

"We are realists... we dream the impossible" - Che



Fire This Time!

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STOP TERRORISING DISSENT!

STOP ISLAMOPHOBIA!

STOP BILL C-51!

Why Trudeau must repeal Bill C-51

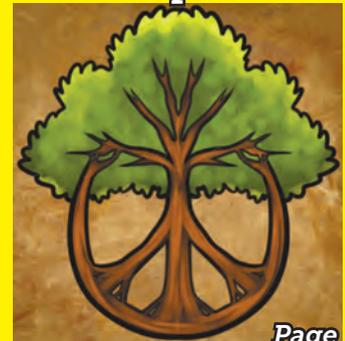
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13 YEARS OF IMPERIALIST WAR ON IRAQ



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By Nita Palmer

The number of Afghans civilians killed or wounded in 2015 passed 11,000, making 2015 the deadliest year since the US/NATO occupation of the country began in 2001. Tragically, one in four of those killed or wounded was a child. Despite ongoing promises by US President Barack Obama and other NATO leaders of increasing security in the country, the number of civilian casualties rises year after year. Afghanistan also has one of the world's highest refugee populations, with 2.6 million Afghans – 10% of the country's population – forced to flee their homes.

The US alone has spent over \$65 billion on supporting the Afghan National Security Forces, according to the office of the Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction (SIGAR). Despite this hefty investment, however, the security situation has greatly deteriorated since 2001. After the overthrow of the Taliban government, the US and NATO promised to usher in a new era of democracy, peace, and security. At first, many Afghans and those watching from abroad were hopeful that Afghanistan would indeed be facing a brighter future. However, it soon became obvious that the US/NATO occupation of the country would bring nothing but more hardship to Afghan people.

Difficult as life was under the Taliban, the country remained at least relatively stable. Today, the US/NATO backed Afghan government holds little real power outside of Kabul. Much of the country is controlled by warlords, drug traffickers, the Taliban, or even ISIS. Afghan civilians are caught both in the literal and political crossfire between these groups and US or Afghan government forces.

While from the comfort of our homes we read news about the battle of the 'good' Afghan government and US forces versus the 'bad' insurgent and Islamist

AFGHANISTAN

CIVILIAN CASUALTIES REACH RECORD HIGH IN 2015 US/NATO OCCUPATION FAILS TO BRING PROMISED SECURITY



groups in the country, reality on the ground is a different story. Those at the highest levels of the Afghan government maintain ties to some of the most brutal and vicious warlords in the country. Both Afghan and US forces have been involved in well-known incidents of torture, murder, and disappearances. Afghans often face torture or threats against their lives or their families from both sides for co-operating with – or even just tolerating – the other. Afghans went from contending with a repressive government to contending with a complex web of deadly forces between which they must tread carefully.

The Rise of Daesh in Afghanistan

Amidst the chaos and instability which has taken hold of Afghanistan since 2001, a new, deadly force has come to rise in Afghanistan: Daesh, also known as ISIS. Condemned even by the Taliban for their brutality, they have taken hold of certain districts in both Kunar and Nangahar provinces. Western media has for the most part downplayed the role of Daesh in Afghanistan, but a Frontline report by Afghan journalist Najibullah Quraishi revealed the totality of control they have in some districts – collecting taxes, providing security, and running local schools.

Some analysts have dismissed the idea of

Daesh gaining any kind of real foothold in Afghanistan, where resistance to the foreign occupation is based more on a desire for national independence and self-determination than on a desire to establish an Islamic state. However, the handsome salaries which the well-funded Daesh pays to its fighters may convince many to join them in a country where employment of any kind is hard to find.

Failure to Provide Basic Human Security

Over the past decade and a half of war, foreign forces have utterly failed to provide or protect basic human security in Afghanistan. Although what exactly defines 'human security' is a subject of debate, in general it is an acknowledgement that any nation – and indeed, the world – cannot be secure when people are living in poverty or lack basic education, health, and human rights. The Human Security Report Project explains that "at a minimum, human security means freedom from violence and from the fear of violence".

Today, Afghans live daily with the fear of violence. A recent poll by the Asia Foundation found that 67% of Afghans "always, often, or sometimes fear for their safety". In addition, the lives of many Afghans are threatened daily by poverty and the lack of basic necessities of life.



Doctors Without Borders hospital bombed by U.S., killing 22 people in Kunduz, Afghanistan. Oct. 2015

Seventy three percent of the country lives without access to improved drinking water sources, and 95% lack access to basic sanitation facilities (HydrateLife, 2012). These two factors alone mean that many die from easily preventable illnesses. More than half the population lives in poverty, according to the World Food Program. As a result, many families do not have adequate shelter or enough food to eat. Tens of thousands of children are forced into often-backbreaking work at a young age in order to support their families – especially when older male relatives have been killed or injured in conflict. Many will never get a chance at an education which could improve their lives. Widespread poverty has also fueled the rise of the drug trade, and with it, further insecurity.

This is the tragic story of Afghanistan – but it was not the inevitable one. The bleak situation facing Afghans today has not always existed, but is the result of more than three decades of war in the country. In fact, if the US and NATO truly wanted to establish peace, security, and democracy in the country they could have gone about it in a much more humane and even less costly way: by increasing human security. This would mean sending aid rather than bombs, building schools rather than military bases, and in general helping Afghans to rebuild their country in a way which truly served Afghan interests. While the US may claim to be building schools, hospitals, and infrastructure, many of these projects are inadequate, unfinished, or rife with corruption, as we have reported in previous issues of Fire This Time.

Why Aren't Foreign Forces Improving Security?

The importance of eradicating poverty and providing jobs and education in combating crime, protecting the security of a country, and even preventing terrorism has been widely acknowledged. Why, then, have the US and their NATO allies sunk hundreds of billions of dollars into the war in Afghanistan – a war which has not only cost tens of thousands of lives, but has opened the country up to even more deadly terrorist organizations such as Daesh?

This is not a matter of a blunder or mistake on the part of the US and NATO. Perhaps, like many foreign militaries before them, they did underestimate the power of the Afghan people to resist foreign intervention. However, the real problem is that peace and security is not the endgame of the US in Afghanistan. It is not for the sake of the Afghan people that this war has become the longest in US history. The real purpose of the US in Afghanistan is to maintain a long-term presence – essentially using the country as a giant military base. Continued instability can be used to justify wasting billions more dollars – and thousands more lives.

For thousands of years, Afghans have been victims of their country's important geographical location. Known as the 'roof of the world', Afghanistan is positioned perfectly between Europe, the Middle East and Asia. This has made the country into an important trade and military outpost. The crisis of the global capitalist economy today has created an ever more heated battle between the old

power of the US and their allies and rising powers such as China and Russia. The US sees Afghanistan as a critical base of operations for expanding their influence and control throughout the region.

The US has built a large embassy in Afghanistan, as well as several large military bases. They have invested in roads and other critical infrastructure around these bases. They have supported a government of known warlords who will do their bidding. They have not invested in real security or basic necessities for Afghans because a healthy, educated population of Afghans is not what the US wants. Afghans have a long and proud history of resisting foreign intervention. With access to basic necessities and education, Afghans could indeed build a secure and peaceful country – but it would be unlikely to be a country which would allow the US unfettered access and control over it. One of the greatest blows for US imperialism would be for Afghanistan to become an secure and prosperous country with an independent foreign policy – much like their neighbour, Iran, which has become relatively an example of what an independent developing country can achieve for its people.

The Real Solution: Foreign Troops Out Now!

The US and NATO have proven beyond a shadow of doubt that they have no interest in building a more secure, stable, or prosperous Afghanistan. The only solution to the security crisis in Afghanistan is for foreign forces which are supporting some of the most brutal and antidemocratic elements in the country to leave immediately. The way forward for Afghans will certainly not be an easy one – but at the very least they will not be battling warlords and drug lords supported by one of the wealthiest countries in the world, as well as ongoing bombings and nighttime raids on their homes by foreign forces.

Instead, of course, US President Barack Obama has once again extended the US mission in Afghanistan, rather than pulling troops out of the country by the end of his presidency as promised. This will not bring security to Afghanistan, but result instead in more senseless and tragic deaths, and further tear the country apart.

If we want to see peace in Afghanistan, we must echo the Afghan people in their demands for independence and an immediate end to the US/NATO occupation of their homeland.

PRESIDENT MADURO WINS MILLIONS OF VENEZUELAN TO A SOCIALIST FUTURE*



*By Francisco Dominguez**

A recent poll conducted by Hinterlaces, a well-known and usually reliable Venezuelan pollster, showed that Venezuelans, by a substantial majority, oppose neoliberal solutions to their country's crisis. The poll was based on 1,200 interviews in the country as a whole between January 11-17.

The poll has a 95 per cent level of accuracy and a 2.7 per cent margin of error.

Hinterlaces focused its poll on key (and difficult) economic issues, in order to know the state of mind of Venezuelans regarding the domestic political situation. This is especially relevant after the overwhelming electoral victory by the right-wing opposition at the elections to the National Assembly on December 6.

The poll suggests that it was primarily people's genuine discontent with the economy, much of it brought about by the ravages of the right-wing opposition's "economic war" aimed at reducing Nicolás Maduro's support, that was the crucial factor in the government's December defeat, not support for neoliberal policies.

The poll shows that the overwhelming majority of the population (79 per cent) are in favour of the government's aim — economic planning and some enterprise working together within an overarching socialist framework. They do not object to government working with multinational corporations as long as those corporations do not set the rules of the game.

Furthermore, a majority of Venezuelans would also support hard economic decisions such as increases in the prices of agricultural goods medicine,

petrol and even currency devaluation.

Venezuelans also overwhelmingly oppose (by nearly three-quarters) the privatisation of the state oil company PVDSA, the state electricity company Corpoelect and state telecommunications company CanTV. It should be inferred that an overwhelming proportion of Venezuela's population oppose the privatisation of health, education and other key state services.

This is significant because immediately following the opposition's electoral victory to the National Assembly, key leaders from both the business world and right-wing parties announced their intention to extend privatisations.

Fedecamaras, Venezuela's equivalent of the CBI even demanded the abolition of the Labour Law. This is the tip of the iceberg of the Venezuelan right's full neoliberal programme.

The poll however does not fully measure views on the overall economic policies of Venezuela's right wing because its economic programme is its best-kept secret. During the electoral campaign leading to the December 6 elections, the right instead sought to capitalise politically on the huge difficulties the government faced with the damaging consequences of the economic war. Henry Ramos Allup, now President of the National Assembly, even promised to eliminate the queues, but never said how he would achieve this.

Since December Allup has also promised to get rid of Maduro's government in six months. He has been trying to oust the government for 17 years and feels it has never been more within his grasp.

It is, therefore, in the interest of the right, including the US, that Maduro's plans to move towards a productive economy fail. Thus Maduro's decree declaring the country in a state of economic emergency was opposed by the right-wing majority in the National Assembly.

So while the right wing seeks to create a constitutional crisis that leads to paralysis, the government and people throughout the nation are mobilising in order to move from Venezuela's oil revenue-based economy to a productive one.

To this end, Maduro is seeking to reorient economic policy towards developing nine areas: oil, petrochemicals, agriculture and food production, mining, telecommunications and IT, inputs for construction and public works, manufacturing of consumption and capital goods by the military, tourism, and manufacturing industry. The declared intention is to drastically reduce the country's dependency on oil and reduce as much as possible the importation of both manufactured and agricultural goods by endeavouring to produce them domestically.

Maduro wants Venezuela to be able to obtain hard currency from creating new and diverse exports. This is a tall order indeed but it may be possible since Venezuela has the potential to develop all nine industries. It is also urgent due to the almost total collapse of oil prices.

** Original title was "Venezuelans Back Maduro's Vision of a Socialist Future"*

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El presidente Maduro cuenta con millones de venezolanos para el futuro Socialista*



*** EN ESPAÑOL ***

Por Francisco Domínguez*

Traducido por Macarena Cataldo Hernández

Una encuesta realizada recientemente por Hinterlaces, una conocida y en general fiable agencia de encuestas venezolana, demostró que los venezolanos, en amplia mayoría, se oponen a las soluciones neoliberales para resolver la crisis de su país. La encuesta se basa en 1.200 entrevistas realizadas en el país, desde 11-17 enero.

La encuesta cuenta con un nivel de precisión de 95% y un margen de error 2.7%.

Hinterlaces centró su encuesta en problemas económicos claves (y difíciles), para conocer la posición de los venezolanos con respecto a la situación política interna. Esto es particularmente relevante después de la abrumadora victoria electoral alcanzada por la oposición derechista en las elecciones para la Asamblea Nacional el 6 de diciembre.

La encuesta sugiere que principalmente la gente esta descontenta con los problemas económicos provocados en gran parte por los estragos de la oposición de derecha en la "guerra económica", con la finalidad de reducir el apoyo a Nicolás Maduro, el cual fue un factor crucial en la derrota del gobierno en diciembre, no el apoyo a las políticas neoliberales.

La encuesta muestra que una inmensa mayoría de la población (79%) está a favor de los objetivos del gobierno - la planificación económica y el trabajo junto con algunas empresas dentro de un marco general socialista. Ellos no se oponen a que el gobierno trabaje con corporaciones multinacionales, siempre y cuando dichas empresas no establezcan las reglas del juego.

Por otra parte, la mayoría de los venezolanos también apoyaría las drásticas decisiones económicas, tales como el aumento de los precios de los medicamentos, los productos

agrícolas, la gasolina e incluso devaluación de la moneda.

Los venezolanos también se oponen abrumadoramente (por cerca de tres cuartas partes) la privatización de la petrolera estatal PDVSA, de la empresa estatal de electricidad Corpoelec y la estatal de telecomunicaciones Cantv empresa. Cabe inferir que una proporción abrumadora de la población de Venezuela se opone a la privatización de la salud, educación y otros servicios estatales claves.

Esto es significativo porque inmediatamente después de la victoria electoral de la oposición a la Asamblea Nacional, los principales líderes de los partidos tanto en el mundo empresarial y de la derecha, anunciaron su intención de

ampliar las privatizaciones.

Fedecámaras, equivalente de la CBI de Venezuela incluso exigió la abolición de la Ley del Trabajo. Esta es la punta del iceberg del programa neoliberal completo de la derecha venezolana.

Sin embargo la encuesta, no mide completamente los puntos de vista sobre políticas económicas globales de la derecha de Venezuela, debido a que su programa económico es su secreto mejor guardado. Durante la campaña electoral previa a las elecciones del 6 de diciembre, la derecha trató de capitalizar políticamente las enormes dificultades que el gobierno ha sufrido como consecuencias perjudicial de la guerra económica. Henry Ramos Allup, ahora Presidente de la Asamblea Nacional, se comprometió a eliminar las colas, pero nunca dijo cómo iba a lograrlo.

Desde diciembre Allup ha también prometido

deshacerse del gobierno de Maduro en seis meses. Él ha estado tratando de expulsar al gobierno durante 17 años y siente que nunca ha estado más cerca de su objetivo.

La derecha, incluyendo los EE.UU., esta muy interesada en que los planes de Maduro para avanzar hacia una economía productiva fallen. Es por esto que el decreto de Maduro el cual declara al país en estado de emergencia económica fue rechazada por la mayoría derechista en la Asamblea Nacional.

Así, mientras que la derecha busca crear una crisis constitucional que conduzca a la parálisis del país, el gobierno y la gente en toda Venezuela se están movilizand con el fin de pasar de la economía basada en los ingresos del petróleo venezolano a la de tipo productivo.

Con este fin, Maduro está tratando de reorientar la política económica hacia el desarrollo de nueve áreas: petróleo, petroquímica, agricultura y producción de alimentos, la minería, las telecomunicaciones y la informática, insumos para la construcción y las obras públicas, la industria manufacturera de consumo y bienes de capital por parte del

ejército, el turismo, y la industria manufacturera. La intención declarada es reducir drásticamente la dependencia del petróleo del país y reducir lo más posible la importación, tanto de productos manufacturados y como agrícolas, estimulando la producción nacional.

Maduro quiere que Venezuela sea capaz de establecer una moneda fuerte a través de la creación de nuevas y diversas exportaciones. Esta es una tarea difícil, pero de hecho, puede ser posible ya que Venezuela tiene el potencial para desarrollar las nueve industrias. También es urgente debido al colapso casi total de los precios del petróleo.

*Titulo original "Venezuelans Back Maduro's Vision of a Socialist Future"

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IRAQ The New Era of War & Occupation

March 18, 2003: The Day the U.S. Started Bombing Iraq, and 13 Years Later Iraq Is Nothing But A Shattered Land

By *Azza Rojbi & Janine Solanki*

"I said, 'Are we still going to war with Iraq?' And he said, 'Oh, it's worse than that.' He reached over on his desk. He picked up a piece of paper. And he said, 'I just got this down from upstairs' — meaning the Secretary of Defense's office — 'today.' And he said, 'This is a memo that describes how we're going to take out seven countries in five years, starting with Iraq, and then Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and, finishing off, Iran.'"

General Wesley Clark, Retired 4-star U.S. Army general and Supreme Allied Commander of NATO during the 1999 War on Yugoslavia, in an interview in March 2007 with Amy Goodman on Democracy Now.

This quote demonstrates that the continuous string of imperialist wars, occupations and military interventions over the past 15 years are no accident. This has been part of the ongoing U.S.-led imperialist plan, the "New Era of War and Occupation" that was set into motion with the invasion of Afghanistan shortly after the September 11th, 2001 attacks. 15 years since the memo shared with General Clark, we can see the results of this plan. Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Iran have all faced either war, occupation, sanctions or imperialist foreign military intervention.

New Era of War and Occupation

Today's world-wide economic crisis has been met with a band-aid solution by advanced capitalist countries, led by the U.S. This has been to seek out new markets and resources to plunder, and to establish imperialist hegemony and domination over strategic regions. As we have seen in the last 15 years, this U.S.-led plan has been to dominate the Middle East and North Africa. The new era of war and occupation has also served to maintain a superior position over China and Russia, the biggest U.S. competitors for influence and control of global markets. The U.S. policy of asserting its own hegemony of the region has meant that any independent country needs to be brought under U.S. control. As in General Clark's interview above, going to war with Iran is a major goal of the new era of war and occupation. For decades the U.S. government has been vying to bring Iran under its command, especially as Iran has been a beacon

of resistance against U.S. imperialism in the region since the 1979 Iranian revolution.

One of the first targets in the new era of war and occupation was Iraq. This month, March 18, marks 13 years since the U.S.-led "shock and awe" invasion of Iraq. However March 18, 2003 was not the first imperialist attack on Iraq. Following the 1990-1991 Gulf War, in 1998 the U.S. bombed Iraq in "Operation Desert Fox" and crippled Iraq with over 10 years of sanctions. The sanctions killed over 1.7 million innocent Iraqi people, half a million of which were children under 5 years old. During this time the U.S. has not once stopped their foreign meddling and provocations in Iraq. Since the 1998 "Iraq Liberation Act" the official U.S. policy towards Iraq has been for regime change.

Going back to the period leading up to the war on Iraq, it was very clear to people around the world that the impending invasion of Iraq was based on lies and propaganda. U.S. politicians, most notably former President George W. Bush, claimed that Iraq was linked to the 9/11 terrorist attacks and that Iraq was building weapons of mass destruction. Despite the old trick of "say it enough times so people will believe it" the fact is that people around the world did not buy the war drive deceptions. Antiwar protests at that time were so large that they reached a world record, culminating in six to ten million people that joined a February 15, 2003 protests in 800 cities around the world, including here in Vancouver, Canada. It was not much of a surprise when the U.S.

government had to admit that they did not find the hyped-up weapons of mass destruction and that their intelligence had been "faulty". Iraqi people know too well that the only weapons of mass destruction in Iraq were those that the U.S.-led invasion inflicted upon the Iraqi people.

Sad Numbers

Today, 13 years of war and occupation by the U.S. and its imperialist allies have transformed the 'Cradle of Civilization' into a land of destruction and devastation. Over one million Iraqis lost their lives as a result of the Iraq war, according to the British polling group, Opinion Research Business. In addition to the tragic loss of life, the imperialist bombing campaign left the Iraqi people with the ongoing legacy of depleted uranium and other toxic weaponry, which contaminated wide areas of Iraq causing horrific birth defects, high cancer rates and environmental devastation. According to Iraqi government statistics, the rate of cancer in the country has skyrocketed from 40 cases per 100,000 people in 1991, to at least 1,600 per 100,000 in 2005. Other crucial health indicators in Iraq have worsened since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion. The infant mortality rate increased 150 percent from 1990 to 2005. The World Health Organization estimated that 70 percent of Iraqis lack access to clean water and 80 percent lack proper sanitation. The situation for women in Iraq has also deteriorated since the 2003 invasion. Many women have been forced into prostitution, and rates of rape and violence against women have risen under occupation. The Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq reported that "an estimated 4,000 Iraqi women, one-fifth of whom are under 18, have disappeared [in broad daylight] since the 2003 invasion; many are believed to have been trafficked." From health to education, women's rights to child labour, employment rates to poverty, there is no shortage of statistics for how the U.S.-led war and occupation of Iraq has destroyed the lives of Iraqi people.

Instability, poverty and sectarianism under U.S. occupation fueled for the rise of extremist groups such as Daesh (ISIS/ISIL/IS). Now the U.S. and their imperialist allies have a new excuse to carry on another war in Iraq. They have created their own enemy in order to bomb the country again, now in the name of fighting Daesh.



U.S. 'Shock & Awe' bombing of Baghdad, 2003.



and North Africa, MAWO has maintained a clear and unwavering independent working class and antiwar position. Reflected in slogans and demands, picket signs and banners, petitions and statements, MAWO's central guideline has been self-determination for all oppressed nations. While increasingly sophisticated imperialist propaganda tries to confuse and divide poor and working people, the principle of self-determination for all oppressed nations maintains

Today Iraq is not often front page news anymore. While the tragedy of war and occupation continues to plague Iraq, new fronts in the new era of war and occupation have taken the spotlight throughout the last 13 years. We have seen Libya thrown into chaos, Somalia, Sudan, Mali and Yemen targeted by imperialist-backed interventions, and Syria has been devastated by almost five years of U.S. fomented civil war and direct military intervention. Iran is still very much in the sights of U.S. imperialism, and has been subjected to sanctions, assassinations and provocations. After over 15 years of the new era of war and occupation, the crisis is now at the doorstep of imperialist countries which inflicted these wars to begin with. Europe and the world is now seeing the largest refugee crisis since World War II, as refugees are fleeing their homelands which have been made uninhabitable by imperialist wars and occupations.

And Canada

Throughout the new era of war and occupation, the government of Canada has worked closely with the U.S. in their war drive. It is no secret that Canada has its own imperialist aspirations. Canada's 2005 International Policy Statement states that Canada needs to break through the "glass ceiling of its middle-power status" and compete economically in "a world of rising giants". Besides Canadian military involvement in Afghanistan, Libya and most recently Syria and the new war on Iraq, Canada played a big part in the 2003 invasion and occupation of Iraq. While not widely known, Canadian naval forces, military advisers and RCMP participated in the 2003 Iraq war, as well as Canadian weapons contracts supplied the Iraq war with ammunition.

Leading the Struggle Against the New Era of War and Occupation in Canada

Following the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the antiwar coalition Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) formed in Vancouver, Canada, and has since been at the forefront of antiwar organizing. From Afghanistan and Iraq to new imperialist wars and occupations throughout the Middle East

that it is the people of a nation that have the right, and genuine interest, to determine their own future without any type of foreign intervention. It is with this foundation that Indigenous, poor and working people around the world, from Canada to Palestine, Ireland to Cuba, Iraq to Ukraine, can all realize that they have a common struggle against imperialism.

Following the 2003 invasion of Iraq, in Canada antiwar organizations have all but resigned from antiwar activity, to the extent that all major antiwar coalitions have collapsed or became inactive. This has been with the exception of MAWO and a very few number of smaller coalitions in which have remained active and consistent in antiwar actions. On an ongoing basis MAWO organizes educational events such as public forums and conferences, direct actions such as pickets, rallies and petition drives, as well as cultural nights and major festivals such as the Hip Hop for Peace Festival and Film Festival for Peace. MAWO has worked to build connections throughout Canada, the U.S. and internationally, in hopes that more antiwar organizations will take up a more consistent and united approach to antiwar activities. If the level of imperialist aggression and the new era of war and occupation is any indication, a higher level of antiwar organizing is imperative to meet this world-wide crisis.

Armed with the slogan of "Self-determination for All Oppressed Nations" and "Out Now" Mobilization Against War and Occupation invites all peace-loving people to join in the struggle against imperialist wars and occupations. Join MAWO for two upcoming actions marking 13 years since the invasion of Iraq on Friday March 18, 2016:

Monthly Antiwar Rally & Petition Drive: 4pm at the Vancouver Art Gallery in Downtown Vancouver

Public Forum: "Building An Antiwar Movement in Canada" 7pm, at Joe's Cafe (1150 Commercial Dr.), Vancouver

For more information visit: www.mawovancouver.org or follow @MAWOVan

Janine Solanki on Twitter: @janinesolanki
Azza Rojbi on Twitter: @Azza_R14

"By Any Means Necessary..."



MALCOLM X SPEAKS

Revolutionary Black Liberation Leader in the U.S.
1925-1965

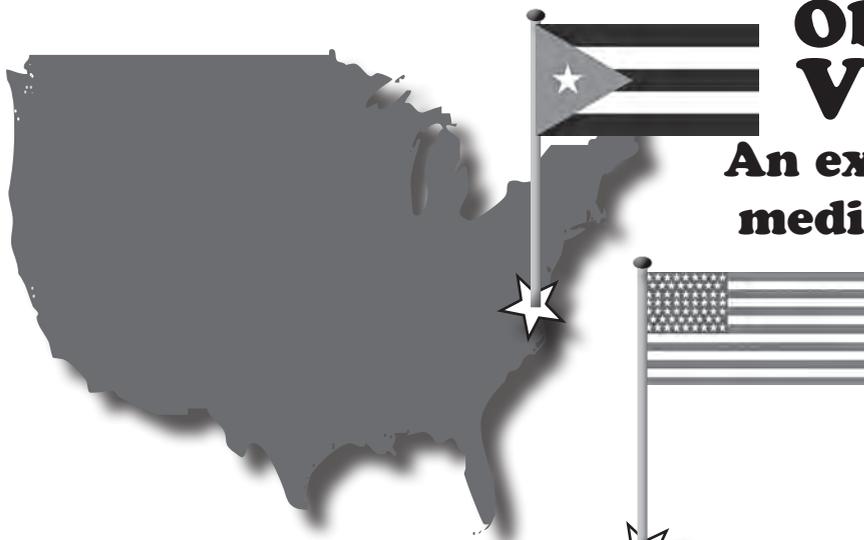
This is all a cold-blooded act on the part of your Western powers, namely the Western powers here in the United States -- interests in the United States, in England, and France, and Belgium and so forth. They want the wealth of the Congo, plus its strategic geographic position.

The step-by-step process that was used by the press: First they fanned the flame in such a manner to create hysteria in the mind of the public. And then they shift gears and fan the flame in a manner designed to get the sympathy of the public. And once they go from hysteria to sympathy, their next step is to get the public to support them in whatever act they're getting ready to go down with. You're dealing with a cold calculating international machine, that's so criminal in its objectives and motives that it has the seeds of its own destruction, right within. They use the press to emphasize that white hostages are being held by [inaudible] -- imagine that -- or white priests, white missionaries, white nuns -- they don't say nuns: white nuns. You know what the paper said right here in Detroit: white missionaries, not just a missionary; a white nun -- as if there's a difference between a white nun and a black nun; or a white priest and a black priest; or if the light that's in a white skin is more valuable than a light within a black skin. This is what they're implying! And the press -- look at the press when this thing was going on -- and you will see what I'm talking about. They're vicious in their whiteness.

But still, I wouldn't judge them just 'cause they're white, or they'd call me a racist. [I'm] judging by their deeds, by their conscious behavior -- and you know how they've been consciously behaving in the Congo, and how they consciously behave in Vietnam, and how they consciously behave right now in Alabama and Mississippi. So you and I got to get conscious, and start behaving in a way that we can offset this thing before it's too late -- and this is what they don't want to hear.

Obama's Historic Visit to Cuba

An excuse for mainstream media to spread more lies about Cuba?



By Tamara Hansen

On February 18, 2016 U.S. President Barack Obama announced he would visit Cuba in March. His visit to Cuba will be the first for a sitting U.S. president in almost 90 years, the last sitting U.S. president to visit was Calvin Coolidge in 1928. That said, former U.S. president Jimmy Carter visited Cuba in 2011 and 2002 – highlights from his trips included condemning the U.S. blockade on Cuba and playing baseball with Fidel Castro.

However, Obama's visit to Cuba will be something noted in future history books. An important step after the reestablishment of formal diplomatic ties between Cuba and the U.S. On February 18, Obama sent five tweets about his visit: First, "14 months ago, I announced that we would begin normalizing relations with Cuba - and we've already made significant progress." Second, "Our flag flies over our Embassy in Havana once again. More Americans are travelling to Cuba than at any time in the last 50 years." Third, "We still have differences with the Cuban government that I will raise directly. America will always stand for human rights around the world." Fourth, "Next month, I'll travel to Cuba to advance our progress and efforts that can improve the lives of the Cuban people." Fifth, "Here's how



Fidel & Jimmy play baseball in Cuba, 2002.

we're looking at the road ahead: <http://go.wh.gov/4b4M4z>"

The link in Obama's final tweet is to an article written by Deputy National Security Adviser Ben Rhodes, titled, "President Obama is going to Cuba. Here's why". In the article Ben Rhodes claims that the goals of the U.S. president's visit are quite simple, "As the President has said, Cuba will not change overnight, nor will all of the various differences between our countries go away. But the guiding principle of our Cuba policy—our North Star—remains taking steps that will improve the lives of the Cuban people."

Cuba Responds to U.S. President's planned visit

On February 18, Josefina Vidal, the general director for U.S. affairs at the Cuban Foreign Ministry held a press conference where she explained Cuba's position on the visit: "The president will be welcomed by the Government of Cuba and its people, with the hospitality that characterizes us. It will be an opportunity for President Obama to see the Cuban reality and continue our exchange about the possibilities of expanding our bilateral dialogue and cooperation on issues of mutual interest to both countries. [...] Of course, to reach the normalization of these bilateral relations key outstanding issues, including the lifting of the blockade and the return of the territory illegally occupied by the U.S. Guantanamo Naval Base would need to be resolved."

So both Cuba and the United States have put forward their goals for this visit. On the surface they do not seem contradictory. It seems obvious that the U.S. lifting its trade embargo or blockade on Cuba would "improve the lives of the Cuban people" as would the U.S. dismantling its criminal prison camp at Guantanamo Bay and leaving the Cuban territory for good. However, when the U.S. government says "improve the lives of the Cuban people" it actually means "regime change" and bringing back capitalism to Cuba.

However, on the surface at least, the United States government is talking about Cuba in more rational terms than it has in over

50 years since the revolution in 1959. But of course, the United States government, including Obama, are very hostile to Cuba and the gains of the Cuban revolution, but the tone of debate and discussion is in full diplomacy mode.

The Mainstream Media goes wild!

Interestingly, the case is quite the opposite in the mainstream media. In this article I will especially highlight an article published after Obama's announcement in the media in Canada. The article, titled, "Why is Obama visiting Cuba?" was published in the *Globe & Mail* on February 25, 2016, written by Konrad Yakabuski. This article tried to answer the question in its title, however everything the author brought was less about answering the question and more about slandering Cuba and Obama in equal parts. Its basic argument being that Obama should not go to Cuba.

However, there have been other disturbingly conservative and slanderous articles published in the mainstream bourgeois media in Canada. Including, "Obama's Cuba visit could mean the end for the Castro brothers Cold War dynasty" printed in the *National Post* on February 22, written by David Blair, Chief Foreign Correspondent for the *Daily Telegraph* UK, and "How Cuba was destroyed" by Patrick Luciani for the *Financial Post* on March 1 – the answer to its title being apparently that the revolution already destroyed Cuba, so Obama probably cannot make it any worse!

It is interesting that the idea of whether or not Obama should go to Cuba is being so hotly debated by the media in Canada. It should be a no brainer that this is a positive step, especially for the U.S. which routinely refuses to dialogue and/or negotiate, and instead prefers sanctions, hostility, plunder, sabotage and war. At the same time, Canada has diplomatic relations with Cuba, in fact Canada and Cuba celebrated 70 years of unbroken diplomatic ties in 2015. Canada's diplomatic relations with Cuba have not been because Canada believes in the Cuba revolution, but instead a relationship which has economically benefited Canada. Maybe these journalists are afraid better U.S./Cuba relations will harm Canada's economic relations with Cuba?

The Globe & Mail Newspaper asks, "Why is Obama visiting Cuba?"

While I encourage those who enjoy a good and critical chuckle to read the full articles, I will just be highlighting and rebutting some Mr. Yakabuski's largest flaws from his quandary "Why is Obama visiting Cuba?"

Journalist Konrad Yakabuski's reasoning that Obama should not go to Cuba is based in the following logic:

First, Cuba has not made enough changes or given enough "freedoms" to its people to merit a visit from the president of the "free world" Mr. Obama.

Second, Cuba has a "human rights" problem that they need to work on.

Third, Obama is not strong enough to give the Cubans an ultimatum, which is what they need according to the journalist... what exactly Obama is supposed to threaten them with is not explained.

But I have to ask Mr. Yakabuski, what is your definition of "freedoms"? The U.S. government has not allowed Americans to travel "freely" to Cuba for the last 50 years. Still today Americans cannot go to Cuba as tourists, they have to get a special educational license, or other similar special permissions, otherwise their trip could be deemed 'illegal' and they could be fined.

Or did you mean to talk about "democratic freedoms"? Did you know that the last election for the Cuban parliament was held in 2013, and over 7.8 million Cubans went to the polls and voted? In fact, those Cuban elections had a 90.8% voter turnout rate. Of the ballots cast, 94% were valid, 1% were spoiled ballots and 5% were blank. While in

Canada's 2015 federal election we had the highest voter turnout rate in 2 decades! And you know what the percentage was? 68.3%. The U.S. voter turnout was about 58% for the 2012 presidential election. So it seems Cubans are actually more interested than Canadians and Americans in what this whole 'democratic freedom' thing has to offer – not because they want to overthrow their system – but instead because they want to participate in it!

Let's also ask who can participate in these "freedoms"? In Cuba, election campaigns do not require any money. Indeed, the only campaigning allowed in Cuba is the publication of each candidate's official

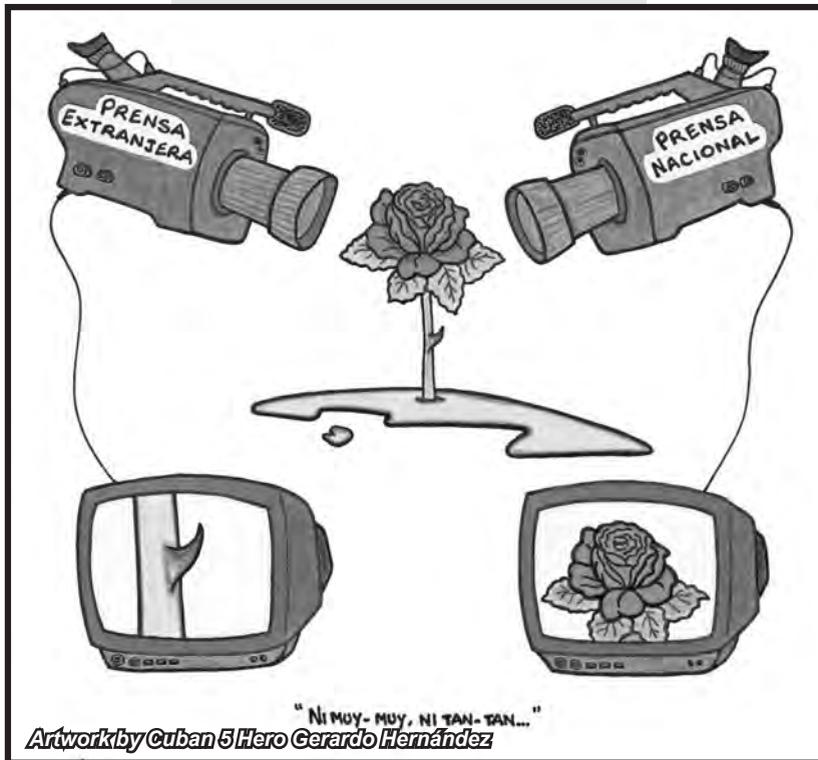
million so far on her campaign (she is the "winner" of the "money race"), Jeb Bush spent \$30.6 million before dropping out, Bernie Sanders has spent \$81.6 million and Donald Trump has spent \$23.9 million. You thought my monarchy statement was a joke, but really who are these people if not representatives of the U.S. ruling capitalist class?

Of course Canada has similar issues. Justin Trudeau (also from Canadian political 'royalty') spent \$40 million on his 2015 election campaign, while the defeated Conservative party spent around \$50 million, unlike the U.S. Canada had a cap on campaign spending - \$54 million. How many people in Canada and the United States can really afford to participate and get anywhere with these kinds of extremely costly "democratic freedoms"?

We can also compare the fact that Cuba is sending doctors and educators around the world to provide free health care and literacy to rural and remote communities, providing foreign nations with the human right to be healthy and educated. While the United States, might still enjoy a 'relatively high standard of living' (which I realise for much of the 99% in the United States is more illusion than reality) this standard is based off of the exploitation and pillaging of the developing world. Outside its own borders the "human rights" brought by the United States are the human right to pollution and

exploitation, the human right to be spied on, the human right to have your lands occupied by a foreign military, and the human right to be extra-judicially killed by drone strikes... I think I might have mixed up the meaning of 'human rights' for those last 4 examples. What human rights work have Obama and the U.S. government done again? Mr. Yakabuski forgot to explain. This is without even bringing up all of the human rights abuses happening within the United States' own borders.

However, Mr. Yakabuski's most important "arguments" come towards the end of his article. He writes, "If anything, Mr. Obama risks enhancing their [Raul & Fidel Castro] legitimacy and strengthening their grip on the island's economy. The Cuban military, also headed by Raul Castro, controls most of the economy (including its burgeoning tourist industry) and stands to benefit the most from increased U.S. trade and investment." Basically he is saying that Obama's visit may legitimize



biography. This outlines the history and character of each candidate and is put up around the neighbourhood as a small, but visible poster. This means that Cubans do not need money run in the elections. Also while the governments of the United States and Canada accuse Cuba of being undemocratic because they have a single party political system, you do not need to be a member of the Communist Party of Cuba to run in elections, candidates are nominated at grassroots neighbourhood based meetings.

This again is in stark contrast to what we have been told are real "democratic freedoms" in the U.S. Two behemoth political parties who keep pushing candidates from the same familial lines, the Kennedys, the Bushes, the Clintons sometimes it seems more like a constitutional monarchy. According to a New York Times article from February 22, 2016 titled, "Which Presidential Candidates Are Winning the Money Race." Hillary Clinton has spent \$97.5

Raul Castro & Barack Obama meet in Panama during Summit of the Americas, April 11, 2015.



the Cuban government – it is unclear if not meeting with the Cuban government would help delegitimizes it? While Yakabuski tries to live in a fantasy world where the Cuban government is isolated, Cuba has diplomatic or consular relations with 187 countries and States around the world. In October 2015 at the United Nations General Assembly, 191 countries voted alongside Cuba for the United States to end its immoral and unjust blockade against Cuba, only two countries voted to maintain the blockade (U.S. & Israel). Who really needs legitimacy on the world stage Mr. Yakabuski?

spoken to who has travelled extensively in developing countries around the world and then to Cuba is shocked by the lack of police and military presence, whose heavily armed presence is used in capitalist countries around the world to keep the poor and oppressed in their place.

Yakabuski continues, “Supporters of Mr. Obama’s approach argue that human-rights violations and political repression have not stopped the United States from pursuing economic and diplomatic relations with China. So why apply a tougher standard to

Cuba, especially when the United States continues to indefinitely detain and deprive of due process dozens of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay? The answer is that Cuba is in North America’s backyard and the Castros head the longest-running dictatorship in the Western hemisphere. Their brutality is well documented, in spite of the romanticism with which Canadians often view them.” The only logic I can understand here is that Yakabuski is saying that from his point of view, the lives of the Chinese people living under his definition of “human-rights violations and political repression” have lives that are less valuable than those living in Cuba because Cuba is closer geographically to the United States? I thought the point of HUMAN rights is that they belong to everyone Mr. Yakabuski?

In fact, while he argues that “Their [Fidel & Raul Castro’s] brutality is well documented, in spite of the romanticism with which Canadians often view them,” I could use this exact same quote to discuss the United States. The U.S. military and government’s brutality is “well-documented” too, despite many Canadians wanting to go along with the United States “greatest country in the world” motto. Mr. Yakabuski is correct that violations of human rights in Guantanamo are one point of argument. However, it is not a blip or an exception in the United States otherwise clean record. Torture at the U.S. prison in Guantanamo, stinks of the same stories we heard about Iraqi and Afghan prisons under their occupation. But the well documented brutality of the U.S. does not end there. Propping up brutal regimes, like the one in Saudi Arabia; letting poisoned water run

Related to his comment about the Cuban military controlling Cuba’s economy and “burgeoning tourist industry” the over 1.2 million Canadians who travel to Cuba every year (that’s about 1 in 30 people in Canada) read that and raised a collective eyebrow. None of us have seen tanks rolling down Cuban streets as they do in countless other countries. None of us have seen heavily armed police at check points in Cuba like you might in Mexico, or Israel or countless other countries around the world. Police in the U.S. and Canada are much more intimidating than any Cuban police officer I have ever seen (considering I have travelled to Cuba 15 times). Everyone I have

THE WORLD AGAINST THE BLOCKADE



WHAT PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA CAN, AND CANNOT DO, TO CHANGE THE BLOCKADE AGAINST CUBA

WHAT HE CAN CHANGE

 <p>AUTHORIZE USE OF THE DOLLAR IN CUBA'S INTERNATIONAL TRANSACTIONS AS WELL AS THROUGH U.S. BANKS.</p>	 <p>ENABLE CUBAN ENTITIES TO OPEN CORRESPONDING ACCOUNTS IN U.S. BANKS.</p>	 <p>AUTHORIZE CUBAN PLANES AND SHIPS TO TRANSPORT PASSENGERS, CARGO AND MAIL BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES.</p>	 <p>ELIMINATE THE LIMIT OF CUBAN PRODUCTS THAT U.S. TRAVELERS WHO VISIT CUBA CAN BRING IN.</p>
 <p>REVERSE THE POLICY OF FINANCIAL PERSECUTION AGAINST CUBA.</p>	 <p>NOT BLOCK THE GRANTING OF CREDITS OR OTHER FINANCIAL FACILITIES</p>	 <p>AUTHORIZE DIRECT EXPORTS OF U.S. PRODUCTS TO CUBA.</p>	 <p>AUTHORIZE U.S. CITIZENS TO RECEIVE MEDICAL TREATMENT IN CUBA.</p>
 <p>ALLOW CUBA TO IMPORT PRODUCTS FROM THIRD COUNTRIES THAT CONTAIN MORE THAN 10% OF U.S. COMPONENTS.</p>	 <p>PERMIT IMPORTATION TO THE U.S. OF EXPORTABLE PRODUCTS OR SERVICES FROM THE CUBAN ECONOMY.</p>	 <p>AUTHORIZE U.S. COMPANIES TO INVEST IN CUBA.</p>	 <p>GRANTING OF CREDITS, LOANS, AND FINANCING FOR THE PURCHASE OF PRODUCTS IN THE U.S. MARKET.</p>

WHAT HE CANNOT MODIFY

 <p>THE PROHIBITION ON U.S. SUBSIDIARIES IN THIRD COUNTRIES DOING BUSINESS WITH CUBA (TORRICELLI LAW)</p>	 <p>THE PROHIBITION ON TRANSACTIONS WITH NATIONALIZED FORMER U.S. PROPERTIES (HELMS-BURTON LAW).</p>	 <p>TRAVEL TO CUBA FOR TOURISM PURPOSES (TRADE SANCTIONS REFORM AND EXPORT ENHANCEMENT ACT)</p>	 <p>THE REQUIREMENT TO PAY CASH IN ADVANCE TO PURCHASE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS (TRADE SANCTIONS REFORM AND EXPORT ENHANCEMENT ACT)</p>
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CUBAN NEWS AGENCY (CNA) 2015

out of the taps in Flint, Michigan; a for-profit health care system and prison system that are both making millions off of the misery of poor and working Americans; making citizens pay for water; police brutally and murder that goes unpunished, especially against young people of colour – are these not violations of human rights? Are these not well documented records of brutality? If anything I think Cuba should be weary of letting Barack Obama come for a visit, not the other way around.

The real issues at stake for this visit...

Is the visit of Obama a win for the Cuban government? Yes. But it is a double edged sword for the Cuban people and government. While this opening with the U.S. government brings many new possibilities economically and in terms of development, we know how the U.S. uses its power around the world. I could take this article to warn Cuba about creeping U.S. intervention, about the threat the U.S. has posed for so many years, but that would be condescending towards Cuba. They already know better than all of us. Reading and listening to Josefina Vidal speak about Obama's visit demonstrates how deeply and wisely the Cuban leadership is aware of this process.

On March 4, 2016 the Obama administration extended the order declaring Venezuela a "national security threat" to the United States. This is despite the fact that in an April 2015 interview with EFE, U.S. President Obama himself said, "We do not believe that Venezuela poses a threat to the United States, nor does the United States threaten the Venezuelan government." However, the blatant contradiction does not concern Obama, because declaring this sort of 'state of emergency' gives the U.S. government more power to place sanctions on Venezuela or support Venezuelan right-wing opposition groups.

On March 4, Cuba did not hesitate, in the afternoon after Obama's announcement on Venezuela, Cuba's Ministry of Foreign Relations (MINREX) released a statement against U.S. aggression towards Venezuela and defending the people of Venezuela and their sovereignty. Cuba was not the only defender of Venezuela, again the U.S. was isolated by its self-contradictory stance when both the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) came out swinging with their own statements against Obama and the United States' declaration.

To me this demonstrates one point that Mr. Yakabuski's article "Why is Obama visiting Cuba?" was correct on. Cuba has not made any major changes, Cuba has not given up anything to re-establish formal diplomatic ties with the United States. Their revolutionary socialist government and revolutionary people remain vigilant against U.S. aggression and

attempts at re-establishing its hegemony over Cuba and the rest of Latin America. Cuba will not stop speaking truth to power because it wants Obama's visit to go smoothly. However, where I again disagree with Mr. Yakabuski is that Cuba should not have to change for the United States. It is the United States that has a farce of a democracy, not Cuba. It is the United States that is violating Human Rights within its own borders and around the world, not Cuba. It is the U.S. that is isolated on the world stage, not Cuba. Cuba, unlike the U.S., is not exporting soldiers, tanks and bombs, but instead sends doctors, nurses and teachers.

So when Mr. Yakabuski concluded his article with the statement, "The world does not need more (of the Castros') Cuba." I turn around and say confidently, actually the world does need more of the Castros' Cuba. A small developing country standing up, as David did against Goliath, speaking truth to power and demanding justice for itself and the rest of the world. In fact, this is what scares Mr. Yakabuski, the humanity of Cuban socialism. As the great Cuban poetry and revolutionary Jose Marti said: "Patria es Humanidad"-Humanity is my Homeland.

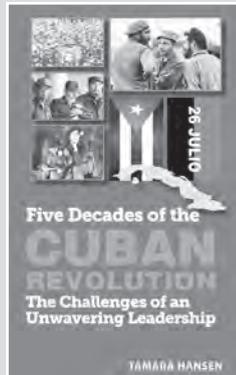
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@THans01

Battle of Ideas Press

**5 Decades of the Cuban Revolution
The Challenges of an Unwavering Leadership**
By Tamara Hansen

"The battles Cuba has fought have not been easy. Some were physical battles, such as the battle against bandits in the Escambray Mountains or the Bay of Pigs invasion. However, most were not battles of physical might, but battles of ideas. But with every twist and turn, every up and down Fidel has been one of the first leaders to say, 'this way forward' or 'we made a wrong turn, we must change course.'"

Tamara Hansen is the coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC). She is also an editorial board member of The Fire This Time newspaper. She has travelled to Cuba ten times and has written extensively on Cuban politics since 2003.



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OUR HERITAGE



Clara Zetkin

German Marxist theorist, activist, and organizer of the first International Women's Day in 1911

The following is an excerpt from a speech by Clara Zetkin at the Party Congress of the Social Democratic Party of Germany, Gotha, October 16th, 1896.

"How does the women's question appear in the circles of the petit-bourgeoisie, the middle class and the bourgeois intelligentsia? Within the bourgeois intelligentsia, another circumstance leads to the worsening of the living conditions: capitalism needs the intelligent and scientifically trained work force. It therefore favored an overproduction of mental-work proletarians and contributed to the phenomenon that the formerly respected and profitable societal positions of members of the professional class are more and more eroding. To the same degree, however, the number of marriages is decreasing; although on the one hand the material basis is worsening, on the other hand the individual's expectations of life are increasing, so that a man of that background will think twice or even thrice before he enters into a marriage. The age limit for the founding of a family is raised higher and higher and a man is under no pressure to marry since there exist in our time enough societal institutions which offer to an old bachelor a comfortable life without a legitimate wife. The capitalist exploitation of the proletarian work force through its starvation wages, sees to it that there is a large supply of prostitutes which corresponds to the demand by the men. The wives and daughters of these circles are pushed out into society so that they may establish for themselves their own livelihood which is not only supposed to provide them with bread but also with mental satisfaction. In these circles women are not equal to men in the form of possessors of private property as they are in the upper circles. The women of these circles have yet to achieve their economic equality with men and they can only do so by making two demands: The demand for equal professional training and the demand for equal job opportunities for both sexes. In economic terms, this means nothing less than the realization of free access to all jobs..."

LIBERALIZING THE CUBAN ECONOMY ... FOR WHOM?



By Manuel Yepe*

The coming visit to Cuba, on March 21 and 22, of the President of the United States of America, Barack Obama, has the expressed goal of contributing to the process of normalization of relations between the two countries.

But the road to such normalization cannot be undertaken mirroring the model of a situation that existed at some period in the past, because the links between the two sides have never been truly “normal”. And, in what way could the US oligarchy obtain benefits from the negotiations that are taking place for that purpose in Washington and Havana?

Demands linked to a number of issues have already fallen into complete disrepute. These issues are: human rights (regarding which Cuba shows many accomplishments and the US serious deficiencies); democracy (a term the US foreign policy systematically confuses with capitalism); ties with US enemies (these change constantly because of US foreign policy's inclination to war); religious intolerance (Cuba is highly regarded for its complete openness to all religions both internally and globally); political fanaticism (Cuban diplomacy enjoys great prestige and has earned outstanding successes in its contributions to conflict resolution in various parts of the world).

Now it appears—at least considering what is reflected by US-controlled or greatly influenced corporate media—that most efforts are focused on demands for the liberalization of the island's economy to increase its vulnerability to the appetites of

Wall Street. The current slogan, repeated in different ways by these means is “the Cuban government must liberalize its economy in response to every step taken by the United States to partially soften its blockade of the island.”

Derived from this slogan is the warning that “the thaw between Cuba and the United States moves very slowly because of the decision of Havana not to lose control of its economy.”

On other occasions they have used officials or experts linked to the US government to express the claim that the continuation of the easing of sanctions, and some timid steps of the White House to allow exports of some of its products to Cuba—on credit—“will depend on the actions carried out by the Cuban government to liberalize its economy.”

There have also been more categorical demands that “if Cuba does not take steps towards greater openness, both of the economic and political systems, it will be impossible that issues such as the embargo or the Helms-Burton Act are repealed by Congress.”

Or, as bait, offering that if Cuba moves its chips in this regard it will be rewarded, because “then Obama could work wonders before a Congress and a Senate that from January on will have a Republican majority”.

All this leads to the threat that if Cuba wants to get rid of the blockade, it must make the changes demanded by the United States, the think tanks of capitalist thinking and the mass media advocating an economic opening directed to Cuba's accepting a system of capitalist economy that Cubans rejected in 2011 when—at

163,000 very democratic assemblies—they added, removed or modified a basic text to endorse the roadmap of economic changes within socialism that are being implemented in the most recent period.

For years, the dominant message in the mainstream media indicated that the US blockade was a mere excuse of the Cuban government to hide its economic failure since this had little impact on the economy of the island. Today few dare sustain such a thing, because in just one year of timid measures by Obama, the Cuban economy grew by 4% and became an exception in the region whose GDP—according to the Comisión Económica para América Latina (CEPAL) [Economic Commission for Latin America]—has contracted by 0.4%. The wisest thing would be for Washington to altogether accept the total failure of its economic war against Cuba and its attempt to reverse the victory of the popular Cuban socialist revolution, in the same way it had to admit defeat in its uneven confrontation against Vietnam four decades ago.

Only that, in this case, they have the possibility of ending its aggression in a civilized way, leaving the door open for a future of mutual respect and eventual reconciliation without the humiliation of having to gather on the roof, as they did in Saigon with low brows of defeat, to board the getaway helicopters.

**Manuel E. Yepe, is a lawyer, economist and journalist. He is a professor at the Higher Institute of International Relations in Havana. He was Cuba's ambassador to Romania, general director of the Prensa Latina agency; vice president of the Cuban Institute of Radio and Television; founder and national director of the Technological Information System (TIPS) of the United Nations Program for Development in Cuba, and secretary of the Cuban Movement for the Peace and Sovereignty of the Peoples.*

*A CubaNews translation. Edited by Walter Lippmann.
www.walterlippmann.com
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Por Manuel Yepe*

La visita que en los próximos días 21 y 22 de marzo realizará a Cuba el Presidente de Estados Unidos de América, Barack Obama, tiene el objetivo declarado de contribuir al proceso de normalización de las relaciones entre los dos países.

Pero el camino hacia tal normalización no puede emprenderse tomando como modelo una situación existente en algún período pretérito, porque nunca los nexos entre las dos partes han sido verdaderamente “normales”.

Y, ¿de qué otra manera pudiera la oligarquía estadounidense asegurarse ventajas en las negociaciones que están teniendo lugar para ese fin en Washington y La Habana?

Ya han caído en total descrédito las exigencias relacionadas con los derechos humanos (en cuyo respeto Cuba sobresale y Estados Unidos muestra serias carencias); democracia (término que la política externa de Estados Unidos confunde sistemáticamente con el capitalismo); vínculos con enemigos de Estados Unidos (porque éstos cambian constantemente a causa de la inclinación a las guerras de la política exterior estadounidense); intolerancia religiosa (Cuba disfruta de gran prestigio por su total apertura a todas las religiones tanto en lo interno como a escala global), o con fanatismo político (la diplomacia cubana goza de un prestigio muy sólido y ha obtenido muy sonados éxitos en sus aportes a la solución de conflictos en diversas partes del mundo).

Ahora todo parece indicar –al menos por lo que reflejan los medios corporativos bajo control o gran influencia estadounidense – que los esfuerzos se resumen a la demanda de liberalización de la economía de la isla para incrementar su vulnerabilidad ante los apetitos de Wall Street.

La consigna actual, repetida de manera diversa por estos medios, es que “el Gobierno de Cuba debe liberalizar su economía en respuesta a cada paso dado por Estados Unidos para suavizar parcialmente su bloqueo a la Isla”.

Deriva de este lema la advertencia de que “el deshielo entre Cuba y Estados Unidos avanza a paso muy lento por la decisión de La Habana de no aflojar demasiado el control de su economía”.

En otras ocasiones han puesto en boca de funcionarios o de expertos vinculados al gobierno estadounidense la afirmación de



Para Quién Liberalizar La Economía Cubana

han venido aplicando en el período más reciente.

Durante años, el mensaje dominante en los grandes medios indicaba que el bloqueo de Estados Unidos era

que la continuidad del alivio de las sanciones y de algunos tímidos pasos de la Casa Blanca que permiten la exportación a crédito de algunos productos a Cuba, “dependerá de las acciones que lleve a cabo el Gobierno cubano para liberalizar su economía”.

No han faltado exigencias más categóricas de que “si Cuba no da pasos hacia una mayor apertura, tanto del sistema económico como del sistema político, va a ser imposible que cuestiones como el embargo o la Ley Helms-Burton puedan ser derogadas por el Congreso de Estados Unidos”. O, a modo de cebo, el

presionante ofrecimiento de que si Cuba mueve sus fichas en este sentido, será recompensada, porque “con ello, Obama podría hacer maravillas ante un Congreso y un Senado que a partir de enero tendría mayoría republicana”.

Todo esto se traduce en la amenaza de que si Cuba quiere librarse del bloqueo, deberá hacer los cambios exigidos por Estados Unidos, los tanques del pensamiento capitalista y los grandes medios de comunicación que preconizan una apertura económica dirigida a aceptar un sistema de economía capitalista que los cubanos rechazaron en 2011 cuando, en 163.000 asambleas muy democráticas, añadieron, quitaron o modificaron un texto básico hasta refrendar la hoja de ruta con los cambios económicos dentro del socialismo que se

una mera excusa del Gobierno cubano para esconder su fracaso económico, ya que éste apenas impactaba sobre la economía de la Isla. Hoy, pocos se atreven a sostener tal cosa, cuando, en apenas un año de tímidas medidas de Obama, la economía cubana creció un 4% y se convirtió en una excepción en la región que, según la Comisión Económica para América Latina (CEPAL) ha contraído su PIB en un 0,4%.

Lo más sabio sería que Washington aceptara el fracaso total de su guerra económica contra Cuba y de su tentativa de revertir el triunfo de la revolución popular socialista cubana en toda la línea, de la misma manera que tuvo que reconocerlo en su dispar enfrentamiento con Vietnam hace cuatro décadas.

Solo que, en este caso, se les presenta la posibilidad de poner fin civilizadamente a su agresión, dejando la puerta abierta para un futuro de mutuo respeto y eventual reconciliación, sin la humillación de tener que atropellarse en los techos de los helicópteros con la frente baja por la derrota, como ocurrió en Saigón.

**Manuel E. Yepe Menendez es periodista y se desempeña como Profesor adjunto en el Instituto Superior de las Relaciones Internacionales de La Habana.*

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IMPERIALISM IS FULLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE REFUGEE CRISIS!

OPEN THE BORDERS!

By Alison Bodine

The number of refugees that have made the deadly crossing so far this year is nearly 14 times the number that crossed over the same time period last year – 135,000, or over 2,000 people per day. The cold winter months and violent waves on the Mediterranean have not stopped their exodus from war and occupation; neither have barbed wire border fences, police tear gas and clubs, nor the inhuman conditions in European refugee camps.

Refugees are fleeing Africa and the Middle East for Europe at a huge rate because they see no end to the bombings, violence and devastation leveled on their countries by the U.S. government and their allies, especially concentrated over the last 15 years. For millions of people in the region, the year 2001, and the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan was the first attack of the new era of war and occupation, a bloody series of imperialist invasions, wars and occupations that continues until today.

War in Syria and Beyond

Syrians make up the largest group of refugees landing on the shores of Greece and Italy. This is no surprise given that in Syria today, over half of the population has been displaced, either inside the country or pushed beyond its borders, often times more than once (United National Refugee Agency - UNHCR). Over 4.5 million people have been forced to leave Syria, and everything that they have ever known, as entire cities and hundreds of thousands of years of civilization are turned to dust.

The U.S. government and their allies first began backing so-called moderate rebels in Syria in 2011, fomenting a fierce civil war meant to destabilize the country and force the exit of Syrian President Bashar al Assad. In 2014, the United States and their allied regimes, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates began bombing Syria, justifying their attacks with the claim that they are fighting the terrorist group Daesh (ISIS/ISIL), a terrible force



that was created by imperialist forces and intervention in Iraq and Syria. Today, the United Kingdom, Canada, France and Turkey have joined in the bombing of Syria. In February, 2016 the United States opened up its second air base in the Kurdish area of Syria, a clear sign that they are not planning on leaving Syria anytime soon.

Really, the experience of people in Syria and the conditions that have pushed them away from their homes are the same as those that are faced by people from all over Africa and the Middle East, from Iraq and Afghanistan to Libya and Somalia. Here are just a few examples of the devastation caused by imperialist war machine.

Currently over 6.6 million Iraqi people are in immediate need of emergency assistance, either food, water, or sanitation (U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs)

In the Yemen, 14.4 million people are

food insecure (Food and Agriculture Organization – FAO) after one year of a brutal U.S.-backed Saudi Arabian bombing campaign

2015 was the deadliest year for civilians in Afghanistan since 2009

In February 2016 the United States dropped bombs on Libya, in the name of “fighting Daesh.” These bombs were dropped on a country still submerged in chaos after the U.S./Canada/France and NATO bombed Libya to rubble in 2011.

With the above conditions facing people in the Middle East and Africa, it is no question why refugees are fleeing for Europe and risking everything that they have in order to find a safe place to be.

The Devastating Reality for Refugee Women and Children

Unfortunately, even for those refugees that survive the bitter cold on the Mediterranean



crossing, their struggle for this safe space to be, and their struggle for dignity, is far from over. This is especially true for women and children refugees.

The European Union police agency, Europol, announced at the end of January 2016 that 10,000 refugee children that registered upon entering Europe had “disappeared.” Although they reported that some that were missing had most likely ended up in with family members, they also warned that many of them were vulnerable to human trafficking.

For women refugees, not only do they face the responsibility of caring for children and trying to keep the family together through the impossible journey, they also face additional harassment and targeting along the way. Amnesty International conducted a study with women refugees, finding that most had “experienced physical abuse and financial exploitation, being groped or pressured to have sex by smugglers, security staff or other refugees.”

Where is the human response to this inhuman situation? Over the last year the refugee crisis in Europe has become impossible for European governments to ignore. After hundreds of people began dying while crossing the Mediterranean last Spring, Europe held its first Summit in order to discuss the refugee crisis. Since then, they have continued to hold many summits and meetings of all kinds, however, to date all decisions that have been made are coming up short and coming too late to have any impact on the refugee crisis today.

Even the latest agreements proposed regarding the re-settlement of refugees are a far-cry from the 1.3 million that arrived in 2015 alone. To date, the European Union,

outside of Germany, has committed to re-settling only 160,000 refugees. France, for example, has committed to taking in a mere 30,000.

European Government Response Deepens the Human Catastrophe

Given this human tragedy, the question really is how are Western and European governments responding and what is being done to bring people fleeing wars and occupations simple human dignity?

Let us start with the European response to refugees that have already arrived in Europe over the last year. With 1.3 million refugees arriving in Europe in 2015, the biggest responsibility of European governments should have been finding dignified places for people to live as they wait to go through the various processes that are required for them to claim refugee status in Europe. The European response to this need has been devastatingly slow. During the summer months this meant that people were left out in the sun, often without food or water except for what was brought to them by volunteers or NGO's. Over the winter, this has meant waiting in the cold and rain, or being cramped into inadequate shelters.

Because of the lack of adequate housing and limitations to travel and movement, refugees have also been forced into building their own places to live. This includes camps along the route from France into the U.K., such as those in Dunkirk and Calais, France. Conditions in these camps, already overcrowded and lacking enough infrastructure to support a dignified life, have worsened over the winter months. As one young Kurdish refugee said to Vice News, “Being killed by the Islamic state would have been better than this; they say

these are the lands of human rights, but if that were true they wouldn't keep us here. They would take us somewhere better, but it didn't turn out that way, there's no progress here.”

This young girl lives with her family in a camp in Dunkirk, France. This camp has seen its population swell to 3,000 from 600 in only a few months, still the camp only has two taps with running water.

The situation in the Calais camp, also known as “the Jungle” is even worse, as the government of France has stepped in to destroy large parts of the camp. An estimated 5-6,000 refugees were living in the camp in Calais, attempting to enter into the U.K., when French authorities began to bulldoze the Southern part of the camp, using tear gas and water cannons against refugees trying to protect what little they had. Local non-governmental groups and charities estimated that up to 3,000 people were displaced when this part of the camp was leveled.

In place of the destroyed parts of the camp, the French government provided a camp of large shipping containers outfitted for people to live in. Although this may seem like a reasonable solution to the horrible conditions for people living in the Jungle, these containers are not really a solution at all. First of all, they only accommodate 1,500 people, or about half of those that were displaced. Secondly, the containers are fenced off in a way that appears to much of the refugees to be more like a prison than a home. Most of them are reluctant to give up what little freedom of movement that they have in exchange for an uncertain future in a camp provided by the French government.

Barbed Wire is No Solution!

One of many cities devastated by war in Syria.



Another human responsibility of European governments is to ensure the ability of refugees to travel from the countries where they have landed to the countries that have offered them a permanent place to stay. Basically it does not matter how many refugees each European country has offered to take if refugees are not able to move to their destination. Basic human decency also requires that they should be able to do this without being treated like criminals or animals. Sadly, this has not been the case. Especially over the last few months borders have been closing in Europe and more and more barbed wire fences have been erected.

The most recent border closure has been on the border between Macedonia and Greece. As borders began to close along one of the routes from Greece to Germany, known as the "Balkan Route," Macedonia finally decided that it too would close down its border. They quickly erected a double razor wire fence, and are now allowing as little as 0-150 refugees through a day, Syrian and Iraqi refugees only. As of March 5, 2016 there were approximately 12,000 refugees stranded in Greece, not being able to cross into Macedonia, and not also having anywhere else to go to in Greece. Additional support from the European Union for Greece to handle this latest crisis has not been provided, with 30,000 refugees expected to be trapped in Greece by the end of March if this border remains closed.

In order to deal with the refugees entering Europe, there are also plans in place to

begin to turn back refugees from areas in the Middle East considered to be "safe." These places include all of the country of Afghanistan, and the cities of Baghdad, Iraq and Damascus, Syria. As well, there are the dozens of countries from which refugees are classified by European governments as economic migrants and deported home. According to the Independent Newspaper, the British Home Office has even begun to charter flights from Afghans from Britain to Kabul, this while Afghanistan has just had the deadliest year for civilians since 2009.

This article would also be lacking if I did not mention the disgraceful response of the U.S. government to the refugee crisis. The U.S. government is the government most responsible for destroying the lives of millions and millions of people in the Middle East and Africa. The White House has only committed to taking in 10,000 Syrian refugees by the end of this year. 10,000? That's not even one refugee for every bomb dropped by the U.S. on the people of Syria in the last 15 months (the U.S. Air Force reported dropping 20,000 bombs and missiles in Syria alone).

What About Canada?

Although the refugee crisis has had the most immediate impact on Europe, the government of Canada, as one of the governments responsible for the devastation that has created this crisis, also has the responsibility to provide a dignified life for refugees from Africa and the Middle East.

As of March 1, 2016, 25,000 Syrian refugees arrived in Canada, representing a mix of both government and privately-sponsored refugees. Unlike what the new Trudeau government would like the people of Canada to believe, this number of refugees is not only not what the Liberal government promised (25,000 government sponsored refugees by the end of 2015), it is also a long way from the number of refugees, Syrian and otherwise, that a rich imperialist country like Canada has the responsibility to accept.

As the refugee crisis was unfolding in 2015, Fire This Time called on the government of Canada to immediately accept 50,000 Syrian refugees and grant them full legal and human rights in Canada. This is still possible. We also restate our demand that the government of Canada accept another 150,000 Syrian refugees by the end of 2016.

Canada has also not taken any responsibility for non-Syrian refugees, or offered non-Syrian refugees the same human response. For example, Syrian refugees are not obligated to re-pay the government of Canada for their travel costs, non-Syrian refugees are. We demand that the same full legal and political rights be extended to all refugees, none of whom should owe the government of Canada for their travel to safety.

Refugees Face Racism and Islamophobia

"I thought Europe would offer me a comfortable life, but I only found hostility and pain." Mohammed Asif, refugee from



A refugee girl moves under barbed wire as she crosses from Serbia to Hungary.

Afghanistan

Even for the refugees that are able to stay in a Europe, or Canada, or the U.S., for that matter, life continues to be difficult. The words of Mohammed are not uncommon to read. Over the last few months, refugees have been increasingly reporting on the open hatred, racism and Islamophobia that they face as they travel through Europe. This atmosphere is the result of the polarization of society in Europe around the refugee crisis, polarization perpetuated by governments, the mass media and far-right political parties in Europe.

Europe has a population of 500 million people, even if 2 million refugees from the Middle East and Africa were to enter Europe, this would represent a population increase of 0.4% over one year. This is not even close to an impossible number for industrialized countries in Europe to absorb, considering a small and developing country like Lebanon has accepted 1.5 million Syrian refugees.

The refugee crisis is being used to divide European society at a time when more unity between poor and oppressed people is needed in order to face increasing cuts to social services and other government attacks.

Refugees in Canada are also facing racism and Islamophobia. Just recently, a school in Calgary was found with graffiti declaring "Syrians are animals" and "real Canadians hate Syrians" as well as "burn all mosques." Here in Vancouver, a Syrian family was spat on while leaving a mosque in January.

Open the Borders!

As European leaders propose more and more to "control the borders," peace-loving people around the world are demanding to open the borders! No matter the fences,

the road blocks, riot police or the perilous conditions, humanity will always find a place to be safe in the face of certain death. There do not need to be any more needless deaths, over 1.5 million people have already lost their lives in Iraq alone. If refugees were given safe passage from the Middle East and Africa to Europe, thousands of lives would be saved. If people were given dignified housing and transportation along the way, then they wouldn't be forced to relive the abuses they suffered as U.S. soldiers broke down their doors in the middle of the night. The refugee crisis doesn't have to be a crisis for humanity.

End Wars and Occupations!

"The tents are better, but the conditions in our hearts is worse...My dream is to move back to Syria...my house has been destroyed, let them go back and live in a tent, what is important is that we are in our country. It has been 5 years, what should we do?" Khaldea Salim, Syrian Refugee living in Lebanon

With these words Khaldea, Syrian mother and refugee in Lebanon has offered the world her solution to the refugee crisis. She wants to return home to a Syria free of war and chaos and the permanent instability that the U.S. government and their allies are imposing on people in the Middle East and Africa.

Opening the borders to all refugees is a way to alleviate the human suffering of the refugee crisis today; ending imperialist wars and occupations is the only way to put an end to the refugee crisis for once and for all.

Open the Borders Now!
No to Islamophobia! No to Racism!
End Imperialist Wars and Occupations!

Follow Alison Bodine on Twitter:
@Alisoncolette



Refugee camp in Greece.

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TEN VITAL FACTS

CAPITALIST INSTITUTIONS DON'T WANT YOU TO KNOW ABOUT HOW WAR & OCCUPATION ARE DESTROYING THE PLANET

By Thomas Davies

There is no place on earth which is not suffering from the two greatest threats to the world today: imperialist war and occupation, and environmental degradation. As the governments of rich countries like the US, UK, France and Canada face off against each other in an increasingly bloody and desperate attempt to secure dwindling resources and maintain slipping profits, they've dragged the rest of us down with them. While many of us know about these two threats separately, it's important to also emphasize how their wars are actually the biggest contributor to environmental degradation around the world. It's another one of their dirty little secrets, and below are 10 things they didn't want you to know about it.

1. The single largest institutional consumer of fossil fuels in the world is the US Department of Defense

The US Department of Defense (DoD) uses 4.6 trillion US gallons of fuel every year, which is an average of 12.6 million US gallons (48 million litres) of fuel per day. According to the 2005 CIA World Factbook, if it were a country, the DoD would rank 34th in the world in average daily oil use, coming in just behind Iraq and just ahead of Sweden. It has been estimated that during the initial invasion of Iraq the US consumed 190.8 million litres of oil every month! Two thirds of this fuel was used delivering more fuel to the vehicles at the battlefield.

2. Despite being the largest consumer of fossil fuels in the world, the US military has been exempt from reporting its greenhouse gas emissions

Obtaining recent and accurate figures about US military fuel usage and greenhouse gas emission has been difficult because the US has forced its military to be exempt from international climate agreements. It demanded and won the exemption from the Kyoto Protocol in 1998 (and then pulled out of the agreement anyway), and required the same exemption from the UN Copenhagen Agreement in 2009. As Sarah Flounders of the International Action Centre pointed out, "The Pentagon wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; its secret operations in Pakistan; its equipment on more than 1,000 U.S. bases around the world; its 6,000 facilities in the U.S.; all NATO operations; its aircraft carriers, jet aircraft, weapons testing, training and sales will not be counted against U.S. greenhouse gas limits or included in any count."

Under the newest UN Climate Agreement recently signed in Paris, countries are no longer automatically exempt from military



U.S. Bombs NAGASAKI



U.S. Bombs HIROSHIMA



U.S. uses AGENT ORANGE in VIETNAM

emissions reporting, but they are also not obliged to cut any of their emissions either.

3. They have destroyed the environment as part of their military strategies, with devastating consequences which are still being felt today.

During its war against Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970's, the US military used massive amounts of chemical agents to destroy forests and vegetation to limit where Vietnamese people could take cover and to destroy their food crops. More than 20 million gallons of "Agent Orange" herbicide were sprayed, destroying forests which have yet to recover, and exposing 4.8 million Vietnamese people to the poison. This resulted in 400,000 deaths and disabilities, as well as 500,000 children born with birth defects, and gave rise to the concept of "ecocide" - the deliberate destruction of environment as a military strategy.

4. They continue to find new ways to destroy the environment and human life

The US and NATO used Depleted Uranium (DU) weapons in the 1991 Gulf War, the 1999 bombing of Yugoslavia and the 2003 invasion of Iraq. It is estimated that between 315 and 350 tons of DU were used in the 1991 Gulf War. DU is favoured for "penetrating" weapons because it is self-sharpening and flammable. This means it can penetrate through heavy armour, and then explode and kill whatever is inside.

Reporter Dahr Jamail visited the Iraqi city of Fallujah after a massive US siege in 2004. He summarized, "The U.S. invasion of Iraq has left behind a legacy of cancer and birth defects suspected of being caused by the U.S. military's extensive use of depleted uranium and white phosphorus... What this has generated is, from 2004 up to this day, we are seeing a rate of congenital

malformations [birth defects] in the city of Fallujah that has surpassed even that in the wake of the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that nuclear bombs were dropped on at the end of World War II."

Depending on the type, DU has a half life of between 703 million and 4.468 billion years, so there is no end in sight to the atrocities for the people of Fallujah.

5. They ruined the rest of Iraq's environment too

Steve Kretzmann, director of Oil Change International, reported: "The Iraq war was responsible for at least 141 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent from March 2003 through December 2007. ... The war emits more than 60 percent of all countries." A former food exporter, Iraq's soil is dead after decades of the effects of war. It now imports 80 percent of its food, and the Iraqi Agriculture Ministry estimates that 90 percent of the land has severe desertification.

Adding insult to injury, rebuilding Iraqi schools, homes, businesses, bridges, roads and hospitals pulverized by the war, and new security walls and barriers will require millions of tons of cement, one of the largest

industrial sources of greenhouse gas emissions.

6. Afghanistan's environment is being destroyed by their wars as well

In 2003, two years after the invasion and occupation by the US, Canada and their allies, the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) released its evaluation of Afghanistan's environment. The UNEP report claimed that war and long-standing drought, "have caused serious and widespread land and resource degradation, including lowered water tables, desiccation of wetlands, deforestation and widespread loss of vegetative cover, erosion, and loss of wildlife populations."

The Costs of War Project says illegal logging by US-backed warlords and wood harvesting by refugees caused more than one-third of Afghanistan's forests to vanish between 1990 and 2007. Drought, desertification and species loss have resulted. Environmental advisor Ghulam Malikya concluded, "War has brought poverty. Poverty is one of the main sources of environmental degradation because people are forced to use different sources of energy. And the same with natural resources - they use it up for energy, for livelihood."

7. They pollute their own countries too

As H. Patricia Hynes, retired Professor of Environmental Health from Boston University School of Public Health documented in her article "Military Waste Sickens Lands and People", "By the late 1980's, public data revealed that the Pentagon was generating a ton of toxic waste per minute, more toxic waste than the five largest US chemical companies combined, making it the largest polluter in the United States.

continued on page 39



U.S. uses WHITE PHOSPHORUS in VIETNAM

**THERE IS NOTHING 'NORMALIZED'
ABOUT THIS RELATIONSHIP**

END THE BLOCKADE ON CUBA



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FREE Leonard Peltier



Introduction By Thomas Davies

On June 26, 2015 two FBI agents sped on to Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota in an unmarked car and initiated a shoot-out with American Indian Movement (AIM) activists.

When it was over, the two FBI agents, and one Native activist, Joe Stuntz, were killed. While there was never any investigation into the death of Stuntz, the FBI began the biggest 'manhunt' in US history to capture the AIM members who were involved in the firefight. Two AIM activists stood trial and were found 'not guilty' for reasons of self-defense. The FBI then put its focus on Leonard Peltier, who had fled to Canada to avoid the racist US justice system. Using manufactured evidence, the FBI had Leonard extradited from Canada to stand trial for the deaths of the agents. Despite the fact that there was never any reasonable evidence presented in the trial that linked Leonard to the deaths of the agents, and that the prosecutor conceded that, "We do not know who killed the agents," in 1977 he was convicted of the two murders and sentenced to two consecutive life terms.

Leonard's real crime was standing up against the US government for Indigenous people. Today, he has been imprisoned for 40 years old and continues to be a symbol of US injustice, but also Native pride and unwavering courage. He has continued to write and speak out from behind prison bars, and is recognized throughout the world for his life-long struggle for human rights.

My 40 Years in Prison

By Leonard Peltier

What can I say that I have not said before? I guess I can start by saying see you later to all of those who have passed in the last year. We Natives don't like to mention their names. We believe that if we speak their names it disrupts their journey. They may lose their way and their spirits wander forever. If too many call out to them, they will try to come back. But

their spirits know we are thinking about them, so all I will say is safe journey and I hope to see you soon.

On February 6th, I will have been imprisoned for 40 years! I'm 71 years old and still in a maximum security penitentiary. At my age, I'm not sure I have much time left.

I have earned about 4-5 years good time that no one seems to want to recognize. It doesn't count, I guess? And when I was indicted the average time served on a life sentence before being given parole was 7 years. So that means I've served nearly 6 life sentences and I should have been released on parole a very long time ago. Then there's mandatory release after serving 30 years. I'm 10 years past that. The government isn't supposed to change the laws to keep you in prison — EXCEPT if you're Leonard Peltier, it seems.

Now, I'm told I'll be kept at USP Coleman I until 2017 when they'll decide if I can go to a medium security facility — or NOT. But, check this out, I have been classified as a medium security prisoner now for at least 15 years, and BOP regulations say elders shall be kept in a less dangerous facility/environment. But NOT if you're Leonard Peltier, I guess.

As you'll remember, the history of my bid for clemency is long. My first app was with Jimmy Carter. He denied it. Ronald Reagan promised President Mikhail Gorbachev that he would release me if the Soviet Union released a prisoner, but Reagan reneged. George H.W. Bush did nothing. The next app was with Bill Clinton. He left office without taking action even though the Pardon Attorney did an 11-month investigation (it usually takes 9 months) and we were told she had recommended clemency. George W. Bush denied that petition in 2009. And in all of the applications for clemency, the FBI has interfered with an executive order. That's illegal as hell!

Today, I'm facing another dilemma — an abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA). It's the size of an AAA battery. The doctor

told me if it bursts, I can bleed to death. It's also close to my spine and I could end up paralyzed. The good news is that it's treatable and the operation has a 96-98 percent success rate. BUT I'm in a max security prison. We don't get sent for treatment until it is terminal.

As President Obama completes the final year of his term, I hope that he will continue to fight to fulfill his promises, and further the progress his Administration has made towards working in partnership with First Peoples. It gives me hope that this President has worked hard to affirm the trust relationship with the Tribal Nations. With YOUR encouragement, I believe Obama will have the courage and conviction to commute my sentence and send me home to my family.

Looking back on the 40 years of efforts on my behalf, I am overwhelmed and humbled. I would like to say thank you to all the supporters who have believed in me over the years. Some of you have been supporters since the beginning. You made sure I had books to read and commissary funds to buy what I may need to be as comfortable as one can be in this place. You made donations to the defense committee so we could continue fighting for my freedom, too. You all worked hard — are still working hard — to spread the word about what is now being called the most outrageous conviction in U.S. history. There are good-hearted people in this world, and you're among them. I'm sorry I cannot keep up with answering all of your letters. But thanks for the love you have shown me. Without it, I could never have made it this long. I'm sure of it.

I believe that my incarceration, the constitutional violations in my case, and the government misconduct in prosecuting my case are issues far more important than just my life or freedom. I feel that each of you who have fought for my freedom have been a part of the greater struggle of Native Peoples — for Treaty rights, sovereignty, and our very survival. If I should be called home, please don't give up on our struggle.

In the Spirit of Crazy Horse...

Originally published in Counterpunch — www.counterpunch.org

Donations can be made on Leonard's behalf to the International Leonard Peltier Defense Committee, PO Box 24, Hillsboro, OR 97123.

Will The Thaw In US-Cuba Relations Chill Cuba's Revolutionary Zeal?

An Interview with René González

By Ramona Wadi

HAVANA, Cuba — The December 2014 announcement that Cuba and the United States would be normalizing relations was met with both eagerness and suspicion. The diplomatic negotiations which led to the release of the remaining three members of the Cuban Five being held in the U.S. in exchange for USAID subcontractor Alan Gross and an unidentified U.S. spy, also provided the foundations upon which both countries agreed to embark on a new series of diplomatic discussions.

Following a State Department review in April 2015, Cuba was removed from the State Sponsor of Terrorism list — a scheme concocted by the U.S. against Cuba due to the island's support for revolutionary resistance in South America and Africa. Iran, Sudan and Syria remain on the list.

In August 2015 the U.S. opened an embassy in Havana, ending the historical diplomatic rupture which escalated to U.S. covert and overt actions against Cuba, including over 630 attempts to assassinate former Cuban leader Fidel Castro. In his address at the flag raising ceremony at the embassy, Secretary of State John Kerry alluded to the perpetual rhetoric of “democratic

transition” in Cuba. Noting that “Cuba's future is for Cubans to shake,” he continued:

“But the leaders in Havana – and the Cuban people – should also know that the United States will always remain a champion of democratic principles and reforms. Like many other governments in and outside this hemisphere, we will continue to urge the Cuban Government to fulfill its obligations under the UN and inter-American human rights covenants – obligations shared by the

soft power with regard to Cuba, it was also striking against Venezuela with aggressive attempts to undermine the Bolivarian Revolution. The U.S. took part in attempts to sabotage Venezuela, aided in orchestrating a coup against President Nicolás Maduro, and provided political and financial support to the Venezuelan opposition.

The United States' different attitudes toward these two countries can be viewed as subjugation tactics. The imperialist aggression in Venezuela is reminiscent

of the tactics used in Chile, which led to the downfall of democratically-elected socialist President Salvador Allende and the backing of Augusto Pinochet's brutal dictatorship. Cuba, on the other hand, has endured over 50 years of persistent U.S. aggression.

Following terror attacks against Cuba planned by former CIA agents Orlando Bosch and Luis Posada Carriles, exiled right-wing dissidents embarked upon a series of terror activities targeting tourist sites in Cuba.

The Cuban Five were sent to Miami in order to monitor and prevent terror attacks from materializing on the island. Evidence gathered by the Five was eventually passed on to the U.S., which retaliated by arresting and imprisoning the Cuban counter-terror agents in 1998.



United States and every other country in the Americas.”

Yet Kerry failed to acknowledge the United States' historical and current in role in shaping international dissonance under the guise of democracy.

Meanwhile, as the U.S. wielded its

On Oct. 7, 2011, René González was the first of the Five to be released. However, additional punitive measures were imposed upon him, with the court mandating a three-year probationary period to be served in the U.S. He was finally granted permission to remain in Cuba after a court-approved visit to attend his father's memorial service in 2013.

Given the dangerous yet futile attempts of the U.S. to sabotage the socialist movement in Cuba, the alternative option for the U.S. is to infiltrate diplomatically and establish a presence that would facilitate any hypothetical erosion of the Cuban Revolution.

Speaking to MintPress News, González outlines where the U.S. and Cuba diverge politically and in terms of their respective goals for the island nation. Now, González says, the Cuban struggle revolves around questions of how to hold onto the values of the revolution, maintain ties with an imperialist power that is hostile to Cuba, and ensure the survival of socialism in the country.

MintPress News (MPN): Now that the [remaining three members of the] Cuban Five have been released upon diplomatic negotiations between Cuba and the U.S., in what manner will you be continuing the anti-imperialist struggle? Will any future activity — particularly in relation to internationalist solidarity — be hindered by the agreement?

René González (RG): First of all, we have to remember that the agreement between the U.S. and Cuba on December 17, as well as any other step taken by one or both parties after that, has never implied a concession by the Cuban government. The Cuban government has made it crystal clear that our sovereignty and policies are not on the table, in the same way that we don't impose on the U.S. our views regarding their sovereignty and policies.

International solidarity is a two-way relationship, in which we give solidarity and receive solidarity in return. The struggle for the Five, to give an example, in great part is the result of the answer by millions of people expressing their solidarity with the Cuban people. Most of the peoples of the world share the common destiny of being subjected to exploitation. All of them will be [among] the victims as long as somebody else is being victimized, even if at any given time they are not subjected to direct aggression. As long as somebody is victimized by imperialism, all of us are victims.

That conscience is ingrained in our internationalism, and is at the essence of our policies of international solidarity. It won't change just because we establish a normal relationship with the U.S. or any other government.

MPN: There have been a lot of conflicting opinions with regard to normalizing ties

overcome a blockade and policies of aggression which have hindered our capacity to build our socialism.

But when it comes to the values of the Cuban Revolution, one of those values is the principle of having normal relations with the rest of the world, with acceptance of every nation's system of government and their sovereignty. It wasn't Cuba that imposed this estrangement between the two countries, but the U.S. government. We would have chosen the path of peaceful coexistence to solve our differences if it was up to us.

So, having a normal relationship with a country which differs from our political system is in agreement with our values. As a matter of fact, Cuba has diplomatic relations with almost every country in the world, regardless of their political system.

That said, we cannot ignore the fact that a relationship with such a big power committed to subverting our socialism, will incur risks regarding our value system. They will try to impose their system of values on us, and for that goal they rely upon lots of resources. It will undoubtedly become a challenge to protect our values under such economical, political and ideological pressures. Awareness of the risks involved is the first defense, but we will have to be clever to transform these events into opportunities and avoid the risks

involved, including the erosion of our value system.

MPN: To what extent do you think the US government will cooperate with Cuban requests — particularly an end to the [U.S.] military occupation of Guantánamo?

RG: The two countries have engaged in a long process which will take time to unfold. The U.S. government will try to use any resource as a bargaining chip on this process, and it includes any of the tools now in place as part of the policies of the last half-century. The occupation of Guantánamo, being one of those tools,

Cubans participate in the May Day celebrations, on May 1, 2015 in Havana.



with the U.S. How does this step fit in with the values of the Cuban Revolution?

RG: We should acknowledge that the normalization of ties with the U.S. is a real conflicting event, so it shouldn't be surprising that it brings about conflicting opinions.

As a matter of fact, the goals of both parties — the U.S. versus the Cuban government — are by nature in conflict. They see this approach as a better way to restore capitalism and their hegemonic relationship with Cuba, having failed after more than five decades of aggressive policies. We see it as an opportunity to

will be part of that give and take.

I don't believe that the U.S. government will make any concession out of goodwill. The process of dismantling the policies of the last 57 years will be conditioned by their pragmatic approach to international relations, which has a lot to do with a costs versus benefits analysis. What I hope is that as the process advances, the political costs of keeping in place those instruments of aggression will eventually increase, pushing them in the only direction which is historically right: the lifting of any barrier to the normalization of relations with Cuba, which includes giving back the territory illegally occupied in Guantánamo.

So, when it comes to those issues, our most valuable asset is history itself. We will have to be patient and approach them with a long-term vision. The U.S. base at Guantánamo has little or no practical military use on the age of aircraft carriers. It is kept in place only as part of putting salt on the wounds they have been inflicting upon the Cuban people. Eventually it will be more costly for them, both politically and economically, to keep it in place. Of course, our prerogative is to do everything possible to increase their political costs for keeping that occupation.

MPN: What is the general reaction of Cubans to rapprochement with the U.S.?

RG: I would describe it as cautious optimism. Most of the Cuban population was born and has lived under the blockade and we want it lifted. We want to be allowed to prove that socialism in Cuba is a viable option and the answer to our future. We have fought for that right for 57 years, and view a thaw in the conflict with the U.S. as a triumph of our resistance and determination. We have reasons to celebrate that rapprochement.

On the other hand, we understand the risks and are aware of the U.S. government's intentions. We know that if things are not done right they might come up with their goal of restoring capitalism in Cuba. We now have to face two challenges as never before: the new imperialist policies, now more subtle and sophisticated, and our own weaknesses and limitations. We look at the future with hope, but at the same time understand that there are big risks associated with our shortcomings, on one

hand, and with the policies by the U.S. government, on the other. It is up to us to overcome our shortcomings to prevent their policies from prevailing.

MPN: The U.S. is seeking to establish relations with Cuba and at the same time interfering in Venezuela. How does Cuban internationalism view this contradiction?

RG: I don't see it as a contradiction at all. It is consistent with the nature and ways of imperialism. Both policies seek the same outcome that the U.S. government has sought on his dysfunctional relationship with Latin America: to prevent the materialization of the common destiny envisioned by Bolivar and Martí, Fidel and Chavez.

The Cuban Revolution represents the moral compass to the path to that destiny, and the policies of the U.S. government toward Cuba aim to divert that compass from its course. By engaging the Cuban society they seek to subvert our values, and with it kill the example and inspiration that the internationalism and solidarity of the Cuban Revolution embodies for the peoples of Latin America. This approach implies a more soft relation with Cuba.

By contrast, the relationship with

Venezuela aims to the destruction of the economic sustenance of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas, by launching a war of attrition against the Venezuelan people, which relies heavily on an economic war which cannot be embedded in subtleties. There are no pretensions here. Imperialism relies upon its power to impose hardships on the Venezuelans, as they did before regarding the Cubans.

As for us, again, our solidarity with the Bolivarian Revolution is not negotiable. We welcome better relations with the U.S., but it won't happen if it means turning our backs on those who, during our worst period, were friends with the Cuban people.

Ramona Wadi, is an independent researcher, freelance journalist, book reviewer and blogger. @walzerscent

walzerscent.wordpress.com

Reprinted from:

<http://www.mintpressnews.com>



Cuban President Raúl Castro meets with the Cuban 5 (Fernando, Ramón, Gerardo, Antonio and René).

Black Leadership from MalcolmX and Martin Luther King to Patrice Lumumba and Thomas Sankara Fire This Time Organizes Successful Forum on the Importance of the Black Leadership



On Friday February 26, Fire This Time organized a community forum titled, "A Revolutionary Perspective from the Civil Rights Movement to the African Liberation Movement to Black Lives Matter!" The event marked Black History Month, as well as the 50th anniversary of the Black Panther Party and the Assassination of Malcolm X. Importantly, it also featured Garry Owens, a member and organizer with the Black Panther Party from 1968 to 1972 who has continued to be very active in many different social justice movements.

Fire This Time also published speeches by Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., Maurice Bishop, Thomas Sankara and Patrice Lumumba in a special Black History Month section of February's edition of the newspaper. An underlying objective of both the forum and the special section were to highlight important but often overlooked or glossed over figures in the history of the struggle of the black liberation movement and the fight for self-determination and dignity of black people around the world, as well as understanding of their ideas and struggle for today fight against capitalism and imperialism.

A packed house came to hear Garry as well as Azza Rojbi, a North African social justice organizer from

Tunisia and Executive member of Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO), speak and also participate in the following discussion.

Garry outlined his personal history of growing up poor and black in the United States, and the process of radicalization he and many other young black people had in response to the injustice which surrounded them. He became one of the founders of the first Black Panther Party chapter outside of California, and organized against colonial oppression and capitalism as well as for a new and better world. He described the challenges of confronting state repression and institutionalized racism, but also emphasized his continuing commitment to fight for the rights of all oppressed people.

Azza took a historical look at the continuation of black struggle around the world. She drew links between the struggles of African nations for their independence from colonial powers to the current fight today confronting ongoing racism, police brutality, mass incarceration, military aggression and imperialist war and occupation at home and abroad.

While it was clear from both speakers presentations that many of the same struggles black people have faced continue today, they both expressed hope and inspiration in the example of so many black people who have stood up, and continue to stand up, to injustice and demand their rights. Fire This Time was honoured to host Garry, and to share these important examples in the international struggle for dignity, self-determination and a better world.

Vancouver Message to Justin Trudeau: Repeal Anti Human and Anti Civil Rights Bill C-51 Join The Working Group to Stop Bill C-51

The Working Group to Stop Bill C-51 was very active during the month of February, organizing six actions including four pickets, a banner drop and a very successful conference. As the new Liberal government continues to stall and avoid discussing Bill C-51, it's increasingly important to continue organizing public actions to demand an immediate repeal of the much despised law.

Weekly pickets and petition drives have become the backbone of the Working Group's campaign to Repeal Bill C-51. Across the Lower Mainland - from Surrey, Coquitlam, Burnaby, Richmond, New Westminster and all across Vancouver, the group sets up information tables, collects petition signatures, hosts speakers, chants slogans and generally engages the public on the issue of Bill C-51. 2000 signatures have now been collected by the Vancouver group alone since Bill C-51 became law this summer, and February 29th was a special action titled, "51 Pickets Against Bill C-51!"

The Working Group is also trying to find new and creative ways to draw attention to Bill C-51. On February 15th it held its first ever banner drop on the busy Stanley Park Causeway leading out of



downtown Vancouver. It was one of the wettest days of the year, but that didn't stop the protestors from setting up a large new banner on the pedestrian walkway above the road, or the many drivers who honked or gave the thumbs up in support. This kind of action will definitely be repeated.

The month also culminated with the "Repeal Bill C-51 2016" Conference at the Simon Fraser University Harbour Centre on February 28th. Six panelists representing diverse organizations gave presentations, and the 70 conference attendees participated in very animated discussion focused on moving the campaign to "Repeal Bill C-51!" forward.

March 7 will the Working Group's 52nd action, a picket and petition drive marking one year of consecutive weekly actions. The Working Group will use the opportunity, as it always does, to reaffirm its commitment to continue organizing until Bill C-51 is repealed.

Vancouver Event to Celebrate International Women's Day 2016: CELEBRATE THE REVOLUTIONARY WOMEN OF CUBA & VENEZUELA!

* A free public community event!

Wednesday March 9, 6:30pm

Roundhouse Community Centre, Vancouver

Since the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, the women of Cuba have been making tremendous gains in the struggle for women's rights and equality, organizing a "Revolution within the Revolution" that continues to move forward today. Over the last 17 years of the Bolivarian Revolution, women in Venezuela have also made great advances in all sectors of society from healthcare and education to politics.

International Women's day is the opportunity to celebrate the gains that women have made around the world in their struggle for justice and equality. The revolutionary women of Cuba and Venezuela are leading the way, not only in their own countries but in the world-wide struggle for women's rights.

For International Women's Day 2016, Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) invites you to join us for a cultural and political evening to celebrate the revolutionary women of Cuba and Venezuela!

Featuring:

>> Miraly Gonzalez Gonzalez - First Secretary of the Cuban Embassy in Canada, speaking via video from Ottawa

>> Aitzanid C. Molero Colina - Second Consul General of the Consulate of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in Vancouver

>> Luz Maria Escarra - Member of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) and the PSUV women's commission, lawyer for the Venezuelan Ministry of Sports, Chavista, wife, daughter, sister, mother and revolutionary, speaking via video from Caracas, Venezuela

>> Macarena Cataldo Hernandez - Executive member of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) & Venezuela/Latin American solidarity activist and organizer originally from Chile

>> Tamara Hansen - Coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba and author of "Five Decades of the Cuban Revolution: The Challenges of an Unwavering Leadership"

>> Azza Rojbi - Coordinator of Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade - Vancouver (FCAB-Vancouver) originally from Tunisia.

>> Beautiful and inspiring poetry from Lucy Ortiz director of Proyecto Cultural Sur, Frida Marzolina member of the board of Proyecto Cultural Sur, Wala young Muslim Iraqi poet for social justice & Marieta Marin Cuban researcher from Camaguey studying in Vancouver!

>> Beautiful music with Kelly White, Macarena Cataldo Hernandez & Alison Bodine!

For more information: www.vancubasolidarity.com



"We are realists... we dream the impossible" - Che



Fire This Time!

A Fundraising Appeal!
\$20,000 Goal - A Great Success!
Help us get to \$25,000 by
February 1!

NEW GOAL:
\$25000!!!
BY FEBRUARY 1st!

October 15, 2015 to February 1st, 2016

Dear Fire This Time Reader,

We are very happy to announce that our fundraising goal of \$20,000 by January 15, 2016 has already been exceeded, with \$20,065 pledged as of December 27, 2015. We are truly humbled by the generous response of our readers, and would like to thank everyone who has pledged and contributed so far! The willingness of our supporters to contribute their hard-earned money to make printing this paper possible further strengthens our belief that the Fire This Time Newspaper is valuable and important to our readers. We are pleased to have received increased support over the past few months, and we are exploring possibilities, and we are pleased to extend the distribution of the Fire This Time Newspaper, which is currently distributed monthly throughout British Columbia, and some further provinces as well as to be mailed internationally. After this encouraging support, we are extending the deadline in order to finance not only the tremendous costs involved in printing but also growing distribution and international mailing. So we have expanded our fundraising campaign to \$25,000 by February 1st. If we receive these funds, we will be able to amplify our distribution and ensure that the newspaper is in the hands of new readers beyond BC, both nationally and internationally!

For the last thirteen years, Fire This Time has refused to be silent. We continue to reflect the battle of ideas that is shaping the political, economic and social fabrics of our society. With the perspective that, "Every international fight is local and every local fight is international," we have also continually highlighted the fightback of working and oppressed people across the

globe. This has included a special focus on Latin-America, and the revolutionary governments of Cuba, Venezuela and ...

IN A WORLD WHERE THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA IS DOMINATED BY ... CORPORATE AND ... FIRE THIS TIME ... THAT IS ... PRESENT ... THESE ... INTERESTED ...

... 2012 ... Board ... assaulted, ... and ... to stop ... the ... Once ... a ... which ... a ... of ... have ...

... not ... with, it ... - Fidel ...

... and ... use to be intimidated.

But now we really need your help!

If you agree that the newspaper is unique and important, we ask you to make a financial contribution, no matter how small (or how large!) to enable us to continue printing in the coming year. We have calculated that we will need a minimum of \$25,000 to continue publishing Fire This Time as a free, monthly, social justice newspaper for 12 months in 2016. We have launched a campaign to raise these funds by February 1st, 2016 and we are really counting on your support!

ONE TIME DONATIONS AND MONTHLY SUSTAINING DONATIONS ARE GRATEFULLY ACCEPTED! ANY DONATION OF A TOTAL OF \$250 OR MORE WILL RECEIVE A BOUND VOLUME OF ALL 12 ISSUES OF NEXT



WE MADE IT!
WE DID IT!
WE REACHED OUR GOAL!
THANK YOU!

GOOD NEWS!
YOU STILL CAN HELP

*** Call 778-938-1557 or e-mail firethistimecanada@yandex.com to organize a donation, or;

*** Mail a cheque to "Nita Palmer" with the Subject "FTT 2016" to: PO Box 21607 Vancouver, BC V5L 5G3

*** Donate via PayPal Online at www.firethistime.net

Thank you for all the support! We look forward to continuing work together to build a better world!
In Solidarity,

Editorial Board of the Fire This Time Newspaper



By Chelsea Manning*

In her first op-ed for The Advocate, the imprisoned leaker of military secrets explains why the queer community must oppose the government's demand for a backdoor into a terrorist's Apple iPhone.

Last week, the U.S. government revealed that Apple refused a request by the Federal Bureau of Investigation to unlock the iPhone 5C carried by one of the San Bernardino shooters. Following this revelation, Apple CEO Tim Cook said that requiring the company to create a bypass to the feature that causes the device to become unusable after entering an incorrect password more than 10 times would set a dangerous precedent and would undermine the security of all such mobile devices.

I disagree with Apple on many things. However, I agree with its decision to defend its customers' right to strong encryption in court. Based on my own experience living as a trans woman and working in technology, intelligence, and the military, I understand how critical encryption is for us as we protect our intimate lives.

In the years before my imprisonment, I worked as a programmer designing and building secure databases and communication software, and later as an intelligence analyst for the U.S. Army. Throughout each of these jobs we used different kinds of encryption to keep prying eyes out of the personal information of others.

Additionally, during my time working for the Army, I lived a "double life" under the military's don't ask, don't tell ban as a closeted trans woman in a relationship with a man. Living under the ban, I regularly used encryption to shield my personal information on my laptop and mobile devices from colleagues living in close quarters. However, things could have been even more high stakes for me. If I were a closeted trans woman, while living and working in less open countries—such as Russia, Uganda, and Nigeria—I could face imprisonment, torture, and even death, if exposed. This is why queer and trans people

living in such countries now use encrypted devices, such as Apple's iPhone 5C, to build and maintain its communities while avoiding the dangerous scrutiny of others.

Now, as the U.S. government seeks a novel judicial back door to one phone, all of our encrypted data on most of our mobile devices and personal computers could be compromised by adversaries of queer and trans people who seek to cause us harm. Meanwhile, lawmakers across the country, and the world, are now considering the passage of new laws that would require all technology companies to build such "back doors" into all of our devices.

With the military's lift of the ban on lesbian, gay, and bisexual service members, the Supreme Court's ruling guaranteeing marriage equality, and the increasing visibility and acceptance in society, it is very

While prosecutors and federal law enforcement agencies have a fair interest in obtaining evidence—especially in a mass murder and terrorist attack—we still need to limit how that evidence is collected. In this case, complying with an order threatens to allow nefarious people in organizations to exploit such "back doors," for queer and trans people and everyone else.

We in society all have an interest in privacy. However, I feel that we in the queer and trans community have a substantially stronger interest than the average citizen. We should continue to demand our privacy. We should defend our privacy rights and protections in the digital realm. We need to stay vigilant—especially as a single order by one Federal Magistrate Judge to unlock one phone threatens to change the entire digital world as we know and depend on it.

Why We Need to Support Apple's Battle Against the Feds



easy to forget that the U.S. government has systematically persecuted our community in the past. Not too long ago, we were targeted as "insider threats," as being damaging to military "unit cohesion," as "deviants," and "sex perverts." If history is a guide, it may one day do so again, no matter how unlikely this may look today. Fundamentally, we in the queer and trans community should understand the need for privacy far more than most people, given the varying degrees of discrimination and persecution by our society and our government. Tim Cook, the CEO of Apple, lived as a closeted gay man himself for many years. Surely, his experience means he understands the importance of this as well.

I feel we should support Apple in its fight. But, we should also fight any government or organization that seeks to remove our strongest ability to guard ourselves from discrimination and persecution in the future. This means protecting encryption.

Reprinted from: www.advocate.com

**Chelsea Manning is a former intelligence analyst and trans woman, serving a 35-year military prison sentence. She is an advocate for queer and trans rights and transparency in government and is a frequent contributor to The Guardian.*

Follow Chelsea Manning on Twitter: @xychelsea

No to War! Out Now! Vancouver's Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO) Continues Organizing for Peace...

By Sarah Alwell

250,000 people killed, 1 million more injured, 4.6 million have fled the country and 8 million more internally displaced. This is today's painful and heartbreaking reality on the ground in Syria, 5 years after the alleged "civil war" began. We often hear about this "civil war", but what we don't often hear about is the significant role of outside intervention by Western imperialist countries, mainly the United States, NATO and Canada. A role so significant, including support and funding of so-called Syrian rebels and a bombing campaign in Syria, that one could argue it is a 'civil war' utterly fuelled and incited by these Imperialist powers.

Discussion and Planning

Because of this ever deepening crisis in Syria today, on February 2nd Vancouver's antiwar coalition Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO) invited participants to come together in discussion for a free public forum titled "Who is Responsible for Civil War in Syria?"

The forum began with a film showing of "Syria: Between Iraq and a Hard Place" by renowned documentary film maker Saul Landau. This film gave a stunning picture of what life was really like in Syria before the war, past the mainstream media spin. It explained the history of US government threats against Syria starting over a decade ago. The film provides a vital context to the many years of foreign manoeuvring and meddling in Syria's internal affairs that have led up to the crisis in Syria today.

Following the film was a talk by forum presenter Alison Bodine, the chair of Mobilization Against War and Occupation, who spoke about the current situation in Syria and the Middle East including questions like "What exactly is the Government of Canada's role in the current crisis?" and "How must the antiwar movement respond?"

Back to Streets

The antiwar actions continued on February 20th as MAWO organized its monthly antiwar rally and petition drive in front of the Vancouver Art Gallery. Accompanied by colorful banners that read "US & Saudi Arabia Hands Off Yemen!" and "US/UN/Canada/France/NATO Out of the Middle East and North Africa Now!" dozens of participants shared their antiwar message with supportive passers-by. This message included calls to stop war and occupation, end Islamophobia, and for Canada to open its borders to refugees now! Protesters also collected a number of signatures on a popular petition against US and Canadian intervention in Syria.

Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO) is asking all peace loving people to add their voice to that of people fighting against U.S.-led interventions, wars and occupations around the world and join them at

2 FREE COMMUNITY EVENTS

13 YEARS AFTER THE MARCH 2003 INVASION OF IRAQ... THE WORLD DEMANDS AN END TO WAR!

US STOP BOMBING LIBYA! US HANDS OFF LIBYA!
US STOP BOMBING YEMEN, SYRIA & IRAQ!
SAUDI ARABIA HANDS OFF YEMEN, SYRIA & IRAQ!
US/UN/CANADA/France/NATO:
NO TO WAR ON SYRIA, IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN!
TURKEY OUT OF SYRIA AND IRAQ!

NO TO ISLAMOPHOBIA! (Equal Rights for Palestine)
STOP BOMBING SYRIA, IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN!
STOP BOMBING YEMEN, SYRIA, IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN!
STOP BOMBING LIBYA!
STOP BOMBING GAZA!
STOP BOMBING NORTH AFRICA!
STOP BOMBING SOUTH AFRICA!
STOP BOMBING EUROPE!
STOP BOMBING ASIA!
STOP BOMBING AUSTRALIA!
STOP BOMBING SOUTH AMERICA!
STOP BOMBING AFRICA!
STOP BOMBING ANTARCTICA!
STOP BOMBING SPACE!
STOP BOMBING THE FUTURE!
STOP BOMBING HUMANITY!
STOP BOMBING THE WORLD!

FRIDAY MARCH 18, 2016

**MONTHLY ANTIWAR RALLY
& PETITION DRIVE**
**VANCOUVER ART
GALLERY**
ROBSON ST. AT HOWE ST
DOWNTOWN VANCOUVER, BC

4PM

MOBILIZATION AGAINST WAR & OCCUPATION

**FREE PUBLIC FORUM
"SPEAKERS/MULTIMEDIA DISCUSSION"**
**BUILDING AN
ANTIWAR MOVEMENT
IN CANADA**
JOE'S CAFE
(IN LARGE NORTH HALL)
1150 COMMERCIAL DR. AT WILLIAM ST
VANCOUVER, BC **7:30PM**

WWW.MAWOVANCOUVER.ORG

their next two antiwar & anti-occupation actions on Friday March 18th. These actions will be marking the 13th anniversary of the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

>>>Antiwar Rally & Petition Drive: 4pm at the Vancouver Art Gallery (Downtown Vancouver)

>>>Free Public Forum "Building an Antiwar Movement in Canada": 7pm at Joe's Café, 1150 Commercial Dr.

For more information please visit website: www.mawovancouver.org

"There Is No Turning Back" – Hugo Chavez U.S. Hands Off Venezuela! – Solidarity with Venezuela in Vancouver Continue...

By Sarah Alwell

While the rain poured down on February 5th, as it usually does in Vancouver, the sidewalk in front of the U.S. Consulate was lit up with the magnificent yellow, red, and blue of the Venezuelan flag as protesters gathered to demand "US Hands Off Venezuela!" This was the 3rd monthly picket action organized by Fire This Time Venezuela Solidarity Campaign in defence of Venezuela and the Bolivarian Revolution, and it certainly was the loudest as energetic chants of "Chavez Vive, Maduro Sigue!" ("Chavez lives, Maduro Continues!") resonated through the busy streets of Downtown.

Speakers at the picket showed a wide range of solidarity and unity with Venezuela and included Alison Bodine, editorial board member of Fire This Time Newspaper, Azza Rojbi, executive member of Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO), Tamara Hansen, coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) and David Whittlesey, a veteran of the civil rights and anti-Vietnam war movement. After the picket action, protesters marched with banners and picket signs in tow to the Vancouver Art Gallery as part of a public outreach campaign to continue their show of support for the Venezuelan people in their struggle against U.S. intervention.

Following that event, on February 28th, Fire This Time participated in a very different but equally important action in solidarity with Venezuela.

An online seminar titled "Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution Webinar: A Revolution Worth Our Solidarity" and organized by Venezuela Strategy Group, brought dozens of activists and participants from across the U.S. and Canada together via the internet to discuss the current situation on the ground in the wake of January's electoral take-over of the legislative branch by the US-backed right-wing opposition and about the social and economic gains made by the people of Venezuela since the election of Hugo Chavez and the necessity to continue to defend those gains.

Featured Speakers included Carlos Ron - Minister Counselor of the Embassy of Venezuela in the US; James Early - former Director of Cultural Heritage Policy at Smithsonian Institution Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage; Gloria La Riva - coordinator of the newly-formed Cuba and Venezuela Solidarity Committee in the U.S.; and Gregory Wilpert - long-time solidarity activist, journalist, sociologist, and author. Throughout the seminar there was an inspiring sense of struggle with a focus on building a stronger and more united movement in Solidarity with Venezuela.

It has now been three months since a U.S. supported right-wing National Assembly took office in Venezuela with a majority in parliament, and on March 3rd 2016, Obama once again unjustly declared Venezuela, and the Bolivarian revolution, to be an "extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States" by renewing an Executive Order against Venezuela that the White House first issued one-year ago. At this time it is more important than ever to come out to the streets and show our solidarity and support for the

IN VENEZUELA THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES!

"THE COUNTERREVOLUTION TRIUMPHED, FOR NOW... UNITY SHOULD BE THE MAIN ADM..."

U.S. HANDS OFF VENEZUELA!

Venezuelan people by continuing to demand "U.S. hands off Venezuela now!"

Match 5th also marked the 3rd anniversary of the passing of Comandante Hugo Chavez, and it is with his example of spirit and unwavering vision for a better world that Fire This Time urges all peace loving people in Vancouver to join them on Friday March 11th, 2016, for two important actions in solidarity with Venezuela:

1>> PROTEST ACTION: U.S. Hands Off Venezuela!
4-5pm, U.S. Consulate (1075 W. Pender St. at Thurlow St. - Downtown Vancouver)

2>> INFO TABLING & PETITIONING:
Maduro is Our President!
5:30-7pm, Vancouver Art Gallery (Robson St. at Howe St. - Downtown Vancouver)

Like Chavez said, "there is no turning back!"
For more information visit: www.firethistime.net

CANADA & ISRAEL, A Friendship Based in Mutual Criminal Interests: War & Occupation

By Noah Fine

On February 22, 2016, Canada's parliament voted overwhelmingly in favor of a Conservative Party motion condemning the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement (BDS). The motion, which was passed 229 in favour to 51 opposed, reads: "That, given Canada and Israel share a long history of friendship as well as economic and diplomatic relations, the House reject the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, which promotes the demonization and delegitimization of the State of Israel, and call upon the government to condemn any and all attempts by Canadian organizations, groups or individuals to promote the BDS movement, both here at home and abroad."

With the sweeping victory of Justin Trudeau and the Liberal Party into majority power in Canada, many people breathed a sigh of relief at the end of Stephen Harper's Conservative ten-year reign. However, the passing of this anti-BDS motion is a good indication that significant issues like the suppression of freedom of speech/expression and flagrant war mongering were not sacked along with the Conservatives in the last election. But should we be surprised?

Canada & Israel

Canada and Israel's relationship began with the illegal theft and occupation of Palestine by the Zionist movement and its imperialist allies, especially Britain, in 1948. Canada was one of the first countries to recognize the legitimacy of the Israeli State and began diplomatic relations in 1949 under the governments of Mackenzie King and Louis St. Laurent, both Liberal Party governments. This could have been seen as an interesting move at the time, as just ten years before the establishment of the State of Israel, in 1939, the government of Canada denied entry to 907 Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi Germany, also while under the Liberal Party leadership of Mackenzie King. The refugees were sent back to Europe where 254 of those refugees were killed in concentration camps.

Over the years both Liberal and Conservative parties continued to foster a strong relationship with Israel.

In the 1967 War Israel captured dozens of Palestinian villages and towns in the West

Bank. The towns were plowed down to make room for Jewish settlers, and the thousands of Palestinians who were removed from their land became refugees. Today on top of the bulldozed and occupied village of Imwas, one of those captured in the war, sits "Canada Park," located outside of "legally" recognized Israeli territory in the West Bank. The Park still exists as a popular tourist destination. It was built with more than \$15 million dollars raised by the Jewish National Fund of Canada (JNF). The JNF is a Canadian Charitable organization, meaning that every donor received a tax break, paid for by the Canadian tax payers.

Harper's Conservative government was a period of a continuing and expanding relationship between Israel and Canada. According to the government of Canada website, in 2014 joint trade tripled to \$1.6 billion with the expansion of the Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement (CIFTA). In that same year, Israel launched a brutal assault on the people of Gaza destroying 20,000 homes and killing more than 2,200 innocent Palestinians. Harper's government gave unequivocal support to Israel at the time, even criticizing the United Nations for asking Israel to show restraint. When UN High Commissioner Navi Pillay criticized Israel's constant 50-day bombing of Gaza, Conservative Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird said her comments were neither "helpful nor reflective of the reality of this crisis."

Where does the NDP Stand?

Although New Democratic Party (NDP) leader Tom Mulcair was not present for the debate on the anti-BDS motion, he wrote the following note leading up to the vote "the Conservatives are proposing to limit what topics Canadians are allowed to debate. That's not the role of government. This goes against our fundamental freedoms and the NDP will be voting against it." That's a tough statement to swallow after Mulcair fired three NDP candidates leading up to October 2015 election due to their sympathy with the Palestinian cause. Morgan Wheeldon, Jerry Natanine and Paul Manly were all disqualified by the NDP



leading up to the election for their comments on Palestine. And when the NDP can't disqualify a candidate outright, they bully them into apologizing as their provincial party did in B.C. in 2009. Former antiwar activist and current NDP MLA Mable Elmore apologized for using the term "Zionists" in an interview about antiwar activism. "At the time, I didn't realize the term was so loaded, that it carried an anti-Semitic meaning in the North American context," Elmore stated. "I wasn't intending to offend anyone and I apologize if anyone was offended by the comments." After that comment the only ones left "offended" are the people of Palestine and millions of their Jewish and non-Jewish supporters around the world.

What is the BDS Movement?

BDS is an international movement of Palestinians, Jews and allies whose aims are, according to their mandate, "To strengthen and spread the culture of boycott as a central form of civil resistance to Israeli occupation, colonialism and apartheid." Their campaign is waged in an attempt to follow the popular and successful boycott of South Africa during the apartheid epoch. Although it is true there are many similarities that can be made between apartheid South Africa and Israel's occupation of Palestine, there are also some big differences. Israel, unlike South Africa is not a real country. Their economy, and therefore survival, is not based on import, export, trade etc. Israel's survival is based on U.S. tax payer's money from the U.S. government and the billions of dollars directly and indirectly being pumped into it by Zionist organizations.

According to the Congressional Research Service's report 'U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel,' in 2015 the Obama administration gave Israel \$3.7 billion, or about \$10.2 million per day, in military aid alone. What this means is that if there was a complete boycott of Israel in all possible departments, Israel would remain capable of continuing the occupation.

BDS has made many positive steps in

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Alexandra Kollontai
1872-1952

Russian revolutionary leader

The following is an excerpt from an article published in the newspaper Pravda one week before the first celebration of the "Day of International Solidarity among the Female Proletariat" on March 8, 1913. In St Petersburg this day was marked by a call for a campaign against women workers' lack of economic and political rights and for the unity of the working class, led by the self-emancipation of women workers.

What is 'Women's Day'? Is it really necessary? Is it not a concession to the women of the bourgeois class, to the feminists and suffragettes? Is it not harmful to the unity of the workers' movement?

Such questions can still be heard in Russia, though they are no longer heard abroad. Life itself has already supplied a clear and eloquent answer.

'Women's Day' is a link in the long, solid chain of the women's proletarian movement. The organised army of working women grows with every year. Twenty years ago the trade unions contained only small groups of working women scattered here and there among the ranks of the workers party... Now English trade unions have over 292 thousand women members; in Germany around 200 thousand are in the trade union movement and 150 thousand in the workers party, and in Austria there are 47 thousand in the trade unions and almost 20 thousand in the party. Everywhere – in Italy, Hungary, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Switzerland – the women of the working class are organising themselves.

There was a time when working men thought that they alone must bear on their shoulders the brunt of the struggle against capital, that they alone must deal with the 'old world' without the help of their womenfolk. However, as working-class women entered the ranks of those who sell their labour, forced onto the labour market by need, by the fact that husband or father is unemployed,

IWD International Women's Day



working men became aware that to leave women behind in the ranks of the 'non-class-conscious' was to damage their cause and hold it back. The greater the number of conscious fighters, the greater the chances of success. What level of consciousness is possessed by a woman who sits by the stove, who has no rights in society, the state or the family? She has no 'ideas' of her own! Everything is done as ordered by the father or husband...

Socialists in every country began to demand special protection for female labour, insurance for mother and child, political rights for women and the defence of women's interests.

The more clearly the workers party perceived this second objective vis-a-vis women workers, the more willingly women joined the party, the more they appreciated that the party is their true champion, that the working class is struggling also for their urgent and exclusively

abolish all privileges deriving from birth or wealth. For the woman worker it is a matter of indifference who is the 'master' a man or a woman. Together with the whole of her class, she can ease her position as a worker.

Feminists demand equal rights always and everywhere. Women workers reply: we demand rights for every citizen, man and woman, but we are not prepared to forget that we are not only workers and citizens, but also mothers! And as mothers, as women who give birth to the future, we demand special concern for ourselves and our children, special protection from the state and society.

The feminists are striving to acquire political rights. However, here too our paths separate.



International Women's Day demonstration led by Alexandra Kollontai and other organizers in Russia. March 8, 1917

For bourgeois women, political rights are simply a means allowing them to make their way more conveniently and more securely in a world founded on the exploitation of the working people. For women workers, political rights are a step along the rocky and difficult path that leads to the desired kingdom of labour.

The paths pursued by women workers and bourgeois suffragettes have long since separated. There is too great a difference between the objectives that life has put before them. There is too great a contradiction between the interests of the

woman worker and the lady proprietress, between the servant and her mistress... There are not and cannot be any points of contact, conciliation or convergence between them. Therefore working men should not fear separate Women's Days, nor special conferences of women workers, nor their special press.

Women's Days and the slow, meticulous work undertaken to arouse the self-consciousness of the woman worker are serving the cause not of the division but of the unification of the working class.

Let a joyous sense of serving the common class cause and of fighting simultaneously for their own female emancipation inspire women workers to join in the celebration of Women's Day.

female needs.

But, some will say, why this *singling out* of women workers? Why special 'Women's Days', special leaflets for working women, meetings and conferences of working-class women? Is this not, in the final analysis, a concession to the feminists and bourgeois suffragettes?

Only those who do not understand the radical difference between the movement of socialist women and bourgeois suffragettes can think this way.

What is the aim of the feminists? Their aim is to achieve the same advantages, the same power, the same rights within capitalist society as those possessed now by their husbands, fathers and brothers. What is the aim of the women workers? Their aim is to

Obama's Visit to Cuba, What's at Stake?

*By Arnold August**

The issue of human rights in the context of Cuba-US relations has erupted once again on the eve of Obama's visit to the island on March 21 and 22, 2016. In Geneva on March 2, the Deputy Secretary of State of the US State Department, Antony J. Blinken, issued the National Statement at the Human Rights Council. He dealt with several countries that are always the target of US accusations of supposed human rights violations, such as China, Russia and Venezuela.

As is always the case, Cuba was also singled out. Concerning this country, the Blinken Statement indicated:

In Cuba, we are increasingly concerned about the government's use of short-term detentions of peaceful activists, which reached record numbers in January. We call on the Cuban government to stop this tactic as a means of quelling peaceful protest. President Obama will make a historic visit to Cuba in a few weeks and will emphasize that the Cuban people are best served by an environment where people are free to choose their political parties and their leaders, express their ideas, and where civil society is independent and allowed to flourish.

The Cuban response

The head of the Cuban delegation to the Council, Pedro Núñez Mosquera, who is General Director of the Division on Multilateral Affairs and International Law at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cuba, was not at all intimidated by the superpower. Since 1959, Cuba has had a history of defending its interests in all international forums. Cuba is a small country, but with a voice that is respected internationally. In Geneva, Núñez Mosquera turned the tables on the US by calling it out for the gross violations of human rights that the

US itself is responsible for, including racial discrimination, police violence, persecution of immigrants and torture that takes place in the Guantánamo prison. In addition, he insisted, the US is responsible for violations of the human rights of the Cuban people because of the blockade against the island.

Blinken's statement on behalf of the Obama administration is notable for being yet another gross attempt at interfering in the internal affairs of Cuba. However, let us leave this aside for the moment and deal with his accusations against Cuba.

Peaceful activists and protests

He charges Cuba of temporarily arresting "peaceful activists" as part of a strategy of "quelling peaceful protest." The term "peaceful" is arbitrary. In the US, for example, when African-Americans and their allies in the US revolt against police assassinations of African-Americans, they are called violent and are referred to as thugs. However, in January and February 2016, when armed right-wing

respectfully refers to them as "opposition leaders." However, they were responsible for violent terrorist acts against the constitutional order in which 43 people were killed and over 800 injured. The US, therefore, is far from being a reference point in dealing with peaceful or violent protests.

In the Cuban context, the individuals to which the US refers cannot be seen as merely "peaceful protesters." Mainly, they are directly or indirectly paid mercenaries of the US. Their publicly stated goal is regime change in Cuba. The very essence of the objective is to smother the Cuban Revolution as the basis of Cuban sovereignty. This means turning Cuba once again into a de facto neo-colony of the US, making it safe for capitalism. Cuban independence, in turn, is the safeguard of the Cuban Revolution, whose mission is to strive continuously to develop and improve its socialism.

Thus, the reactionary change that the "peaceful protesters" seek is a rupture from the Cuban constitutional order to satisfy

US interests. Therefore, by its very nature, this goal is violent, as it translates into a breach from the road that the overwhelming majority of Cuba people have taken since 1959. Whether, at the time of their detention, these individuals were or were not violent is irrelevant. Cuba has every right to defend itself from the coordinated efforts of the US-funded "opposition" and mainstream media to foment regime change in Cuba.

Choosing political parties and leaders

The Blinken Statement also highlights one of the goals of Obama's March 21 and 22 visit to Cuba, that being to emphasize "that people are free to choose their political parties and their leaders." The US is blinded by the US-centric notion of political parties and elections. The US has its "multi-party" political system and the Cubans have an altogether different system.

The Cuban process resulted from the



Cuban children pose with big smiles & victory signs! Cuba provides free education - a fundamental human right

individuals in Oregon occupied a federal agency, the government and media politely labelled the occupiers "protesters" and "militia." The latter term "militia" provided legitimacy to these armed people. They were never categorized in any derogatory way as being violent.

Turning south to Latin America, the same double standard applies. In the National Statement, the US State Department demands the release of two imprisoned pro-American individuals in Venezuela. It

Revolution. An essential feature of this Revolution stems from the tradition emerging out of the second half of the 19th-century revolutionary wars of independence against the Spanish colonizers. An essential ingredient was – and is – the need for one unifying political force to lead the Revolution.

The Communist Party of Cuba was born out of the combined political forces that were sacrificing their lives to defeat the bloody, US-backed Batista dictatorship in the 1950s. The Cubans chose their leading political force and indeed their leaders during the 1950s until the Triumph of the Revolution in 1959. Furthermore, in that period and since, millions of Cubans have chosen to be part of that Revolution, rather than to stand on the sidelines “choosing leaders” according to some preconceived-US notion of leadership. The role of this unifying political force is entrenched in the Cuban Constitution, which people at the grass roots contributed to drafting. In 1976, in a referendum on the Constitution, 98% of the electorate voted and, of those voters, 97.7% approved of the Constitution.

The Cuban political system also affords other formal legal channels so that Cubans can vote for their leaders. Once again, it does not conform to the US-centric notion. Cuba is not based on the presidential system as it exists in the US and other countries.

On Cuban leadership: Raúl Castro

Let us take the example of Raúl Castro based on a very summary description of some of the steps leading to his election as President of the Councils of State and Ministers. In the last 2013 general elections, he was elected as Deputy to the Cuban National Assembly of People’s Power (Parliament) from a municipality in his home province of Santiago de Cuba. While there is only one candidate per seat, a candidate needs at least 50% of the popular vote.

In the 2013 general elections, Raúl Castro garnered 98.04% of the vote. This was one of the highest among the 612 Deputies who were elected.

Once the elections are over, in order to elect leaders, the Deputies have their input on an individual basis and in private. Resulting from this consultation, a list of candidates to the Council of State, including the President of this body, is

drawn up. The newly elected legislature meets, as it did, for example, on February 24, 2013. It chooses among the Deputies in a secret ballot vote. It is beyond the scope of this article to cover more of the details and analysis of how this and the general elections occur. However, this is how Raúl Castro was elected as President of the Council of State (and therefore also of the Council of Ministers). This role is carried out as a function of being a member of these collegial and collectives Councils. These bodies are in turn accountable to Parliament.

On Cuban leadership: Fidel Castro

Furthermore, a country that has forged itself in Revolution has its own standards on leaders. Let us take another example. Fidel Castro is known as the Historical Leader of the Cuban Revolution. In the Preamble to the Constitution approved by the population, the Magna Carta recognizes the “leadership of Fidel Castro.” Whether it is in the Constitution



Fidel Castro, the Historic Leader of the Cuban Revolution and Cuban President, Raúl Castro

or not, the fact is that he is the Historical Leader of the Cuban Revolution and is recognized as such by the overwhelming majority of Cuban people.

These cursory facts regarding Cuba’s leaders do not seem to be of interest to the US ruling circles.

“Presidential systems” of Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador

In any case, Washington’s ideological/political pressure for people choosing their leaders is arbitrary. For example, from a superficial standpoint, one can say that Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador all have “presidential systems.” Nevertheless, the US does not really recognize as presidents the directly elected leaders, including Nicolás Maduro, Evo Morales and Rafael Correa. Rather, the US is continuously engaged in regime change in Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador to overthrow these elected leaders and everything they

stand for. The US thus has an erratic stand with regards to leaders that is manipulated to serve its own purposes.

Cuban “civil society”

In Geneva, the US also rolled out its requirement for Cuba that “civil society needs to be independent.” The US, according to its own formula and in the context of Obama’s upcoming visit to Cuba, recognizes the “members of civil society, including those who certainly oppose the Cuban government’s policies.” One could ask the US, if it succeeds in further winning over those individuals to US policy, which is a foregone conclusion, is it not a fact that they will no longer be independent? On the contrary, they will be even more dependent on the US than they were before Obama’s visit. According to the US, if Cuban civil society works in harmony with the Cuban political process, then they are not independent. However, if they act in accord with the US, they receive bona fide credentials as being independent.

Improving the Cuban political system

Considering the above-mentioned themes with regard to the Cuban political system, this to not to say that there is no room for improvement. However, the Cubans who debate this issue do not need advice from the US. It is up to Cubans to bring about changes. For example, on August 14, 2015, during the joint press conference in Havana given by Secretary of State John Kerry and Cuban Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cuba Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, a reporter asked Bruno Rodríguez a question about democracy in Cuba. He responded:

I feel very comfortable with Cuban democracy, and at the same time there are things that could be further perfected, as we are actively working on today with the processes related to the updating of our socialist economic and social model.

The necessity to ideologically and politically revamp the political system is part of their life-and-death struggle to bring about transformations in Cuba’s socioeconomic system despite the crippling US blockade and other factors that are domestic in nature. This is, and will be, Cuba’s own path.

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*Source: Global Research
<http://www.globalresearch.ca/obamas-visit-to-cuba-and-human-rights/5512021>*



"BILL

**IS ONE OF
THE MOST
UNPOPULAR
LAWS IN THE
HISTORY OF
CANADA"**



A TALK BY THOMAS DAVIES

AT THE "REPEAL BILL C-51" CONFERENCE ON FEBRUARY 28, 2016 IN VANCOUVER, CANADA

The setting I'm used to speaking about Bill C-51 in is every Monday at different skytrain station and busy transit points. I'm there with a lot of people who are at this conference - holding signs, holding sign-up sheets and petitions at our weekly picket actions. I've actually brought all the petition signatures we've got, almost 2000 signatures collected just on the streets across the Lower Mainland. So I'm used to speaking on a megaphone at a skytrain station for 20 to 25 minutes at a time. So this 10 minute time limit is going to be a bit of a struggle for me, but let's see how it goes.

What I wanted to say is that there are at least 311,000 signatures on an online petition to repeal Bill C-51. To my knowledge that is the most signatures that's been on any petition in Canadian history. Granted it's an online petition, which is a new technological advancement, but it's very obvious that this is one of the most popular petitions in the history of Canada. This means Bill C-51 is one of the most unpopular laws in the history of Canada.

We are reaffirmed of this every single Monday - if we had any doubts during the week about whether people still care about Bill C-51, whether they still think it's a good idea to Repeal Bill C-51. That's the benefit of being able to go out every week. The public reminds us that, "Yes we

think this is important." If you look at our online photos, when we're trying to take a group photo at the end of the pickets there's always someone trying to sign out petition as we're trying to take the photo. It really doesn't end.

People care about Bill C-51 because it challenges their fundamental rights and they can identify with that. The other thing is that Bill C-51 is such a broad attack on our human and our democratic rights that unfortunately or fortunately the benefit of it is that it attacks all of us. It attacks everybody, so everybody feels attacked. And that a very big broad base of people to work for and from to repeal Bill C-51. So our challenge is to mobilize that already established base of people who are against Bill C-51, who already came out to the two huge National Days of Action. We had over 70 actions in one day across Canada against Bill C-51. So we've got to mobilize that. We need more education of course, but there already is a base for us to work from.

International Perspective

The other thing I think we need to understand is the context of Bill C-51. Not just the national context, but the international context. We need to know that it's not just Canada that has these so-called anti-terrorism laws. The United States, France, England, Australia - they

all have these same laws. They even name the same thing, "Anti-Terrorism Bill 2015" They are all countries that are actively engaged in war and occupation abroad, and austerity and cutbacks at home. All countries that are concerned about opposition as the realities of poor and working peoples' lives, of the majority of peoples in these countries lives, becomes worse and worse and worse. They become more and more concerned about what we are going to do in response to those things.

So we need to understand and grow strength from the fact that we are part of a movement across Canada, but also part of a movement across the world of people who are fighting back and defending their human rights and their dignity.

How Do We Move Forward?

So, what do we do? That often is a question that we get from people at the skytrain stations. They say, "I'm against this thing, I've signed your petition, I see you guys, I've heard you guys, so what am I going to do?" The first thing I say is, "You can grab a sign, you can become part of this!" For us here today, many of whom who are people who are already actively engaged against Bill C-51, I say that we need to have a continuous campaign against Bill C-51. I think that's why the Working Group to Stop Bill C-51 has been able to do what we've been doing - because

it's a campaign. Every week we have an action - it's connected. But it's not just the picket action, it's the e-mail I send every week to remind people about it, it's the social media campaign, it's the signs, it's the banners, it's the brochures - all of these things come together. The weekly pickets are the backbone, but it's part of an organized effort.

It's definitely an organized effort that brought Bill C-51 to Canada, an organized campaign of fear and intimidation and Islamophobia, that was implemented by the Harper Conservatives and is continued today. There are campaigns against our rights. They are smart enough to use campaigns against us, we should be smart enough to use campaigns against them. When you have limited resources, like generally grassroots organizations do, we need to be as effective as possible. So our actions need to be connected and they need to be coordinated.

We Need to Keep Up the Fight

Our success is through our organizing. I remember doing a tour through the United States right before Barack Obama was elected, speaking about Cuba. A lot of the places we went people were talking about how they weren't doing much organizing any more. They were doing a lot of fundraising for Obama, and they were hoping that this was going to fix things. I went back the next year and there was a lot of disappointed people who felt like they had wasted a lot of time. They thought that Obama was going to be the solution for them, and had put all of their eggs in this one basket. We can't do that, and we don't have time to waste waiting for Justin Trudeau to fix Bill C-51 for us. The power of the initial movement against Bill C-51 was in how broad based it was, how grassroots it was, how it didn't rely on any specific political party. It relied on people responding to things that

affected their interests, and all the organizations that were there and part of it. So we aren't going to rely on anybody, we are going to rely on the organizing that we still need to keep on doing.

Clear Focus: Repeal Bill C-51

The reason I bring this right now is that we need to be clear in our message as well. I think it's going to be a challenging time right now. There's talk about this public consultation, there's talk about amendments. A lot of loose talk of commitments and non commitments. Our demand still needs to continue to be Repealing Bill C-51. I don't want to get us drawn into a long and never-ending discussion about exactly what kind of amendments are needed, or how exactly this public consultation is going to take place. Public consultation? Fine. But while Bill C-51 remains in effect, while the biggest attack on our free speech and our human rights remains in effect? How are we supposed to have a public consultation while that's going on? That doesn't make sense to me.

They could repeal Bill C-51 if they wanted to. They could have repealed Bill C-51 three months ago when they took office if they wanted to. They need to repeal Bill C-51. Then fine, they can have a discussion about rights and security and how you balance those things. But don't try and tell me that a discussion that happens in the shadow of Bill C-51 is a real discussion. And Ralph Goodale [Minister of Public



Photo credits: Devin Gillan

First panel: Dr. Samir Gandesha, Director of SFU Institute for the Humanities; Micheal Vonn, BC Civil Liberties Association; & Charles Boylan, Coordinator of the Working Group to Stop Bill C-51

Second panel: George Davison, President of the Federation of Post-Secondary Educators (FPSE); Thomas Davies, Working Group to Stop Bill C-51 & Fire This Time Newspaper; & Chief Bob Chamberlin, Vice President of Union of BC Indian Chiefs

security and rights. People in Canada have been telling you for the last year exactly what they want, and exactly how they want to repeal Bill C-51. So stay here, we've been telling you for a year. You don't need to go much farther for that. There has already been a lot of public consultation, unfortunately not organized by the government of Canada. The people of Canada organized the public consultation.

United Effort

My final point is that need to focus on unity. What I said about Bill C-51, about the positive aspect of it being that it was such a broad attack on so many different sectors of society, is that we need to be united and we need to organize that way to defeat Bill C-51. Because the resources supporting Bill C-51 have been pretty large. Our main resource is people. The majority of people who live in Canada, the majority of people around the world, who are either being attacked in wars by these large governments, or who deal with the consequences at home with cuts to social programs because they are spending more money on bombs and missiles. We are a majority and we should act like are a majority. When we act like a majority we will repeal Bill C-51.



recently travelled to London and Paris for advise on national security issues], don't fly a plane to England or to France to talk about what you should do to balance

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TALK BY THOMAS DAVIES "REPEAL BILL C-51" CONFERENCE

So we need to take advantage of the already established opposition. It's not often that Conrad Black, the National Post, or the Globe and Mail newspapers write things that are against things that I am also against. They were all against Bill C-51. We will take advantage of that. 60 business leaders in Canada want to write and open letter against Bill C-51? Great. Margaret Atwood and artists write an open letter against Bill C-51? Even better. So many different sectors of society have come out against Bill C-51. Another example is the Canadian Bar Association, which represents lawyers across Canada.

The opposition to Bill C-51 is so broad, so we have non-traditional allies, but the base of it is poor and working people. The base is regular people, just like you and me, who just want to live their lives with their human rights. We need to understand that no government has the right to take away any of our human rights. Why would we even consider that?

How does the government of Canada say, "Okay, we've got this new Bill where we are giving the secret police the ability to pre-authorize violations of human rights, of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms." They are saying, "We are going to violate this Charter, we just want to pre-authorize it in a secret tribunal." How does that exist? It exists under Bill C-51 today, it existed when the Conservatives implemented it, and it exists today as the Liberal government continues it.

So Bill C-51 relates to all of us. It relates to all progressive organizations – it effects indigenous self-determination, it effects labour unions, it effects educators, it effects civil liberties organizations, it effects a broad spectrum. All of the progressive work we want to do is jeopardized under Bill C-51. So all of the progressive work that we need to do also needs to include working against Bill C-51. Bill C-51 has been and can continue to be the 'big uniter' of people in Canada.

Towards Repealing Bill -51

That last things I wanted to say is that

this is an international campaign. We need to feel the strength of that and we need to understand the context. International in the fact that we are up against some major forces - all these big governments are doing some really terrible things. Also international in the fact that we know that people are united and people are attacked by the same forces and can together work against those same forces. They are trying to chill freedom of speech, they are trying to silence our dissent. We will not let them. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "Our lives begin to end that day that we become silent about things that matter." So we will refuse to be silent about Bill C-51. We will continue to organize the weekly protests, and we invite all of you to join us. We have a real opportunity to defeat Bill C-51. When we defeat Bill C-51 it's going to be a victory for all of the work we are doing which is part of the larger international struggle for our rights and our dignity. It's going to be a victory for all of those fights and for everyone around the world fighting the same things. Thank you very much.

Follow Thomas Davies on Twitter:
@thomasdavies59

Love & Unity – Solidarity with Cuba Continues in Vancouver

By Sarah Alwell

"Patria es Humanidad!" - "Humanity is my Homeland!"...

Those of you who have had the opportunity to travel to Cuba may recognise this phrase, painted in giant letters on a building at the airport in Havana, often the first sight to greet you as you arrive on the Island. A phrase with even more meaning and significance to Cuba as the size of the letters it is painted in, these very words were spoken by Cuba's national hero Jose Marti.

Jose Marti was a 19th century poet, a journalist and a revolutionary who fought for Cuban Independence. His words and his ideas still guide and influence the Cuban people and their revolution today. That's why, on Friday February 12th Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) invited folks in Vancouver to join them for a cultural evening of film, music and poetry at Joe's Café on Commercial Drive, to share and find out more about this historic figure.

The evening got off to a wonderful start with a live musical performance from MX Katracho, bringing vibrant Ranchera music from the soul of Latin America. Some of the powerful poetry written by Jose Marti was also shared by Cuba solidarity and social justice activists, Macarena Cataldo, Shakeel Lochan, Azza Rojbi and Tamara Hansen. Tamara Hansen, coordinator of VCSC and MC for the evening shared some more writings and stories about Jose Marti and his life long struggle for justice. After this opening, the Cuban/Spanish

film "Jose Marti: Eye of the Canary" a biopic that imagines the early years of his childhood and youth, allowed the audience a glimpse of how this young man became such an important and revolutionary fighter in the struggle for a better world.

Of course, as it was approaching Valentine's Day, the event would not have been complete without the handcrafted card making session for the one(s) we love and the little heart shaped candies that dressed



each table. In my mind, there was not a better way to mark that particular holiday than this Cuban cultural film night that brought so much love and solidarity to a rainy Vancouver evening.

End the Blockade of Cuba

Now, Jose Marti was also famous for saying that actions, not words, were the dignity of greatness.

This leads me to my next report because just a few days later on February 17th peace loving people in

Vancouver took their words and poems from Joe's Café out onto the streets of Downtown Vancouver for the 6th monthly protest in front of the US Consulate to demand an end to the US Blockade on Cuba, and the return of Guantanamo Bay to Cuba Now! This monthly picket action is organized by Friends of Cuba Against the Blockade – Vancouver (FCAB) and endorsed by Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC).

Dozens of people marched along the sidewalk in front of the US consulate with Cuban flags and colourful picket signs demanding an immediate and full end to the cruel and inhumane US blockade of Cuba, not excepting the extremely slow and partial changes the US government is currently carrying out.

And they were not alone. Part of the protests program featured a phone call with words of solidarity from activists and members of Ottawa Cuba Connections, who also organize a picket every month on the same day outside the US Embassy in Ottawa! The picket action was wrapped up by FCAB organizers Azza Rojbi and Alison Bodine who encouraged everyone to join them next month, same place same time, to continue fighting together, and with people all over the world, until the blockade on Cuba is lifted once and for all!

Please join Friends of Cuba Against the Blockade – Vancouver at their next monthly picket action on Thursday March 17th at 4pm at the US Consulate in Downtown Vancouver.

To find out more about Friends of Cuba Against the Blockade – Vancouver please visit: www.vanclubavsblockade.org

Follow Sarah Alwell on Twitter: @sarah_alwell

¡Venceremos!

Latin America Remembers Revolutionary Legacy of Hugo Chavez

March 5, 2016 (teleSUR English)

Peace, unity and prosperity was the message on Saturday, on the third anniversary of the death of Hugo Chavez.

President of Venezuela, Nicolas Maduro, was at the Cuartel de la Montaña alongside other Latin American leaders to pay homage to the former leader.

“Today the new history begins,” he said.

Evo Morales, Daniel Ortega and Salvador Sanchez Ceren, the presidents of Bolivia, Nicaragua and El Salvador respectively, among others, gathered at the monument to pay tribute Chavez, who died of cancer three years ago.

“With the union of all it is possible to build new prosperity, that is what we are going to see,” said Maduro in an interview with VTV.

“There is no option, either we achieve it or we achieve it. Peace, union and prosperity that is the message today three years after the parting of Comandante Chavez.”

The president said that in spite of the death of Chavez, his message is still strong.

“I feel Chavez more present and more alive than ever, and he generates more and more love in those who fight for the truth of America,” he added.

Indigenous and Catholic communities joined together in a religious ceremony at the Cuartel de la Montaña, in the revolutionary neighborhood of 23 de Enero, to honor Chavez.

At 4.25 p.m. local time a canon was fired to remember his revolutionary legacy, as his death fell at that time, March 5, 2013.

The day was also marked by international leaders, with current and former Latin American presidents paying tribute to Chavez.

Evo Morales, President of Bolivia

“As a human being, (Chavez) was a great support. As a Latin American brother, he was a great integrator. As a politician, he was an anti-imperialist who taught us to lose our fear in the face of the empire, to raise our voice to the empire with no fear.”

Rafael Correa, President of Ecuador

“You can't even imagine all the propaganda that they made against Chavez, full of slander, when in reality Chavez was an extraordinary human being. Despite being a soldier, at the end sometimes he was very naive because he trusted people so much. He was too good-natured, he gave opportunities



We Will Win!

Cuba develops biopharmaceuticals to treat cancer

February 4, 2016 (Granma)

Cuba currently has a total of 28 drugs registered, or in various stages of investigation, for the treatment of cancer, which include therapeutic vaccines, monoclonal antibodies, interferons and peptides, developed in different scientific institutions linked to the country's biotechnology sector.

Dr. Rolando Pérez Rodríguez, of the Center of Molecular Immunology, reported on advances in the sector at the inauguration of the 5th International Seminar and National Workshop on Use and Development of Health Related Industrial Isotope Products, organized by the Center of Isotopes (Centis) and running through Friday, February 5, at Havana's Hotel Riviera. Professionals from various countries, including Italy, Germany, the U.S., Hungary, Spain, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Honduras and El Salvador are participating in the event.

As the specialist noted, these biopharmaceuticals should have an increasing impact over the coming years in cancer treatment, with the aim of turning advanced cancer into a long-term manageable chronic disease, with an acceptable quality of life.

He also highlighted that the planned introduction in the country of advanced imaging equipment in nuclear medicine and oncology will lead to more effective treatment for malignant neoplasms, according to the specific biological characteristics of each tumor.

Also speaking at the opening of the event, Dr. Jorge Cruz Arencibia, director of Centis, noted that beyond import substitution, the gradual installation of a plant to produce yttrium-90 will enhance the use of therapeutic radiopharmaceuticals in the treatment of neuroendocrine tumors, joint complications due to rheumatoid arthritis and hemophilia, pain relief for bone metastases, non-Hodgkin lymphoma, and other types of tumors.

again and again to the opposition, for them to end up once again driving the dagger into his back”

Cristina Kirchner, former President of Argentina

“We remember him, those who know that he left life for a free people, and a legacy of American unity.”

“Hugo Chavez, remembered by his people with enormous and eternal love.”

Daniel Ortega, President of Nicaragua

“Chavez is the reincarnation of Bolivar. Chavez knew that revolutions cannot go alone and depart from the principle of solidarity, and this solidarity goes from sharing bread, up to moral solidarity, they all have an infinite value.”



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educating and mobilizing against the occupation of Israel. Their annual “Israeli Apartheid Week” has gained wide support and backlash even from Justin Trudeau himself who last year tweeted “The BDS movement, like Israeli Apartheid Week, has no place on Canadian campuses. As a @McGillU alum, I’m disappointed. #EnoughIsEnough”.

So Why Such a Tough Stance from Canada’s Parliament?

The BDS movement represents the most symbolic manifestation of the struggle against the Israeli occupation of Palestine in Canada. This parliamentary motion is meant as a warning not unlike “anti-terror” legislation Bill C-51 and other similar measures. They are meant to sow fear into the fabric of society in Canada in order that we don’t take a stance against the interests of the Canadian ruling class and their allies. In other words, so we don’t take a stand and unite with oppressed people around the world, especially the heroic Palestinian people. Motions like this, alongside laws like Bill C-51, threaten us with fear of being targeted or imprisoned for being socially conscious and, even worse, consciously active defenders of human rights and social justice.

What to Do?

The anti-BDS motion passed by Canada’s parliament needs to be protested by all peace loving people in Canada and around the world. Defending the heroic Palestinian people or any oppressed people is a human right that we should not allow to be taken away. If we’ve learned nothing else from the almost 70 years of Palestinian people fighting against the brutal occupation by Israel let it be this: Let’s not give up! Let’s fight for an end to the occupation of Palestine by Israel! Let’s fight for freedom of speech and expression!

Follow Noah Fine on Twitter: @noahfine

Successful Conference Discussing Anti-democratic and Anti-human Rights Bill C-51

By Thomas Davies

The “Repeal Bill C-51!” 2016 Conference in Vancouver was a huge success! Over 70 people came together to discuss how best to move forward to build the movement to repeal this anti-human, anti-democratic law. Over 3 months after the election of Justin Trudeau and the Liberals the hated Bill C-51 continues to be law. Canada’s spy agency CSIS has already admitted to using its secretive new measures, while the Liberals continue to make vague promises of possible amendments and consultations. The conference was an important opportunity to discuss how to move forward in this new context to defend our human and democratic rights.

The Conference was organized by the Working Group to Stop Bill C-51,



which is nearing one year of consecutive weekly actions against Bill C-51. These actions have become well known across Canada, and have served as an important tool for continuing the public campaign to Repeal Bill C-51.

The diverse movement against Bill C-51 was well represented by the six speakers in the two conference panels: “What is the State of Bill C-51 Today?” and “Building the Movement to Repeal Bill C-51. Audrey Siegl also opened the conference with an official Musqueam Welcome.

Micheal Vonn of the BC Civil Liberties Association, Dr. Samir Gandesha, Director of SFU Institute for the Humanities and Charles Boylan, the Coordinator of the Working Group to Stop Bill C-51 formed the first panel. Together they gave a detailed analysis of the origins of Bill C-51, the international crackdown on dissent, and the challenges posed by the the new government of Canada which has promised, “Real Change Now” but definitely has not delivered this on Bill C-51.

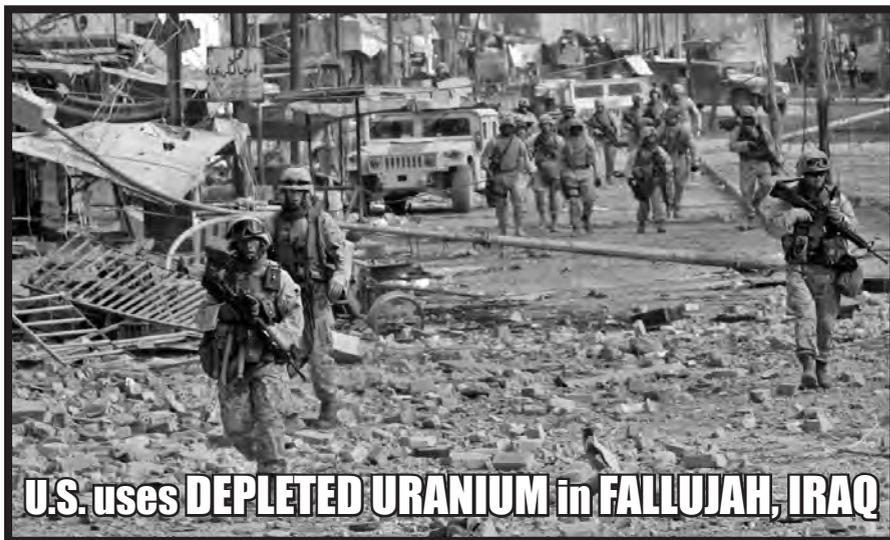
The first workshop was chaired by Jean Ardila of the Human Rights & International Solidarity Committee of the Education & Training Employee Association and the second workshop by Bowinn Ma of Stop Bill C-51 and United We Stand.

Chief Bob Chamberlin, Vice President of Union of BC Indian Chiefs, George Davison, President of the Federation of Post-Secondary Educators and Thomas Davies of the Working Group to Stop Bill C-51 discussed how best to move forward to organize to repeal Bill C-51. The common sentiment was that Bill C-51 is an attack on so many sectors of society, it therefor opens massive possibilities for unity and coordination as the demand to Repeal Bill C-51 is in all of our interests.

Over half the conference was devoted to discussion between all of the participants. There was never a lull in discussion, as people asked questions of the presenters, and also shared their own analysis and ideas on how to move forward

The conference closed with an open invitation by that the Working Group to Stop Bill C-51 is to join its 51st picket action in 51 weeks against Bill C-51. The conference reaffirmed the necessity to continue to educate, organize and mobilize to demand that Justin Trudeau and the government of Canada, “REPEAL BILL C-51!” They must constantly be reminded that not only do people across Canada want this law repealed, but they are also willing to organize against it.

Follow Thomas Davies on Twitter: @thomasdavies59



U.S. uses DEPLETED URANIUM in FALLUJAH, IRAQ

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(This figure did not include the Department of Energy’s nuclear weapons plants and the Pentagon’s civilian contractors.) The Army Corps of Engineers labeled the 100-acre basin at Rocky Mountain Arsenal near Denver, Colorado, which stored waste from the production of nerve gas and pesticides from World War II through the Vietnam War era, ‘the earth’s most toxic square mile.’”

“Today nearly 900 of Environmental Protection Agency’s approximately 1,300 Superfund sites – the suite of waste sites classified as those most hazardous to human and ecological health – are abandoned military bases or facilities or military industrial manufacturing and testing sites that produced weapons, military vehicles, and other military-related products and services.”

In Canada, the indigenous community of Deline in the Northwest Territories has become known as the “Village of Widows”. Located on the shores of Sahtu (Great Bear Lake), men from the community were employed by the Canadian Government in transporting radioactive uranium from the local mine during World War II and for many years after. The ore was sold to the US military and became fuel for the bombs that devastated Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Tons of tailings both radium and uranium mine were also dumped without consent directly into the lake and used as landfill. Most of the men who worked as mine labourers died of cancer, leaving their families and the community devastated.

8. Military “green technologies” are only so they can keep killing

There has been a recent emphasis on reducing military fuel consumption and investment in new “green” military technology. However, we need to be critical of their motivations.

USA Today reported that since the Vietnam War, there has been a 175% increase in the demand for fuel per service member and that the DoD spends about \$15 billion a year on fuel. “Because of our thirst for liquid fuel, we’re not as light and agile as we once were, putting both our Marines and our expeditionary capabilities at risk,” General James Amos, a Marine Corps commandant, said when he launched a new US military energy strategy in 2011.

Sharon Burke, the first ever Assistant Secretary of Defense for Operational Energy further explained in a 2015 interview,

“Importantly, I want to emphasize that the reason the military was originally interested in oil reduction technologies was because of the performance gains. The military isn’t going to cut fuel use because it looks good on paper: They care about the battlefield.”

“Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency currently has a program for a solar drone. It can stay up for months at a time, it’s utterly silent, and it’s harder to detect because it doesn’t have a heat signature. One of the naval research labs is working on small solar drones that move in swarms.”

“In the Asia-Pacific theater, where much of our future lies, we must move a lot of fuel a very long way. Countries, and even non-countries, are going to have precision weapons, and the ability to hit our supply line. We have to cut that vulnerability in the long term.”

Is this really good for the planet, if their “green” technologies are being used to continue and expand their wars and occupations? So they can destroy human life and the planet directly through war before climate change does?

9. War resources could solve climate change

The Iraq war was responsible for 141

million tonnes of carbon releases in its first four years, according to an Oil Change International report. The paper found that projected US spending on the Iraq war could cover all global investments in renewable energy needed to halt global warming trends in the period to 2030.

In 2015, the US had a declared military and defense budget of 601 billion dollars, which is more than the next seven highest spending countries combined. Imagine if all of the financial, human and scientific resources spent on war and occupation worldwide were instead dedicated to projects which ensured a sustainable future. Peace and sustainability are not impossible, but the priorities of imperialist governments are completely wrong. As Martin Luther King Jr. said, “Our scientific power has outrun our spiritual power. We have guided missiles and misguided men.”

10. There’s an opportunity in all of this

We have outlined 9 reasons why war and occupation are a human and environmental catastrophe. There are many, many more. There are also approximately 7.4 billion people who live on this planet, which is 7.4 billion good reasons to save it. There is also only one planet which we currently know of which can support the lives of these 7.4 billion people, which is another great reason not to destroy it! It is increasingly obvious that if we continue down the same path, with the same corporations and the same governments and the same militaries making the same profit drive, anti-human decisions, what’s left of our future is bleak.

We are running out of time, but as the Chinese proverb says, “The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago, the second best time is now.”

Our opportunity lies in our ability as poor and working people to understand, and act on, our common interests. No matter where we live on this planet, poor and working people cannot avoid the wild and negative impacts of climate change. We can also not avoid either the direct murderous consequences of war, or the related fallout from the massive amount of resources pumped into killing machines instead of social programs. The opportunity is when we realize that the majority of people in this world share the common interest of bringing and end to war and occupation, and focusing the massive human and technological resources we have to work in cooperation with each other and this incredible planet we live on. They especially don’t want us to know about this, because when we act like the majority we are, we can make all of this possible. Peace, planet and people before profit!

*Follow Thomas Davies on Twitter:
@thomasdavies59*

"We are realists... we dream the impossible" - Che

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