

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



Fire This Time!

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Pages 20-25



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Repeal Bill C-51!



Page 26

HONDURAS



Page 18

I am Cuba.
I am Fidel.
I am Revolution.

A FIRE THIS TIME SPECIAL SECTION ON CUBA & FIDEL

Pages 8-17



Stop Kinder Morgan!

Page 6



YEMEN

Page 4



SYRIA

Page 2



WAR & OCCUPATION

In SYRIA: An Assessment

!!The Syrian people have a long road ahead of them to rebuild their country and to stop the terrorists which have gained a foothold there. But they can only build a peaceful and democratic future for their country without foreign military intervention, meddling, and support for terrorists.!!

By Nita Palmer

In an important victory for the Syrian people, the Syrian army and its allies have retaken control over Abu Kamal, the last significant stronghold of the Islamic State (ISIS or Daesh) in Syria. This victory has brought within sight an end to the nearly seven years of war which have devastated Syria.

Civil War or Proxy War?

Although the conflict in Syria is referred to as a 'civil war' by the U.S. and their allies, in reality this war has been anything but. Years before fighting broke out, the U.S. government had been fomenting opposition to the Syrian government under the guise of 'democracy promotion'. In 2006, Time Magazine reported that "the Bush Administration has been quietly nurturing individuals and parties opposed to the Syrian government in an effort to undermine the regime of President Bashar Assad", citing a classified document which notes that the U.S. is "supporting regular meetings of internal and diaspora Syrian activists" in Europe and hope that "these meetings will facilitate a more coherent strategy and plan of actions for all anti-Assad activists". The classified document included a proposal to launch covert attempts to influence the 2007 Syrian elections in an effort to remove Assad from power.

As the fighting broke out in Syria in April 2011, the CBC reported that the U.S. State Department acknowledged it had been long funding opponents of the Syrian government, funnelling over \$12 million to anti-government activists and media organizations between 2006-2010. However, many of the groups which the U.S. was funding in the name of 'promoting democracy' were religious fundamentalists who formed the precursors to the terrorist organizations which operate in Syria today.

Syria was indeed facing internal problems in 2011 – as every country does. However, the war did not begin with Syrian government attempts to crush a peaceful grassroots uprising. The U.S. and their allies for years had been building an opposition to the Syrian government, and they seized their opportunity to create an armed conflict in the hopes of bringing down the Syrian government and president Bashar al-Assad.

The U.S. created the conditions for the deadly terrorists



The US-led coalition bombing in Syria (city of Raqqa) has been compared to the American/British carpet-bombing, of Germany's Dresden during World War Two.

of Daesh to come to rise – and then began bombing and sending troops into the country under the guise of stopping the very terrorists they helped to create, all the while attempting to undermine the Syrian government, which was fighting tooth and nail to save their country from the terrorists. The consequences of this war have been devastating, and have turned what was once a modern and rapidly developing country into a living hell.

Sheer Destruction

Over 400,000 people have lost their lives in the war (UN, April 2016) and millions have been forced to flee their homes. The war has created the largest refugee crisis since World War II, with 5.7 million Syrians internally displaced and an additional six million having fled the country, often forced to live in miserable, overcrowded refugee camps or face the dangerous voyage to Europe. Many of those who fled had little time to gather their belongings, never mind say goodbyes to loved ones or put their affairs in order.

For those remaining in the country, conditions have grown more desperate. The Syrian economy has been deeply impacted by the war, with inflation rates skyrocketing. Basic necessities such as food and heating fuel are now out of reach for many Syrians. Between 2011 and 2015, the price of rice – a basic food staple - increased by 723%. In some areas, meat, and even vegetables, are available only on the black market.

Yet as prices have increased, available employment has become increasingly scarce. More than three quarters of working age Syrians are now unemployed or not actively

employed (World Bank, July 2017). As a result, six in 10 people now live in extreme poverty, compared to just over one in 10 in 2007.

The country's infrastructure has also suffered heavy damage. Many roads have been destroyed by bombs and the resulting debris and critical infrastructure for electrical and water delivery has been destroyed. Power generation declined by 62.5% between 2010-2015, resulting in rolling blackouts or sometimes no power at all in regions which once had round-the-clock electricity. Water access has become increasingly scarce, with a 50% decline in access to clean water. According to the World Bank, "Overall, nearly two-thirds of the water treatment plants, half of the pumping stations, a third of the water towers, a quarter of the sewage treatment plants, and a sixth of the wells have been destroyed or partially damaged across Syria".

Lack of running water and sanitation facilities impacts more than just families trying to go about their daily lives; it also means schools cannot function, hospitals cannot provide basic care and businesses are forced to shut their doors.

Healthcare

A few short years ago, Syria's healthcare system was known as one of the best in the region, and was rapidly advancing. Today, much of it has been decimated through physical damage, lack of security, and the utter chaos caused by the war. Nearly half of Syria's healthcare



facilities have sustained damage, and 16% have been destroyed completely (World Bank, July 2017). The World Health Organization estimates that two-thirds of Syria's healthcare professionals have fled the country. In the areas hardest hit by the war, the losses are even greater. In the city of Aleppo – which was a stronghold of terrorist groups for much of the war – just 70 of the city's 6,000 doctors remained as of 2014. In some areas, medical students or even veterinarians are the only ones left to provide medical care.

Of course, the violence and destruction caused by the war has made the loss of medical professionals an even more acute crisis. With the limited resources remaining, doctors and nurses scramble to treat the injured and face new outbreaks of disease due to lack of sanitation facilities and limited vaccination programs. Polio – which was considered eliminated in Syria – has now re-emerged.

As a result of this crisis, many who desperately need care – especially the elderly and those with chronic illnesses – have died. An estimated 200,000 Syrians have died from lack of access to drugs or medical care.

Education and the Lost Generation

Perhaps one of the greatest crises of this war is the lost generation of Syrian children and youth. As of 2009, 93% of Syrian children were enrolled in school. Today Syria has the second worst school enrollment rate in the world, with 2.8 million children out of school (Save the Children, 2014). The World Bank reports that over half of Syria's schools are damaged, and 10% have been completely destroyed. School closures, lack of security, and the trauma of war have deeply affected the ability of Syrian children to receive an education. According to the International Rescue Committee (IRC), most Syrian kids are up to six years behind in literacy and numeracy. Paul Frisoli, the IRC senior technical adviser for education, states, "This is quite alarming... in a country that really promoted the value of education we are now seeing severely low levels of literacy and numeracy, which can have a severe impact on children's learning going forward."

The trauma of war has had a deep impact on this generation of Syrian youth, which UNICEF warns is becoming a 'lost generation'. The trauma and loss of opportunities for each child would be bad enough; but the loss of education for this generation will affect the entire country. An entire generation of Syrian doctors, engineers, teachers, and workers has been put more than half a decade behind in their studies, and will continue to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder throughout their lives. This puts not only the future of the individuals, but the entire country, in jeopardy.

What Has Been Achieved?

The U.S. and their allies in NATO and other countries in the region supported the so-called 'rebels' in the name of defending 'freedom,' 'democracy,' and 'human rights'. When their support for these rebels gave rise to Daesh, the U.S. began bombing the country and sending in troops in the name of fighting terrorism.



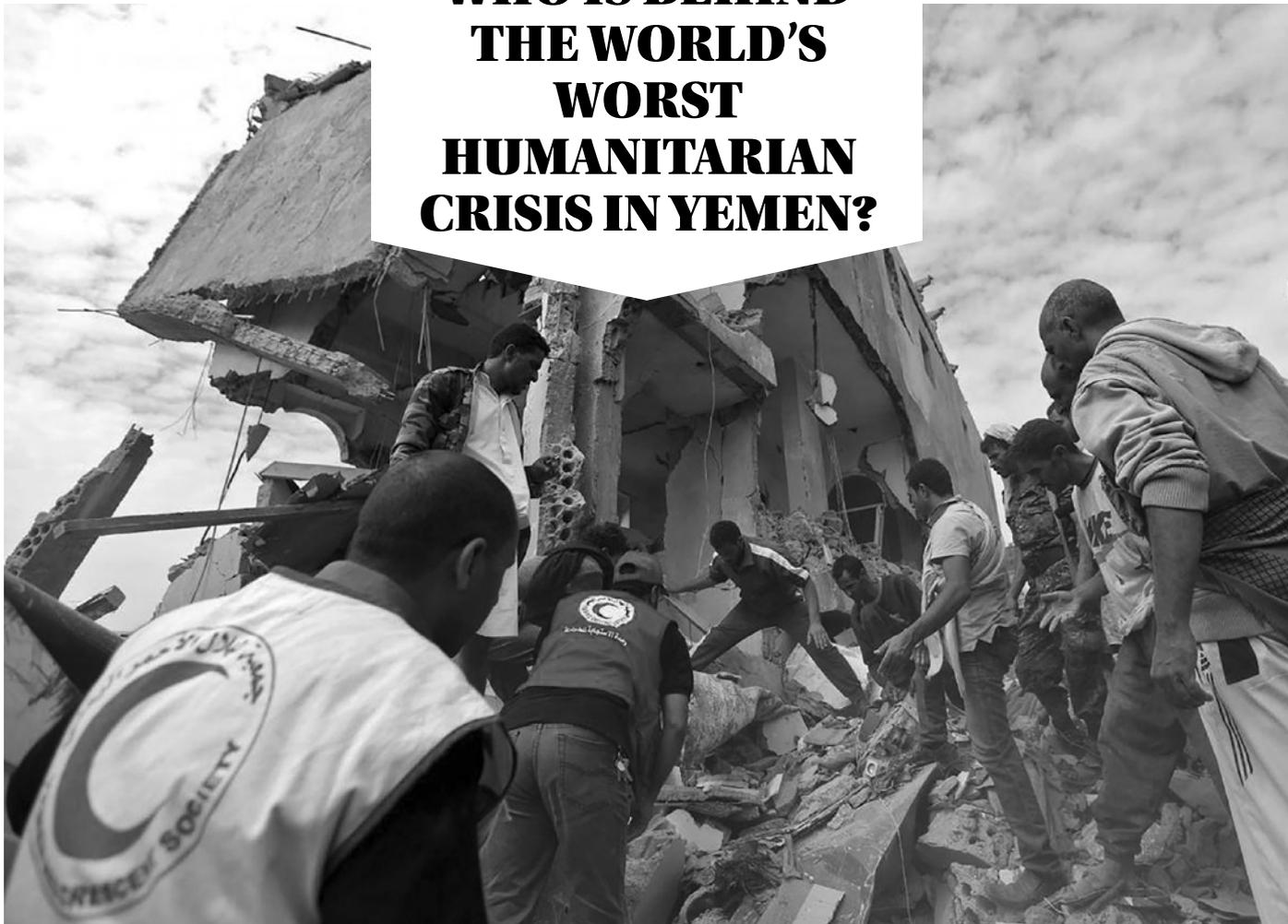
Yet has this war, with all its costs and devastating consequences, achieved a single one of these goals? Far from it. Where are the human rights for those who have lived under the deadly reign of terrorists, forced to comply with their ideology or risk torture or public execution? Where are the human rights for the millions of Syrians who have been forced to flee their homes, their families, and their lives for an uncertain future in squalid refugee camps?

What democracy is there for those who have lived under the terrorists of Daesh or al-Nusra front? Where are the elections and 'freedom of speech' for those who have lived under their control?

What victory has there been over terrorism? The U.S. support for so-called 'rebels'

continued on page 29

WHO IS BEHIND THE WORLD'S WORST HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN YEMEN?



By Azza Rojbi

“Yemen is the country with the most depleted water sources across the globe; Yemen today is also the country with almost the highest level of malnutrition. What has happened in the last two and a half years, throughout Yemen has of course only exacerbated what was already a very sad reality. Today we estimate that every ten minutes a child in Yemen is dying from preventable diseases. The massive and unprecedented outbreak of acute watery diarrhea and cholera this year is no surprise. As you know, close to one million Yemenis have been affected by acute watery diarrhea and cholera.” This is how Geert Cappelaere, UNICEF Regional Director for Middle East and North Africa, described the humanitarian situation in Yemen at a press conference on November 26, 2017.

In the same press briefing, Cappelaere also commented on the arrival of a UNICEF shipment of vaccines to the airport in Sana’a “It was our first delivery of humanitarian supplies to Sana’a airport since the 6th of

November[...] We are very grateful for what we could achieve yesterday. However, this is not enough, much, much more is needed.”

Not once in his statement did Cappelaere mention the reason behind the human tragedy in Yemen, or even the reason why UNICEF and other human rights organization haven’t been able to deliver desperately needed aid to the people and children of Yemen!

The U.S. backed Saudi-led coalition’s war and blockade of Yemen is at the root of this crisis. Saudi Arabia is not only subjecting the people of Yemen to daily bombing and attacks, but is also imposing a land, sea, and areal blockade on the country. It might be true that the Saudi-led coalition has let in some humanitarian aid to Yemen, but it is very little compared to the magnitude of the human tragedy on the ground.

There cannot be an improvement to the life of Yemeni people without a complete stopping of the bombing and war so that humanitarian aid can be properly

distributed and reconstruction efforts can begin. Saudi-led airstrikes have damaged and destroyed homes, schools, hospitals, markets, mosques, universities, roads, and other vital civilian infrastructure. This has left millions of Yemenis without access to basic necessities. The shortage in fuel, food and medicine caused by the Saudi-led blockade on the country has aggravated the humanitarian crisis.

In a news release from November 17, 2017, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), announced that “the water and sewage systems in Hodeida, Sa’ada and Taiz stopped operating because of a lack of fuel [...] As a result, close to one million people are now deprived of clean water and sanitation in crowded urban environments in a country slowly emerging from the worst cholera outbreak in modern times.”

According to the United Nations, more than 20 million people in Yemen, including over 11 million children, are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance. The Saudi government wants us to believe that it is

imposing this war and blockade against the Yemeni people to bring stability to the region and stop the influence of Iran! Why starve millions of poor Yemeni families then? What have the children of Yemen ever done to deserve being robbed of their childhood and future?

How did all of this start?

Saudi Arabia continues to claim that it is fighting to bring back legitimacy and stability to Yemen, and the region, by reinstating Yemen's former president Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi. Hadi's presidential term expired, he resigned, fled the country, and is currently hiding with his masters in Riyadh! Any claim of legitimacy is a farce!

Backed by the United States, the Saudi-led coalition started its bombing campaign on Yemen called "Operation Decisive Storm", in March 2015. Within a month of their indiscriminate bombing campaign, the Saudi government claimed success and announced the end of "Operation Decisive Storm" and the start of a reconstruction effort named "Operation Renewal of Hope".

It has been over two and a half years since the start of the Saudi war on Yemen and there is no end or hope in sight! The so called "Operation Renewal of Hope" has only brought death and destruction upon the Yemeni people and created what the UN and other human rights organization refer to as "the world's worst humanitarian crisis."

The United States government is a direct accomplice of all the atrocities committed by the Saudi government against the people of Yemen. Since day one, Saudi Arabia had the full backing of the U.S. in its bombing campaign. The U.S. military has been providing coalition fighter jets with mid-air refueling and U.S. surveillance planes have been flying over Yemen in intelligence gathering missions. In addition to all of this, the U.S. has provided the Saudi-led coalition with its political support and has continued selling arms and weapons to Saudi Arabia.

In his visit to Saudi Arabia in May 2017, U.S. President Donald Trump signed a \$350 billion arms deal with Saudi Arabia, the largest arms deal in American history! The U.K. has also continued supplying weapons and logistical and intelligence support to the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen.

Neither the U.S., the U.K., Saudi Arabia, or their allies have the well being and



Yemeni children protest against the Saudi-led coalition outside the UN offices in Sana'a

future of Yemenis at heart! Their war and aggression on Yemen is part of the U.S. and its imperialist allies' strategy to expand their hegemony in North Africa and the Middle East to block any possible formation of an independent state in Yemen.

Canada's complicity

The government of Canada has been silent on the Saudi government crimes against the people of Yemen. One wonders why? What does the Canadian government have to hide? Maybe the fact that in 2016 "Saudi Arabia was the largest non-U.S. importer of Canadian-made military goods, receiving \$142 million in exports — nearly 20 per cent of all Canadian military exports." as the National Post Newspaper reported.

In addition, the Trudeau Liberal government is moving ahead with a \$15 billion arms deals to supply Saudi Arabia with light-armored vehicles, or LAVs manufactured by General Dynamics. A CBC News article titled "Let's not kid ourselves, Canada is in the war business", describes the government's eagerness to go forward with this arms deal despite Saudi Arabia's despicable human rights record :

"And so enthusiastic is the Liberal government about its wealthy Arabian partner [Saudi Arabia] that the Canadian military is allowing General Dynamics

to use a military base to test the vehicles Canada is shipping, which come equipped with heavy guns and cannon."

The article continues, "We do know that Canadian-made vehicles were used in the bloody repression of Bahrain's Shia population a few years ago. Whether they are deployed in Yemen is unclear, and it's a safe bet the Canadian government isn't terribly interested in finding out.

We also know that last summer, Canada quietly rewrote the rules governing the export of arms to other countries. No longer do such exports hinge on whether the recipient nation is a human rights abuser. Instead, the Canadian rules now strive to 'balance the economic and commercial interests of Canadian business' with this country's 'national interest.'"

Furthermore, Canada has exported \$11.4

million worth of rifles to Saudi Arabia this year, a 67% increase from last year according to iPolitics.

It becomes clear, that no matter how many millions of dollars Canada pledges to the UN relief efforts in Yemen, the Canadian government can no longer hide its military, political, and ideological support for the Saudi government and its war on Yemen.

U.S., U.K., Canada and Saudi Arabia Hands Off Yemen!

As peace-loving people in Canada and around the world, we must hold governments accountable for their support and complicity with the Saudi government in its brutal war on Yemen. We must unite our efforts and voices internationally to call for an immediate end to the Saudi-led coalition bombing campaign in Yemen and a complete lifting of the blockade imposed on the country.

The Yemeni people have continued their steadfast resistance against the Saudi-led war on their country. Let's join them in their fight for dignity, freedom and sovereignty!

Stop Bombing Yemen!

Lift the Naval, Aerial and Land Blockade on Yemen!

Follow Azza Rojbi on Twitter:
@Azza_R14

KINDER MORGAN WE STILL SAY NO!

They Fight for Profits for a Minority, We Fight for a Planet for Everybody

By Thomas Davies

It has been one year exactly since Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced the Federal government's approval of the Kinder Morgan and Line 3 oil pipelines. In the last 365 days they are unable to present any plan showing how these projects can be built and still meet Canada's lacklustre United Nations climate commitments. Kinder Morgan is also unable to prove that it is anything other than a money-hungry oil giant willing to bully its way through construction. Meanwhile, the opposition and protests to the Kinder Morgan pipeline have proven that we are not going away any time soon!

Their Numbers Don't Add Up

The math remains the same this year as it was last year. The Kinder Morgan pipeline would add 100 megatonnes and Line 3 another 90 megatonnes of global warming causing carbon dioxide emissions. This makes it impossible for Canada to achieve its already lacklustre commitment to reduce national emissions 200 megatonnes by 2030.

Angel Gurria, secretary-general of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, recently called out Canada and the absurdity that it is doing even worse

than the U.S. on reducing emissions.

"It's a bit of a paradox, here," Gurria told the Canadian Press. "In Canada, you have a situation where you have a very strong political will to reduce, but effectively it has not gone on the planned road.

In the United States, you have a government that has pulled out of the (Paris) agreement, but in the United States you are having a reduction in emissions."

Maybe because the political will of the government of Canada does not match its exaggerated promises?

As Grand Chief Steward Phillip wrote when Trudeau originally announced the pipeline approval, "You also must have known that allowing two pipelines to carry over a million barrels a day of additional tar sands production is not the way we are going to solve the climate crisis. No one could truly believe that more oil will help us get off oil. It's too ludicrous to even contemplate."

Oil Spill Catastrophe

There's the overall planetary crisis of climate change, but also the very real and inevitable issue of oil spills either on land or sea. Kinder Morgan's environmental record is ridiculous. A report by environmental advocacy group Stand.earth documented that Kinder-Morgan has been responsible for least 1,800 oil and chemical spill violations since its incorporation in 1997. That's almost two every week for 20 years!

This month at least 200,000 gallons of oil leaked out of TransCanada's Keystone

pipeline in South Dakota. Kent Moeckly, a nearby land owner and member of the Dakota Rural Action Group, summed up the situation, "TransCanada thought it was 200,000 gallons. What we found out working with TransCanada, it could very well be 600,000 gallons."

A recent Maclean's magazine article, "A B.C. pipeline spill would be inevitable. But Who Would Pay?" details some alarming realities. The Exxon Valdez oil tanker spill in Alaska released 260,000 barrels of oil into the North Pacific in March 1989, contaminating a 2,000 km stretch of coastline. The cost of cleanup for Exxon was \$6.3 billion (USD) when adjusted for inflation. They were ordered to pay another \$5 billion in punitive damages, but after 14 court cases, it was forced that down to \$507.5 million.

The supertankers that Kinder Morgan wants loaded at the Westridge Marine Terminal in Burnaby would each carry about 575,000 barrels of oil - more than double the Exxon Valdez spill. They also want to increase tanker traffic in the Burrard Inlet more than 7 times - from five tankers a month to 34.

Who Will Pay?

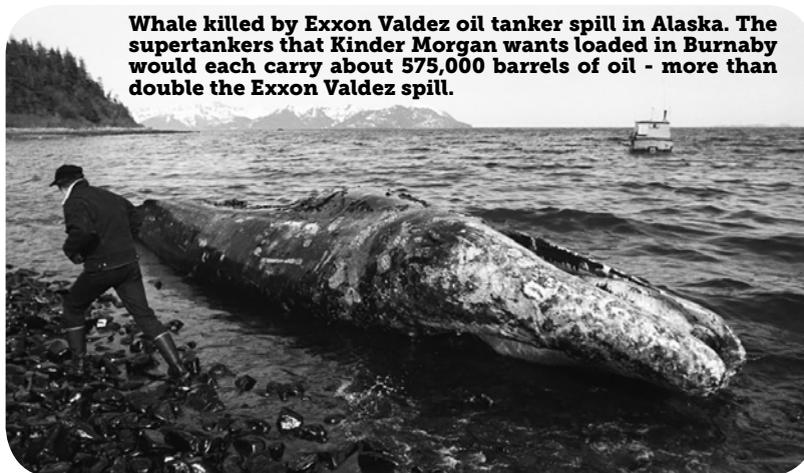
In the event of an oil spill, Kinder Morgan has committed to only comply with the minimum federal requirements, which stipulate they must have a \$1 billion available to cover liabilities related to a land spill. However, if a tanker were to have a spill in the Burrard Inlet or Vancouver Harbour, the vessel owner would be held responsible and expected to pay a maximum of \$1.36 billion.

This is obviously peanuts compared to what is necessary. As Maclean's reported, "The Deepwater Horizon explosion and oil spill on the Gulf Coast in 2010 cost

British Petroleum a total of US\$62 billion. BP, whose net worth is about \$100 billion, paid the full cost out of pocket. Kinder Morgan has nowhere near the financial resources of BP." Most likely we will be stuck with the consequences of a contaminated coastline and spending the billions of dollars required to clean up.

Remember who paid the bill when all the massive

Whale killed by Exxon Valdez oil tanker spill in Alaska. The supertankers that Kinder Morgan wants loaded in Burnaby would each carry about 575,000 barrels of oil - more than double the Exxon Valdez spill.



Monthly protest action in front of TD Banks in Vancouver. Organized by the Climate Convergence coalition. November 18, 2017.



Brandon Gabriel of the Kwantlen Nation speaks at the Climate Convergence "Frontlines Fundraiser". November 25, 2017.

cross, and a recent Climate Convergence fundraiser helped raise money towards the Kwantlen Nation's project to build a Healing Lodge, also on the path of the pipeline proposal.

In short, the local and international consequences of the pipeline are too much and people are responding accordingly. Kinder Morgan has said it costs \$30-35 million for every month the pipeline is delayed, and that they lose an additional \$90 million in profits. They are fighting for

super-profits that benefit a tiny minority. We are fighting for a planet that is necessary for everybody. That's why we must continue to educate, organize, and mobilize to defeat the Kinder Morgan pipeline!

Follow Thomas Davies on Twitter: @thomasdavies59

corporations were in crisis in 2008? We did. Through government bailouts using our tax dollars.

Showdown

So far Kinder Morgan has been stalled and frustrated in starting construction, but they have started expanding their marine terminal behind newly installed massive floating fences topped with razor wire. Meanwhile the cities of Burnaby and Langley have still not approved construction permits despite Kinder Morgan's bullying, and their illegal anti-salmon spawning nets in BC rivers were removed by activists.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Kinder Morgan CEO Ian Anderson, and Minister of Natural Resources Jim Carr, have all had their recent speeches in Vancouver interrupted by activists, and protests at different Kinder Morgan sites are now at least a weekly occurrence. The Climate Convergence Coalition and many other groups have also targeted the TD Bank, which is the largest investor in the Kinder Morgan pipeline with over \$700 million committed. The Secwepmec Nation has completed three of ten tiny houses to be placed on their traditional territories where the pipeline would

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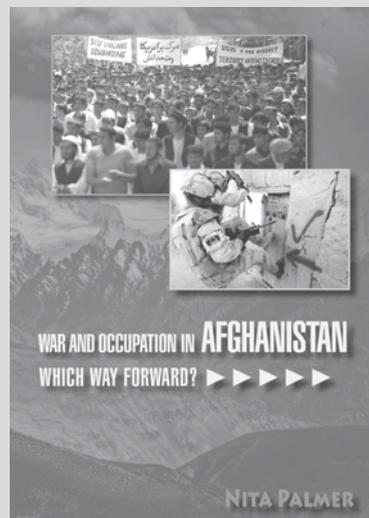
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WAR AND OCCUPATION
IN AFGHANISTAN
WHICH WAY FORWARD?



BY NITA PALMER

Nita Palmer is an author and researcher on the war in Afghanistan. She is a member of the editorial board of Vancouver, Canada-based social justice newspaper Fire This Time.

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By Tamara Hansen

On November 25, 2016 just one year ago, the leader of the Cuban revolution, Comandante Fidel Castro, passed away. He was 90 years old. While Fidel had stepped down as Cuba's president a decade ago, he continued as an important leader for the Cuban revolution through his speeches and reflections until his passing. Today, Fidel's legacy, of over 70 years of steadfast commitment and accomplishments in the fight for a better world, is best illustrated by the way the Cuban people have continued to guard and advance the revolution.

Within days of his passing the mainstream media around the world was speculating about what this would mean for the future of the Cuban revolution. Headlines wondered: "After Fidel Castro's death, can Cuba finally move on?" (CNN Nov 26, 2016); "What's next for Cuba after the death of Fidel Castro?" (AFP Nov. 26, 2017); "The Next Cuban Revolution? What Castro's Death Means for the Country's Opening" (Foreign Affairs Nov 28, 2016); and finally from Miami, "Post-Fidel Castro, what is the future of US investment in Cuba?" (The Real Deal Nov. 30, 2016).

Marking one year since Fidel's passing, the obsession with these questions about a so-called "Post-Castro Cuba" continue. Especially as Cuban President Raúl Castro will be stepping down after the next round of elections in Cuba, which began on November 26, 2017 and will conclude in February 2018.

Imperialist Media and the Fidel Fixation

However, none of this is new. The mainstream media has always had a fascination and fixation on the role of Fidel Castro as the eternal leader of the Cuban revolution. Even when he was fighting in the hills of the Sierra Maestra

mountains from 1956 to January 1, 1959, the imperialist media loved to report that he had been killed or that he was on his deathbed. Yet Fidel Castro outlasted 10 U.S. presidents (it would have been 11 when Obama left office January 20, 2017).

In 2003, as a first-year

The Cuban Revolution Continues Forward!



One Year After the Passing of Comandante Fidel Castro

President Fidel Castro.

Throughout the end of 2002 and beginning of 2003, Fidel Castro stood on the world stage condemning the impending war on Iraq, and exposing the U.S. campaign of lies to justify their drum beat towards war. This was what drew me to learn more about Fidel Castro and the Cuban revolution, and eventually to get involved in the Cuba solidarity movement.

Often while petitioning against the U.S. blockade on Cuba or picketing to demand the freedom of the Cuban 5 held in U.S. jails, we have been asked about

university student, I became involved in the growing movement against the war on Iraq. One country, and one world leader, stood out because of their willingness to demand the United States not attack Iraq and to call the United States an imperialist power to its face, which forever left an impression on me. That revolutionary leader was Cuban



our support for Fidel Castro. Especially before 2006, we were consistently asked questions about what would happen in Cuba once Fidel had passed. Questions such as: ‘Won’t people rise up and demand “democracy” (often used as a tricky euphemism for capitalism)?’ ‘Won’t people flee Cuba?’ Or ‘Won’t the military regime collapse?’ At the same time, those who supported us, and supported Fidel would also ask questions. Theirs were a bit different, raising issues such as: ‘Don’t you think lots of McDonald’s will open in Cuba after Fidel dies?’ or ‘He has been doing so much of the work, won’t the revolution collapse without him?’ While these questions came from a positive place, if we believe Fidel Castro is the only thing holding the Cuban revolution together, it makes it seem as if the Cuban people are brainless sheep, when in fact they are active participants and leaders in their own revolution.

Of course the role of Fidel Castro as the eternal leader of the Cuban revolution will never be questioned by Cubans and those who are fighting and working to push the gains of the revolution forward. However, the Cuban people have fought valiantly alongside Fidel and under his leadership – they are concerned, but ready, to take on the challenges of a revolutionary Cuba after Fidel.

The Cuban Revolution Continues Forward Despite Challenges

Despite the predictions of the collapse of the Cuban revolution without Fidel Castro, it has continued forward. Only two months after Fidel’s passing Donald Trump became the 45th President of the United States. Trump had widely appealed to right-wing voters in Florida, promising to roll back many of the gains made in U.S.-Cuba relations since the

reestablishment of formal diplomatic ties, and the opening of the US and Cuba Embassies under President Obama and President Raúl Castro in 2015. The year promised a rocky start, and yet tourism in Cuba has been growing, by November 2017, 4.2 million tourists have visited the island. Keeping in mind that Cuba is an Island of only 11.48 million people; the number of tourists is expected to reach 4.7 million by the end of 2017.

Some might ask why tourism is so important for Cuba, as in many ways it creates further inequality –with both wealthy tourists flaunting their affluence and by creating disparity within Cuban society itself. However, one must remember that Cuba is not a resource rich nation. This means that tourism is a much needed source of income for the government’s world class initiatives, from which all Cubans benefit, including education and healthcare.

Prensa Latina explains the 2017 UNESCO report (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), which demonstrates that, “Cuba is the Latin American country with the highest rate of educational development and the only one that has met the global objectives of Education for All. Cuba also devotes about 13 percent of its Gross Domestic Product to

education. This year, the funds planned for Education amounted to 8.2 billion Cuban pesos (more than 331 million dollars), equivalent to 23 percent of budgetary expenditures.”

This investment is happening despite the over 50 years of United States blockade on Cuba, which limits many sectors of potential economic and social development. Also, in June 2017, President Trump announced further restrictions to be added to the blockade. These were not as severe as Trump had promised (as he did not eliminate formal diplomatic ties with Cuba) but his announcement was an attempt to slow tourism to Cuba.

This was coupled with the warning given on September 29, by U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, that the U.S. government was cutting its diplomatic staff in Havana and could not guarantee the safety of Americans travelling to Cuba after some apparent “sonic attacks” against their diplomats. The U.S. has released very little evidence to justify their accusations and many experts across the field from Cuba, Canada and the U.S. have written off the so-called “sonic attacks” as unsubstantiated and unscientific claims. However, once again the target is Cuba’s tourism industry and preventing Americans from visiting and developing a better understanding of Cuba.

Added to the provocations by the Trump administration, Cuba’s tourism industry also suffered from the natural disaster of Hurricane Irma at the beginning of September. The Category 5 hurricane battered Cuba for over three days with winds up to 250 kilometers per hour. Despite Cuba’s renowned hurricane planning and preparedness, 10 people lost their lives. This was partially due to the fact that Irma went off its projected course and hit Cuba’s capital, Havana, much harder than expected. In the end, 3/4 of Cubans were without power, much of the islands agricultural crops were wiped out, thousands lost their homes or rooves, and many of Cuba’s best tourist resorts were devastated. Cuba has worked hard to



Above: November 2017, municipal election ballot boxes are guarded by Cuban youth

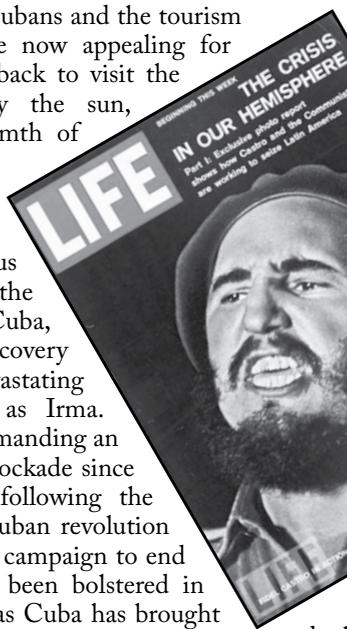
Below: Cuban youth enjoy the best education in Latin America

rebuild both for Cubans and the tourism industry. They are now appealing for tourists to come back to visit the island and enjoy the sun, beaches, and warmth of the Cuban people.

In Cuba and around the world there is a continuous demand to end the U.S. blockade on Cuba, which slows recovery efforts after devastating hurricanes, such as Irma. Cuba has been demanding an end to the U.S. blockade since it was imposed following the triumph of the Cuban revolution in the 1960s. This campaign to end the blockade has been bolstered in the last 26 years, as Cuba has brought this fight to the United Nations with an annual vote in the General Assembly. Each year countries of the world stand together with Cuba to oppose this unjust and inhuman United States' policy. On November 1, 2017 once again 191 countries voted in favor of ending the blockade on Cuba, while only 2 voted against the resolution, the United States and Israel. This demonstrates the isolation of the United States on the world stage, and the need for the government of the U.S. to end its cruel and unjust policy against Cuba.

The Continuity of the Cuban Revolution

In the year since the passing of Fidel Castro there has been no uprising in Cuba, no military revolt, no exodus, no mass protest movement, nor attempted coup d'état – in short, no political instability or crisis. The imperialist



Magazine covers predict crisis and the end of the revolution. Years left to right: 1961, 1965, 1993.

media, rather than recant its decades of lies and deceptions, continues to double down on its forecasts about Cuba's impending doom. For them it seems this story can never die.

However, their conspiracies will soon hold less weight as Raúl Castro will step aside in February 2018, when a new round of elections are complete, to make space for a new president of Cuba. This is based on a change made in the law in 2011, which states that senior elected officials are now only able to serve for two consecutive terms. This will help maintain Cuba's stability in this time of transition between the historic leadership of the Cuban revolution, represented



by Fidel and Raúl Castro, to a new revolutionary leadership. The term limit is also because there is a sense amongst Cubans that the future leaders of the revolution will not have the privilege which was given to Fidel, a sort of blank cheque, based on their faith in the incorruptibility of his leadership.

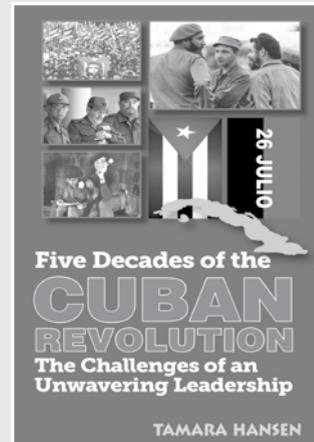
Indeed, national unity has been a

huge priority for many Cubans. Often the National Assembly of Cuba has voted unanimously on issues as a show of confidence in the historic leadership of Fidel and Raúl. However, as an untested younger leadership is brought forward

continued on page 30

Battle of Ideas Press

5 Decades of the Cuban Revolution The Challenges of an Unwavering Leadership



By Tamara Hansen

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 over a dozen times and has written extensively on Cuban politics since 2003.

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At the end of October, 2017, the 7th International Che Guevara Conference was held in Vancouver, British Columbia. The conference was an significant success, with over 350 people attending over three days of program organized by Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) under the theme: "From the Russian Revolution to the Cuban Revolution: The Question of Leadership, Implementing the Socialist Project & Where We Are Today!"

One of the honoured guests and speakers at the International Che Guevara Conference was Tania Lopez Larroque, Consul General of the Cuban Consulate in Toronto, who was in Vancouver for her first time. In her initial contribution to the conference, Tania gave a keynote address on "Fidel & Che's Legacy in Cuba Today," which made an important contribution to the debates and discussions to follow. Her words are below.

For further photos, reports, and videos of the 7th International Che Guevara Conference: www.cheguevaraconference.ca

Good morning. I am excited as well, being my first time here in Vancouver. I have been here in Canada for a year now and I have had the best references of people in Vancouver fighting for Cuba and defending Cuba. So, I am really excited, I am really honoured to be here in Vancouver with you today. Thank you all for the invitation.

When Tamara told me that we were having this conference, and that this morning we will be talking about Fidel and Che's legacy to Cuba, I said that it could be really easy, if I just say "well Fidel and Che's legacy is everything," and that's it. And it would be quite difficult as well, because I have to go further then that and try to explain how we



Cuban students with posters of Fidel on his 90th birthday, August 13, 2016

Fidel and Che's Legacy in Cuba Today

**Che Guevara Conference
Keynote address by Tania Lopez Larroque, Consul General of the Cuban Consulate in Toronto**



face this, how to cover the huge spectrum of Fidel and Che's legacy on every day life in Cuba.

I have some notes here, because with this topic I used to get really passionate, and I don't want to get so passionate and I would like to cover the same course. That is why you will see me looking at the laptop from time to time.

As I have seen in the program, during the next sections, I think you will be going through some detailed aspects about this legacy, not only to Cuba, but to the whole world. These remarks will only propose to make a presentation, maybe to open thoughts and debates of what I think. I am quite sure it will be a really successful event in two sessions.

Che Guevara went through a long journey throughout Latin America, facing the suffering of most of the people in Latin America. Che felt that there are no boundaries among countries or nationalities that define limits to defend principles. Then, he meets Fidel, and found a tangible revolutionary movement that matches with his ideals. He joins him, and they fight together to make it possible. Then, when the Cuban Revolution shows definitive signs of strength, and the conviction not to go back, Che continues spreading its

altruistic principles in other countries. Fidel supports him and later, Cuba itself, will continue Che's path fighting for other countries.

Having said this, this may be a very simple summary of a great chapter of a history that you all know. That leads us to the topic that we are trying to approach today, the common legacy of these two leaders to humanity.

Concerning Cuba, I would say that their main legacy is Cuba itself. The Cuban Revolution and its people today. As we have all seen in the short documentary

materials, since the very beginning, our parents, our grandparents trusted these leaders, when no one knew what was going to happen.

When I was born, everything was a reality. It was easier to trust them. It was easier to know what to believe in; but, our parents, our grandparents, they were the ones that worked along with these two leaders, and they trust them absolutely. They joined them in the nationalization processes of industries, in the literacy campaign, in agricultural reforms, and all those radical changes that were necessary in a revolution aimed to reverse all social damages. And people were always part of the process, I think that is a huge achievement. As Che and Fidel were, and are, part of the people as well.

Another legacy that I would stand for, definitely as one of the main legacies to our country today, is the principle of sovereignty and justice anywhere; solidarity principles as well; what for us means, not giving what you have an abundance of, but sharing what you have. That is something that makes our foreign policy, our everyday life particular and unique and I think that's a legacy from Fidel and Che.

You have seen recently how Cuba, after being hit, dramatically hit, by Hurricane Irma, we are standing up, we are moving forward, and at the same time we are offering our humble support to all those islands that have been hit, and to Mexico because of the earthquake. That is what we

are trying to do. Because Cuba has always received as well, solidarity from many other countries and from many other peoples, like you are doing today.

One of the most, and I think probably sometimes it's not the most recognized legacy when we're talking or reading of history, but I was trying to think of how to detail this. I think our criticism is something that we value as a legacy from Fidel and Che. It's not possible to move forward if you don't recognize what has been done wrong. And Fidel was always really serious on that, and so was Che. Always criticizing what we were supposed to do, what we were going to do, where we did well and where we did not. And with the Cuban people still we are like that. We have a strong criticism of our problems, we try to solve our problems, and that's why we always have, mainly during the last years of these huge recent changes, we have stages in our revolutionary process as you know, and all of them have been characterized by mass consultations, parliamentary debates. That's something that I always find is really important to say, because you will never find the media talking about Cuba and presenting our parliamentary debates as they are. Open, broadcast live, where our members discuss our most common problems. Since transportation, since political decisions or elections. And that's it, that's part of our process, and the population takes part in that.

Another thing that I think is a huge achievement, is not to be conformist, and to try to make it better every time. Sometimes we fulfill, sometimes we don't. But the importance is to keep trying.

To conceive the revolution as a process. Not a final product. Look forward, and preserve continuity through generations. That's why we have the presence of young leaders, parliament members, that are really young, debating as I told you before, every aspect of our economy and society, at all levels and sectors. The reform projects in our economy today, face really new characteristics, which we constantly evaluate on its application and affect on our people. No doubt, that economics and market mark the rhythm of today's world. The challenge is not to let them rule above our human nature. We are urged to preserve our social achievements, and improve them.

Defense of culture, I would say, is one of the most relevant legacies that Fidel and Che have left our country. To defend the culture, not as a slogan. Not only because it is what defines our nationality or any other aspects of someone's singularity, but because culture determines people's capacity to think. To

evaluate what is good and what is not. That is why Fidel always said to the people, we say to the people, "read," we don't tell the people, "believe."

Never deny history, and in the recent years we have acknowledged, I think even more, the importance of this legacy. Never deny history. A few years ago, someone in Havana asked the Cuban people to forget the past. We were then, and we are now, quite sure that it is not possible to do that. It's not possible to move to the future, forgetting about the past. We will continue moving forward, definitely, but we will never put away our history.

Perseverance and resistance. I think these two values, which all over the world people recognize the Cuban people because of this, and they say you are so resistant and you persevere on every fight on every goal you aim for. I always think, if Fidel and Che had given up in front of all of the obstacles that they faced, we wouldn't be here today. Likewise, if the Cuban people would have given up in front of the blockade we have been facing for more than 50 years, this conference today would not have a point of discussion.

leaders become only an image on t-shirts or posters. I think that our commitment is showing the younger revolutionaries and the younger generations, that definitely a better future is possible.

Having said this, I just would like to open this first session by sending our gratefulness and acknowledging your presence here. Thank you for your endless effort for many years and for devoting these spaces and these forums of debate for these topics that the media would never like to talk about, we would never find this on social networks or in the mass media. On behalf of the Cuban people and the Cuban government, thank you and we wish you all of the success in this event. Thank you.

Follow Tania Lopez Larroque on Twitter:
@CGCuba_Toronto



Top: Cuban children with painting of Che Guevara.

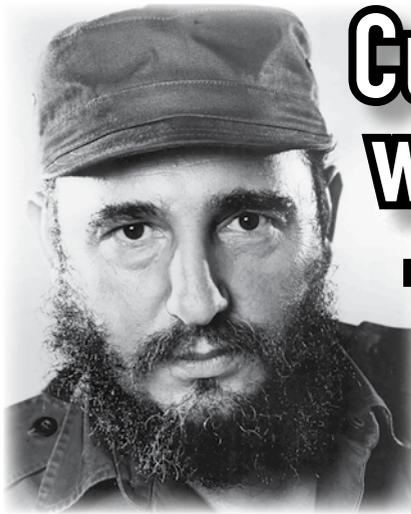


Middle: Cubans commemorate Che Guevara on the 50th anniversary of his assassination

Bottom: Cubans hold photo of Fidel on 58th anniversary of Cuban Revolution



Definitely Fidel and Che have led us with the conviction that the only possible future for our country is to continue building a more sustainable and profitable socialism. We are convinced of that. Che and Fidel remain revolutionary leaders, they are not myths. It is challenge, it is a challenge for all revolutionaries here in Canada, all over the world, to avoid that these



Cuba is poor, but who is to blame - Castro or 50 years of the US blockade?



By Dr. Helen Yaffe

Fidel Castro has often been blamed for the state of the Cuban economy, but the longstanding US embargo and the question of what constitutes real economic success make the issue far more complex than that, argues Helen Yaffe.

Alongside his depiction as a “brutal dictator”, negative reflections on Fidel Castro since his death in November 2016 have focused on his “mismanagement” of the Cuban economy and the consequent “extremes of poverty” suffered by ordinary Cubans.

This caricature is problematic – not only because it ignores the devastating economic impact of the United States embargo over 55 years, but also because it is premised on neoclassical economic assumptions. This means that by stressing economic policy over economic restraints, critics can shift responsibility for Cuba’s alleged poverty on to Castro without implicating successive US administrations that have imposed the suffocating embargo.

This approach also ignores key questions about Cuba after the revolution. Where can medium and low-income countries get the capital to invest in infrastructure and welfare provision? How can foreign capital be obtained under conditions which do not obstruct such development, and how can a late-developing country such as Cuba use international trade to produce a surplus in a global economy which – many claim – tends to “unequal terms of trade”?

It was the search for solutions to the challenge of development that led Cuba’s revolutionary government to adopt a socialist system. They adopted a centrally planned economy in which state ownership predominated because they perceived this system as offering the best answer to those historical challenges.

But the commitment to operate within a socialist framework implied additional restraints and complications, particularly

in the context of a bipolar world. My book, *Che Guevara: The Economics of Revolution*, examines the contradictions and challenges faced by the nascent revolutionary government from the perspective of Guevara’s role as president of the National Bank and minister of industries.

Literature on Cuba is dominated by “Cubanology”, an academic school central to the political and ideological opposition to Cuban socialism. Its emergence and links to the US government are well documented. Its arguments are that the revolution changed everything in Cuba – and Fidel (and then Raul) Castro have personally dominated domestic and foreign policy since, denying Cuban democracy and repressing civil society. Thanks to their mismanagement of the economy, growth since 1959 has been negligible. They simply replaced dependency on the US with dependency on the USSR until its collapse in 1990.

These ideas have also shaped political and media discourse on Cuba. But the problem with this analysis is that it obstructs our ability to see clearly what goes on in Cuba or explain the revolution’s endurance and Cuban society’s vitality.

What did Castro inherit?

Arguments about the success or failure of the post-1959 economy often hang on the state of the Cuban economy in the 1950s. The post-1959 government inherited a sugar-dominated economy with the deep socio-economic and racial scars of slavery. Cubanologist Jaime Suchlicki argues that Batista’s Cuba was “well into what Walter Rostow has characterised as the take-off stage”, while Fred Judson points to structural weaknesses in the Cuban economy: “Long-term crises characterised the economy, which had a surface and transient prosperity.” So while one side insists that the revolution interrupted healthy capitalist growth, the other believes it was a precondition to resolving the contradictions obstructing development by

ending Cuba’s subjugation to the needs of US capitalism.

Following the revolution, Castro set out to bring social welfare and land reform to the Cuban people and to confiscate the ill-gotten gains of the Cuban elite. But when the defeated Fulgencio Batista and his associates fled Cuba, they stole millions of pesos from the National Bank and the Treasury. The country was decapitalised, severely limiting the capacity for public spending and private investments. Wealthy Cubans were leaving the island, taking their deposits and taxes with them. How was the new government going to carry out the ambitious socio-economic reforms without financial resources?

We have to consider these real circumstances at every juncture. For example, when the US embargo was first implemented, 95% of Cuba’s capital goods and 100% of its spare parts were imported from the US – and the US was overwhelmingly the main recipient of Cuban exports. When the Soviet bloc disintegrated, Cuba lost 85% of its trade and investment, leading GDP to plummet 35%. These events produced serious economic constraints on Cuba’s room for manoeuvre.

Putting a price on poverty

Moving on, we should also ask: how are we to measure Cuba’s poverty? Is it GDP per capita? Is it money-income per day? Should we apply the yardsticks of capitalist economics, focusing on growth and productivity statistics to measure “success” or “failure”, while paying little attention to social and political priorities?

Even factoring in its low GDP per capita, the Human Development Index (HDI) lists Cuba in the “high human development” category; it excels not just in health and education, but also in women’s participation and political inclusion. Cuba has eliminated child malnutrition. No children sleep on the streets. In fact, there is no homelessness. Even during the hungry years of economic crisis of

the 1990s, Cubans did not starve. Cuba stuck with the planned economy, and it enabled them to ration their scarce resources.

Yes, salaries are extremely low (as both Fidel and Raul have lamented) – but Cubans' salaries do not determine their standard of living. About 85% of Cubans own their own homes and rent cannot exceed 4% of a tenant's income. The state provides a (very) basic food basket while utility bills, transport and medicine costs are kept low. The opera, cinema, ballet and so on are cheap for all. High-quality education and healthcare are free. They are part of the material wealth of Cuba and should not be dismissed – as if individual consumption of consumer goods were the only measure of economic success.

Operation miracle

The specific and real challenges Cuban development has faced has generated unique contradictions. In a planned economy, with an extremely tight budget, they have had to prioritise: the infrastructure is crumbling and yet they have first-world human development indicators. Infant mortality rates reveal a lot about the standard of living, being influenced by multiple socioeconomic and medical factors. Cuba's infant mortality rate is 4.5 per 1,000 live births, which sits it among first-world countries – and above the US on the CIA's own ranking.

It is not just Cubans who have benefited from these investments. Tens of thousands of Cuban doctors, educators and other development aid workers have served around the world. At present some 37,000 Cuban doctors and nurses work in 77 countries. They generate foreign exchange of some US\$8 billion a year – Cuba's biggest export.

In addition, Cuba provides both free medical treatment and free medical training to thousands of foreigners every year. As a direct initiative of Fidel, in 1999, the Latin American School of Medicine was inaugurated in Havana to provide foreign students from poor countries with six years of training and accommodation completely free. In 2004, Cuba teamed up with Venezuela to provide free eye surgery to people in three dozen countries under Operation Miracle. In the first ten years more than 3m people had their sight restored.

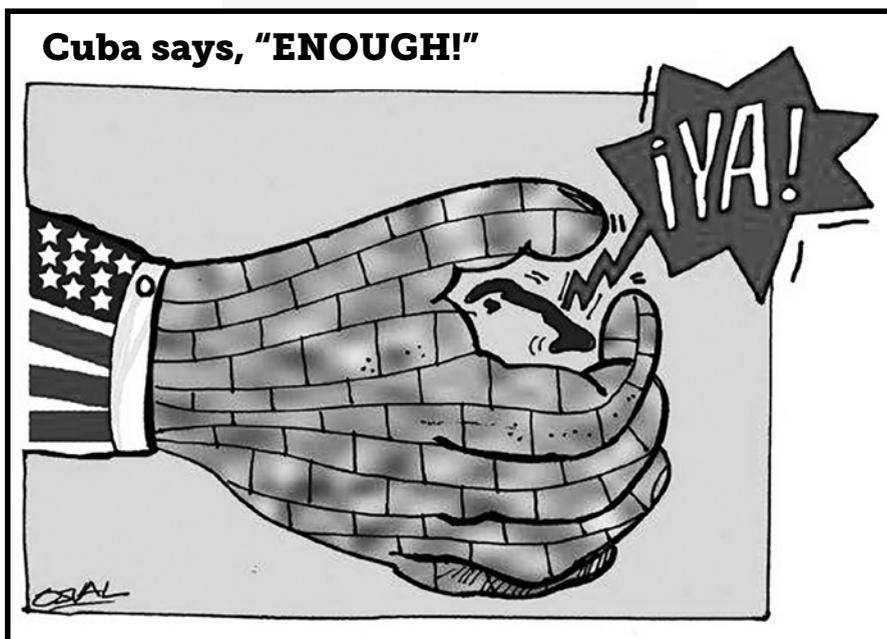
Prohibiting even trade in medicines, the US embargo led Castro to prioritise investments in medical sciences. Cuba now owns around 900 patents and markets pharmaceutical products and vaccines in 40 countries, generating yearly revenues of US\$300m, with the potential for massive expansion. The sector produces more than 70% of the medicines consumed by its 11m people. The entire industry is state owned, research programmes respond to the needs of the population, and all surpluses are reinvested into the sector. Without state planning and investment it is unlikely that this could have been achieved in a poor country.

In the mid-1980s Cuba developed the world's first Meningitis B vaccine. Today, it leads in oncology drugs. In 2012 Cuba patented

its poverty it has known how to share, with all its international programmes. Cuba is the country with the greatest cooperation in relation to its gross domestic product and it is an example for all of us. This doesn't mean that Cuba doesn't have big problems, but it is also certain that it is impossible to judge the success or failure of the Cuban model without considering the US blockade, a blockade that has lasted for 50 years. Ecuador wouldn't survive for five months with that blockade.

Let's consider the embargo: the Cuban government estimates that it has cost the island US\$753.69 billion. Their annual report to the United Nations provides a detailed account of that calculation. That's a lot for a country whose average GDP between 1970 and 2014 has been calculated at US\$31.7 billion.

Yes, Castro presided over mistakes and errors in Cuba's planned economy. Yes, there is bureaucracy, low productivity, liquidity crisis, debt and numerous other problems – but where aren't there? Castro pointed to these weaknesses in his own speeches to the Cuban people. But President Correa is right – to objectively judge Castro's legacy, Cuban development and contemporary reforms today, we cannot pretend that the US blockade – which remains today despite rapprochement – has not shaped the Cuban



the first therapeutic cancer vaccine. The US embargo forces Cuba to source medicines, medical devices and radiology products outside the United States, incurring additional transportation costs.

Sharing economy

Ecuador's president, Rafael Correa, told me in 2009:

“A great example provided by Cuba is that in its poverty it has known how to share, with all its international programmes. Cuba is the country with the greatest cooperation in relation to its gross domestic product and it is an example for all of us. This doesn't mean that Cuba doesn't have big problems, but it is also certain that it is impossible to judge the success or failure of the Cuban model without considering the US blockade, a blockade that has lasted for 50 years. Ecuador wouldn't survive for five months with that blockade.”

A great example provided by Cuba is that in

economy.

Castro almost saw out 11 US presidents since 1959, but he never lived to see the end of the US embargo. New challenges face Cuba, with economic reforms underway and the restoration of relations with the United States. The next step, including for me personally, is to assess the Cuban revolution's resilience in this post-Castro, Donald Trump era.

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Dr Helen Yaffe is an LSE Fellow in Economic History. She is the author of Che Guevara: The Economics of Revolution (2009) and co-lead of the joint LSE Latin America and Caribbean Centre-LSE US Centre project US-Cuba Rapprochement: Building Resilience in a Transition Economy.

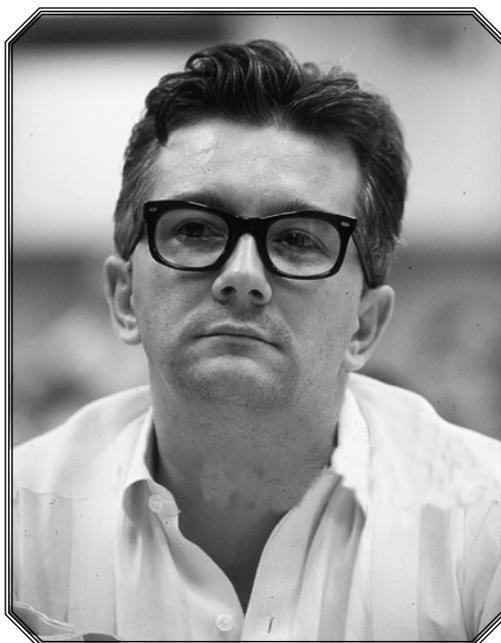
Follow Dr. Helen Yaffe on Twitter: @HelenYaffe

By Thomas Davies

Armando Hart Dávalos, one of the fundamental organizers, thinkers and leaders of the Cuban Revolution of 1959 passed away on November 26, 2017. He leaves behind an incredible legacy that changed the face of Cuba and the world forever. He was 87.

Hart was born June 13, 1930 in Havana. As a young lawyer in the early 1950's, he took a firm position in opposition to the U.S. backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista. He was imprisoned and tortured on several occasions during this period.

Undaunted, he was a founder of the revolutionary July 26 Movement and was part of the original leadership alongside Fidel Castro. He was the primary organizer of the urban underground movement in Cuba, which worked in support of the Rebel Army in the jungle. Every day was marked by acts of astounding heroism and bravery, as the young Cubans worked under constant threat of murder and torture by Batista's forces. He served as National Coordinator of the July 26 Movement, before being arrested and tortured again in 1958. He remained imprisoned until the dictatorship was defeated in 1959.



Armando Hart Dávalos
1930 - 2017

Armando Hart was trusted as Cuba's first post-revolution Education Minister, and served until 1965. His first accomplishment was organizing the incredible recruitment of as many as 100,000 student volunteers who spread out to every corner of Cuba to eradicate illiteracy on the island in a single year. He was also Cuba's Minister of Culture from 1976 to 1997.

He was a member of the Communist Party of Cuba's Central Committee from its foundation in 1965 until 1991, a member of the Council of State from 1976 until 2008 and a deputy to the National Assembly of People's Power, from its constitution until his death. His extensive intellectual work, deeply rooted in the ideas of Marx, Martí and Fidel, is considered among the best of Cuban revolutionary thought.

Armando was the president of the José Martí Cultural Society and in 2010 he was awarded the Order of José Martí, the Council of State's highest honor.

Fire This Time salutes this incredible human being who embodied some of the best qualities of what Che Guevara described as "the New Man." He dedicated his life to doing whatever was necessary to advance the struggle of poor, working and oppressed people, and succeeded in doing so.

#YoVotoVsBloqueo!

From the UN to Vancouver, the World Stands Against the US Blockade on Cuba!

By Janine Solanki

November 1, 2017 marked the 26th annual vote in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on a resolution opposed to the U.S. blockade on Cuba. The vote yet again was overwhelmingly on the side of Cuba, with 191 votes in favour of ending the blockade, and just two countries, the U.S. and Israel, voting against the resolution. This vote comes at a time when the U.S. government and U.S. President Trump are escalating their hostile policies towards Cuba. Despite the good initial steps towards normalizing U.S./Cuba relations made under the Obama administration, the U.S. blockade against Cuba was never lifted and now U.S. President Trump is attempting to roll back the minor progress which was made.

For almost 60 years the U.S. blockade has put an enormous strain on the Cuban economy, with damages totaling over \$1.3 trillion. The blockade makes everything from medicines to school supplies to construction materials difficult and expensive to import. Alongside the cruel policy of the blockade, the U.S.

occupies the Cuban territory of Guantanamo Bay, despite Cuban and international demands to return the territory to Cuba.

In Vancouver, Canada, Friends of Cuba Against the Blockade - Vancouver (FCAB-Van) is organizing in solidarity with Cuba against the U.S. blockade. Every 17 of the month, FCAB-Van holds a picket action in front of the U.S. Consulate. This protest action is growing, and now Ottawa, Montreal and Kiev, Ukraine are holding these coordinated monthly picket actions!

On November 17, Cuba supporters in Vancouver came out in front of the U.S. consulate, holding picket signs reading "End the Blockade on Cuba Now", "Cuba Si! Bloqueo No!" and "Return Guantanamo to Cuba Now!". To open the protest and later to close it, Indigenous elder and activist Eagle Eyes from the Sechelt nation led the protesters in song, acknowledging that the action was being held on unceded and traditional Indigenous territories. In between spirited rounds of picketing and chanting, picket participants heard from local speakers as well as heard a voice message of solidarity from Ottawa Cuba Connections and their picket action in front of the U.S. Embassy.

Next month's picket action on December 17, 2017 will mark three years since Cuban President Raul Castro and U.S. President Obama made historic announcements declaring that the U.S. and Cuba would be normalizing diplomatic relations. Also on that day, the

remaining three of the Cuban 5 heroes were released from U.S. jails and returned home to Cuba, a huge victory for Cuba and for Cuba solidarity activists who had fought for their release for many years. FCAB-Van formed shortly after this announcement, realizing that public opinion and protest were needed to keep Obama to his word and to put pressure on the U.S. Congress to approve ending the blockade. Three years later, the blockade is still in place, President Trump is continuing the hostile policies towards Cuba, and the job of Cuba solidarity activists and supporters is more important than ever!

For more information or to find out about future events, visit www.vancubavsblokkade.org or follow on Facebook and Twitter @NoBloqueoVan

End the Blockade on Cuba Now!
Return Guantanamo to Cuba Now!

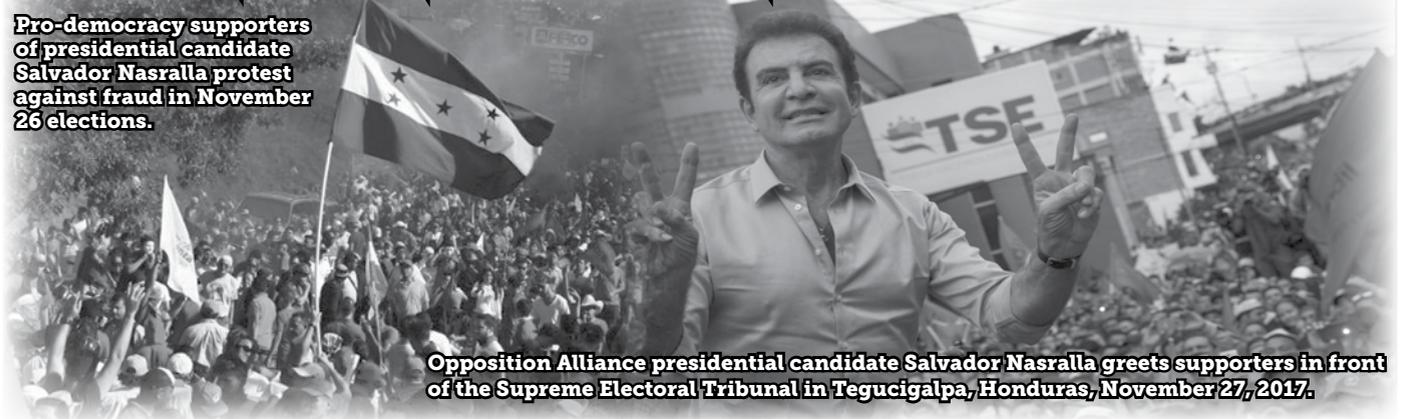


POSTER

POSTER

HONDURANS SEEK REVENGE AT THE BALLOT BOX

Pro-democracy supporters of presidential candidate Salvador Nasralla protest against fraud in November 26 elections.



Opposition Alliance presidential candidate Salvador Nasralla greets supporters in front of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, November 27, 2017.

By Manuel Yepe

The deceptive trickery of the bourgeois governments sponsored by the United States has no limits. A few hours were enough for the candidate for presidential re-election in Honduras, Juan Orlando Hernandez (JOA), to convert, a difference of 5% of the votes counted in favor of his opponent, Salvador Nasralla, into an advantage of for him that would proclaim him reelected President.

JOA had remained in an electoral campaign throughout his government. While locking up, banishing or burying his adversaries, he gave away balls, cardboard houses, bags of beans labeled with his photograph and the logo of his party and other sacramental gifts “blessed with the blood of Christ”. He distributed even 50 Lempiras (equivalent to 2.5 dollars) to all impoverished voters.

Depressing was the surprise for him and his cohort when, at the end of the November 26 vote, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) announced that the candidate of the Free Alliance-PINU, Salvador Nasralla, was ahead of him by 5 points.

A few minutes later, the TSE suspended the count due to “technical problems of the system” and shortly thereafter announced that, in a new calculation, JOA was ahead of Nasralla by 1 point.

Popular protests immediately broke out. Hondurans could not placidly accept the monstrous fraud, which came to fill the cup of humiliation that infringed the nation's coup that ousted President Manuel Zelaya in 2009.

Ollantay Itzamná, a Quechua nomad, son of Pachamama, activist and reflective defender of human rights and of Mother Earth, who also trained as a lawyer, anthropologist and theologian in Western science, has narrated, as a brilliant journalist, an understandable synthesis of the historical background of the phenomenon that is taking place in Honduras.

“The State of Honduras, in its almost 200 years, has been controlled and governed by

an elite of landowners and self-designated conservative and liberal merchants. During the first 100 years, the leaders of Honduras were selected by means of bayonets and shotguns.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the conservatives, to make the pantomime appear democratic, created the so-called Liberal party and, from that, Honduras lived a whole century under National-Liberal bipartisanship.

With the politico-military coup d'état of 2009, the rich in power accelerated their own political destabilization. In fact, the emergence of the social movement that became the National Front of Popular Resistance (FNRP), demanded the return to power of the deposed President Manuel Zelaya. It proposed profound structural changes in impoverished and alienated Honduras.

Beginning in 2012, the FNRP gave birth to the current political party Freedom and Free Refoundation, made up mostly of former liberal politicians, who, in its first participation in elections, took second place in the general elections of 2013, with 37 deputies from the 128 that make up the Congress of the Republic.

But the government of JOA, co-author of the coup d'état, which had control of the legislative and judicial powers, and made political life almost impossible. Not only did it exclude them from parliamentary committees, it systematically blocked their legislative initiatives.

After the 2009 coup, Honduras experienced a systematic “democratic” dictatorship, where illegality, corruption and the dissolution of rights were constantly promoted.

The illegality of the JOA dictatorship reached its maximum expression when, contrary to the provisions of the country's Political Constitution, the presidential candidate announced he was seeking re-election, under the slogan: “The best life for Honduras cannot stop”. Something unlikely in a country that has

conquered the world record as “the country with the most violent war in the world,” and where the level of poverty worsened more than 10% after the 2009 coup.

Dissent or disseminating a critical thinking has been punished with harsh penalties and disrespect for human rights. It took on a murky look with massacres and selective killings, such as the murder of Berta Cáceres which was denounced worldwide.

“In these conditions, Honduras was forced to return to the ritual of the polls. The dictator, believing that his victims were defeated, tried to re-elect himself in the polls claiming to be ‘s anointed by God to continue governing Honduras for Christ.’”

But, the resistance was not dead. It returned to him to ashes and defeated the dictatorship of fear, the dictatorship of the media and the divine dictatorship in which the oligarchy enrolled even the Cardinal, bishops, priests, pastors and apostles, says Itzamna.

At the end of this article, and without knowing the final pronouncement of the TSE, everything seemed to indicate a new confrontation between the oligarchy at the service of US imperialism and the mocked people. It could now be more violent and bloody than in 2009, if the poor don't win electoral vengeance.

Manuel E. Yepe, is a lawyer, economist and journalist. He was 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
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Por Manuel Yepe

La prestidigitación de los gobiernos burgueses patrocinados por Estados Unidos no tiene límites. Unas pocas horas bastaron para que el candidato a la reelección presidencial en Honduras Juan Orlando Hernández (JOA), convirtiera, una diferencia del 5% de los votos computados a favor de su contrario, Salvador Nasralla, en una ventaja suya que lo proclamaría Presidente reelecto.

JOA se había mantenido en campaña electoral durante todo su gobierno. Al tiempo que encerraba, desterraba o enterraba a sus adversarios, regalaba pelotas, casitas de cartón, bolsitas de frijoles rotulados con su fotografía y el logo de su partido y otros regalitos sacramentados y “bendecidos con la sangre de Cristo”. Distribuyó incluso 50 Lempiras (equivalente a 2.5 dólares) a todos los empobrecidos electores.

Deprimente fue la sorpresa para él y su cohorte cuando, al término de la votación del 26 de noviembre el Tribunal Supremo Electoral (TSE) anunció que el candidato de la Alianza Libre-PINU, Salvador Nasralla, le adelantaba por 5 puntos.

Algunos minutos más tarde, el TSE suspendió el conteo por “problemas técnicos del sistema” y poco después dio a conocer que, en un nuevo cálculo, JOA iba delante de Nasralla por 1 punto.

Enseguida estallaron las protestas populares. Los hondureños no podían aceptar plácidamente el monstruoso fraude, que venía a colmar la copa de la humillación que infringió a la nación el golpe de estado que defenestró al Presidente Manuel Zelaya en 2009.

Ollantay Itzamná, nómada quechua, hijo de la Pachamama, activista y defensor reflexivo de los derechos humanos y de la Madre Tierra, formado también como abogado, antropólogo y teólogo en la ciencia occidental, ha narrado, como brillante periodista que es,

una comprensible síntesis de los antecedentes históricos del fenómeno que está teniendo lugar en Honduras.

“El Estado de Honduras, en sus casi 200 años, estuvo controlado y gobernado por una élite de terratenientes y comerciantes auto titulados conservadores y liberales. Durante los primeros 100 años, los dirigentes de Honduras eran colocados por medio de bayonetas y escopetas. A principios del siglo XX, los conservadores, para hacer aparecer democrática a la pantomima, crearon el denominado partido Liberal y, a partir de ello, Honduras vivió todo un siglo bajo el bipartidismo Nacional-Liberal.

Con el golpe de Estado político-militar de 2009, los ricos en el poder aceleraron su propia desestabilización política y, de hecho, el surgimiento del movimiento social que significó el Frente Nacional de Resistencia Popular (FNRP) que exigía la restitución en el poder del depuesto Presidente Manuel

una sistemática dictadura “democrática”, donde la ilegalidad, la corrupción y disolución de los derechos fueron constantemente promovidas.

La ilegalidad de la dictadura de JOA alcanzó su máxima expresión cuando en contra de lo dispuesto por la Constitución Política del país, se autoproclamó candidato presidencial buscando su reelección, bajo el lema: “La vida mejor para Honduras no puede parar”. Algo inverosímil en un país que conquistó la marca mundial de “país sin guerra más violento del mundo”, y donde el nivel de pobreza empeoró más del 10% tras el golpe de Estado de 2009.

Disentir o difundir un pensamiento crítico se ha castigado con duras penas y el irrespeto a los derechos humanos cobró visos dantescos con las masacres y asesinatos selectivos, con el caso del homicidio deBerta Cáceres como el más repudiado mundialmente.

“En estas condiciones, la hondureñidad fue obligada a volver al ritual de las urnas.

El dictador, creyendo que sus víctimas estaban vencidas, intentó reelegirse en las urnas alegando ser el ungido del Dios para seguir gobernando en Honduras para Cristo”.

Pero, la resistencia no estaba muerta. Volvió sobre sus cenizas y derrotó a la dictadura del miedo, la dictadura de los medios de prensa y la dictadura divina en la que la oligarquía enroló hasta al Cardenal,

obispos, curas, pastores y apóstoles, señala Itzamná.

Al cierre de este artículo sin conocer el pronunciamiento final del TSE, todo parecía indicar un nuevo enfrentamiento entre la oligarquía al servicio del imperialismo estadounidense y el pueblo burlado, que pudiera ser ahora más violento y cruento que en 2009, si se desconoce esta venganza electoral de los pobres.

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Zelaya y proponía cambios estructurales profundos en la Honduras empobrecida y enajenada.

A partir del 2012, el FNRP dio origen al actual partido político Libertad y Refundación Libre, conformado en su mayoría por políticos ex liberales, que en su primera participación en comicios, ocupó el segundo lugar en las elecciones generales del 2013, con 37 diputados de los 128 que integran el Congreso de la República.

Pero el gobierno de JOA, coautor del golpe de Estado, tenía el control de los poderes legislativo y judicial, y les hizo la vida política casi imposible. No sólo les excluyó de comisiones parlamentarias, sino que les impidió sistemáticamente sus iniciativas legislativas.

Después del golpe de 2009, Honduras vivió

“Already we can say that Venezuela has much for which to thank the Cuban people.”

Speech by Wilfredo Perez Bianco, Consul General of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, in Vancouver, Canada



From October 27-29, 2017, the 7th International Che Guevara Conference, organized by Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) was held in Vancouver, Canada. Over three days, more than 350 people came together for workshops and discussions on the theme “From the Russian Revolution to the Cuban Revolution: The Question of Leadership, Implementing the Socialist Project & Where We Are Today!”

“Building Solidarity with Venezuela Today” was the workshop given by Wilfredo Perez Bianco, Chief of Mission, Consul General of the

Venezuelan Consulate in Vancouver. Wilfredo has been working for Foreign Affairs for 7 years in the Venezuelan Ministry of Popular Power, and held various positions in public administration institutions in Venezuela between 1999 and 2017. He joined the student struggle from an early age and stands firmly in the defense of the Bolivarian Revolution.

It was a great honour to have Wilfredo Perez at the conference, and the topic of building solidarity with Venezuela and the Bolivarian revolutionary process was an important and informative workshop and discussion. Below is an excerpt from his speech.

For the full speech, and further photos, reports, and videos of the 7th International Che Guevara Conference: www.cheguevaraconference.ca

Good afternoon sisters and brothers. First of all, I would like to thank the Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) for inviting me to participate today in the 7th International Che Guevara Conference. Secondly, I wish to extend a cordial greeting, revolutionary, Bolivarian, Zamorano and Chavista, to all the compañeras and compañeros with whom I share this honorable activity; and of course, to all of you, sisters and brothers, for being present at the time we commemorate the 50th anniversary of the murder of our beloved heroic guerilla, Ernesto Che Guevara, Commander of the Nancahuazú guerrilla army, which was made up of Bolivian, Peruvian, Cuban and Argentine guerrillas. Honor and glory to the memory of all of them! Beacons of our struggle for the definitive liberation of the Patria Grande!

Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to make a brief account of the cooperation and international solidarity between

Venezuela and Cuba.

[...]

Already we can say that Venezuela has much for which to thank the Cuban people. The Cuban mission in our country has brought more than 60,000 doctors, who have given health, life and love to our people. At the Integral Community Medical School of Cuba they have trained more than 23,000 doctors and integral doctors, and in the coming years they will be graduating another 30,000.

Recently, President Maduro announced that Misión Barrio Adentro 100%, Venezuela’s main program in public health, has provided complete coverage in all of the 24 states that make up the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. This program provides free and universal care in primary, preventive and community health. It is run through the Community Integral Health Areas. Venezuela has thus reached second place in the region in this area, after Cuba.

To this we must add literacy, education, culture, sports, just to name some areas where we Venezuelans have to say THANK YOU, and keep learning from Cuba, the world champion of solidarity in Our America and in the world.

I cannot finish my contribution to this important forum, without denouncing once again the new claims of the hegemonic government of the North. The US president, Donald Trump, has threatened a possible “military option” for Venezuela, issued a new Executive Order with new sanctions, this time economic, no longer against high Venezuelan officials, but against the economy and the financial system of all Venezuela.

[...]

President Nicolás Maduro said that the new economic and financial sanctions of the United States against the country “violate international law and the United Nations Charter, and ratify an imperial policy



Revolutionary leaders Hugo Chavez and Fidel Castro



Billboard reading “ALBA Another Latin America is Also Possible”



Doctors in Venezuela working as part of Mission Barrio Adentro

of aggression against Venezuela, Latin America, the Caribbean and the peoples of the South.

At the same time, he expressed that the Bolivarian government will take the necessary measures to that protect the Venezuelan people from aggression. By protecting the national and international finances of the country, with the purpose of breaking the economic and financial blockade.

"Everything they are trying to do against Venezuela will fail and Venezuela will emerge freer, stronger, more independent, we have entered the post-US hegemonic era" - President Nicolas Maduro

"Everything they are trying to do against Venezuela will fail and Venezuela will emerge freer, stronger, more independent, we have entered the post-US hegemonic era," President Maduro said.

Along these lines, on September 22, 2017 the Canadian government, following in the footsteps of the North American empire, announced unilateral and coercive sanctions, against 40 high-level officials of the Government of Venezuela.

In this regard, Venezuela denounced these unfriendly and hostile measures, which seek to undermine the peace and social stability achieved, as well as the efforts made in favor of dialogue and political understanding, to the international community. These sanctions are aimed at undermining the support of members of the international community. Their main purpose is to repudiate the institutions of the Venezuelan State and to continue supporting the violence of the extremist groups which the government of Canada has protected and promoted in international forums. A very

recent example of this was an event called "The Crisis in Venezuela," organized by the Canadian Council for the Americas, and sponsored by powerful mining companies, on Thursday, October 26, in Toronto. There they gave space and prominence to characters such as Mrs. Luisa Ortega Díaz, former Attorney General of Venezuela, fugitive from the Venezuelan Justice, among others.

The Venezuelan government has considered that the government of Canada has established, with these adopted measures, an aberrant subordination to the government of President Donald Trump, with the explicit purpose of overthrowing the constitutional government of Venezuela using an economic weapon as a political weapon. At the same time, Venezuelan government has also considered that this decision of the Canadian government has deeply damaged the bonds of friendship and respect that for years have guided the relations between both countries.

Without signs of rectification or rapprochement, on the contrary, the Bolivarian government felt the need to call its diplomatic representative for consultation, bringing the bilateral relationship to its worst moment. I take advantage of this moment to offer Ambassador Wilmer Barrientos, from this podium, all our solidarity and support, and our desires for the recovery of relations; and with it, a path of dialogue, understanding and integration; the union and peace among our peoples.

We regret that the US and Canada continue in their efforts to promote and manage the so-called "Lima Group", 12 countries in the region, which incidentally, have also just met in the same city of Toronto, which promote and finance the destabilizing actions in Venezuela, whose ultimate goal is to produce a regime change in the country.

[...]

The Venezuelan people, the revolutionary people, the Chavista people, in less than two months, have responded to the imperialist

and pro-imperialist governments in the world with two very valuable electoral victories, amid accusations on top of accusations that there is an iron-fisted dictatorial regime in Venezuela.

[...]

Two electoral processes in two months, where the Venezuelan people exercised their right to free, secret and universal vote, under an automated system considered by international specialists as one of the best in the world. At the same time, on September 26, Venezuela passed its examination before the Human Rights Committee of the UN and that added to the affirmation by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CELAC) that in Venezuela there has not been, and there is not, a humanitarian crisis. And with this the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has dismantled the three large media attacks that the presidents of the Lima Group have used, they themselves are systematically violating the international order, and even worse, leading to the near extinction of the Organization of American States (OAS).

To conclude, I return to the words of President Nicolás Maduro Moros during the Political-Cultural Act of Solidarity with Venezuela, which was held at the Havana Convention Center, within the framework of the XV Political Council of ALBA-TCP, the event I was referring to the beginning of my speech, I quote:

"The space to achieve development is not the OAS, no! It is the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA), it is PetroCaribe, it is the Caribbean, it is Central America, it is South America, that is our path, that is our space, we have no doubt of that.

Venezuela is not going to surrender, Venezuela is going to follow the course of a revolution founded by a giant, Hugo Chávez, and that course will continue beyond threats, beyond aggression! It will not be the OAS and it will not be the pro-imperialist right that cuts the victorious course of a revolution that has been born of history and that has a single destiny through history: victory, victory and victory!"

Long live Cuba! Long live Venezuela!
Long live the ALBA-TCP!
Long live Fidel!
Long live Chávez!
Long live the Bolivarian Revolution!
Long live the Patria Grande!
Long live CHE GUEVARA!

*Follow Wilfredo Perez Bianco on Twitter:
@ConsuladoVenVan*



Session of the National Constituent Assembly; Campaign rally for the revolutionary candidate for Governor in the Venezuelan state of Zulia - October 11, 2017

“Podemos decir que Venezuela tiene mucho que agradecerle al pueblo cubano”



Algunos de los oradores invitados en la 7ma Conferencia Internacional Che Guevara (I-D), el músico cubano Gerardo Alfonso; el cónsul general venezolano en Vancouver, Wilfredo Pérez Bianco; la cónsul general cubana en Toronto, Tania Lopez; el parlamentario cubano, Luis Morlote



Del 27 al 29 de octubre de 2017, se realizó la 7ª Conferencia Internacional Che Guevara, organizada por Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) en Vancouver, Canadá. Durante tres días, más de 350 personas se reunieron para talleres y conferencias sobre el tema “De la revolución rusa a la revolución cubana: la cuestión del liderazgo, la implementación del proyecto socialista y dónde estamos hoy”.

“Construyendo Solidaridad con Venezuela Hoy” fue el taller impartido por Wilfredo Pérez Bianco, Jefe de Misión, Cónsul General del Consulado de Venezuela en Vancouver. Ha trabajado para el Departamento de Relaciones Exteriores durante 7 años en el Ministerio de Poder Popular de Venezuela, y ocupó varios cargos en instituciones de la administración pública en Venezuela entre 1999 y 2017. Se unió a la lucha estudiantil desde temprana edad y se mantiene firme en la defensa de la Revolución Bolivariana.

Fue un gran honor tenerlo en la conferencia, y el tema de la construcción de la solidaridad con Venezuela y el proceso revolucionario bolivariano fue un taller e intercambio importante e informativo. A continuación, hay un extracto de su discurso.

Para obtener su discurso completo, más fotos, informes y videos de la 7ma Conferencia Internacional Che Guevara: www.cheguevaraconference.ca



Presidente de Venezuela Nicolás Maduro y Presidente de Cuba Raúl Castro - 1 mayo, 2015



Un hombre recibe un examen de la vista como parte de la misión milagro



Manifestación de clausura para la votación de la Asamblea Nacional Constituyente, Caracas, Venezuela - 27 de julio de 2017

Buenas tardes hermanas y hermanos. Quiero en primer lugar, agradecer a las Comunidades de Vancouver en Solidaridad con Cuba (VCSC) por invitarme el día de hoy a participar en la 7ª Conferencia Internacional "Che Guevara"; en segundo lugar, deseo extenderles un cordial saludo, revolucionario, bolivariano, zamorano y chavista, a todas las compañeras y compañeros con los que comparto esta honorable actividad; y por supuesto, a todas y todos ustedes, hermanas y hermanos, por estar aquí presentes en momentos en que conmemoramos los 50 años del asesinato de nuestro querido “Guerrillero Heroico”, Ernesto Che Guevara, Comandante de la guerrilla de Ñancahuazú, que estuvo integrada por guerrilleros bolivianos, peruanos, cubanos y argentinos. ¡Honor y gloria a la memoria de todos ellos!, faros de nuestra lucha por la emancipación definitiva de la Patria Grande!

Muchas gracias por darme la oportunidad de realizar un breve recuento sobre la relación de cooperación y solidaridad internacional entre Venezuela y Cuba.

[...]

Ya en el campo material podemos decir que Venezuela tiene mucho que agradecerle al pueblo cubano, la misión cubana en nuestro país ha llevado más de 60 mil médicos, que han dado salud, vida y amor a nuestro pueblo. Han forjado de la mano de la Escuela Médica Integral Comunitaria de Cuba más de 23 mil médicas y médicos integrales, y en los próximos años se estarán graduando unos 30 mil.

Recientemente, el presidente Maduro anunció que la Misión Barrio Adentro 100%, principal programa en salud pública, alcanzó una cobertura total en los 24 estados que conforman la República Bolivariana de Venezuela. El programa propicia la atención a los ciudadanos en materia de salud primaria, preventiva y comunitaria, gratuita y universal. Y se ejecuta en las Áreas de Salud Integral Comunitaria. Venezuela alcanza así el segundo lugar en la región en esta materia, después de Cuba.

A esto hay que sumarle la alfabetización, la educación, la cultura, el deporte, solo para nombrar algunas áreas en donde nosotros los venezolanos tenemos que decir es GRACIAS,

y seguir aprendiendo de Cuba, la campeona mundial de la solidaridad en nuestra América y en el mundo.

No puedo terminar mi participación en este importante foro, sin denunciar una vez más las nuevas pretensiones del gobierno hegemón del norte. El presidente de EE.UU., Donald

"Todo lo que están tratando de hacer contra Venezuela fracasará y Venezuela saldrá más libre, más fuerte, más independiente. Hemos entrado en la época post hegemonía estadounidense" - Presidente Nicolás Maduro

Trump, amenazó con una posible "opción militar" a Venezuela, emitió una nueva Orden Ejecutiva con nuevas sanciones, esta vez económicas, ya no contra altos funcionarios venezolanos, sino contra la economía y el sistema financiero de toda Venezuela.

[...]

El presidente Nicolás Maduro manifestó que las nuevas sanciones económicas y financieras de Estados Unidos contra el país "violan la legalidad internacional y la carta de Naciones Unidas, y ratifican un camino imperial de agresión contra Venezuela, América Latina, el Caribe y los pueblos del Sur".

Al mismo tiempo, expresó que el gobierno bolivariano tomará las medidas necesarias para proteger las finanzas nacionales e internacionales del país, con la finalidad de romper el bloqueo económico y financiero que permitan proteger al pueblo venezolano de la agresión.

"Todo lo que están tratando de hacer contra Venezuela fracasará y Venezuela saldrá más libre, más fuerte, más independiente. Hemos entrado en la época post hegemonía estadounidense", sentenció el presidente Maduro.

En este orden de ideas el pasado 22 de septiembre, el gobierno canadiense, siguiendo los pasos del imperio norteamericano, anunció la imposición de sanciones, unilaterales y coercitivas, contra 40 altos funcionarios del Gobierno de Venezuela.

En este particular, Venezuela denunció ante la comunidad internacional estas medidas inamistosas y hostiles, las cuales pretenden socavar la paz y la estabilidad social alcanzada; así como los esfuerzos adelantados a favor del diálogo y el entendimiento político. Son medidas sancionatorias destinadas a minar el apoyo y acompañamiento de miembros de la comunidad internacional. Teniendo como fin principal desconocer las instituciones del Estado Venezolano y continuar apoyando la violencia de los grupos extremistas que el propio gobierno de Canadá ha protegido

y promovido en foros internacionales; un ejemplo de ello es muy reciente, se acaba de efectuar en la ciudad de Toronto el pasado jueves 26 de octubre, bajo el título "La Crisis en Venezuela", organizado por el Canadian Council For The Americas, y patrocinado por poderosas empresas mineras. Allí le dieron espacio y protagonismo a personajes como la señora Luisa Ortega Díaz, ex Fiscal General de Venezuela, prófuga de la Justicia venezolana, entre otros.

El gobierno venezolano consideró que el gobierno de Canadá estableció con estas medidas adoptadas una aberrante asociación de subordinación al gobierno del presidente Donald Trump con el fin explícito de derrocar al gobierno constitucional de Venezuela usando como arma política sanciones económicas. Al mismo tiempo, consideró en esta oportunidad que esta decisión del gobierno canadiense, dañaba profundamente los lazos de amistad y respeto que durante años han guiado las relaciones entre ambos países.

Sin señales de rectificación o de acercamiento, sino todo lo contrario, el gobierno bolivariano se vio en la necesidad de llamar a su representante diplomático a consulta, llevando la relación bilateral a su peor momento. Aprovecho el momento para brindarle desde esta tribuna al Embajador Wilmer Barrientos, toda nuestra solidaridad y apoyo, y nuestros deseos de que se recupere la sindéresis; y con ello, el camino del diálogo, el entendimiento y la integración; la unión y la paz entre nuestros pueblos.

Lamentamos sí que EE.UU. y Canadá continúen en su empeño de favorecer y mángear el llamado "Grupo de Lima", 12 países de la región, que por cierto, también acaban de reunirse en la misma ciudad de Toronto, que promueven y financian las acciones desestabilizadoras en Venezuela, cuyo fin último es producir un cambio de régimen en el país.

[...]

El pueblo venezolano, el pueblo revolucionario, el pueblo chavista, en menos de dos meses le ha respondido a los gobiernos imperialistas y pro imperialistas en el mundo, con dos valiosísimas victorias electorales, en medio de acusaciones y señalamientos de existir en Venezuela un férreo régimen dictatorial.

[...]

Dos procesos electorales en dos meses, donde el pueblo venezolano ejerció su derecho al voto libre, secreto y universal, bajo un sistema automatizado considerado por los

especialistas internacionales como uno de los mejores del mundo; y al mismo tiempo, el pasado 26 de septiembre Venezuela aprobaba su examen ante el Comité de Derechos Humanos de la ONU; que sumado a la afirmación de la Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CELAC) de que en Venezuela no ha habido ni hay Crisis Humanitaria, se desmontan las tres grandes matrices "mediáticas" que los presidentes del Grupo de Lima han impulsado para atacar a la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, violando sistemáticamente el ordenamiento internacional, y peor aún, llevando a la casi extinción a la Organización de Estados Americanos (OEA).

Para concluir, retomo las palabras del presidente Nicolás Maduro Moros durante el Acto político-cultural de solidaridad con Venezuela, que se efectuó en el Palacio de Convenciones en La Habana, en el marco de la XV Consejo Político del ALBA-TCP, evento del que me refería al inicio de mi intervención, cito:

"El espacio para conseguir el desarrollo no es la OEA, no! es la Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América (ALBA), es PETROCARIBE, es el Caribe, es Centroamérica, es Suramérica, ese es nuestro camino, ese es nuestro espacio, no tengamos duda de eso.

¡Venezuela no se va a rendir, Venezuela va a seguir el curso de una revolución fundada por



Nicolás Maduro se dirige a una multitud de estudiantes en el día nacional de la estudiante universitaria - 21 de noviembre de 2017

un gigante, Hugo Chávez, y ese curso seguirá su camino más allá de las amenazas, más allá de las agresiones! No será la OEA y no será la derecha proimperialista la que corte el curso victorioso de una revolución que ha nacido de la historia y que tiene llamada por la historia un solo destino: ¡la victoria, la victoria y la victoria!

¡Viva Cuba! ¡Viva Venezuela!
¡Viva la ALBA-TCP!
¡Viva Fidel! ¡Viva Chávez!
¡Viva la Revolución Bolivariana!
¡Viva la Patria Grande!
¡Viva el CHE GUEVARA!

*Sigue Wilfredo Perez Bianco en Twitter:
@ConsuladoVenVan*

By Alison Bodine

On November 16, 2017, the Globe and Mail printed the article “Phone-tapping, fear and threats: Why an ex-Venezuelan judge is seeking refuge in Canada.” It was front page news, just shy of 1000 words, all carefully crafted to reinforce the most common and predictable lies and manipulations about Venezuela: government repression, political prisoners, food and medicine shortages, and human rights abuses. In this way, although the article claimed to be telling the story of Ralenis Tovar, a former judge in Caracas, it really wasn’t about her at all. Instead, it was another opportunity for the mainstream media to carry out its job of being a mouthpiece for the government of Canada. Another opportunity to attempt to convince people in Canada that the government of Canada’s attacks and illegal sanctions against the sovereign country of Venezuela are justified.

In the article, described as an “exclusive

interview” by the Globe and Mail, Ms. Tovar makes multiple claims of “threats, stalking and a kidnapping attempt by members of the Maduro regime,” without offering any proof except for her own suspicions and paranoia, prefaced with words like “might be” and “is convinced”. It seems the Globe and Mail is hoping that that reader will just take these claims at face value because, it matched so well with the ongoing narrative that the democratically elected government of Venezuela and President Nicolas Maduro is a violent and repressive dictatorship. It goes right along with the words of U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley, who said, “The crisis in Venezuela today poses a direct threat to international peace and security. Venezuela is an increasingly violent narco-state that threatens the region, the hemisphere, and the world.”

It is the Violent Right-Wing Opposition that Should be Feared

This Globe and Mail article has

deliberately confused terrorist attacks and assaults by Venezuela’s U.S.-backed right-wing opposition with unsubstantiated claims of repression and violence by the government of Venezuela.

Ms. Tovar and her family left Venezuela at the end of July 2017, claiming that “her fear peaked in June when another judge involved in the sentencing of opposition leader Leopoldo Lopez was murdered.” The other judge that she is referring to is Nelson Moncada, who was robbed and murdered after being intercepted by a street barricade built by Venezuela’s violent right-wing opposition.

In fact, Nelson, who was only 37 years old when he was brutally murdered, is one of the over 125 people killed in Venezuela as a result of violent street riots organized by Venezuela’s violent opposition in the four months from April-July 2017. If indeed Ms. Tovar has anyone to be afraid of, it is not the government of Venezuela, as the article would like us to believe, but Venezuela’s violent right-wing opposition.

THE GLOBE AND MAIL’S GOT IT ALL WRONG...



U.S./CANADA HANDS OFF VENEZUELA!

However, Ms. Tovar is seeking refugee status in Canada, which means she is trying to place the blame squarely on the government of Nicolas Maduro.

“Political Prisoners” in Venezuela

Throughout the article the name “Leopaldo Lopez” appears seven times, only three times less than Ms. Tovar’s name. This is no coincidence. Leopaldo Lopez, who is currently under house arrest in Venezuela, is often mentioned by imperialist governments and Venezuela’s right-wing opposition alike, as the



Right-wing protestor in Venezuela demands intervention from the U.S.

main example of “political repression” in Venezuela. His wife has even been given the ear of U.S. President Trump and Prime Minister Trudeau. With all of this talk about Leopaldo Lopez, and claims that his arrest was based on political targeting, there is not a single mention of the fact that Mr. Lopez was tried and convicted of inciting violence and arson, among other crimes. Mr. Lopez’s connection to violent street riots in 2014, which killed 43 people, has been proven in a court of law. Ms. Trovar, who was a judge in Venezuela for 17 years, should be the first to know that. Instead she repeats, “I felt petrified because internally I knew what was the purpose of that warrant, which was to silence a political leader who was an obstacle for President Maduro.”

Leopaldo Lopez is a favorite of the U.S. government and their imperialist allies because he is their own creation. Coming from Venezuela’s capitalist class, Mr. Lopez was educated in the United States at a private high school, as well as the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. After graduating, he went on to become mayor in Chacao, the wealthiest municipality in Caracas. He also founded the right-wing political party “Primero Justicia,” using millions of dollars in funding from the United States government agencies, USAID and the National Endowment for Democracy.

An article by Roberto Lovato from Foreign Policy, also explains just how the campaign for his release from prison has received so much media attention, “helping to power Free Leopoldo in the United States is Republican Party operative Leonardo Alcivar, who ran communications strategies for the Romney campaign and the 2004 Republican National Convention [...] No other element of the Venezuelan opposition has anything resembling the U.S. media operation that López has through Free Leopoldo.”

Government of Canada’s Attacks on Venezuela

On November 3, 2017 the government of Canada announced further sanctions against Venezuela, targeting 52 officials under the “Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act.” In the words of Chrystia Freeland, the Foreign Minister of Canada, “Canada is determined to protect human rights and combat corruption worldwide. Today’s announcement sends a clear message that Canada will take action against individuals who have profited from acts of significant corruption or who have been involved in gross violations of human rights.” Ms. Trovar’s story certainly attempts to bolster the government of Canada’s claims.

The article in the Globe and Mail also reinforces another interventionist policy of the government of Canada against Venezuela when it discusses Ms. Tovar’s “testimony” in front of the Organization of American States (OAS). The government of Canada has been promoting foreign intervention in Venezuela through the OAS, which is a regional body based in Washington, DC, consisting of countries in Latin America, the Caribbean, and the United States and Canada.

The latest manifestation of these attacks on the sovereignty of Venezuela has been a push by imperialist governments to take Venezuela to the International Criminal Court (ICC) for crimes against humanity. This absurd charge is supported by the government of Canada through the voice of Professor Irwin Cotler, who represents Canada on a sham OAS panel that is conducting a so-called investigation into “crimes against humanity” in Venezuela. Mr. Cotler is a legal representative for Leopaldo Lopez, as well as a former Liberal politician who is clearly biased in his views on the government of Venezuela.

This isn’t the first time that Venezuela’s pro-U.S. opposition and their allies tried

to bring the government of Venezuela to the ICC on the ridiculous claim of “crimes against humanity”. Following the 2002 US-backed coup d’état against President Hugo Chavez (which was over-turned by the people of Venezuela in less than 48 hours), right-wing perpetrators of the coup alleged that President Chavez was responsible for injuries and deaths caused by the coup, which they themselves carried out.

The Economic War on Venezuela

Although it is only one sentence, the Globe and Mail article is also sure to



Venezuelan President Maduro meets with students after announcing the creation of the Experimental University of Caracas - November 21, 2017

include another overplayed lie about Venezuela, “Meanwhile, the country is facing triple-digit inflation and desperate shortages of food and medicine.” That’s it, there is not a single word to back-up this loaded sentence, or to explain anything about the origins of shortages of medicine, food, and basic goods in Venezuela.

Since it began with the election of the Hugo Chavez in 1998, the Bolivarian revolutionary process has made tremendous gains for poor, working and oppressed people in Venezuela. In 2012, the United Nation’s Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) recognized Venezuela for reducing hunger and extreme poverty by greater than 50%. In 2015, Venezuela was once again given an award by the FAO for its work towards eliminating malnutrition, hunger and poverty in Venezuela.

These gains have been possible even though Venezuela’s capitalist class continues to control a majority of the production and distribution of food and basic goods in Venezuela. However, when the price of oil began to fall, and Venezuela’s income dropped, the capitalist class and Venezuela’s right-wing opposition seized the opportunity to sabotage

continued on page 31

Different Number, Same Fight

Repeal Scrap

Bill C-51!

+59

By Thomas Davies

It was not too long ago that we, along with tens of thousands more across Canada, were criticizing the Harper Conservative government for pushing through a massive omnibus “national security” law (Bill C-51) which violated our basic democratic rights. Now almost three years later, here we are again, criticizing the Trudeau Liberals for... pushing through a massive omnibus “national security” law (Bill C-59) which would violate our basic democratic rights. We would much prefer celebrating to criticizing, but from a government which ran on a slogan of, “Real Change Now,” the irony is too much to ignore. Most importantly, Bill C-59 is too much of a violation of our democratic and human rights to ignore.

Quick Re-Cap

Originally referred to as the “Secret Police Bill,” Bill C-51 enabled the Canadian government to grant itself unprecedented powers to spy on, disrupt, and detain anyone falling under the purposefully vague and undefined accusation of “supporting terrorism”. It lowers the standard of proof required to detain someone, and also grants Canada’s spy agency, CSIS the power to purposely break laws and disregard human rights. It also allows government agencies to share personal and private information amongst themselves with little justification. These are only some the highlights! The Harper Conservatives justified these drastic measures by saying the government needed new powers to protect people from “radical Jihadi terrorists” - who, despite minimal activity in Canada, were apparently going to be coming any day soon.

Daniel Therrien, Privacy Commissioner of Canada at the time summarized, “The scale of information sharing being proposed is unprecedented, the scope of the new powers conferred by the act is excessive, particularly as these powers affect ordinary Canadians, and the safeguards protecting against unreasonable loss of privacy are seriously deficient.”

Bill C-51 “Light”

Cue the election of a Liberal majority federal

government on a promise that they would prioritize fixing Bill C-51, even though every single Liberal MP voted in favor of the bill at the time. After a first delayed and then rushed, primarily web-based “public consultation” process, a report was written - not by participating members of parliament but - by a public relations firm. The Liberals then introduced their new Bill C-59. While there is some tightening of language and new oversight mechanisms, many of the worst aspects remain and they’ve even added new spying powers! The Canadian Civil Liberties Association summarized Bill C-59’s infringements as follows:

- The newly-renamed Security of Canada Information Disclosure Act still permits far too much information to flow between too many departments, and to further concerning objectives;
- The no-fly list still lacks adequate due process while proposed redress mechanisms remain unfunded;
- The bill fails to reverse the low threshold Bill C-51 set for terrorism peace bonds;
- The preventative detention powers introduced in 2001 are still in place and remain deeply problematic;
- The risk for abuse of CSIS disruption powers is reduced, but the government has yet to demonstrate either their necessity or constitutionality;
- The newly created oversight agencies lack the guarantees necessary to ensure their effectiveness;
- The general risk that our security activities will once again contribute to torture remains; CSE “active” cyber security powers (i.e. offensive hacking) are introduced without a rationale for their necessity or measures to adequately prevent abuse;
- The new bill fails to reverse the erosion of due process C-51 extended in security certificate proceedings; and
- The bill legitimizes troubling conduct, including mass surveillance by our foreign intelligence agency and extensive datamining.

That’s no small list!

Attempt to Fast-Track

Bill C-59 is a massive omnibus bill (omnibus is when many bills are grouped together to be voted on as one, meaning a member of parliament must vote for all or none) which

is almost 150 pages long. Instead of following standard parliamentary procedure, which might have allowed the bill to be separated and have different parts voted on individually, Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale put forward a motion to move the bill directly into the House Public Safety and National Security Committee, without a second reading debate. This effectively limits debate and forces Bill C-59 to be voted on as one massive entity.

What are the Liberals afraid of? They already dragged their heels for more than two years creating this bill, and now all of a sudden they are in a such a rush they can’t debate it fully?

Rotten

The whole thing reeks of bad intentions. There has still been no real explanation or justification for how these “Anti-Terrorism” laws protect anyone, anywhere from terrorism. These laws are drastic and dangerous, and we need to organize with full force to defeat them. What we wrote when Bill C-51 was first introduced to parliament is still fundamentally true:

“It is important to remember that the human rights exercised today in Canada were not handed down benevolently to us by the Canadian government - they were won through the organization of poor and working people in unions and other mass social movements. Canada didn’t even have a Charter of Rights and Freedoms until 1982, 115 years after the official founding of the country! Rights are hard won, and even more difficult to regain after having lost them. Bill C-51 represents the most wholesale attack on human rights in Canada in decades, and must be exposed and opposed at every opportunity. All peace and freedom loving people should join the growing organizing effort demanding, “Scrap Bill C-51!”

The number has changed, but the fight remains the same.

Repeal Bill C-51!
Scrap Bill C-59!

Follow Thomas Davies on Twitter:
[@thomasdavies59](https://twitter.com/thomasdavies59)

FIRE THIS TIME VENEZUELA SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN IN THE STREETS AGAINST CANADA'S SANCTIONS ON VENEZUELA! *U.S./Canada Hands Off Venezuela!*

By Janine Solanki

In Venezuela, the Bolivarian Revolution is charting a new path for its people, favouring equality, education, healthcare and housing for all Venezuelans. Historically, Venezuela, under corrupt regimes, had high levels of inequality. In 1998, the year in which Chavez was elected and the Bolivarian Revolution began, poverty was at 50% of the population, according to World Bank figures. By 2012, after social programs were introduced under the Chavez government, the United Nations Agency for Human Settlements reported Venezuela as having the highest wealth equality in Latin America. While wealth disparity in the rest of Latin America is increasing, in Venezuela it is decreasing.

However, the progress of the Bolivarian revolutionary process has been in the face of great challenges. The former ruling elite in Venezuela is still trying to regain power and turn back the Bolivarian Revolution. This opposition has resorted to violence and an economic war in which essential goods and food are hoarded and factory production is cut. External forces are also part of this economic war on Venezuela, especially the governments of the U.S. and Canada who have imposed sanctions against Venezuela and are part of a dangerous campaign of threats and propaganda aimed at overthrowing the democratically elected government of Nicolas Maduro.

Now more than ever, peace and justice loving people in Canada have the responsibility to demand that the governments of Canada and the U.S. respect Venezuela's sovereignty and end their sanctions. The Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice Venezuela Solidarity Campaign has been organizing monthly actions in solidarity with Venezuela's Bolivarian revolution, and against U.S. and Canadian sanctions and interference in Venezuela's affairs. On November 3rd, activists and supporters gathered for a picket action in front of the U.S. Consulate in Downtown Vancouver. With picket signs reading "USA: Hands Off Venezuela!" and "No Regime Change in Venezuela!" protesters marched and chanted in front of the U.S. Consulate, and

listened to local speakers in between rounds of picketing.

The protest was at an especially relevant time, as on the same day, the government of Canada announced further sanctions targeting an additional 19 Venezuelan officials and public figures, on top of the sanctions Canada imposed on September 22, 2017.

Following the picket action, activists marched up to the Vancouver Art Gallery, and setup an information table at the busy plaza. Many passers-by stopped to get more information at the table and to ask questions about that is happening in Venezuela, and activists approached people walking by to sign on to a petition demanding Canada end its sanctions on Venezuela.

The Fire This Time Venezuela Solidarity Campaign is committed to continue organizing against the actions of Canada and the U.S. against Venezuela, and in support of the sovereignty and self-determination of Venezuela. FTT Venezuela Solidarity Campaign is also supporting a new parliamentary petition against Canada's threats and sanctions on



Venezuela, which can be signed online at <https://petitions.ourcommons.ca/en/Petition/Details?Petition=e-1353>

The next FTT Venezuela Solidarity Campaign action will be on Friday December 8th. For more info go to www.firethistime.net or follow on Facebook and Twitter @FTT_np

Follow Janine on Twitter: @janinesolanki

***NEW PARLIAMENTARY PETITION TO THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA* SIGN TODAY!**

NO TO CANADA'S THREATS & SANCTIONS ON VENEZUELA!

Scan the QR code to sign or visit:
<https://petitions.ourcommons.ca/en/Petition/Details?Petition=e-1353>





By Max Tennant

As November came to a close the Liberal government finally began their push in parliament on Bill C-59, “An Act respecting national security matters”. The Working Group to Stop Bill C-51 took this as an opportunity to push forward its education campaign on Bill C-59, which the Liberals are

Weekly Action Campaign to Repeal Bill C-51 Continues!

trying to sell as an important improvement on Bill C-51 but contains many of the same fundamental violations of our rights and privacy.

The Working Group organized weekly picket and petition drives at four major transit hubs in three major cities during the month of November. As winter approached and daylight hours became shorter, organizers found creative ways to brightly light signs to make sure the demands were clear for passersby to read. Regardless of the cold weather, and some strong winds which threatened to blow over the information tables, the number of people participating in the actions has actually increased! Overall, the reception

has continued to be very positive with more people taking leaflets, signing petitions, and especially asking questions about Bill C-59.

For almost three years straight, the Working Group has coordinated 139 consecutive weekly actions and will continue to educate people and organize consistent actions until these bills against our basic human rights are reversed. As Bill C-59 moves forward, there is an added urgency to the campaign to make sure people know about the real consequences of this law, despite what the Liberals have promised.

Repeal Bill C-51! Scrap Bill C-59!

Follow Max Tennant on Twitter:
@MaxTennant

Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO) MARKS 14 YEARS OF ORGANIZING AGAINST WAR & FOR PEACE!

By Janine Solanki

Yemen today is facing the world’s worst humanitarian crisis. For two and a half years the U.S.-backed Saudi-led war has devastated Yemen, destroying infrastructure and indiscriminately targeting civilians in their homes, in hospitals and even at funerals. Saudi Arabia has also imposed a land, air and sea blockade, preventing essential aid, food and medicine from reaching the Yemeni people. Now, as a symptom of this criminal war, Yemen is facing the worst cholera outbreak the world has ever seen and facing a famine that threatens to become the worst seen in decades. Yemen’s children are particularly vulnerable. As described in the article “Yemen’s Children Under Attack!” by Azza Rojbi in Fire This Time Volume 11 Issue 9, the “war on Yemen is stripping Yemeni children of their childhood and destroying the hopes and future of a whole generation.”

In Vancouver, Canada, Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) has kept up the demands against this brutal war on Yemen, both in educational events and out on the streets. In November, MAWO held two events against war on Yemen, alongside Yemeni activists and community members.

On Friday November 17, MAWO organized an antiwar poetry night dedicated to the people of Yemen. The evening gave participants a deeper insight into the beauty, history and culture of Yemen, the horror of war that Yemen is facing, and the struggle of the Yemeni people against the vicious attacks on their country. The event started with a welcoming song and drumming from Indigenous elder and activist Eagle Eyes.

The evening was MC’d by Alison Bodine, chair of MAWO, who spoke about the extent of the crisis in Yemen and the work of MAWO against the Saudi war on Yemen. MAWO executive committee member Janine Solanki also spoke to recognize the recent anniversary of MAWO, which formed 14 years ago on October 29, 2003, and talked about the campaigns which have been fought throughout MAWO’s history. Yemeni community member Asaad Aljaboubi, who had recently visited Yemen, gave his account of the situation of Yemen and how deep the crisis is.

The poetry section of the evening featured readings by Thomas Davies and Janine Solanki from well-known poets, as well as original poetry from Jodie Ortega and Max Tennant. Much of the poetry reflected the spirit of fighting for justice and for life, and in honor of the struggle of the Yemeni people. The evening wrapped up with participants enjoying delicious Yemeni food, sweets and tea, prepared by activists and organizers from the Yemeni community.

The next day, Saturday November 18, MAWO held its monthly antiwar rally and petition campaign at the Vancouver Art Gallery in Downtown Vancouver. An information table was hung with Yemeni flags and banners demanding “U.S./Saudi Arabia Hands off Yemen!” and protesters held picket signs with the slogans “Self-Determination for the People of Yemen!” and “Stop Bombing Yemen!” Activists approached passers-by and asked them to add their signature to a petition demanding that Canada end its \$15 billion arms deal with Saudi Arabia for so-called “light” armored vehicles. Many people were eager to sign on to the petition and show their opposition to



the government of Canada’s role in providing arms to Saudi Arabia, especially considering the brutal war Saudi Arabia has been waging on Yemen. The rally wrapped up with Alison Bodine speaking about the human costs of the Saudi-led war on Yemen, and calling particular attention to the support that the governments of both the U.S. and Canada are providing to Saudi Arabia. To close the rally, Indigenous elder and activist Eagle Eyes sang and drummed a closing song, reminding activists that the rally is taking place on the traditional and unceded territories of the Tsleil-Waututh (səlilwətaʔ), the Musqueam (xʷməθkʷəy̓əm), and the Squamish (Skwxwú7mesh) Coast Salish Nations.

Mobilization Against War and Occupation is committed to continue organizing against the Saudi-led war on Yemen, and demanding that the governments of the U.S. and Canada end their support of Saudi Arabia and the war on Yemen. To find out about MAWO events and actions visit www.mawovancouver.org or follow on Facebook and Twitter @mawovan

Follow Janine on Twitter: @janinesolanki



continued from page 3

gave rise to Daesh, the most widespread and deadly terrorist group in the world. The only victory over these terrorists has come at the hands of the Syrian army and their allies. Yet the damage has already been done – Daesh has spread and gained control of areas throughout the region.

The devastation and chaos the U.S. has created in Syria is no accident. U.S. intelligence agencies knew precisely what the consequences of supporting terrorist groups would be. The intervention in Syria is not a battle for human rights and democracy but part of a larger plan to sow chaos and division in the Middle East, in order for the U.S. and their allies to justify military intervention and establish more control in the region.

The U.S. aim is to replace the independent and secular government of Syria with one that follows U.S. interests in the region. This goal is part of a larger U.S. strategy to establish an upper hand over Iran, an important regional power which has stood independent from the U.S. since the Iranian revolution of 1979. Iran's independence and insistence on control over their own resources, their own government, and their own future threatens U.S. economic and political interests in the region.

In 2006, the Bush administration established the Iran Syria Policy and Operations Group, a committee involving various members of U.S. government and intelligence agencies, to try and bring about regime change in Iran and Syria. This involved providing financial support to 'dissident' groups in Iran and Syria (some of which have now become the terrorist groups active today), military support to Gulf Arab countries allied with the U.S., and creating 'economic development' plans to strangle Iran's economy. The

group was disbanded after a year, but the same strategies have been adopted throughout the U.S. government.

Another important aspect of U.S. strategy in Syria and the larger Middle East and North Africa is to establish military and economic control ahead of rising global competitors such as China and Russia. If they can accomplish this through either direct or indirect intervention in a country they will; if not they will create long-term chaos in order to justify a long-term military presence, as they have done in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The U.S. plan to gain control over Syria by ousting President Assad and supporting terrorists has not gone quite as planned. The U.S. underestimated the level of support that Assad has within Syria and the ability of the Syrian army and their allies to fight back against the U.S.-sponsored terrorists. Be that as it may, we should not expect the U.S. government to give up on its campaign to control or create chaos in Syria anytime soon.

What is to Be Done?

What right does the U.S. have to decide the future of Syria, especially in light of all the destruction and chaos they have caused? Truly only Syrians have the right to decide the future of their country and their government. The way forward will not be easy after nearly seven years of war and the divisions which have been drawn by foreign interests, but it is the only path forward.

It is time for all U.S. and other uninvited foreign forces to leave Syria. The U.S. and their allies which were involved in this war and intervention must also be held responsible for the destruction of Syria. They supported the terrorists, created divisions in the country, and then destroyed the country, all with the excuse of stopping the very terrorists they created! This war has cost Syria not only hundreds of thousands of lives, but also put the future of the country in jeopardy and severely impacted the economy. The total cost to the Syrian economy thus far is \$226 billion, according to World Bank estimates. The countries involved in creating this chaos should be held responsible to pay the Syrian people reparations for this amount, plus all other costs of damage created by the war.

The Syrian people have a long road ahead of them to rebuild their country and to stop the terrorists which have gained a foothold there. But they can only build a peaceful and democratic future for their country without foreign military intervention, meddling, and support for terrorists.

*Follow Nita Palmer on Twitter:
@NGP1x0*

continued from page 10

chances are good more divisions on the future of Cuban socialism will emerge. Although debate and disagreements have always been a feature of Cuba's ongoing revolutionary process, Cubans have often protected these debates to avoid being misinterpreted by the imperialist bloodhound media, which is always looking to sow and deepen divisions.

The Cuban Revolution Today

On November 26, 2017, almost exactly a year to the day since Fidel Castro's passing, Cubans went to the polls to elect members of their municipal assemblies. Without going into too much detail about the Cuban electoral system, which is interesting, but complex, the November 26 elections begin a process that will lead to the election of provincial assemblies and the National Assembly. The National Assembly will then elect the Council of State, which then elects its ministers, as well as the Vice Presidents and President of Cuba.

Participation in this round of municipal elections was high. The elections featured 27,221 candidates, of whom 35.4% were women and 19.5% were young people. In total, 66.44% of the candidates are current delegates who were running for another term. Voter turnout was 89%, with over 7.6 million Cubans casting secret ballots. Of the votes cast across the island, 92% were valid. The ballots that were not calculated were: 4% blank ballots, and 4% spoilt ballots. It seems worthwhile to mention these items in such detail because often imperialist media calls Cuba a dictatorship and ignores Cuba's electoral process. When the mainstream media concedes that Cubans do vote, they try to claim that they are forced to vote, or that they are socially intimidated into voting. However, these numbers demonstrate that not all Cubans vote. The right-wing in Miami has also called for those opposed to the political system in Cuba to cast blank ballots, although as numbers above indicate, Cubans who do cast blank ballots are a huge minority. In fact, the Cuban municipal elections enjoy greater popularity than the national elections in either the United States (Presidential election 2016 - 56% turnout) or Canada (Federal vote 2015 - 68% turnout).

The Cuban revolution continues because the Cuban revolution is not, and never was, just Fidel, just Raúl, or just the Communist Party of Cuba. The Cuban revolution is standing firm because the people of Cuba have fought for the gains made within the revolutionary process, and they will continue to work and build upon those gains into the future. Of course, without the leadership of Fidel and Raúl Castro, there comes some fear of the unknown, fear of whether Cuba will find the right leadership to build a path forward in challenging new times. However, the Cuban people have proven time and time again that they are hardworking, opinionated, humble, loyal, and revolutionary – all qualities that will be important for the challenges on the road ahead.

Follow Tamara Hansen on Twitter: @THans01

OUR HERITAGE



Ellen Gabriel

Turtle Clan Member and Indigenous Human rights activist, Gabriel was well-known when she was chosen by the People of the Longhouse and her community of Kanehsatà:ke to be their spokesperson during the 1990 "Oka" Resistance; a 78 day standoff to protect their traditional territories from the expansion of a golf course.

"Indigenous peoples have been fighting imperialism for centuries, from the free market economy of capitalism to glorification of the "American" or Canadian dream of prosperity. Our ancestors were forcibly removed from our homelands to make room for settlers who in turn created the "reserve" system that took away our security, our languages, our culture and customs. Rich, proud and honorable nations were reduced to wards of the state after the War of 1812.

We were treated as less than human and only a couple of decades ago got access to human rights mechanisms. Even today, people don't realize that in spite of Section 35 of Canada's Constitution Act, 1982, recognizing "existing Aboriginal and treaty rights," those rights are not clearly defined. Indigenous peoples have to go through exhaustive court battles to define those rights, and have had to prove "occupancy" of our lands since time immemorial.

There is no other group of peoples who must constantly undergo such scrutiny to obtain justice and have their rights respected... This is evidenced by the sweeping approvals of major industrial projects on Indigenous land without the consent of Indigenous peoples, like the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain expansion or Site C Dam.

Instead we remain at the mercy of municipalities, policing authorities, Canada's army and its politicians, whose ignorance of Indigenous peoples' human rights forces us into situations whereby we must fight to defend our lands, and indeed, our very identities. This is the Canada that we, as Indigenous peoples, know."

From, "Untethering colonial rule for Canada's 150th Birthday"

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continued from page 25

Venezuela's economy, at great cost to the people of Venezuela. Through hoarding, price gouging, smuggling and even the destruction of food and basic goods, the counter-revolutionaries have worked in tandem with the U.S. government to use the economy as a weapon to attempt to overthrow President Nicolas Maduro and the revolutionary Bolivarian government.

As just two examples of this economic war, in November 2017 Telesur TV reported that 7,000 metric tons of corn flour were allowed to rot in the state of Lara and video evidence was uncovered showing thousands of live chickens being buried alive in the state of Carabobo.

Sanctions imposed on the government of Venezuela by the United States have also had a significant impact on Venezuela's ability to buy products, including medicine, on the world market. In September, President Nicolas Maduro explained, to the newly elected National Constituent Assembly, multiple instances when Venezuela was prepared to pay for shipments, but the companies were not able to accept their payments due to U.S. sanctions, including 300,000 doses of insulin which were held up for many days.

U.S./Canada Hands Off Venezuela!

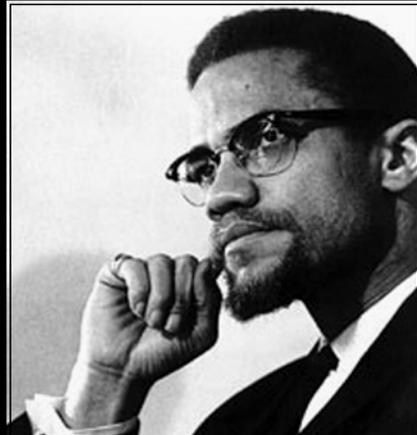
The U.S. government and their imperialist allies are working with Venezuela's violent opposition with the goal of overthrowing the government of Venezuela and reversing the gains made by the majority of the people of Venezuela with the Bolivarian Revolutionary process.

The Globe and Mail article and the lies and manipulations spread by Ms. Tovar about Venezuela are the fodder that the government of the United States and Canada uses to fuel their attacks on the sovereignty and self-determination of Venezuela.

As poor, working and oppressed people in Canada and the United States, we have the responsibility to challenge the imperialist rhetoric about Venezuela, and cry foul on the crocodile tears that they weep for so-called democracy and human rights. We must unite together to demand that imperialist governments end their meddling in the internal affairs of Venezuela. We must echo the calls of the people of Venezuela for an end to sanctions and threats.

Follow Alison Bodine on Twitter:
@Alisoncolette

"By Any Means Necessary..."



MALCOLM X SPEAKS

Malcolm X, Interview with Young Socialist, 1965

"In my thinking, if the students in this country forgot the analysis that has been presented to them, and they went into a huddle and began to research this problem of racism for themselves, independent of politicians and independent of all the foundations (which are a part of the power structure), and did it themselves, then some of their findings would be shocking, but they would see that they would never be able to bring about a solution to racism in this country as long as they're relying on the government to do it. The federal government itself is just as racist as the government in Mississippi, and is more guilty of perpetuating the racist system. At the federal level they are more shrewd, more skillful at doing it, just like the FBI is more skillful than the state police and the state police are more skillful than the local police. The same with politicians. The politician at the federal level is usually more skilled than the politician at the local level, and when he wants to practice racism, he's more skilled in the practice of it than those that practise it on a local level."

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