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Introduction

During the 2003 US invasion of Iraq, Canada played it's role in world imperialism by taking over the NATO led occupation of Afghanistan, and continues occupy Afghanistan with imperialist interests in mind. The occupation serves the interests of Canadian imperialism through the economic plundering of the nation, as well as providing a strategic military base in Afghanistan to further expand Canadian interests throughout the Middle East.

Canadian ruling class interests in Latin America, the Middle East, and entire world do not represent the interest of poor and oppressed people in Canada. In March of 2003 Canada expanded their imperialist front into Latin America, as they became a decisive force in the occupation of Haiti. In fact they expose the roots of Canadian imperialism and the roots of the colonial state of Canada founded on the genocide of Indigenous peoples. The two articles selected for this booklet address the situations in Afghanistan and Haiti, the axis of Canadian imperialism abroad today.

- Aaron Mercredi

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Demonstration against Occupation, Port-au-Prince, Haiti

Canadian companies are looking to shift garment production to Haiti.” This includes Gildan Activewear, a Montreal-based company that is one of the largest manufacturers of t-shirts in the world. Gildan, which has been severely criticized by the Maquila Solidarity Network for the conditions of its workplaces in Honduras, is already subcontracting work to sweatshops in Haiti. Through participating in the occupation of Haiti, Canada hopes to deepen its ability to exploit Haitian labour, exposing exactly what it means when it is interested in conducting ‘peacekeeping’ missions in third world countries. Canada’s intervention in Haiti is part of a long history of Canadian colonial occupation, which started with the creation of Canada itself as part of 500 years of colonization of Indigenous people. In the new era of war and occupation, Canada’s approach as an imperialist nation is expanding with its occupations in Afghanistan and Haiti both of which mark the beginnings of Canada’s ‘bigger role on the world stage’, as Canadian Defense Minister John McCallum recently put it.

End the Occupation of Haiti! Canadian Troops Out Now! Self-Determination for Haitians!

Whether it is a military force led by the US, Canada, France, or under UN ‘peacekeeping,’ it is important for people in Canada to realize that occupation is occupation. Regardless of who is leading it, the intervention in Haiti is an occupation designed to pursue imperialist interests, and these run counter to the interests of the people of Haiti.

We need to recognize that Canada’s intervention in Haiti has nothing to do with ‘peacekeeping,’ and is part of Canada’s overall agenda of exploiting third world countries.

We also need to recognize that the occupation of Haiti is part of an overall plan by the US and other imperialist countries for further intervention in Latin America. Along with the heightened attacks on Cuba, the US’ ‘Plan Colombia,’ and continued hostility towards the Chavez government in Venezuela, the occupation of Haiti is part of a plan to re-assert domination over the people of Latin America and eventually to prepare for further military interventions, especially in Cuba. Only Haitians have the ability to sort out the problems in their country that have been created through hundreds of years of colonial intervention. As people living within one of the main countries that is currently preventing Haitians from carrying forward their struggle for justice and dignity, we must demand self-determination for the people of Haiti. We must demand an end to the occupation, and all Canadian troops out of Haiti.

Afghanistan 3 Years After Occupation: A Country Without Government

Excerpts from article that originally appeared in issue 14 of the Fire This Time newspaper

“...Afghanistan, in my view, is succeeding. Progress has been noteworthy, especially when measured against the level of effort and resources devoted to Afghanistan.” – Zalmay Khalilzad, US Ambassador and special envoy to Afghanistan – April 2004.

Based on this quote, it is clear that Ambassador Khalilzad’s definition of “success” achieved in Afghanistan relative to the money and resources committed is not based on reality and is absolutely misleading. Between 2001 and 2003, between the cost of humanitarian assistance and military expenditure, more than 10 billion dollars was spent on Afghanistan. On April 1, 2004 at the Berlin Donor Conference a total of \$8.2 billion was pledged with \$4.5 billion for the first year. The majority of international aid money so far has gone towards the US military operations hunting down Osama Bin Laden and others, to no avail, while Afghan people live in abandoned cars, cramped by the hundreds into gutted buildings, the vast majority unemployed and starving. Success for who?

The war the United States began in Afghanistan on Oct 7, 2001 has never ended. Instead, it has gone through the stages of invasion, cluster bombing and mines, through the establishment of a shaky occupation, with force being added in vain by NATO troops led by Canada, and on to the implanting of the Afghan Transitional Authority (ATA), a weak puppet government with no popular support. Throughout the past 2 ½ years since the invasion and occupation, Afghanistan has seen no possibility of stability for her people. There has been no progress in rebuilding the thousands of homes, schools and hospitals that have been destroyed, and certainly, she has seen no government capable of leading the Afghan people anywhere but deeper into this crisis.

Afghan Women and Children: Suffering and Death

"There is not a village in Farah where a young woman has not burned herself to death." – Nazir Shah, father of a 26-year old woman who committed suicide by self-immolation.

Statements such as those of Ambassador Khalilzad’s lauding the progress made in Afghanistan are becoming more and more common as the US, UK, Canada and NATO try to convince the world that they have something to show for the past 2 ½ years. However, crisis continues to assault the people of Afghanistan on nearly all fronts. Afghan people still make up one of the single largest groups of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the world, second only to Palestinians.

The situation of women in Afghanistan has yet to improve as most reports cite that any change in conditions has been for



Soldiers of the US Army's 2-87 Infantry detain an elderly Afghan man in Ghazni, 125 km south of Kabul.

the worse. Their desperate situation is seen in the tragedy of the number of women committing suicide by self-immolation. This has increased in recent months and has also spread across several provinces. Anecdotal evidence suggests that several hundred young women are burning themselves to death every year in western Afghanistan. These suicides are becoming more common among educated women, especially former refugees who have returned from Iran and who had grown accustomed to a freer life there. There have been several documented cases of nurses and teachers burning themselves to death in Herat, just 100km from the Afghan-Iranian border. Suraya Sobah Rang, Deputy Women's Minister, has said, "Women in this country are in a very bad situation, with forced marriages, families selling their daughters to pay drug debts, women being beaten all the time." The Afghan Human Rights Commission has also stated "women have always burned themselves, because they have always been so badly treated, but this phenomenon was never as prevalent as it is today."

Children are also one of the most vulnerable groups suffering under the chaos of the occupation. Aside from growing up in the violent and unstable conditions of foreign occupation, there has been a growing epidemic of child kidnappings for the purposes of trafficking as labour abroad. In late 2003, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) released a report, "Trafficking in Persons", stating that there are additional forms of human trafficking prevalent in Afghanistan including prostitution, forced labour, slavery, servitude and the removal of body organs. The report states that this is a direct result of the kinds of factors created by the occupation: longstanding conflict, lack of internal security, poverty and poor socio-economic opportunities.

The war of occupation rages on in Afghanistan. Groups like Human Rights Watch have been reporting on this and on occupying forces employing "cowboy-like" tactics against Afghan people. Reports include that soldiers are "blowing doors open with grenades rather than knocking" and "military forces using deadly force from helicopter gunships and small and heavy arms fire during law-enforcement operations ... in residential areas where there is no military conflict."

On May 18th 2004, police forces of the new government, with the support of US marines, used tear gas and fired assault rifles on a pro-Aristide demonstration of at least 10,000 Haitians who were demonstrating in the country's capital. At least 12 demonstrators were killed, and according to an American reporter on the scene, Kevin Pina, at least one of those killed was shot by US marines.

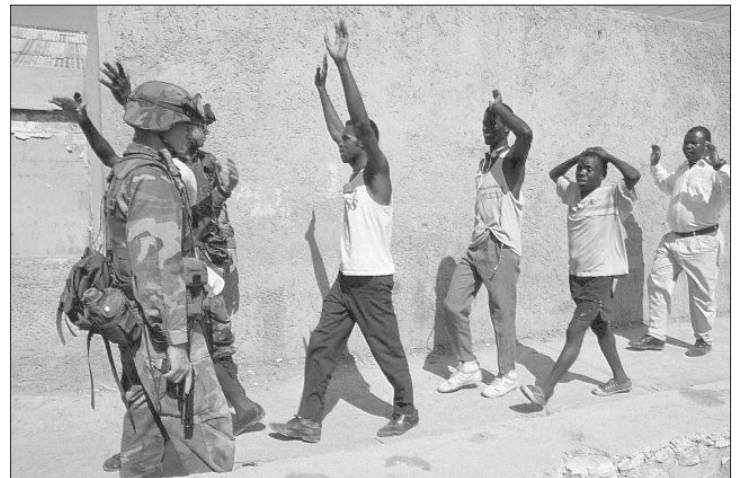
Haitian police and occupation forces have also rounded up and jailed countless numbers of Haitians that oppose the new government, including several leaders of Aristide's Lavalas Party. On June 14, 2004, a contingent of French and UN soldiers invaded the home of the Mayor of Milo, Jean Charles Moise. On finding that he was not home, the soldiers arrested his wife and took her into custody, along with several other adults in the home. At least 12 Lavalas leaders were arrested in the days leading up to the May 18th pro-Aristide rally, including Annette Auguste, who was taken from her home and imprisoned by US Marines on May 10th.

In addition to arresting Lavalas leaders, the forces of the new regime in Haiti have also been massacring opponents of the new government and the imperialist occupation of Haiti. According to a recent press release from the Council on Hemispheric Affairs (A Washington-based research organization), hundreds of Lavalas members have been killed in the capital of Haiti alone, and the US National Lawyers Guild estimates that at least thousands of Haitians were killed by paramilitaries in the 3 weeks following the March coup and occupation.

This, then, is the 'political process' unfolding in Haiti that the UN occupation is intending to uphold, a process of massacres and repression at the hands of the new government working hand-in-hand with

Canada's Role

As one of the major imperialist powers occupying Haiti, the Canadian government is directly involved in this brutal occupation of Haiti. The Canadian military currently has 500 troops in Haiti, most of which are stationed in Port-au-Prince,



Soldiers arrest Haitians at a rally in support of exiled Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide

the capital of Haiti.

Canada's military intervention in Haiti is happening at the same time as Canada's economic interests in the country are deepening. These interests in Haiti include the profits to be made off of the incredibly low wages paid to Haitians for manufacturing clothing for Canadian companies in sweatshops. On March 2nd, 2004 Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) stated, "some

The Occupation of Haiti: US, France, and Canada Target Latin America

Excerpts from article that originally appeared in Fire This Time # 8-9

"What you've got to do is get a political agreement between the parties that will allow us to not just send troops to maintain peace, but to establish a good justice system, to set up a good police force, and I have said that Canada will be very much there when that happens. – Paul Martin, March 3rd 2004

Since the recent imperialist occupation of Haiti began in early March 2004, after Haitian president Jean Bertrand Aristide was forcibly removed from Haiti in a coup organized by former death squad leaders, life for Haitians has been characterized by constant harassment and killing by occupation forces, political repression, and even greater poverty. The 'peace' maintained according to Canada, one of the main occupation forces in Haiti, is nonexistent for the majority of Haitians, and the brutal nature of the police force under the new regime shows that by 'good' Paul Martin means 'good' at carrying out massacres and repression against Haitians who don't support either the ouster of former president Aristide or the imperialist occupation of their country.

The March Occupation and the New UN Mandate

Not only did the US act to help remove Aristide from Haiti in the coup on February 29th, but they also led a UN-established occupation force of 3,600 troops into Haiti following Aristide's removal, a force that includes troops from Canada and France.

Since June 2nd 2004, the current US-led mission is being 'phased out' and replaced by a new UN mission, called the UN 'Stabilization Mission in Haiti' (MINUSTAH). This force will include up to 5700 UN troops and 1622 civilian police. Though this new force is to be led by Brazil, it will still include troops from the US, Canada, and France.

The new UN occupation of Haiti, though slightly reconfigured in terms of who is officially in command, is a continuation of the occupation already in place. According to UN Security Council Resolution 1542, under which this new mission was established, one of the goals of the new mission is "to support the constitutional and political process under way in Haiti." To understand exactly what is being upheld under this UN occupation, it is important to see what 'constitutional and political process' has been under way since the occupation began.

A Process of Repression and Massacres

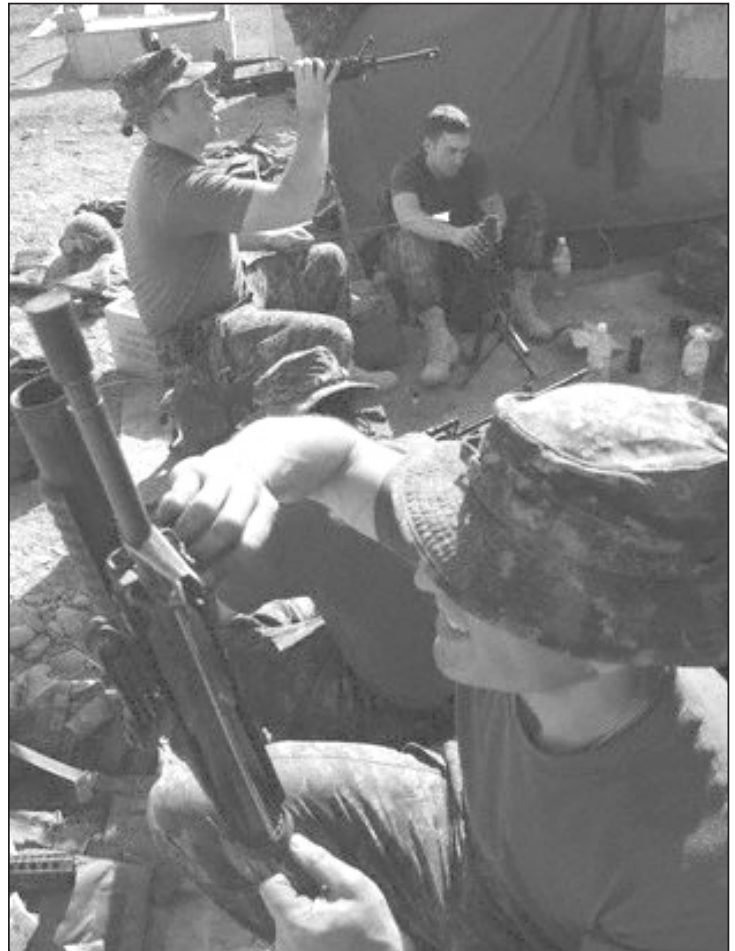
The paramilitary forces which carried out the February 29th coup, and which now occupy key positions in the post-Aristide government, include people like Guy Phillippe, who received training, funding, and possibly even arms from the US through the School of the Americas in Ecuador. Since the occupation these military forces, now primarily from within the new government, have been carrying out brutal repression of supporters of Aristide. Leaders and members of Aristide's Lavalas Family Party have been especially hard-hit by this new wave of repression.

The pre-war rationale of "liberating Afghan women" has proven to be a despicable lie as we see all people in Afghanistan forced into increasingly unstable and desperate situations. Clearly, the occupation hasn't freed anyone in Afghanistan except the interests of imperialist nations, giving them free reign to establish what is necessary for Afghanistan to remain a docile and obedient state, serving imperialist needs and interests.

Canada in Afghanistan: Bloody Hands Get Bloodier

"Our long-term security requires the spread of freedom around the world." – Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin, April 29, 2004

Since January 2004, Canada has had a leading role in the occupation of Afghanistan. Canada is the largest troop provider to the international force stationed in Kabul and Canadian Lt. General Rick Hillier is the leading commander of the 6,500-troop strong force with 34 contributing nations. If by "freedom" Paul Martin means spreading spheres of influence for the ruling class at the expense of exploiting and making chaos of the lives of millions of people around the world, then he is right. If Canada is to dig itself out of the deepening hole of the current global capitalist crisis, then it does have to spread this "freedom"; freedom for corporate and ruling class



Canadian Peacekeeping Forces, based at the Kandahar Airfield in Afghanistan.



Sherbeghan Prison in Afghanistan. Prisoners captured during the November 2001 US invasion

interests to plunder as they go, to save their own necks from extinction.

Currently, Canadian forces are preparing to deploy the second rotation of Canadian troops of Operation ATHENA to Kabul and the Government has recently released details on the vague statements made in recent months regarding keeping troops in Afghanistan past the already established withdrawal date. Stating that Canada will maintain a “meaningful military contribution to ISAF after the drawdown of our current contingent in August 2004”, the government is establishing that with the 600 troops deployed in August, this will be a part of its new strategy of furthering Canada’s interests through intervention in third world countries. At the Berlin donor conference this past month, Canada pledged \$250 million to reconstruction in Afghanistan, to be delivered from 2005-2009, with \$5 million of that to be allocated to the election process. These donations can be seen as investments in establishing Canadian interests in the Middle East.

Also recently announced, the Canadian government is in the process of a comprehensive international policy review, the first in a decade. As released on the Government of Canada website “This review will help us clearly define our interests and articulate our values in the area of foreign and defense policy, aid and trade,” This statement follows similar comments made by Paul Martin in the beginning of 2004 that Canada needed to step up its involvement on the world stage, ie improve its status as an imperialist nation. The overall shift to the right of the current Canadian government and with the current international policy review, the Liberal government of Canada is setting the stage for prolonged and intensifying involvement abroad to secure its interests in international trade agreements and strategic military positioning.

Canada Out Now!

“Empire is being built on the backs of Afghans and it is up to us as antiwar activists to recognize it and address it.” – Sonali Kolhatar, Co-director, Afghan Women’s Mission in “What are YOU doing about Afghanistan? An Open Letter to Anti-War

Activists”

Given Canada’s leading role in Afghanistan, which only promises to increase as Canada’s global imperialist role increases, anti-war activists in Canada have a tremendous responsibility to expose this colonial, imperialist agenda. As we demand, “Troops Home Now!” and “US/UK Out!” we must also demand “Canada Out!” and work to organize and educate people against this government.

Canada enforces the idea that it is a “peacekeeping”, or “neutral” nation when it comes to international affairs. Canada’s “non-involvement” was much touted last year when Canada declined to send troops to invade Iraq. Meanwhile, Canada was quietly sending thousands of Canadian soldiers to Afghanistan to relieve US soldiers for that exact purpose and also providing support vessels, arms and equipment to the US forces, stationing Canadian ships in the Persian Gulf. All poor, working and oppressed people in Canada have much work to do to combat Canada’s peaceful image and propaganda and expose the over 500 year old colonial nature of this country, connecting the colonial war on the Indigenous people of this land with the colonial wars abroad.

Self-Determination: An Inalienable Right and the Only Solution

The people of Afghanistan have an awe inspiring history of anti imperialist resistance dating back to the early 1800s; between 1836 and 1921 the Afghan people heroically defeated three British invasions. Afghans have also shown that they have no problem governing and running their own country, a particular example of this being the period of time after the overthrow of Mohammad Zahir Shah in 1973. Progress was being made for women and all Afghans, though unfortunately the government was dragged into factional fighting followed by the coup d’etat that opened the door for Soviet invasion in late 1979. This was followed by the growth of armed Islamic groups and the intervention of the US and CIA to fund and help to arm them. Thus began a dark era, and the appearance of the Taliban.

But the Afghan people don’t have to prove that they can take care of themselves. The right to self-determination, the right of a people to govern and direct their own nation and to decide how they will use and distribute their resources is a basic human right, and one that has been denied to Afghans during decades of imperialist intervention.

Afghan peoples’ voices are getting louder as the US, UK, Canada and NATO try to suppress them even further. The anti-war movement globally, and in Canada, has the responsibility of echoing their calls and demanding: Canada Out of Afghanistan! Bring ALL troops home now! Unconditional Self-determination for the people of Afghanistan!