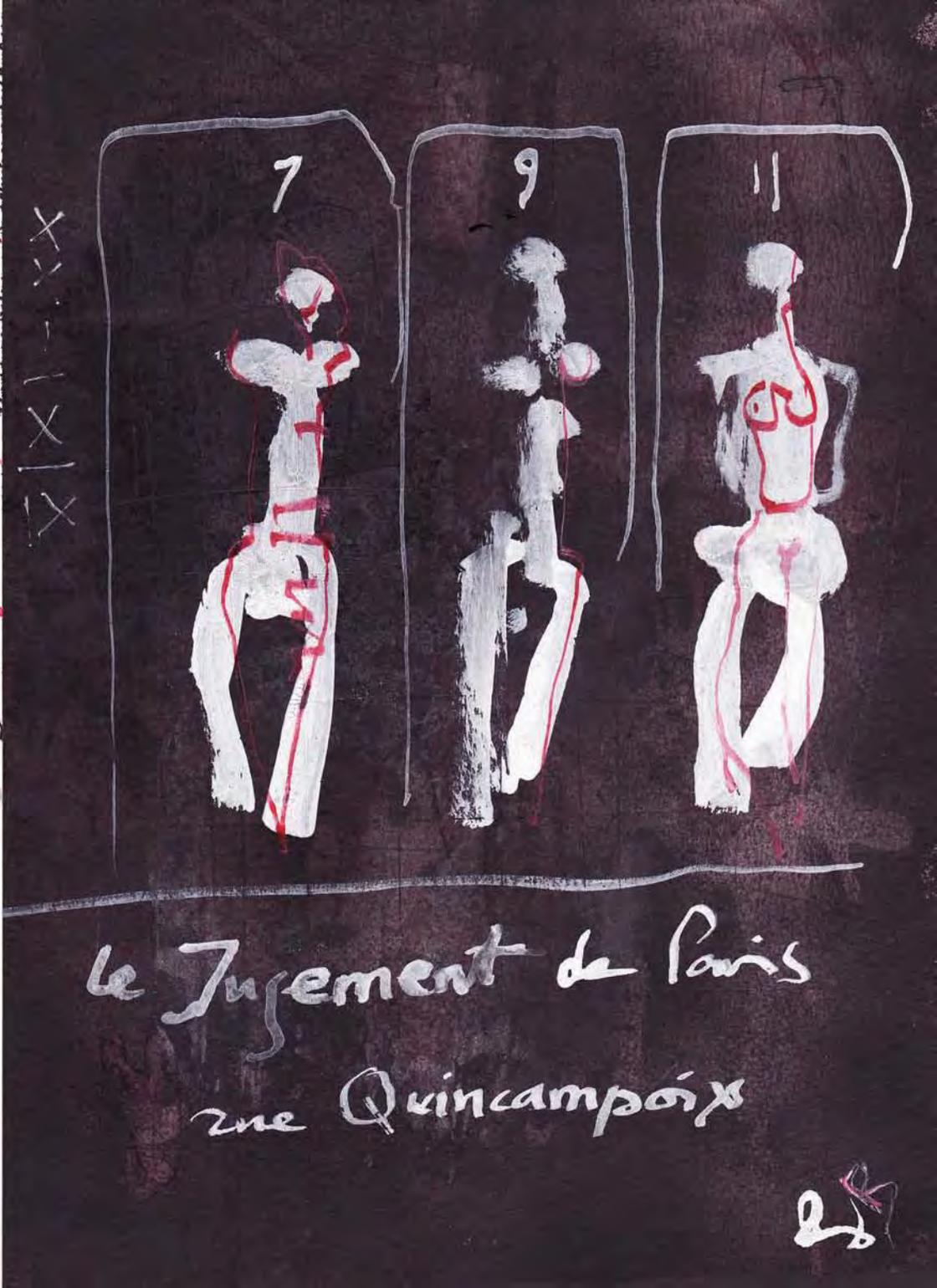
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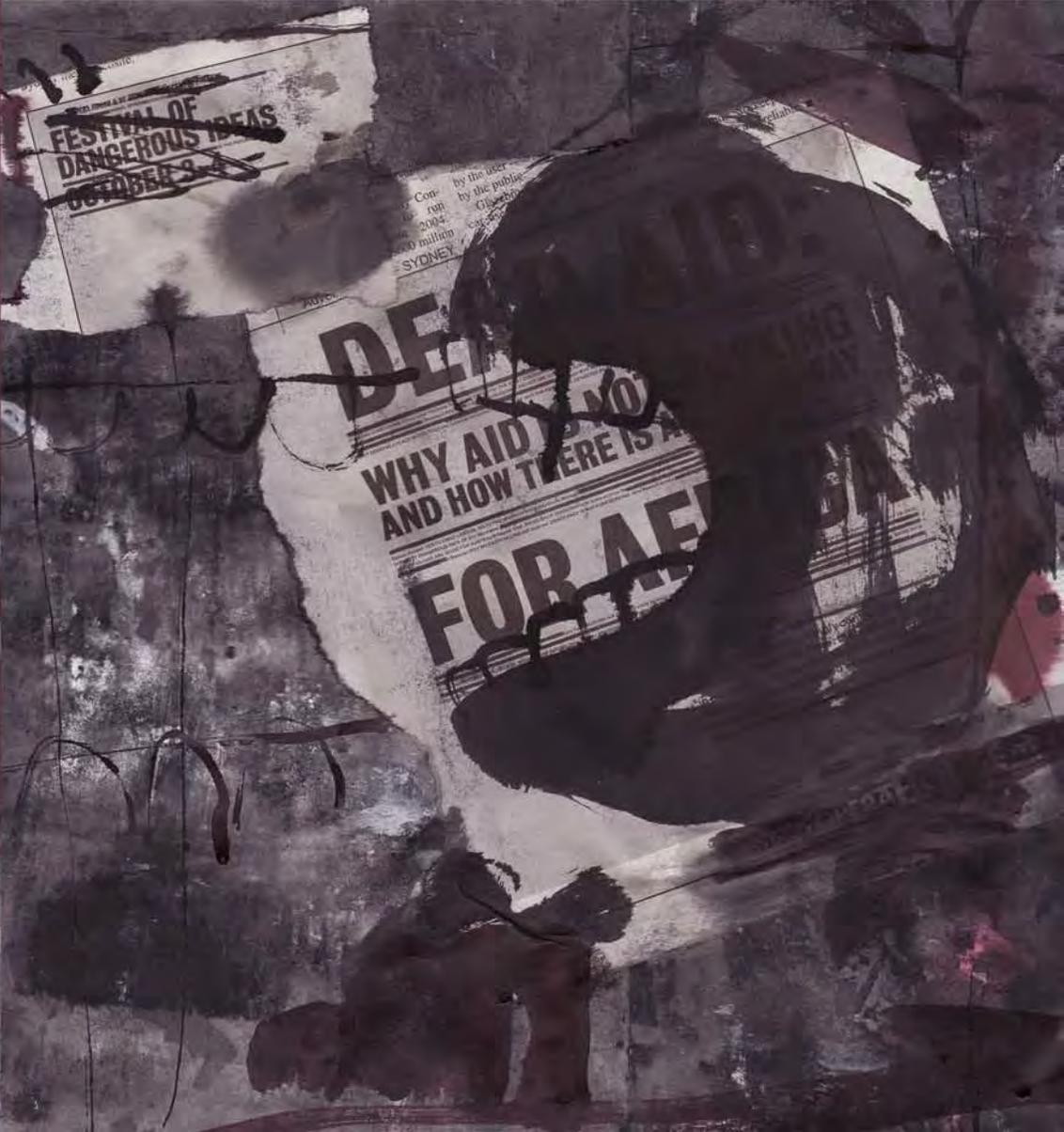
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FREEDOM: THE MOST DANGEROUS IDEA OF ALL

BERMAINE GREEN
4 OCTOBER, 11AM

My wife's going to talk to the Green Party about the socialist and journalistic rights to our time of the last and so-called 'socialist' era.

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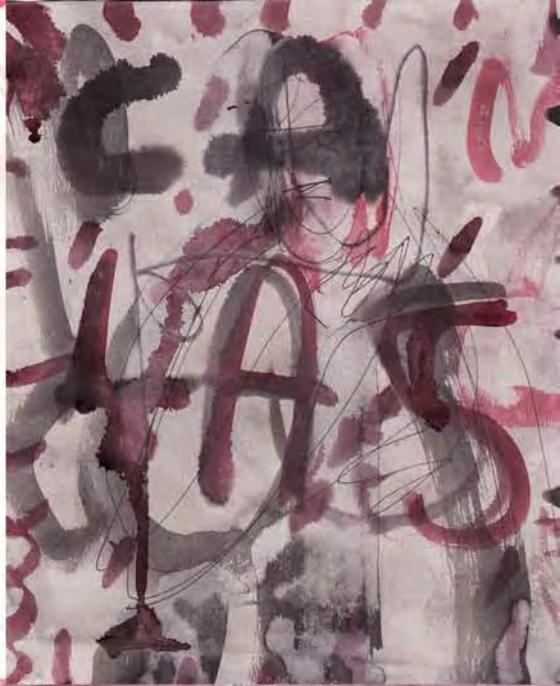
2-5 January, 2011

socialist alliance
socialistalliance.org

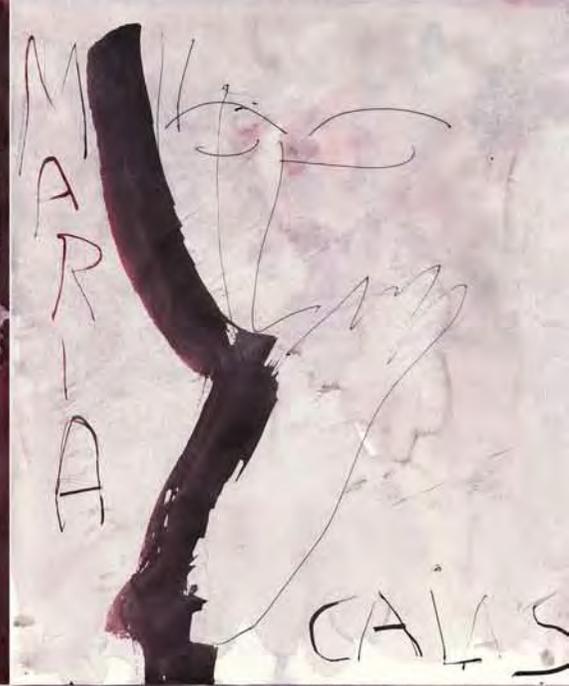
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THE TEN PRINCIPLES OF BANDUNG

by **George Burchett**

In May 2009 I visited the Museum Of The Asian-African Conference in Bandung, Indonesia.

In April 1955, the heads of state of 29 Asian and African countries¹, many of them newly independent, gathered in Bandung to chart a course for peaceful co-existence and mutual respect between all nations. The conference was hosted by Indonesia's President Soekarno. The museum commemorates this important and mostly forgotten event.

At the end of the Conference, the delegates issued a ten-point declaration known as The Ten Principles of Bandung. They are:

1. Respect for fundamental human rights and for the purpose and principles of the Charter of the United Nations;
2. Respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries,
3. Recognise the equality of all races and the equality of all nations,
4. Non-intervention in the internal affairs of other countries,
5. Respect for the right of each nation to defend itself singly or collectively, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations.
6. (a) Abstention from the use of arrangements of collective defence to serve any particular interests of the big powers.
(b) Abstention by any countries from exerting, pressures on other countries.
7. Refraining from acts or threats of aggression or the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any countries.
8. Settlement of all international disputes by peaceful means, such as negotiation, conciliation, arbitration or judicial settlement as well as other peaceful means of the parties' own choice, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations.
9. Promotion for mutual interest and cooperation.
10. Respect for justice and international obligations.

All ten points sound eminently sensible to me.

I was born one month after the Bandung Conference, in Hanoi, Vietnam, one of the participating countries. 1955 was a good year, filled with optimism and promises. The day I was born, the last French colonial troops left Hanoi. Vietnam was finally free and independent, although temporarily divided. In accordance with the Geneva Agreements of 1954, elections were to be held in both North and South, and the country was to be united again. Everyone expected Ho Chi Minh to win the elections in a landslide. One imperial power and its allies wanted to prevent this at all costs. Vietnam was eventually re-united in 1975, not through the ballot box but through armed struggle. We all know at what cost. Millions of people died, millions of bombs were dropped, millions of tonnes of toxic chemicals released and countless atrocities committed because neither the 1954 Geneva accords nor the 1955 Ten

Principles of Bandung were respected by the world champions of “freedom and democracy”.

My father, Australian journalist Wilfred Burchett – an incurable optimist despite witnessing the horrors of the Great Depression, Nazi Germany, World War II, Hiroshima and Korea – was in Bandung in April 1955. There is a very nice photo of him in the Museum. There is also a photo of the *Kashmir Princess*, an airplane chartered by the Chinese government to fly China’s Premier Zhou Enlai to the conference. It was blown up in mid air by an American-made bomb planted by a Taiwanese agent in Hong Kong.² Luckily, Zhou Enlai had a last minute change of plan and flew on a different plane. My dad was also supposed to be on the *Kashmir Princess*, but eventually flew direct from Hanoi with the Vietnamese delegation led by Premier Pham Van Dong.



Wilfred Burchett (right) in Bandung, 1955

On his way back from Bandung, as he was crossing from China into Vietnam, his passport mysteriously disappeared.³ When he applied for a replacement, the Australian government refused to issue him with one. That refusal lasted 17 years. For good measure, Australia’s then Prime Minister Robert Menzies personally decided that I was not to be registered as an Australian citizen, overruling advice that this was illegal.⁴



The wreckage of the Kashmir Princess,
Bandung Museum Of The Asian-African Conference

From 1957 to 1965, we lived in Moscow. These were good years for the Soviet Union. In 1956 Khrushchev had denounced Stalin's crimes at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the USSR, released political prisoners and ushered in an era of openness and peaceful cohabitation. Asia, Africa and Latin America were shaking off their colonial shackles and getting rid of fascist dictatorships. I was on the Red Square in 1961 to greet Fidel Castro. The Soviets were conquering space and humanity was marching towards progress and a world free of oppression, poverty, disease, racism and all the other ills that have plagued the world since the dark ages. Vietnam was resisting American imperialism and my dad was reporting the heroic struggle of the Vietnamese people from the jungles of South Vietnam. There was no doubt in my young mind that with the support of the Soviet Union and all of progressive humanity, Vietnam and all of Asia, Africa and Latin America would be liberated from oppression and poverty. That's how the world looked to me back then: bright and beautiful.



My grandfather, George Burchett, presents Yuri Gagarin with a boomerang, Moscow 1961 (The Australian Government refused to allow my father to visit his dying father and then refused to allow him to attend his funeral)

Mr George Burchett presenting Yuri Gagarin with a boomerang on behalf of Australian peace workers, with the hope that he and his fellow compatriots in their journeyings to the stars, will, like the boomerang, always return to earth safely and to a world at peace.

In 1965, we moved to Phnom Penh, Cambodia, so that my dad could be close to Vietnam and as far away from Moscow winters as possible. As I later learned, he was getting extremely disillusioned with the USSR and its lukewarm support for the resistance in South Vietnam. He also sided with China when the Sino-Soviet split occurred.

Cambodia in 1965 was pure heaven, despite the escalating war in neighbouring Vietnam. 1965 marked the beginning of what Tariq Ali called "the glorious decade".⁵ Yes, there was war, misery and oppression, but there was also tremendous international solidarity, an explosion of hope, optimism, and creativity. The Civil Rights movement in the US and the growing anti-war movement worldwide were energising people across the planet. Revolution

was in the air and it had the faces of Ho Chi Minh, Che Guevara, Fidel Castro, Patrice Lumumba, Mao Tse Tung, Martin Luther King and other legendary revolutionaries and freedom-fighters. My dad was at the centre of the anti-war movement. His books and dispatches from Indochina, published weekly in the New York *National Guardian* and reprinted around the world, were informing the world about the struggle of the people of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. The world was still full of optimism, hope and passion. It also looked incredibly sexy, what with rock & roll, flower power and all. It was a great time to be a kid!



My mum and me in the woods around Moscow, September 1961,
Photo [Roger Pic](#)

In 1969, we moved to Paris where negotiations to end the war in Vietnam had started. Post May 68 Paris was the coolest place on earth. The anti-war movement was at its strongest. Everything seemed possible: Vietnam was winning the war. The USA was talking peace (while still bombing Hanoi). On 18 March 1970, my dad's old friend Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia (also present at Bandung) was overthrown in a CIA-backed coup. He declared from Moscow that he was going to fight back and set up his resistance headquarters in Beijing.⁶ Sihanouk is now again king of Cambodia. But at what price? Millions died in the US-imposed war, in US carpet bombings and the ensuing Khmer Rouge genocide.

In 1975, North Vietnam and the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam won the war against the USA. The country was finally reunited. And it was swiftly declared an enemy of humanity, ostracized by the international community and denounced as a Stalinist state by sections of the Left. When Vietnam liberated Cambodia from the genocidal Khmer Rouge, there was an international uproar. Joan Baez marched to the Thai-Khmer border to demand the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia and the return of the legitimate government of Democratic Kampuchea – meaning the Khmer

Rouge. The US, UK, Australia, China, Thailand and others backed and armed Pol Pot.

I don't know what evil pact Henry Kissinger made with the Chinese leadership in the 70s. But it worked. Not only did Vietnam become an international pariah, but the western Left split, disintegrated and made itself irrelevant.

Communists and independent voices, like my dad's, who supported Vietnam, were labelled "Stalinists" and stooges of Moscow. Maoists, Trotskyists and assorted leftists were denouncing Vietnamese imperialism. Quite a few were later reborn as neo-cons, clamouring for Iraqi blood.

In France, former Maoists, re-branded themselves as "nouveaux philosophes" and became the new darlings of the French media and Paris salons.

The spoiled heirs of rich families, like the ineffable Bernard Henry-Lévy, got bored or disillusioned with their former "revolutionary" activities and were pontificating about human rights – including Pol Pot's democratic right to return to his killing fields.

The bourgeoisie was reassured. Their sons and daughters had finally grown out of the "revolution" and were denouncing its evils.

So that was the end of the "glorious decade". My dad went on reporting the horrors of the Khmer Rouge and the wars in Angola and Mozambique, but by that time he was labelled a Stalinist, a stooge of Moscow, a KGB agent etc. by both Right and Left. He resigned from the New York *Guardian*, for which he'd been writing weekly for 25 years, because the editors either refused to publish or censored his reports from Vietnam and Cambodia, in which he denounced Chinese aggression against Vietnam and her support for the murderous Khmer Rouge. The *Guardian*, like much of the Left, was toeing the pro-China, anti-Soviet and anti-Vietnam line.

In 1983 my dad finished typing the footnotes for his last book, *Shadows Of Hiroshima*, collapsed and died shortly after. *Shadows Of Hiroshima* was his final contribution to the anti-nuclear and peace movements, based on his experience as the first Western correspondent to report from Hiroshima after the atomic bomb was dropped. His famous *I Write This As A Warning To The World* from atom-bombed Hiroshima still resonates today.⁸

In 1985 I moved to Australia with my wife Ilza and our son Graham to reclaim my birthrights and give our son a warm place under the sun to grow up in. We spent our first six months in the Aboriginal Community of Maningrida, in Arnhem Land, in the Australian Northern Territory. It was there that I learned from Rupert Murdoch's *The Australian* what an evil and despicable man my father was in a series of long articles written by a former Australian "friend" of his. According to these stories, my father was a KGB agent, an agent of Hanoi, Beijing and Pyongyang, an alcoholic and fornicator, a lover of dog meat and other such nonsense. Simultaneously, Australia's "leading public intellectual" published a long pompous piece in the right wing (and CIA-

funded) magazine *Quadrant* denouncing him as a KGB agent and traitor to his country.⁷ Suddenly the world I knew and loved became evil, communism and socialism became dirty words, the USSR was evil, Vietnam was evil, Wilfred Burchett was evil, the Khmer Rouge were evil, but deserved support because they were less evil than the Vietnamese, who had freed the Cambodian people from its killers and enslavers.

For the sake of sanity, I simply switched off. “Let historians sort it out”, I thought. And they did, brilliantly.⁹ But the media doesn’t like history, it likes catchy headlines like “Comrade Burchett Was A Party Hack” or “Burchett: Moral Traitor To Western Civilisation” and other such rubbish.

In 2006 I returned to Hanoi after an almost five decade absence. And it instantly felt like home. Suddenly I was surrounded by friendliness and love. I was again part of the winning team, the team that kicked French colonialists and American imperialists out of their country. Friends took me to see our old home. I wanted to stay!

Then I visited Uncle Ho’s house in Hanoi. And it hit me. I thought this is the most beautiful house in the world. It is a modest wooden house on stilts, modelled on the traditional *montagnard* hut in which Ho Chi Minh stayed during the years of anti-French resistance (1946-1954). It is very simple, elegant, functional and energy efficient – the only “luxury” item was a small electric heater for Hanoi’s winter chills. The house took less than a month to build. Uncle Ho specifically instructed that no precious timber should be used. It faces a large pond in which several varieties of fish breed, and were occasionally cooked for Uncle Ho and his guests. It is surrounded by beautiful gardens, with palm trees, fruit trees, flowers, a great variety of native and imported plants. From here, dressed in simple peasant garb, Uncle Ho directed the resistance against the USA and its allies.

So if you want a model of sustainability, elegance, simplicity, resilience, harmony, goodness, economy, energy efficiency, greenness and beauty, you have it in Uncle Ho’s house.

Our world will be fine if we apply the Ten Principles of Bandung and heed the lessons from Uncle Ho’s modest house-on-stilts.



Ho Chi Minh's house-on-stilts

¹ The countries represented at Bandung in 1955 were: Afghanistan; Bhutan; Burma; Cambodia; Ceylon; People's Republic of China; Egypt; Ethiopia; India; Indonesia; Iran; Iraq; Japan; Jordan; Laos; Lebanon; Liberia; Libya; Mongolia; Nepal; Pakistan; Philippines; Saudi Arabia; Syria; Thailand; Turkey; Vietnam North; Vietnam South; Yemen.

The Ten Principle of Bandung are quoted from the Bandung Museum brochure.

² [Target: Zhou Enlai: Was America's CIA working with Taiwan agents to kill Chinese premier?](#) by Wendell L. Minnick, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 13 July 1995

³ *Memoirs of a Rebel Journalist: The Autobiography of Wilfred Burchett*, edited by George Burchett and Nick Shimmin, University of NSW Press, 2005

⁴ *From Traveller To Traitor – The Life of Wilfred Burchett*, Tom Heenan, Melbourne University Press, 2006

⁵ [Where has all the rage gone?](#) by Tariq Ali, *The Guardian (UK)*, 22 March 2008

⁶ *My War With the CIA: The Memoirs of Prince Sihanouk* as related to Wilfred Burchett, Pantheon Books, 1972

⁷ *The Fortunes of Wilfred Burchett: A New Assessment* by Robert Manne, *Quadrant*, August 1985

See also [Once Were Warriors: Wilfred Burchett, Robert Manne and the Forgotten History War](#) by Jamie Miller, Institute of Advanced Studies, September 2008

⁸ *Rebel Journalism: The Writings of Wilfred Burchett*, edited by George Burchett and Nick Shimmin, Cambridge University Press, 2007

⁹ *Burchett: Reporting the Other Side of the World 1939-1983*, edited by Ben Kiernan, Quartet Books, 1986