

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



Fire This Time!

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FIGHTING TO LOSE BC NDP BETRAYAL ON SITE C DAM

By Thomas Davies

Fighting to Lose: NDP Betrayal on Site C Dam

There had been warning signs since the NDP formed provincial government in B.C. that they were reluctant to follow through with their campaign criticisms of the Site C mega-dam construction project and cancel it. Given the amount of support the party had gained from opponents of Site C, and its written commitment to upholding the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), Premier John Horgan's announcement that they would be going ahead was a harsh shock for many. There had been some hope that after 16 years of the pro-big business, anti-environment BC Liberal government that the NDP might make the right decision – but this has evaporated quickly.

Quick Re-Cap:

“Let’s get the science on the table, let’s get the economics on the table, and let’s end it once and for all.” - John Horgan, Paddle for the Peace rally against Site C Dam in 2010

“A foundational piece of this relationship is that both caucuses support the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action and the Tsilhqot’in Supreme Court decision.”

- 2017 “Confidence and Supply Agreement” between the BC Green Party and the BC NDP to form a provincial government.

The BC Hydro Site C Dam has been a failed project since the 1970’s when it was proposed, opposed and shelved. The

60-meter-high Site C mega dam would cost over 10 billion dollars and flood over 100 km of river valley to create power BC Hydro says we don’t need now but might in the future. Indigenous Nations whose territories Site C would flood point out under Treaty 8, they have entrenched constitutional rights to hunt, trap and fish on the would be flooded land. Environmentalists have pointed out that this land is also so fertile it could grow food for over a million people, and economists have shown that construction costs of Site C would create at least \$5000 in debt for ever household in BC.

Indigenous Rights

“When it comes to reconciliation or working with Indigenous leadership, look there has been over 150 years of disappointment in British Columbia. I am not the first person to stand before you and disappoint Indigenous peoples.” - John Horgan after Site C decision

This is not an issue of disappointment. This is an issue of knowingly violating the rights the BC government has already acknowledged to “free, prior and informed consent” for indigenous nations into projects on their territories.

The West Moberly and Prophet River



An undated photo tweeted by Chief Roland Willson (West Moberly First Nations) showing NDP leader John Horgan (far right) posing in opposition to the Site C Dam.

First Nations, whose territories will be flooded if Site C goes forward, will seek a court injunction against the Site C dam, and also announced they will pursue a civil case for treaty infringement. Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, said that the NDP had “pretty much poisoned the well” for reconciliation between the province and Indigenous Nations. Saying “I hung up on him,” when Horgan called him after the decision.

Fighting to Lose

What has made the process so distasteful for many was that there was a clear and compelling case for cancelling the Dam, and the NDP missed every opportunity after forming government.

- The NDP refused to apply UNDRIP to Site C, saying that the project was already started so that would be “retrospective”.
- The NDP limited the review of Site C to strictly economic



Protest against Site C Dam in front of Parliament Hill in Ottawa, Canada, September 2016.

Vancouver Vigil after Premier Horgan says they will go ahead with the Site C Dam Dec 2017.



their Site C decision

Now the grassroots FightC coalition is organizing a Divest NDP campaign, which is organizing those outraged by the Site C decision to publicly cancel their monthly donations to the NDP and instead donate to the legal challenges by the West Moberly and Prophet River First Nations through www.stakeinthepeace.com

factors, when the indigenous rights components and environmental components are compelling and even more important.

- The NDP refused to halt construction while Site C was undergoing a review by the BC Utilities Commission (BCUC).
- The NDP did nothing when the BCUC tabled its highly critical report finding that Site C was behind schedule, would be over 2 billion over budget, had unresolved risks including tension cracks, and “Increasingly viable alternative energy sources such as wind, geothermal and industrial curtailment could provide similar benefits to ratepayers as the Site C project, with an equal or lower unit energy cost.”
- The NDP waited until the outcry over the BCUC report had died down to announce

This is either a textbook worthy example of how to fail at stopping a project, or how to pay lip service “opposition” while allowing it to proceed.

The Green Party has not done much better. Despite saying they oppose Site C, their leader Andrew Weaver stated publicly before the decision that regardless of what happened he wouldn't withdraw his party's crucial support which upholds the NDP government.

Fall Out

There is now significant fallout from disconcerted NDP members and many others who had donated or campaigned for the party based on opposition to Site C. This is not the first time this has happened. The NDP faced losses of party members over its support for clear-cut logging in 1978, and a mass exodus when as provincial government they supported the clear-cut logging of the Old Growth forests of Clayquot Sound in 1993.

Not in It To Lose

There is no reason to stop fighting against the Site C Dam. The indigenous nations, local residents, farmers, economists, environmentalists, scientists and many others who made the campaign against the Site C Dam so powerful are not stopping. We find ourselves in the familiar position of going head to head with a government which is trying to ignore our concerns in the name of giant mega-projects which destroy the environment and at best provide some temporary construction jobs. Fire This Time calls for an immediate halt to construction of the Site C Dam, and an independent public inquiry into what happened behind closed doors to compel both the BC Liberals and BC NDP to approve the project.

Stop Site C Now! Independent Public Inquiry Now!

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

Climate Convergence demands:

TD Bank – Totally Divest in Kinder Morgan!
No Kinder Morgan Pipeline!

By Thomas Davies

TD Bank continues to face monthly protests for its \$731 million investment in the Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion. Calls for “TD – Totally Divest from Kinder Morgan!” have become increasingly common, with the Climate Convergence Coalition in Metro Vancouver continuing monthly actions outside different TD Banks.

This month it was decided to escalate the action. Kinder Morgan has begun construction to expand its Westridge Marine Terminal oil tanker loading facility in Burnaby, while TD Bank continues to falsely present itself as a “environmental leader” which prioritizes a



CBC French coverage of the TD Bank Protest against the Kinder Morgan Pipeline

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Women, Let's Unite For Our Rights!

DEFEND MUSLIM WOMEN IN QUEBEC AGAINST ISLAMOPHOBIC BILL 62!

By Tamara Hansen

This fall the Quebec provincial government passed Bill 62, also known as the “religious neutrality law.” While it refers to “neutrality,” the law is anything but, specifically requiring that Muslim women who wear the Burqa or the Niqab uncover their faces when accessing public services or working in public services “when it’s required for communication, identification or security reasons”.

The vagueness of what this means has led to many awkward press conferences with Quebec’s Justice Minister Stéphanie Vallée, who has had to clarify the minute details of implementing this self-contradictory law. One of the press conferences established that Muslim women wearing the face coverings can and cannot do the following things, according to CBC News. They explain, “You can walk into a public library, but you can’t take out a book. You can sit in a hospital waiting room, but you can’t interact with staff. You can drop off your children at public daycare, but you can’t pick them up.” This exposes the paradoxes of a law that is supposed to be about religious neutrality, but is clearly about raising fear and suspicions of Muslim women and their “hidden” identities. What about someone wearing a big scarf that covers their face due to Quebec’s cold winters? Or someone who wears sunglasses and a hat which covers most of their face due to Quebec’s warm summers? These are also apparently banned by the strangely named, “religious neutrality law.”

The problems with the law are numerous. First, it requires public servants, such as librarians and bus drivers to act as police and enforce the law. Second, it is not about religious neutrality, as it specifically targets religious “face coverings” which is solely about Muslim women and their unjustified ‘security’ concerns. Third, it is a renewed attempt to attack and isolate Muslim women based solely on their appearance and dress, which has been



Thousands rallied in Montreal against hate and racism Nov 12, 2017

proposed several times in Quebec under different names. Fourth, these laws have not stood the test of time because they are considered an infringement on human rights and religious freedoms in accordance with Canada’s Charter of Rights & Freedoms.

Many have also commented that while people in Canada love to justifiably condemn and ridicule President Trump and the American government, our American neighbours have not yet passed any laws so directly attacking Muslim women (at least those already living in the United States). In fact this is the first law attacking Muslim women and “face coverings” in North America. How is it possible that Bill 62 passed in Quebec with so few protests outside of la Belle Province?

At the same time, Muslim women are standing up for themselves. Recently a few women who wear the niqab were supported by several civil society groups in Quebec, and filed a constitutional challenge against Bill 62. On December 1, 2017 a Quebec Superior Court Judge temporarily suspended the law. His ruling found that Bill 62 needs to be clearer and that the government must create specific

guidelines on the implementation of the law.

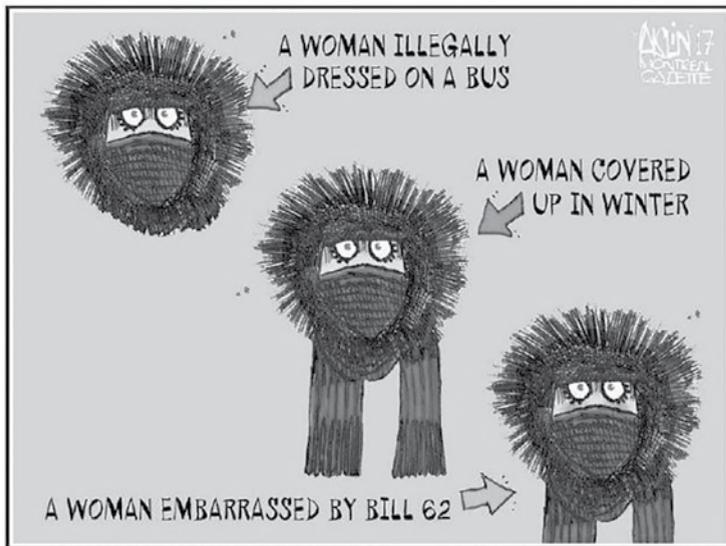
Strangely, the main factor it seems he considered is that Bill 62 Chapter 3 Division 3 allows for “Accommodations on Religious Grounds” meaning people will be able to apply to be exempt from the face-covering law. However, there is no avenue at this time to apply for this accommodation, so the law is suspended until the process is established. Of course, this is not a full victory for the Muslim women who took the government to court, as the law was not scrapped completely. However this short term gain opens space and momentum for them to continue to campaign against this unjust law.

TVA News Stirs Islamophobia with Lies

In mid-December the depths of this harmful campaign against Muslim women and the Muslim community was further highlighted when TVA News falsely reported that a Mosque in the Montreal region had sent a letter to a construction company asking, “for women to be removed from a construction site near their place of worship”. According to CTV News, “TVA stood by its story about the banning of women for several



Warda Naili, on a bus in her niqab, is one of the Montreal women who challenged the Quebec government in court over Bill 62.



days, even saying that this clause was written in the contract.” However, the letter and contract clause were complete fabrications. In fact, Mosque officials released a video showing they had denied the claims to the journalist prior to TVA publishing the story, and had demanded written proof from the journalist of her claims, which she did not produce. However, despite the Mosque’s denial and TVA having no physical proof of a letter and/or contract, TVA went ahead and published the story.

A week or so later and TVA had to send two retractions and promise an internal investigation into what happened. Everything published so far seems to point to the fact that this mainstream news organization knowingly published false news to stoke Islamophobic flames. At the same time, the damage has

already been done, even with the retractions, protestors showed up to protest the mosque on Friday December 15, believing that the TVA retractions were the ‘fake news’.

These attacks on Muslim women and the Muslim community should be condemned by people across Canada. Muslim women are not a danger to the people of Quebec or the rest of Canada, but islamophobia is. In 2015, police across Canada reported 159 hate crimes targeting Muslims, representing a 253% increase from 2012, when 45 incidents were reported. Unsurprisingly, most of the victims to these crimes were Muslim women. Bill 62 targets and marginalizes

Muslim women, and will keep them from accessing much needed public services – including public transportation, schools, and hospitals. This is a cruel attack on their rights and it also stokes the flames of Islamophobia, attempting to divide people and intensify intolerance.

January 20, 2018 Women Around the World Unite for Our Rights!

Whether it is Muslim women, Indigenous women, trans women, or women struggling against sexual harassment within the #MeToo movement, women in Canada, and our allies, have a lot to do to push back against patriarchy and demand our rights.

January 20, 2018 will mark one year since the inauguration of U.S. President Donald Trump. It has also been called as

a day of protest, for women around the world to take to the streets and demand our rights be respected. According to the Women’s March international website, “On January 21, 2017, people of all backgrounds--women and men and gender nonconforming people, young and old, of diverse faiths, differently abled, immigrants and indigenous--came together, 5 million strong, on all seven continents of the world.” They continue, “We were answering a call to show up and be counted as those who believe in a world that is equitable, tolerant, just and safe for all, one in which the human rights and dignity of each person is protected, and our planet is safe from destruction.” Now women, and their allies, are being called to the streets again.

While the demands of the “Women’s March” movement are mostly social democratic, vague, and loose, rather than radical, specific, and consistent, it is an important movement for educating and radicalising women to stand up and fight back. Here in Canada, hopefully January 20, 2018 will be marked not just by anti-Trump protests, but by a movement that will also look inward at the ongoing challenges facing women in Canada, including Quebec’s Bill 62.

Divide and Conquer? Unite and Win!

Of course, capitalism relies on keeping us divided. Many reading this might be wondering if Bill 62 is indeed a feminist issue. They might ask: Aren’t the Burqa and Niqab symbols of women’s oppression? Why would women’s rights activists stand up in favor of Muslim women who wear these face coverings? While there are Muslim women in the world who are forced to wear face coverings against their will, many Muslim women choose these forms of dress due to their religious beliefs and interpretation of Islam. As someone who believes in women’s equality, who am I to say what other women should or should not wear? Clothing choices are loaded with cultural values. Are short shorts and bikinis more feminist than a Niqab? For some yes, for others no. We must also ask these questions in the context of Bill 62 which limits the jobs Muslim women who wear the Niqab or Burqa will be able to apply

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LIBYA

FROM REGIME CHANGE TO "DEMOCRACY" TO SLAVERY

By Thomas Davies

There are colour photos. There are videos. There is indisputable documentation that there is a growing slave trade of African refugees in Libya. This is not from hundreds of years ago. Human beings are currently being auctioned, bought, sold, used, abused and discarded. While the major news media has only covered this story since the final months of 2017, the practise has been growing since in the massive 2011 NATO-led bombing which destroyed the country's government and resulted in the murder of Libya's then-President Muammar Gaddafi. With no real government emerging afterwards, absolute chaos took over. When combined with the destruction caused by other imperialist wars in the region, and their refusal to deal with the resulting refugees in a humane way – slavery, among many

other horrors, re-emerged into Libya.

So while politicians in the US, UK, France, Germany and Canada all express supposed shock and dismay at what is happening in Libya – their tears mean little given their primary role in creating the situation in the first place.

Regime Change

In March of 2011 a NATO-led coalition began a massive military intervention in Libya. Their justification was the enforcement of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973, which authorized "the international community" to establish a "no-fly zone" and to use "all means necessary" short of foreign occupation to "protect civilians". Veto-power having permanent members the US, UK and France all voted in favour. China and Russia abstained, allowing the

vote to go forward.

In 7 months, according to NATO's own summary, "NATO and partner air assets had flown more than 26,000 sorties, an average of 120 sorties per day. Forty-two per cent of the sorties were strike sorties, which damaged or destroyed approximately 6,000 military targets. At its peak, OUP involved more than 8,000 servicemen and women, 21 NATO ships in the Mediterranean and more than 250 aircrafts of all types."

"Sorties" are bombings, and Canada played major role. 7 CF-18 fighter jets performed hundreds of bombings and 440 armed forces personnel took part. The Conservatives, Liberal and NDP all supported the bombing,

NATO claimed to be supporting a popular democratic uprising in Libya, but it is difficult to reason how such a "popular" uprising would need the help of such a massive bombing campaign by outside forces. Their criteria for "military targets" also must have included schools, hospitals, water treatment facilities and civilians - because all of them were hit many times by NATO bombs.

"Democracy"

When Libya's President Muammar Gaddafi was captured, beaten and murdered by Libyan "rebels" at the end of October, NATO declared victory and ended its operations. The West celebrated and world leaders all flew in for a few hours to celebrate the new "democracy" their bombs had brought. Hillary Clinton famously bragged in an interview, "We came, we saw, he died!"

But that's not the end of the story. Since 2011 Libya's descent into chaos and civil war has been incredible and gut wrenching. There is no central government, only several different armed factions which rule over smaller parcels of land. Libya, which had been well known for its free healthcare, education and the highest Human Development Index in all of Africa, has seen all of those things go up in flames. Oil production, which had previously supported the country's infrastructure, is less than quarter of what it was in 2010.

Slavery

This coincided with waves of refugees fleeing war torn countries such as Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan – most of them headed



to Europe. Many more refugees also fled incredible poverty in other African countries as well. Libya, with its close proximity to Europe and its destabilized borders, became a primary route for those seeking refuge in Europe by sea. According to conservative figures from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the UN's migration agency, over 150,000 refugees a year have made the dangerous crossing across the Mediterranean Sea from Libya. At least 3,000 people a year have died while attempting the journey.

Instead of focusing on ending the primary cause for these refugees – unlivable conditions created by imperialist wars and occupations, or establishing comprehensive programs to help them settle, the EU has focused on supporting the Libyan Coast Guard in cracking down on boats bringing migrants to Europe. With hundreds of thousands now stuck in Libya, horrific detention centres are overflowing. Robbery, rape, murder and slavery have emerged wholesale as the most vulnerable are taken advantage of.



Hillary Clinton celebrates 'freedom' in Libya in 2011. However, the crisis the U.S. created in Libya is clear in 2017 as human beings are being sold as slaves.

Liberation

What is plain for all to see is that anything these imperialist countries and their armies touch goes up in flames, and they never hold themselves accountable for the consequences. Wars, bombings, occupations, refugees, poverty and slavery are all their collective legacy. The US, UK, France, Canada and Germany have all been primary actors in the sick story, and must be held responsible. We must demand that they immediately end all their wars and occupations, and that they accept all refugees fleeing the suffering they have caused. There will be more than enough money for all of this when they are forced to stop wasting trillions every



year on war.

Imperialists Out of the Middle East and North Africa!

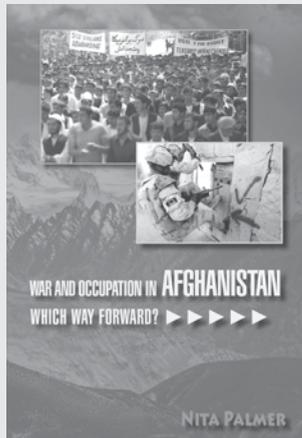
Open All Borders to All Refugees!

Let the Refugees Stay!

*Follow Thomas Davies on Twitter:
@thomasdavies59*

Battle of Ideas Press

WAR AND OCCUPATION IN AFGHANISTAN WHICH WAY FORWARD?



By Nita Palmer

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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Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice Statement - December 8, 2017

Israel Hands Off Jerusalem! Self-Determination for Palestine! U.S. Out of the Middle East!

The Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice fiercely denounces U.S. President Trump's provocative announcement that the United States government will recognize occupied Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and move the U.S. Embassy there. This is the latest demonstration of colonial arrogance from the U.S. in its support for Israel — which comes at the direct cost of the lives and self-determination of Palestinians.

There is no mistaking the significance of Jerusalem, known in Arabic as al-Quds ("The Holy One"), to the people of Palestine. It is recognized as their "eternal capital", and the location of the al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock, two of the most significant sites in Islam. It has also been the centre of so-called Peace negotiations since the forced establishment of Israel on Palestinian lands in 1948. Palestinians have fought against a continued campaign of ethnic cleansing by Israel in Jerusalem, as they have in all of occupied Palestine. Today they still make up 37% of the population of Jerusalem, despite facing constant persecution by Israeli forces.

This move also solidifies what Palestinians have known all along: the United States has never been, and will never be, an honest broker for peace in the region. How could they be when they are constantly arming and enabling one side against the other? While for decades Israel and the United States have been constantly calling for a "negotiated settlement" to the conflict, on the ground they have continued to grab more land, violate more rights and kill more Palestinians.

Trump's announcement was a clear message to Israel — we will support you in every continued bloody attack on Palestinians. On this issue, like so many others, the U.S. and its violent client state Israel are isolated internationally. No other country in the world has an embassy in Jerusalem and no country in the world has rushed to support this U.S. move.

The absurdity of the situation is clear. Why is it that a statement by the U.S. government holds so much significance? Because Israel would not be able to exist for even one day if not for the massive diplomatic, financial and military support of the United States. In 2016, the U.S. signed a deal to give Israel \$38 billion in military aid over the next 10 years — \$3.8 billion per year, or \$10.41 million per day. While the Trump administration is cutting aid to every other country in the world, they have made clear that Israel will be the exception.

During the creation of Israel approximately

750,000 Palestinians were made refugees by Israeli forces in 1948. Today there are more than 7.2 million Palestinian refugees and another 355,000 who are internally displaced within Israel's borders. Despite 70 years of suffering and hardship they have not given up the struggle for their rights and their country, including their right of return. No statement by any U.S. President has ever been able to change that, and no amount of violence by the state of Israel will ever be able to change that either.

Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice stands with the brave people of Palestine in their continued struggle for dignity and self-determination against Israel and the United States. We call on all peace-loving people around the world to stand up and denounce President Trump's announcement, and to be constantly active in the ongoing fight for the liberation of Palestine!

End the Israeli Occupation of Palestine Now!

Long Live Palestine!

Long Live International Solidarity!

Top photo: Rally for Palestine in Vancouver in front of Trump Tower Dec 9, 2017



Stop the U.S./United Nations Security Council War on North Korea!

U.S. HANDS OFF NORTH KOREA!

Statement by Mobilization Against War & Occupation - MAWO | Dec 26, 2017

On December 22, 2017, the United Nations Security Council passed another round of brutal sanctions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). Although the United States government was the main proponent of Resolution 2397 (2017), it passed with the unanimous vote of all 15 member-states of the Security Council.

These genocidal sanctions are the third to be passed in the UN Security Council this year, amounting to a 90% reduction in the amount of oil that North Korea can import as compared to 2016, while also imposing ruthless restrictions on the import and export of food, as well as agricultural, industrial and manufactured goods. Effectively, they amount to an economic and financial blockade of the country. As well, these new regulations introduce targeted sanctions against 15 North Korean officials, and call for the re-patriation of North Koreans working in other countries within the next 24 months, which will cut off a vital source of income for many families.

The U.S. government and their imperialist allies claim that these sanctions are the only way to put an end to North Korea's nuclear program. In reality, whether imposed by the United States or the United Nations Security Council, sanctions are a weapon of killing people. These ruthless sanctions escalate tensions between the United States and the DPRK. They also further punish the people and government of North Korea for taking a stand as an independent country and refusing to follow the orders of the United States government.

The U.S. government will stop at nothing, at no amount of human suffering, to destroy independent governments in order to gain imperialist hegemony over every part of the globe. Iraq is an example of how little human lives matter to the imperialist policy



government continues to provide nutrition, healthcare, education and housing to all its people, there is still needless suffering imposed by the criminal blockade.

Venezuela, Iran, and Syria all continue to face brutal sanctions that deny their people food, medicines and basic goods. The result is sickness and starvation imposed on millions of people around the world. History, and current reality today have shown that people and governments cannot be starved into submission. So, since when was such pitiless disregard for human life an



acceptable reality?

In the face of their own inhuman sanctions regime, the U.S. government and their imperialist allies continue to do everything they can to demonize North Korea, and paint the government of North Korea as the aggressor. Disgustingly, they dare to declare that DPRK is the "biggest threat to humankind." Yet, it is U.S. President Trump that has pushed forward genocidal sanctions and threatened to "totally destroy" North Korea, and its 25 million people, with "fire and fury like world has never seen."

And these are not just the words of President Trump, following the test-launch of a ballistic missile by North Korea on November 29, it was the United States' UN Ambassador Nikki Haley who, at an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council, reminded the international community once again "make no mistake the North Korean regime will be utterly destroyed."

Then, on December 15, 2017, at a meeting of the UN Security Council, U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson was again threatening North Korea, stating "We have been clear that all options remain on the table in the defence of our nation [the United States]."

of sanctions and war. Prior to the 2003 invasion, over 1.5million people in Iraq died as a direct result of 13 years of vicious sanctions by the U.S. and UN Security Council, including more than 500,000 children. Then, the U.S. government and their allies invaded, killing millions more and tearing the country apart at the seams.

Other independent countries are also strangled under the mass punishment of sanctions. For nearly 60 years the people of Cuba have been under an cruel and inhuman U.S. blockade that continues to deny Cubans access to life-saving medicines and costs the Cuban economy more than \$4.3 billion each year. Although the Cuban

On top of threats and sanctions, the U.S. government and South Korea have also continued and even escalated their dangerous and provocative war games just off the shores of North Korea. Just days after a “emergency meeting” of the UN Security Council called by the United States in response to North Korea’s November 29th ballistic missile-test, South Korea and the U.S. launched into military exercises involving over 230 warplanes, and at least 12,000 U.S. troops, and practice air-strikes on North Korea.

On top of this, at any given time there are at least 35,000 U.S. troops in South Korea and 40,000 more in neighbouring Japan ready to take military action against North Korea. As well, the U.S. government’s largest naval fleet, the 7th Fleet of the U.S. Navy, is stationed in Japan; with a further 20,000 soldiers, more than 50 warships, and 12 nuclear-powered submarines, as well as the U.S.S. Ronald Reagan aircraft supercarrier.

In fact, the U.S. government has imposed a constant policy of aggression against North Korea for over 60 years, coupled with U.S. and UN sanctions. During the Korean War (1950-1953), the U.S. government and their allies, including Canada, were responsible for the deaths of nearly 3 million people on the Korean Peninsula, deployed 32,557 tons of the chemical weapon Napalm, and destroyed 75% of the Pyongyang, the capital city of North Korea.

With all of this focus on the nuclear weapons program in the DRPK, it is also important to note that the first nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula were not in North Korea. The U.S. government deployed nuclear weapons to South Korea in 1958, where they remained until 1991. The hypocrisy of the US government’s demand that North Korea end all nuclear weapons development goes even deeper – it is the United States that maintains a nuclear arsenal of at least 4,600 nuclear warheads and bombs. On top of this, the United States also remains the only country in the world to have ever deployed nuclear weapons; when they dropped nuclear bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. So, how is it again that the DRPK poses such a grave threat to the world?

Then, there is the question of United States support for a nuclear-free zone on the Korean Peninsula. How can the U.S. government claim to be in support of nuclear-free zones when, to protect nuclear armed Israel, they blocked a United Nations conference on establishing a nuclear free zone in the Middle East?

As a sovereign and independent country, the DPRK has the right to develop science, technology, and its military capabilities without interference from the U.S. government and their allies. If the UN Security Council were truly concerned with peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula, they would call for the immediate withdrawal of all U.S. troops and military installations from the region, and an end to U.S. military exercises, aggression and sanctions against North Korea.

Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) condemns all U.S. and UN Security Council sanctions against the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea as a genocidal act of war against an independent and sovereign country. It is the threats, inhuman sanctions and military actions, of the U.S. government and their allies against the DRPK that are the biggest threat to peace and stability in the region.

Vancouver is Ready, Let’s Unite, We Must Protest

On January 16, 2018 the U.S. Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson and the Foreign Minister of Canada Chrystia Freeland have

announced that they will be co-hosting a meeting, referred to as the “Vancouver Group,” including other un-announced foreign ministers, to “demonstrate solidarity in opposition to North Korea’s dangerous and illegal actions and to work together to strengthen diplomatic efforts toward a secure, prosperous and denuclearized Korean peninsula.”

It is clear that this meeting will not put any discussion of U.S.-led aggression, threats, and sanctions against North Korea on the table. Rather, this meeting has been called to further attempt to isolate and demonize the DPRK, to bolster U.S. and imperialist interests in the region.

As peace-loving people in Vancouver we must unite against these war-mongers and call for an end to the inhuman sanctions imposed on 25 million people in North Korea! Mobilization Against War and Occupation calls on all people who stand with the right of the Democratic People’s Republic of North Korea to self-determination and an end to imperialist threat, sanctions and military actions against the DPRK to unite. On January 16, 2018 we must join together to let the so-called “Vancouver Group” know that they are not welcome here!

No to Sanctions and Threats on North Korea!

End Imperialist Aggression Against North Korea!

US/Canada Hands Off North Korea!



By Carlito Pablo

Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland and U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson have announced plans to host an international conference about North Korea.

The meeting to be held in Vancouver on January 16 is intended to maintain pressure on the Asian nation to give up its nuclear weapons program.

The typical narrative about North Korea has been that it is a rogue state that poses a threat to world peace.

According to Vancouver antiwar activist Alison Bodine, it is not surprising that many people seem to accept that view.

“The U.S. and Canada have



Alison Bodine, Chair of Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO) speaks at a MAWO antiwar rally

ANTIWAR ACTIVIST SAYS VANCOUVER CONFERENCE ON NORTH KOREA WILL NOT PROMOTE PEACE

demonized North Korea so much, I think, it's difficult for people to understand what's happening,” Bodine told the Georgia Straight in a phone interview Wednesday (December 20).

Bodine spoke on behalf of the Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO), a group that holds regular rallies against U.S.-led or -backed military actions in Iraq, Syria, and Libya.

MAWO has also protested the Saudi Arabian-led military intervention in Yemen. The group has likewise warned against U.S. interference in North Korea and Venezuela.

Bodine questioned how conferences like the one to be co-hosted by Freeland and Tillerson in Vancouver next year will contribute to the cause of world peace.

“What kind of conference can be held here in Vancouver, Canada about North Korea when the U.S. has 35,000 troops in South Korea or when they have aircraft carriers circling around North Korea?” Bodine asked.

history and current events, it is actually the U.S. and its allies that are “the threat to world peace”.

She cited the examples of Iraq, Syria, and Libya, “countries that have been completely devastated” because of American interference.

Referring to the Vancouver conference, Bodine said: “This is just really part of this continued campaign to convince people of the world that North Korea is a problem when in fact the U.S. government is the most nuclear armed country in the world by far.”

According to the Switzerland-based International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), nine countries have nuclear arsenals with around 15,000 warheads.

Based on ICAN's figures, the U.S. and Russia account for most of these warheads, totaling 13,800.

The other countries on ICAN's list are the U.K., France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel, and North Korea.

According to ICAN, North Korea has the smallest arsenal, which “probably

comprises fewer than 10 warheads”.

Bodine asserted that peace can be advanced if American troops pull out of South Korea, and international sanctions against North Korea are lifted.

North Korea invaded South Korea in 1950. The conflict ended in 1953 with an armistice, which is not a peace treaty, meaning the two countries are still technically at war.

The U.S. and Canada fought alongside South Korea in the Korean War.

The U.S. maintains a big military presence in South Korea. The Seventh Fleet, which the largest of deployed U.S. Navy forces, is based in neighbouring Japan.

“North Korea is an independent country,” Bodine said. “It has the right to self-determination, [and] to develop its science and technology without pressure from the U.S. government and their allies.”

Bodine said that as far as MAWO is concerned, the issue is that North Korea is a country that is “under tremendous amount of pressure from the United States”.

“Everything that they [North Korea] are doing is a defensive action and response to these direct military threats and sanctions,” Bodine said.

Reprinted from: www.straight.com

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Nabeel Rajab



Rally in Bahrain demanding the freedom of political prisoner Nabeel Rajab, Nov 2013



LETTER FROM PRISON: TRUMP'S PANDERING TO BAHRAIN HAS DEADLY CONSEQUENCES

By Nabeel Rajab

I am writing this from prison. The government of Bahrain, my country, jailed me for criticizing its involvement in the brutal, bloody war in Yemen. I face up to 15 years imprisonment on that charge, in addition to the two-year sentence I am already serving in a separate case.

This week, the Bahraini government is holding an international forum called the Manama Dialogue, a public relations exercise designed, in part, to whitewash its dismal human rights record. But don't expect any criticism from Washington. Two weeks ago, I watched from my cell as President Trump gleefully announced the sale of \$9 billion worth of arms to Bahrain, including finalizing the purchase of American F-16 jets. At a time when Bahrain faces serious economic challenges partly due to the slump in oil prices, this deal comes as a great comfort to human rights abusers. It is a political signal from Washington that the Bahraini regime can continue to commit atrocities at home and abroad and still receive American support. Under President Barack Obama, a sale of American F-16s to the Bahraini government was made conditional upon the improvement of the regime's human rights record. Now, the Bahraini government knows it can do what it wants with impunity. It will continue to receive U.S. support no matter how bloody its hands become.

In May, I read Trump's statement to the king of Bahrain during his visit to Riyadh, which included the words "there won't be strain with this administration." It was no coincidence that days later, Bahraini police used the deadliest force we have seen in decades, killing five protesters. That was part of a larger pattern. Over the past year, opposition



U.S. President Trump shakes hands with Salman bin Hamad al-Khalifa, crown prince of Bahrain, Nov 2017.

members have been executed, civil society crushed and our human rights completely sidelined. The regime has stepped up its reprisals against human rights activists. The Bahraini government has even imprisoned the family members of my friend and colleague Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei, who is beyond their reach in the United Kingdom.

The two-year prison sentence I am serving is related to the charge of "spreading fake news." This is because I told the press truthfully that journalists and human rights organizations cannot enter Bahrain, a key U.S. ally and participant in Saudi Arabia's disastrous blockade and bombing of Yemen. That war, which has caused untold suffering and death, has been fueled by the Trump administration's unconditional support for both Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. The United States has also been supplying both governments with the weaponry to prosecute this vicious conflict.

Many people in my region hate U.S. foreign policy, because they see Washington as the key supporter of dictatorial regimes that repress their own people. My own visits to the United States have deeply impressed me with the values of justice, freedom and equality that lie at the heart of American democracy. But there

is an absolute absence of those values when it comes to U.S. foreign policy. If Trump wants to "make America great again," he could do so by orienting his policies toward the world on the same democratic and humanitarian values on which the United States was founded.

The United States must take the long view rather than focusing on short-term gains. It is in the interest of the United States — and all people everywhere — that we attain stable, democratic governments rooted in justice and respect for human dignity. This applies to the states of the Gulf as much as it does anywhere else.

In May, I saw Trump dancing and waving his sword in the Saudi kingdom, which also uses swords to behead people who demand democracy, and whose leaders humiliate women and believe that they do not have the same rights as men. Clearly, Trump's visit to Saudi Arabia was the precursor to the multibillion-dollar business deals that are now putting so many lives at risk in my region.

I know I risk more years in prison for writing this. Three years ago, I was sentenced to six months' imprisonment for tweeting criticism of Bahrain for ignoring the rise of the Islamic State and related extremism. If the government of Bahrain has its way, I may never be released. From the moment I entered Jaw prison last month, I have been entirely isolated, barred from seeing visitors and separated from the rest of the prisoners. I am classified as a "threat" to the prison population, and for that I am kept in a segregated wing of the building otherwise reserved for Islamic State-supporting extremists. I hope that this is a coincidence, but I fear that it is not.

The risk of speaking out is huge. Yet when I think of the starvation in Yemen caused by Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, the lost potential of the thousands who have died, the imprisonment of so many who have dared to speak out — and all of this with Trump's apparent backing — I know it is a risk worth taking. It is true that I face the prospect of spending an additional decade and a half in prison because I have chosen to take a stand. Yet my suffering is nothing compared with what Yemeni children are going through every day as they face bombing, starvation and fear. I continue to stand with the civilians and children of Yemen and to call upon the Saudis and Bahrainis to end the war immediately.

Those of us who hold up a mirror to tyranny will not be silenced.

Reprinted from: www.washingtonpost.com

Nabeel Rajab is president of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights and a member of the advisory committee for Human Rights Watch's Middle East and North Africa division.

Hey Prime Minister Trudeau:

REPEAL BILL C-51! SCRAP BILL C-59!

Our Security Lies in Defending the Rights of All!

By Max Tennant

As 2017 is coming to a close, parliament has not yet passed the Liberals' Bill C-59, "An Act respecting national security matters." Going into the New Year and a new parliamentary session, there remains huge human rights concerns regarding Bill C-59, and whether it is a really responding to the widespread criticisms of Harper's detested Bill C-51.

During the month of December, the National Council of Canadian Muslims gave an oral submission to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security on Bill C-59 that clearly outlined their opposition and lack of trust in providing CSIS or any other government agencies any more powers to attack our democratic and human rights,

"...members of Canadian Muslim communities have been victims of Canadian national security policy. Over the last 15 years, we have seen three separate judicial inquiries, numerous court rulings, out of court settlements and apologies that acknowledge the constitutional violations committed against innocent Muslims by national security intelligence and enforcement. Canadian Muslims are not only disproportionately affected by these errors and abuses, but we also bear the brunt of social impact when

xenophobic and anti-Muslim sentiment surges."

These concerns are also reinforced by CSIS' private settlement of a multimillion-dollar lawsuit with five intelligence officers and analysts who faced years of discrimination because they were gay, Muslim or Black.

As well, in a recent 90-page document released by the University of Toronto's CitizenLab and the Canadian Internet Policy and Public Interest Clinic (CIPPIC) highlighted the dangerous new powers Bill C-59 would grant secretive Communications Security Establishment (CSE),

"From mass dissemination of false information, to impersonation, leaking foreign documents in order to influence political and legal outcomes, disabling account or network access, large-scale denial of service attacks, and interference with the electricity grid, the possibilities for the types of activities contemplated in (Bill C-59) are limited only by the imagination."

With these reports echoed from many different sectors and people in Canada,



it is clear that Bill C-59 is nothing more than a continuation of Bill C-51 and that would continue to invade our privacy and erode more of our democratic and human rights.

In the month of December, the Working Group to Stop Bill C-51 also continued its weekly action campaign articulating and organizing the opposition to Bill C-51 and Bill C-59. The Working Group returned to the busy Commercial-Broadway Station, where reception was very warm despite the cold weather and chilly winds. Many people joined the e-mail list and had questions about Bill C-51 and especially Bill C-59. This trend also continued in the suburbs of Richmond and Coquitlam.

While the parliament chose to break early again this year, the Working Group stayed busy and organized its 147th weekly action before the end of December. Organizers have resolved to continue these important actions until Bill C-51 is repealed and Bill C-59 is scrapped for good!

REPEAL BILL C-51!

SCRAP BILL C-59!

Follow Max Tennant on Twitter:
@MaxTennant



Photos from two BILL C-51 Weekly actions on Dec 13 & 23, 2017



Cuba: From Machistas Leninistas to Educating Homophobes

By Nelson Valdes

I'm a dialectic dope

I'm all confused on carnal relations.

Can a Bolsheviki wikki wakki wikki?

What's the party line

We need a party line

Who's got the party line on love?

From the American song: "What's The Party Line On Love"

The American Communist song from the 1930s made fun of the politicization of sexual relations. The song, of course, defended the realm of what was to be a private matter. Granted, politicians and religious institutions, of all shades and colors, have tried to legislate what were [or are] proper "carnal relations." Certainly for a brief time the Bolsheviks in 1922 decriminalized homosexuality. But, generally speaking, neither the communists, the socialists nor the capitalists ever elucidated a Policy on Sexual Matters that would be central to their partisan politics.

But that has changed. On December 6, 2011 US foreign policy has moved into the realm of defender of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender "rights" for some countries in the world.[1] Then, Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, announced the policy to the world noting, "I speak about this subject knowing that my own country's record on human rights for gay people is far from perfect. Until 2003, it was still a crime in parts of our country. Many LGBT Americans have endured violence and harassment in their own lives, and for some, including many young people, bullying and

exclusion are daily experiences. So we, like all nations, have more work to do to protect human rights at home." [2]

The new internationalist policy promised to open US borders to LGBT refugees and asylum seekers, offer foreign aid to the same people and organizations where the US fosters regime change. The policy also promised to "help ensure the federal Government's swift and meaningful response to serious incidents that threaten the human rights of LGBT persons ABROAD."

Thus, another instrument has been added to justify political and military meddling and intervention in the internal affairs of those nations abroad that challenge American power. But the US policy of fostering regime change on sexual matters does not pertain to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the UAE and numerous other countries. [3]

Just a few days after Hillary's announcement the subject of the policies that the Cuban government carried out in the mid-1960s against homosexuality a number of anti-Cuban government publications and organizations began to stress the issue.

Certainly the history of the Cuban government toward gays should not be a taboo subject. People in the left/right and center certainly have a right to analyze and discuss the issue today.

Professor Samuel Farber on December 23rd, 2011 published in the Nicaraguan publication Havana Times an article on the "Roots of Homophobia in Cuba during the Revolution." [4] It is not the intent of this brief commentary to discuss the

matter of the roots of homophobia in Cuba – something that Farber fails to do. His thesis is simple, "the thrust and dynamism of those policies came primarily from Fidel Castro and the new Cuban Communist leadership." That is to say, homophobia in Cuba lacks a social, economic or cultural history pre-1959. This is hardly the case. Instead we are told to accept that homophobia was the result of the personal attitudes of a handful of people in power. In other words, it was all mere ideology and political reasons of state.

Assuming that such simple explanation were to be true, Farber fails to tell his readers that Fidel Castro in an interview with the Mexican newspaper La Jornada in 2010 stated, that he assumed full responsibility for the wrongheaded policy of earlier years: "I did not judge the matter well then [No lo supimos valorar]. [5]

Was it popular in 1963 or even 1971 in Cuba to defend an enlightened position on matters related to homosexuality? It was not. But, why not?

Was the world enlightened about such matters then? No, it was not. It should be remembered that until 1973 homosexuality was considered a mental disorder by the American Psychiatric Association. The professions elsewhere in the hemisphere shared similar attitudes. Homosexuality, at least in the US, it was considered "deviance" until not too far back in history and outlawed in most states. Cuba had inherited a male chauvinist culture due to longstanding attitudes in both Spanish and African cultures.

Professor Helen Yaffe writes,

“The first legal challenge to homophobia in Cuba was in 1975 with a Cuban Supreme Court ruling against discrimination at work. In 1979 same sex relationships were decriminalised. In 1988 the offence of committing ‘homosexual acts in public places’ was removed from the penal code. In the 1990s, they resources to combat homophobia both in institutions and from individuals. Discrimination was condemned in a UJC Congress in 1992 and in 1993 sex education workshops on homosexuality were run throughout Cuba to explain that homophobia is a prejudice.” [6 Helen Yaffe. *Socialism and Equality in Cuba: the Fight for LGBT Rights*, FRFI (London), August/September 2012, No. 227].

Yaffe also notes that in 1995, “Cuban drag queens led the annual May Day parade, joined by two gay delegations from the US – where sodomy remains a criminal offence in many states” [7 yaffe, op cit,]

Yet, over the past 15 years the changes have been extraordinary on the subject of sexual identity and policy. The Cuban mass media has played a systematic and concerted role in educating the general population. The Cuban Film Institute has been at the vanguard of discussing such matters. For example, as early as 1993 Cuba produced *Strawberry and Chocolate* denouncing anti-gay ideology and behavior among Communist party members. That was followed by numerous other films such as: *Kleines Tropicana* (1997), *Noches de Constantinopla* (2001); *Video de Familia* (2002) where a young man leaves Cuba because his parents dont accept him; *Casa Vieja* (2010); *Perfecto amor equivocado* (2004) and *el viajero inmóvil* (2008). The theme of transvestism began to be treated in *Bailando Cha cha chá* (2005), *Los dioses rotos* (2009) and *Chamaco* (2010).

Cuban television, which enters every home on a nightly basis has been slower, but in the last 13 years it began to deal with such important issues as well. And more explicit alternative sexual behaviors have

been explored as well, for example, the tv series “The next victim” which shows more explicit male homosexual behavior. A sensation that got Cubans in all walks of life to talk about the subject was “The Dark Side of the Moon” exploring bisexuality. Most recently, the TV series “Under the Same Sun” discloses and confronts sexual taboos.

Openly gay behavior is not circumscribed to just Havana; indeed one of the most conservative towns in the island , Santa Clara, in central Cuba has become a trend setter with its unique El Mejunje cultural center.

Homophobia is in clear retreat throughout the island. Openly gay men and women candidates are beginning to be elected to public office. [6] One foreign observer has



noted, “It is quite more liberal here than in the United States or Europe.” [7]

What remains to be addressed is how a male-centered and chauvinist position that Cuban culture, politicians and institutions held for centuries has changed in such relative short period of time (in about 50 years). Now, homophobia is the enemy.

Granted, the mass media and important political and social leaders are openly attempting to positively influence the population at large. Yet, the battle for sexual and gender equality is not an easy, nor top down process of change. The older population still tried to hold on to the sexual and gender roles that they were taught before the Cuban revolution.

But this is not government policy; guiding and changing social behavior and traditional cultural perspectives is a long drawn out struggle. And the metrosexual revolution with its ideology, behavior and institutions have made significant inroads as well. Machismo, manhood and masculinity are no longer expression of a what constitutes a revolutionary person. Indeed, “seremos como el Che” – the sacred icon of revolutionary manhood – has been transformed into revolutionary personhood. [8]

Is there a Party line on love in Cuba today? Yes. And the headline from the Cuban newspaper *Trabajadores* (May 8, 2013) simply states where Cuba’s policy is on the matter: “Homosexuality is neither chosen nor learned, it is an orientation and a source of pleasure and happiness”. [9]

*The song is also named “I’m a Dialectic Dope” from *The Socialist Songbook*.

[1] The White House, Office of the Press secretary, December 6, 2011. Presidential Memorandum – International initiatives to Advance the Human Rights of Lesbian, gay, Bisexual, and transgender Persons.

[2] <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2011/12/178368.htm>

[3] “Barack Obama’s Surprising Lack of patience for Russia’s Anti-Gay Laws,” *Forbes*, August 9, 2013.

[4] <http://www.havanatimes.org/?p=58144>

[5] <http://cuba-1.unm.edu/?mid=82191&q=La%20Jornada%20and%20Fidel%20and%20>

[6] 11/16/12 – Fox News – Once imprisoned for her sexuality, Cuban transgender woman becomes 1st to hold office.

[7] 06/09/13 – VOXXI – Cuba’s gay and transgendered population in the open.

[8] Vladia Rubio, “Masculinidades: Los problemas de Machi,” *Cubasi.cu*, August 30, 2012.

[9] Alina M. Lotti, “La homosexualidad no se elige, no se aprende,” *Trabajadores* (Habana), May 8, 2013.

This article was written in 2013.

Reprinted from: www.counterpunch.org

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Chile



USA

Excerpts from the speech presented by Army General Raúl Castro Ruz, first secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba Central Committee, during the closure of the National Assembly of People's Power 8th Legislature's 10th Period of Ordinary Sessions, in Havana's International Conference Center, December 21, 2017, Year 59 of the Revolution for the full speech visit www.granma.cu



Compañeras and compañeros:

It is my responsibility to make the closing remarks for this last Period of Ordinary Sessions of the National Assembly of People's Power's 8th Legislature. On this occasion, I will address several topics of national and international relevance.

Between September 8 and 10, the country was struck by Hurricane Irma, described as the most powerful and violent extreme weather event in the history of the Atlantic Ocean, which impacted, to one degree or another, 12 provinces, with strong winds, heavy rain, and severe coastal flooding.

Despite the enormous effort conducted to safeguard the population, that included the protection of more than 1.8 million persons, we were obliged to mourn the loss of 10 compatriots. More than 179,000 dwellings were affected and significant damage caused to infrastructure, national health system buildings, educational centers, the sugar industry, tourist facilities, and communications. For the first time ever, the national electrical grid was interrupted across the entire country.

In summary, damage caused by Hurricane Irma was calculated at 13,000,185,000 pesos, a figure produced on the basis of parity between the peso and the U.S. dollar.

Once again, made evident was the spirit of resistance and victory of our people, who confronted the event and the recovery period with organization, unity, discipline, and solidarity.



Within only 20 days, electrical service and water distribution were restored throughout the national territory, an effort in which, along with specialized forces, standing out were mixed support brigades, organized in every municipality, to undertake clean-up, pruning of trees, opening of trenches, and transportation of utility poles, supporting the workers who took on the task of re-establishing electrical service.

Likewise, in only 62 days, all damage to tourist facilities was repaired, to ensure that they were ready to offer their services before the beginning of the high season.

No one was left to their fate. The revolutionary government took a series of measures to facilitate the acquisition of construction materials and consumer goods of basic necessity by those affected.

We were able to maintain educational and health care services, assuring epidemiological stability.

Advancing are different housing construction programs to build stronger, more resistant dwellings in the most severely affected communities, which will be maintained as one of the principal priorities in the National Economic Plan for next year and in the future. In this sense, local resources available to accelerate a solution to this longstanding problem must be augmented.



Reconstruction after Hurricane Irma hit Cuba. ABOVE: Residents cleaning streets in Havana, Cuba, Sept. 11, 2017. LEFT: Phone lines being repaired in Camaguey, Cuba, Sept. 12, 2017

To be fair, we must recognize the role played by the strategic regions and their respective chief officers; provincial and municipal defense councils led by high-ranking leaders of the Party and government at these levels, and at the defense zone level; mass organizations; the Revolutionary Armed Forces; the Ministry of the Interior; and other agencies of the Central State Administration.

The results achieved in confronting the hurricane, and the accumulated impact of similar extreme weather events in recent years, confirm the relevance and value of our concept of people's war, and the organization of the provincial defense system and its systematic improvement, as pillars supporting our ability to resist and overcome any event or threat, regardless of whether it is of natural origin, or any other kind. (Applause).

This is an opportunity to reiterate, in the name of the Cuban people, our deepest gratitude for the help and countless expressions of support arriving from all parts of the planet, from heads of state and government, political organizations, solidarity movements, and friends of Cuba.

Moving on to another issue, I will take advantage of the occasion to mention the successful holding of the first stage of the general elections process, in which delegates to Municipal Assemblies of People's Power were elected, constituted this past Sunday, December 17.

Once again our people turned out massively to exercise their right to vote, reaching a participation level of 89.02% in the first round, a figure similar to that of the previous process.

At the same time, the quality of the vote was greater, in comparison to the elections held in 2015, reaching a higher percentage of valid ballots, with fewer voided or blank.

The process was characterized by greater preparation, organization, and cohesion in the work done by electoral authorities at different levels, state institutions, mass organizations, social associations, and citizens.

In fact, the process constituted a massive demonstration of the people's support and confidence in the Revolution and socialist democracy, as well as a worthy tribute to our historic leader, and this must be the case in the second

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Extractos del discurso pronunciado por el General de Ejército Raúl Castro Ruz, Primer Secretario del Comité Central del Partido Comunista de Cuba y Presidente de los Consejos de Estado y de Ministros, en la clausura del X Período Ordinario de Sesiones de la VIII Legislatura de la Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular, en el Palacio de Convenciones, el 21 de diciembre de 2017, «Año 59 de la Revolución». Para el discurso completo: www.granma.cu

Compañeras y compañeros:

Me corresponde realizar las conclusiones del último Período Ordinario de Sesiones de la VIII Legislatura de la Asamblea Nacional. En esta oportunidad abordaré varias temáticas del acontecer nacional e internacional.

Entre los días 8 y 10 de septiembre el país fue azotado por el huracán Irma, calificado como el evento meteorológico más poderoso y violento de la historia del Atlántico, que impactó, en mayor o menor medida, a 12 provincias con fuertes vientos, lluvias intensas y severas inundaciones costeras.

A pesar de las ingentes acciones acometidas para salvaguardar a la población, que abarcó la protección de más de un millón 800 mil personas, tuvimos que lamentar la pérdida de 10 compatriotas. Más de 179 mil viviendas resultaron afectadas y se produjeron significativos daños en las infraestructuras, edificaciones del sistema nacional de salud, centros docentes, la agricultura, industria azucarera, instalaciones turísticas y en las comunicaciones. Por vez primera se produjo la interrupción del sistema eléctrico nacional en todo el país.

En resumen, los daños ocasionados por el huracán Irma fueron cuantificados en 13 mil millones 185 mil pesos, cifra calculada a partir de la paridad del peso con el dólar norteamericano.

Nuevamente se puso de manifiesto el espíritu de resistencia y victoria de nuestro pueblo, que con organización, unidad, disciplina y solidaridad enfrentó este evento y la etapa de la recuperación.

En apenas 20 días se restableció el suministro de electricidad y agua en todo el territorio nacional,

"AQUÍ ESTAMOS Y ESTAREMOS, LIBRES, SOBERANOS E INDEPENDIENTES"



actividad en la que, junto a las fuerzas especializadas, se destacaron las brigadas mixtas de apoyo conformadas en cada municipio para las labores de limpieza, poda, apertura de huecos y acarreo de postes en apoyo de los obreros que se ocuparon de restablecer la electricidad.

Igualmente en tan solo 62 días fueron restablecidas todas las afectaciones en las instalaciones turísticas, de modo que estuvieron listas para prestar servicios antes del inicio de la temporada alta.

Nadie quedó desamparado. El gobierno revolucionario adoptó un conjunto de medidas para facilitar la adquisición de materiales de la construcción y bienes de consumo de



Reconstrucción después del huracán Irma. DERECHA: El vicepresidente primero de los Consejos de Estado y de Ministros, Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez (centro) inspecciona las operaciones de recuperación en la planta termoeléctrica de Antonio Guiteras, severamente dañada, en Matanzas, el 13 de septiembre de 2017.



primera necesidad a los damnificados.

Logramos preservar los servicios de educación y salud, asegurándose la estabilidad epidemiológica.

Se encuentran en ejecución diferentes programas de construcción de viviendas más sólidas y resistentes en las comunidades que tuvieron las mayores afectaciones, lo cual se mantendrá como una de las principales prioridades en el Plan de la Economía Nacional para el próximo año y en adelante. En este sentido deben potenciarse los recursos locales disponibles para acelerar la solución al viejo problema de la vivienda.

Es justo reconocer el papel desempeñado por las regiones estratégicas y sus respectivos jefes, los consejos de defensa provinciales y municipales, encabezados por los máximos dirigentes del Partido y el Gobierno en esas instancias, y a nivel de zona de defensa, las organizaciones de masas, las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias, el Ministerio del Interior y demás organismos de la Administración Central del Estado.

Los resultados alcanzados en el enfrentamiento a este huracán y las experiencias acumuladas ante fenómenos climatológicos similares en años recientes, confirman la vigencia y validez de la doctrina de la Guerra de todo el pueblo, y la organización del sistema defensivo territorial y su sistemático perfeccionamiento, como pilares para resistir y vencer cualquier evento o amenaza, ya sea proveniente de la naturaleza o de cualquier otra índole (Aplausos).

Sirva esta oportunidad para reiterar, en nombre del pueblo cubano, el más profundo agradecimiento por la ayuda y las incontables muestras de apoyo llegadas desde todas las partes del planeta, mediante jefes de Estado y de Gobierno, organizaciones políticas, movimientos de solidaridad y amigos de Cuba.

Pasando a otro tema, aprovecho la ocasión para referirme a la exitosa realización de la primera etapa del proceso de elecciones generales, donde resultaron electos los delegados a las asambleas municipales del Poder Popular, las cuales quedaron constituidas el pasado domingo 17 de diciembre.

Una vez más nuestro pueblo acudió masivamente a ejercer su derecho al voto, alcanzando en la primera vuelta un 89,02 % de asistencia, cifra similar a la del anterior proceso.

Al propio tiempo, la calidad del sufragio resultó superior, en comparación con las elecciones efectuadas en el año 2015, al

continúa en la página 22

stage, which will be convoked shortly. [...]

Speaking in December last year before this Assembly, I warned that financial tensions and challenges would continue in 2017, and could even grow worse. Nonetheless, we projected re-taking an ascending path in the national economy's performance and achieving moderate growth in the Gross Domestic Product of 2%.

As was explained over the course of this session, the GDP maintained a positive direction, showing growth of 1.6%, an outcome that may not satisfy us but was achieved in a context aggravated by financial restrictions and insufficient availability of fuel, to which was added the significant impact of a severe three-year drought, and the extensive damage caused by Hurricane Irma, to which I have already referred.

Neither can we overlook the effect of the economic, commercial, financial blockade of the United States government, which not only remains in full force after 56 years, but has been tightened under the new administration.

The economy's modest growth was favored by positive trends in tourism, a sector in which a new record of 4.7 million international visitors will be established; as well as increases in transportation, communications, agriculture, and construction, fundamentally.

The principal programs of investment linked to the development of infrastructure and the broadening of external sources of income performed at an acceptable level.

Amidst financial tensions, the vitality of social services provided to Cubans free of charge was assured.

Likewise, the domestic financial equilibrium was maintained, with greater supplies in the network of retail stores, which while still insufficient, allows for a better response to the population's growing demand. [...]

As on other occasions, I think it appropriate now to make a brief assessment of some of the main foreign policy issues.

In 2017 we have witnessed a serious, irrational deterioration in relations between the United States and Cuba. Our country is not at all responsible for this setback, marked by the tightening of the blockade, the return of aggressive and disrespectful rhetoric, and the arbitrary application of unjustified measures that significantly affect ties between peoples and families, as well as the rights and freedoms of Cubans and U.S. citizens.

The decisions adopted by the United States government in recent months, not only interrupted the process initiated on the sovereign

decision of both countries to move toward a new type of relationship, for the first time in their history, based on respect and civilized co-existence, but have opened new fronts of tension.

In this setback, the United States again resorts to the artificial fabrication of pretexts to justify the return to failed and universally rejected

We must not forget that the policy adopted by the new government of the United States is opposed by the American people and the international community, which was clearly expressed on November 1 in the United Nations General Assembly on voting, almost unanimously, with the exception of the United States and Israel, in favor of the resolution presented

by our country on the need for the U.S. government to put an end to its economic, commercial and financial blockade, which the Cuban people have suffered for almost 56 years.

Neither does it have the support of the majority of Cuban émigrés, who are also affected by decisions that only favor minority, reactionary sectors, historically interested in leading the two countries toward a confrontation.

For our part, we have made efforts and will continue working to preserve, to the extent possible, the spaces for exchange and cooperation established in recent years and, as I have said repeatedly, Cuba is willing to continue negotiating pending bilateral issues with the United States, on the basis of equality

and respect for the sovereignty and independence of our country, and continue the respectful dialogue and cooperation on issues of common interest with the U.S. government.

The Cuban Revolution has withstood the onslaught of 11 U.S. administrations of different kinds and here we are and will remain, free, sovereign and independent. (Applause)

Our Latin American and Caribbean region is suffering imperialist and oligarchic attacks with the aim of turning back history and destroying the advances achieved by popular forces in recent years.

The Bolivarian Revolution faces an unconventional war imposed by its external enemies and internal coup-plotting sectors.

The results of the recent electoral processes ratify the legitimacy and democratic character of the government led by constitutional President Nicolás Maduro Moros and the civil-military union.

We reject the unilateral coercive measures imposed by the United States, Canada, and the European Union, and the external interference against Venezuela's Bolivarian Chavista process, which threaten the peace and dialogue between Venezuelans, with destabilizing purposes, and generate economic hardship for the population.

Certain governments of the hemisphere, in complicity with officials of the discredited OAS, are trying to crush Venezuela. The Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America



Cuban students in Havana react to results of the 2016 United Nations vote condemning the US blockade on Cuba. The 2016 vote was the first to receive zero votes against the resolution, as the US abstained.



Cartoon with the hashtag that translates to "I vote against the blockade"

policies.

I categorically reiterate that Cuba had and has no responsibility whatsoever in the incidents that allegedly affected the health of accredited diplomats or other foreign visitors.

The results of the Cuban and U.S. investigations, which until now have not found the slightest evidence of the causes or origin of the health conditions described, confirm as such.

It was not Cuba that established new prohibitions on the already very limited economic, commercial, and financial ties between the two countries, or who has once again restricted the right of U.S. citizens to visit our country and Cubans to the United States, or harmed the functioning of embassies, with negative consequences for migratory relations, exchanges, and travel between the two nations.



Cuban school children customarily guard the ballot boxes during elections in Cuba.

reiterated, through the declaration of its Political Council, meeting in Havana in recent days, that we will remain united.

The Cuban Revolution suffered similar stages for decades, and even worse on some occasions. With that experience and faithful to our principles, we reiterate our unwavering solidarity with the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

We will maintain cooperation with the Venezuelan government and people, even under the most adverse circumstances.

We will do everything in our power to fulfill the revolutionary duty of contributing to the victory of the Bolivarian Chavista Revolution. (Applause)

We will never be unfaithful to the loyalty and gratitude that we feel toward President Hugo Chávez Frías for his support and solidarity in difficult moments.

Likewise, we reiterate our support to Senator Cristina Fernández de Kirchner who, as you know, was president of Argentina, and former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, today harassed by the oligarchy with politically motivated legal proceedings.

In this increasingly complex scenario, the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean have a duty to move toward the political, economic and social integration of Our America. As I have stated in various forums, working for "unity within diversity" is an imperative need.

Cuba will spare no effort to ensure that CELAC, as a genuinely Latin American and Caribbean mechanism, continues to promote the common interests of the region. In this regard, the postulates of the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace should continue to be the benchmark in relations between CELAC countries and between the rest of the world and our states.

As has been reported, a few days ago we held the Sixth CARICOM-Cuba Summit in Antigua and Barbuda, which demonstrated not only the high level of relations between Caribbean nations and our country, but also the importance of the mutual cooperation and solidarity that we have maintained for decades.

I wish to reiterate our continued support to our

Caribbean brothers and sisters, victims of devastating natural phenomena such as Hurricanes Irma and Maria. At the same time, we demand fair and differentiated treatment for the states of the Caribbean, which today suffer the dramatic effects of climate change, and we reaffirm our conviction that this phenomenon must be faced decisively by all.

To the same extent that its disastrous consequences are revealed, the position of the President of the United States to withdraw from the Paris Agreement becomes even more incoherent, in contrast to the attitude of the rest of the international community, gathered in France on December 12 at the Summit convened by President Emmanuel Macron and the United Nations.

I consider it necessary to dedicate a few words to the situation in Palestine.

I reiterate our profound concern and rejection of the unilateral decision of the United States government to recognize the city of Jerusalem as the capital of the state of Israel, which constitutes a serious violation of United Nations resolutions on the subject, and of international law.

This measure, broadly condemned by the international community, further exacerbates tensions in the area and dispels the possibility of any effort aimed at resuming peace talks between Israelis and Palestinians.

We reaffirm our unconditional support for the search for a comprehensive, just, and lasting solution to the conflict, based on the creation of two states, which ensures the exercise of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, and to an independent state within the pre-1967 borders, with its capital in East Jerusalem.

Finally, I reiterate with all my energy and conviction that our country will continue to maintain its principled positions in all aspects of international relations, in favor of the rights of the peoples, of peace, justice, and solidarity with the best causes of humanity. (Applause)

Finally, compañeras and compañeros, I wish to reaffirm what I have already expressed in the Sixth and Seventh Party Congresses about the benefit of limiting the nation's principal positions to two five-year terms. Consequently, when the National Assembly of People's Power is constituted on April 19 of next year, my second and last term leading the state and the government will conclude, and Cuba will have a new president.

It only remains for me to wish you and all our people the warmest congratulations on the occasion of the New Year, year 60 of the Revolution.

Thank you very much. (Ovation)

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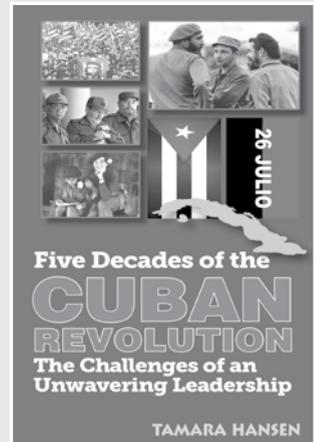
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**5 Decades of the Cuban Revolution
The Challenges of an
Unwavering Leadership**



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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alcanzarse un mayor por ciento de boletas válidas y por ende cifras inferiores de anuladas y en blanco.

Este proceso se caracterizó por una mayor preparación, organización y cohesión de trabajo entre las autoridades electorales en los distintos niveles, las instituciones estatales, organizaciones de masas y sociales y la ciudadanía. De hecho constituyó una demostración de respaldo masivo y confianza del pueblo en la Revolución y la democracia socialista, así como un digno homenaje a su líder histórico, y así debe ser en la siguiente etapa que próximamente se convocará. [...]

Al intervenir en diciembre del pasado año ante esta Asamblea alerté que en el año 2017 persistirían las tensiones financieras y retos que podrían incluso recrudecerse, no obstante preveíamos retomar la senda ascendente en el desempeño de la economía nacional y lograr un crecimiento moderado del Producto Interno Bruto en el entorno del 2 %.

Como les fue explicado en el transcurso de esta sesión, el PIB conservó su signo positivo al registrar un crecimiento del 1,6 %, resultado que aunque no nos satisface, ha sido logrado en un escenario agravado de restricciones financieras, insuficiente disponibilidad de combustibles, a lo que se suma el nada despreciable impacto de la aguda sequía sostenida durante tres años y las cuantiosas afectaciones provocadas por el huracán Irma, cuestión a la que ya me referí.

Tampoco pueden soslayarse los efectos del bloqueo económico, comercial y financiero del gobierno de los Estados Unidos, que no solo sigue en pie desde hace más de 56 años, sino que se recrudece bajo la nueva administración.

El modesto ascenso de la economía se vio favorecido por la dinámica en el turismo, esfera en la que se impondrá un nuevo récord de visitantes internacionales de 4 millones 700 000; incrementos en los sectores del transporte, comunicaciones, agricultura y

Murales contra el bloqueo en Cuba



las construcciones, fundamentalmente.

Los principales programas de inversiones vinculados con el desarrollo de las infraestructuras y la ampliación de las fuentes de ingreso externas tuvieron un comportamiento aceptable.

En medio de las tensiones financieras se aseguró la vitalidad de los servicios sociales que se brindan gratuitamente a todos los cubanos.

Igualmente se ha preservado el equilibrio financiero interno, con mayores ofertas en la red de establecimientos minoristas, que aunque todavía insuficientes, permiten mejorar la respuesta a la creciente demanda de la población. [...]

Al igual que en otras ocasiones, me parece oportuno ahora hacer un breve balance de algunos de los principales temas de la política exterior.

En 2017 hemos sido testigos de un serio e irracional deterioro en las relaciones entre los Estados Unidos y Cuba. Nuestro país no es en lo absoluto responsable de este retroceso, marcado por el recrudecimiento del bloqueo, el regreso de la retórica agresiva e irrespetuosa y la arbitraria aplicación de medidas injustificadas que afectan sensiblemente los vínculos entre los pueblos y las familias, así como los derechos y libertades de los cubanos y los estadounidenses.

Las decisiones adoptadas por el gobierno de los Estados Unidos en los últimos meses, no solo interrumpieron el proceso iniciado por decisión soberana de ambos países para avanzar hacia un nuevo tipo de relación, por primera vez en su historia, basado en el respeto y la convivencia civilizada, sino que han abierto nuevos frentes de tensión.

En este retroceso, los Estados Unidos acuden nuevamente a la fabricación artificial de pretextos que justifiquen el regreso a políticas fracasadas y universalmente rechazadas.



adas.

Reitero categóricamente que Cuba no tuvo ni tiene responsabilidad alguna en los incidentes que se alega habrían afectado la salud de diplomáticos acreditados o de otros visitantes extranjeros.

Los resultados de las investigaciones cubanas y estadounidenses, que hasta ahora no han encontrado la más mínima evidencia de las causas y el origen de las afecciones de salud descritas, así lo confirman.

No ha sido Cuba la que ha establecido nuevas prohibiciones a los muy limitados vínculos económicos, comerciales y financieros existentes entre los dos países, ni quien ha vuelto a restringir el derecho de los ciudadanos estadounidenses a visitar nuestro país y de los cubanos a los Estados Unidos, ni la que ha perjudicado el funcionamiento de las embajadas, con consecuencias negativas para las relaciones migratorias, los intercambios y los viajes entre ambas naciones.

No debemos olvidar que la política adoptada por el nuevo gobierno de los Estados Unidos tiene la oposición del pueblo estadounidense y de la comunidad internacional, que se expresó claramente el pasado primero de noviembre en la Asamblea General de las Naciones Unidas al depositar su voto, de forma casi unánime, con la excepción de Estados Unidos e Israel, a favor de la resolución presentada por nuestro país sobre la necesidad de que se ponga fin al bloqueo económico, comercial y financiero por parte del gobierno de los Estados Unidos, que el pueblo cubano sufre desde hace más de 56 años.

Tampoco tiene el apoyo de la mayoría de la

emigración cubana, que se ve afectada también por decisiones que solo favorecen a sectores retrógrados minoritarios, interesados históricamente en conducir a ambos países hacia una confrontación.

Por nuestra parte, hemos hecho esfuerzos y continuaremos trabajando para preservar, en la medida de lo posible, los espacios de intercambio y cooperación establecidos en los últimos años y, como he dicho en repetidas ocasiones, Cuba tiene la voluntad de continuar negociando los asuntos bilaterales pendientes con los Estados Unidos, sobre la base de la igualdad y el respeto a la soberanía y la independencia de nuestro país, y proseguir el diálogo respetuoso y la cooperación en temas de interés común con el gobierno estadounidense.

La Revolución Cubana ha resistido los embates de 11 administraciones de los Estados Unidos de distinto signo y aquí estamos y estaremos, libres, soberanos e independientes (Aplausos).

Nuestra región latinoamericana y caribeña sufre los ataques del imperialismo y de las oligarquías con el objetivo de hacer retroceder la historia y quebrar los avances logrados por las fuerzas populares durante los últimos años.

La Revolución Bolivariana enfrenta la guerra no convencional que le imponen sus enemigos externos y sectores golpistas internos.

Los resultados de los recientes procesos electorales ratifican la legitimidad y el carácter democrático del gobierno encabezado por el presidente constitucional Nicolás Maduro Moros y la unión cívico-militar.

Rechazamos las medidas coercitivas unilaterales impuestas por los Estados Unidos, Canadá y la Unión Europea y la injerencia externa contra el proceso bolivariano y chavista de Venezuela que amenazan la paz y el diálogo entre venezolanos con propósitos desestabilizadores y generan penurias económicas a su población.

Algunos gobiernos del hemisferio, en complicidad con personeros de la desprestigiada OEA, intentan aplastar a Venezuela. La Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América reiteró, mediante la declaración de su Consejo Político, reunido en La Habana en días recientes, que permaneceremos unidos junto a ella.

La Revolución Cubana padeció por décadas etapas parecidas y aún peores en algunas ocasiones. Con esa experiencia y fieles a nuestros principios, ratificamos la invariable solidaridad con la República Bolivariana de Venezuela.



Raúl Castro votando durante elecciones parciales en 2017

Mantendremos la cooperación con el gobierno y el pueblo venezolanos, aun bajo las circunstancias más adversas.

Haremos todo lo que esté en nuestras manos para cumplir el deber revolucionario de contribuir a la victoria de la Revolución bolivariana y chavista (Aplausos).

Nunca faltaremos a la lealtad y gratitud que sentimos hacia el presidente Hugo Chávez Frías por su apoyo y solidaridad en momentos difíciles.

Asimismo, reiteramos nuestro respaldo a la senadora Cristina Fernández de Kirchner que, como ustedes conocen, fue presidenta de Argentina, y al expresidente Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, hoy acosados por la oligarquía con procesos judiciales motivados políticamente.

En este escenario cada vez más complejo, los países de la América Latina y el Caribe tenemos el deber de avanzar hacia la integración política, económica y social de Nuestra América. Como he afirmado en diversos foros, trabajar por la «unidad dentro de la diversidad» es una necesidad impostergable.

Cuba no escatimará esfuerzos para que la Celac, como mecanismo genuinamente latinoamericano y caribeño, siga promoviendo los intereses comunes de la región. En ese propósito, los postulados de la Proclama de América Latina y el Caribe como Zona de Paz deberán continuar siendo el referente en las relaciones entre los países de la Celac, y del resto del mundo con nuestros Estados.

Como se ha informado, hace pocos días efectuamos la Sexta Cumbre Caricom-Cuba en Antigua y Barbuda, que demostró no solo el elevado nivel de relaciones entre las naciones caribeñas y nuestro país, sino también la importancia de la cooperación y la solidaridad mutuas que mantenemos desde hace décadas.

Deseo reiterar el permanente apoyo a los hermanos caribeños, víctimas de devastadores fenómenos naturales como los huracanes Irma y María. Demandamos al propio tiempo un

tratamiento justo y diferenciado para los Estados del Caribe, que hoy sufren los dramáticos efectos del cambio climático, y reafirmamos nuestra convicción de que es preciso enfrentar decisivamente ese fenómeno por parte de todos.

En la misma medida en que se manifiestan sus nefastas consecuencias, resulta más incoherente la posición del Presidente de los Estados Unidos de retirarse del Acuerdo de París, lo que contrasta con la actitud del resto de la comunidad internacional, reunida en Francia el pasado 12 de diciembre en la Cumbre convocada por el presidente Emmanuel Macron y las Naciones Unidas.

Considero necesario dedicar unas palabras a la situación de Palestina.

Ratifico nuestra profunda preocupación y rechazo a la decisión unilateral del gobierno de los Estados Unidos de reconocer a la ciudad de Jerusalén como capital del Estado de Israel, lo que constituye una grave violación de las resoluciones de Naciones Unidas sobre el tema, y del Derecho Internacional.

Esta medida, repudiada de manera generalizada por la comunidad internacional, agudiza aún más las tensiones en el área y aleja las posibilidades de cualquier esfuerzo dirigido a reanudar las conversaciones de paz entre israelíes y palestinos.

Reafirmamos el irrestricto apoyo a la búsqueda de una solución amplia, justa y duradera al conflicto, basada en la creación de dos Estados, que asegure el ejercicio del derecho inalienable del pueblo palestino a la libre determinación, y a disponer de un Estado independiente dentro de las fronteras anteriores a 1967, con su capital en Jerusalén Oriental.

Finalmente, reitero con toda energía y convicción que nuestro país seguirá manteniendo sus posiciones de principios en todos los aspectos de las relaciones internacionales, a favor de los derechos de los pueblos, de la paz, la justicia y de la solidaridad con las mejores causas de la humanidad (Aplausos).

Finalmente, compañeras y compañeros, deseo ratificar lo ya expresado por mí en el Sexto y Séptimo congresos del Partido acerca de la conveniencia de limitar a dos términos de cinco años el ejercicio de los principales cargos de la nación. En consecuencia, cuando la Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular se constituya el 19 de abril del próximo año, habrá concluido mi segundo y último mandato al frente del Estado y el Gobierno y Cuba tendrá un nuevo presidente.

Solo me resta desear a ustedes y a todo nuestro pueblo las más calurosas felicitaciones con motivo del año nuevo, año 60 de la Revolución.

Muchas gracias (Ovación)

An Interview with journalist, author & Cuba Solidarity activist, Arnold August

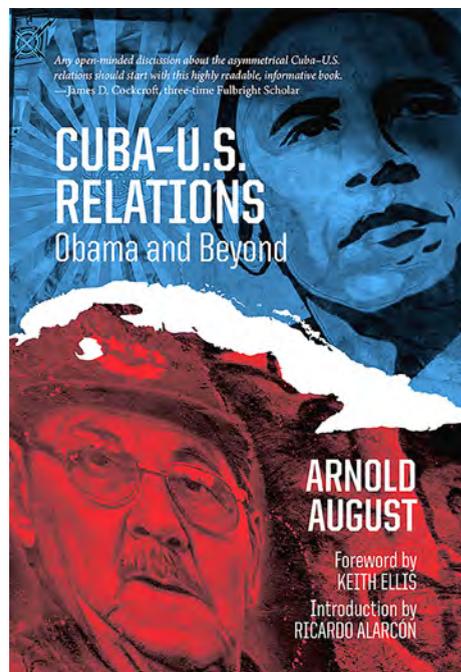
By Ali Yerevani

Arnold August is the author of many articles and books including: "Democracy in Cuba and the 1997-98 Elections" (Editorial José Martí, 1999), "Cuba and Its Neighbours: Democracy in Motion" (Fernwood Publishing/Zed Books, 2013), "Cuba-U.S. Relations: Obama and Beyond" (Fernwood, 2017). An accomplished journalist, he contributes articles in English, Spanish and French to news and research sites in the United States, Canada, Cuba, Latin America and Europe. Since 1997, he has spent extended periods in Cuba pursuing his intensive investigations. We had the honour of having Arnold August visit Vancouver from his home in Montreal, Quebec in October 2017 for the 7th International Che Guevara Conference. After many lively conversations about politics and his work, we were inspired to invite him to do an exclusive interview with Fire This Time Newspaper.

Fire This Time: Now it is one year after the passing of Fidel, what do you think are the most important things for people to know about Fidel?

Arnold August: His thinking is valid today and tomorrow. On the first anniversary of his passing last November 25, I wrote about his ideas on Cuba-U.S. relations as the principal guide for today and tomorrow. He is in fact

Make sure to get Arnold August's "Cuba-U.S. Relations: Obama and Beyond"



the architect of Cuba's U.S. policy, which resulted in the December 17, 2014 formal mutual Cuba-U.S. recognition. Fidel's dedication since 1959 is also coupled with his incessant warning to be wary of U.S. imperialism's long-term goals which never change. Thus, on principles, "Ni un tantico así, nada!" – Not one iota, but nothing! This sums up his justified apprehension.

FTT: Congratulations on receiving the Friendship Medal from Cuba, because of your dedication and commitment to Cuba solidarity work and the Cuban Revolution. Besides doing the important promotion of your book, what other upcoming educational projects about Cuba do you have in mind?

AA: Thank you, Ali, but the Medal is no longer "mine." It is still at home, but upon reception I publicly dedicated it "to the ever-valid work of Fidel Castro Ruz."

Well, I think that the promotion of the book Cuba-U.S. Relations is still my most important educational project task now. The publication is the only one (as far as I know), written in the context of Cuba-U.S. relations, that thoroughly deals with Cuban resistance to the U.S.-led cultural war. I use this term "culture" in the broad sense to include artistic endeavours, politics and ideology. Here is a scoop for Fire This Time: the Cuban Spanish-language edition is to receive special treatment with a series of book launches (in which I am fully participating) in Havana, Santiago de Cuba and elsewhere in April 2018.

In addition, I am continuously humbled by the multiple invitations received from a half-dozen prestigious Cuban universities and research institutes to give conferences and to exchange experiences on Cuba-U.S. relations in February and March 2018 alone.

FTT: Your first two books, Cuba and Its Neighbours: Democracy in Motion and Democracy in Cuba and the 1997-98 Elections, were very educational. What do you think is the most significant lesson to be learned from your third book, Cuba-U.S. Relations: Obama and Beyond?

AA: Not to fear writing about reality based on investigation and guided by Marxism-Leninism and Fidel's work. I began following Cuba-U.S. relations more closely after Obama came to power in 2008, as it seemed that change was in the offing, accelerated by his



Gerardo Hernández, one of the 5 Cuban heroes held for 16 years in U.S. jail, presents Arnold August with the Friendship Medal awarded by the Council of State of the Republic of Cuba, July 2017.

2016 Havana visit. Thus, my third book was born in these conditions. It would have been easy to write by contributing towards the festering illusions about the Obama Cuba policy. But look Ali, I have been studying the U.S. since 1968. You, I and millions of people around the world know better. We remember that Obama said the U.S. Cuba policy failed because it did not bring "democracy" or the "market economy" to Cuba. Right? Thus, time for Washington to change tactics to subvert the Revolution in another way: from aggression to seduction. Another concern was the false notion that the Obama "thaw" amounted to "normalization" of Cuba-U.S. relations, or if not so, "normalization" just on the horizon.

Furthermore, based on the publication's analysis, the Trump Cuba policy is intriguingly presented as follows, for example in the Winnipeg and Washington D.C. book events in January: "From Obama to Trump: Change and Continuity" and "Cuba Policy from Obama to Trump: Differences or Only Distinctions." Thought-provoking? That is the idea!

During investigation, I found that I was on the same page as many Cuban revolutionaries. Allow me to provide you with just two of many examples: Cuban writer Luis Toledo Sande and blogger Iroel Sánchez. For those who have already read my book, you would be familiar with his extraordinary work and writing style. We now collaborate on projects, and we are like brothers, part of a larger "brotherhood" in Cuba.

To summarize my answer to your question, the most significant lesson of this book is that – Yes! – it was right to raise these controversial issues and – No! – it would not have been possible without this collaboration with Cubans who are part of their Revolution.

Follow Arnold on Twitter:
@Arnold_August

Follow Ali on Twitter: @AliYerevani

Canada Expels Venezuelan Diplomats:

Imperialist Intervention and the Dynamics of Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Venezuela

By Alison Bodine

On December 25, 2017, Chrystia Freeland, the Foreign Minister of Canada, announced that the Venezuelan Ambassador to Canada, Wilmer Barrientos Fernandez, “is no longer welcome in Canada.” Freeland also declared the chargé d’affaires at the Venezuelan Embassy in Canada, Angel Herrera, “persona non-grata.”

This declaration was a direct response to the announcement made by the government of Venezuela on December 23, that the chargé d’affaires at the Canadian Embassy in Venezuela, Craig Kowalik, was a persona non-grata, and would be expelled from the country.

For mainstream media, this is where the analysis has stopped; Canada’s announcement is being painted as a “tit-for-tat” maneuver, nothing more. However, there is much more that must be understood from this escalation in Venezuela-Canada relations, and much that the imperialist media isn’t reporting.

Why Did Venezuela Expel Canada’s Diplomat?

Delcy Rodriguez, the elected President of Venezuela’s National Constituent Assembly, explained why Venezuela was expelling Canada’s top diplomat in a statement from Venezuela’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She said, “We have decided to declare persona non-grata to the chargé d’affaires of Canada for its permanent and insistent, rude and vulgar, interference in the internal affairs of Venezuela; whom, despite the fact that the Venezuelan Foreign Ministry has called attention to respect the Vienna Convention on diplomatic relations, persistently makes statements and uses Twitter to try to give orders to Venezuela.”

Essentially, the expulsion was a result of the diplomat’s intervention in the internal affairs of Venezuela.

Venezuela’s decision to declare the chargé d’affaires at the Canadian Embassy in Venezuela should not have come as any surprise to Canada’s diplomatic mission. In October, Venezuela’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jorge Arreaza, delivered an official letter calling on the mission and the government of Canada to end their intervention in the internal affairs of Venezuela, especially Canada’s questioning of the legitimacy of the elections for governors held in mid-October.

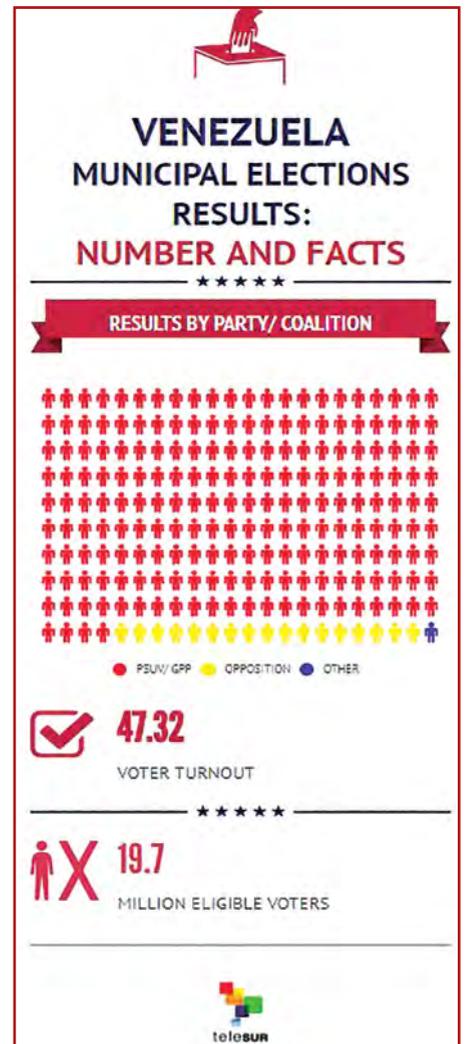
The government of Canada issued inflammatory statements about the October 15 regional elections even though they were broadly supported throughout Venezuela,

with 220 candidates running in the 23 states, and a 61.4% voter turn-out. They questioned the results because PSUV (United Socialist Party of Venezuela) candidates won in 18 out of 23 states, once again proving that, despite what imperialist governments would like us to believe, there is mass majority support in Venezuela for the government of President Nicolas Maduro.

As well, Venezuela’s Ambassador to Canada had recently been called back to Venezuela for consultations in response to the increased intervention and provocations. This included Canada’s sanctions against Venezuela, which were expanded twice in the last two months and now target 52 Venezuelan officials, including President Nicolas Maduro.

Canada’s intervention in the internal affairs of Venezuela is also not new. From 2014 to 2017, Canada’s Ambassador to Venezuela was Ben Rowsell, a career diplomat recognized for his expertise and experience in working with “opposition groups.” As reported by VenezuelaAnalysis in 2014, “While overseeing the “democratic transitions” of Afghanistan, Iraq, and Egypt, the fledgling attaché [Rowsell] specialized in the harnessing of social media for diplomatic missions, in order to interact directly with non-state actors, in effect bypassing the target nation’s government.” Even just as indicated by the Canadian Embassy in Canada’s Twitter account, when Rowsell left in July, the chargé d’affaires certainly continued the same interventionist policies.

The government of Canada continued its close relationship with Venezuela’s violent counter-revolutionary opposition is also apparent in



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NO TO CANADA’S THREATS & SANCTIONS ON VENEZUELA!

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the “Human Rights Prize” that the Canadian Embassy in Venezuela sponsors each year. The award is always given to someone that is a member of the counter-revolutionary opposition, someone whom has been actively campaigning against the democratically elected government of Venezuela.

Most recently, the government of Canada has also established itself as a pivotal member of the “Lima Group.” The Lima Group is made up of Canada and 11 other right-wing governments in Latin America, who have aligned with the objective of promoting foreign intervention in Venezuela. The third meeting of the Lima Group, which was held in Canada, concluded that, “If necessary we must put added pressure on the Maduro regime by taking concrete steps to further isolate it from the international community.” This same sentiment was echoed again by Freeland in her report on her meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson on December 19, “Rex and I also had the opportunity to discuss hemispheric concerns, including the crisis in Venezuela and what actions we can take individually, together, and in cooperation with the Lima Group, of which Canada is a member, to address the deteriorating political, economic, and humanitarian situation there.”

Canada is Defending Its Own Interests in Venezuela

When Chrystia Freeland made her announcement on December 25, she said, “Canadians will not stand by as the Government of Venezuela robs its people of their fundamental democratic and human rights, and denies them access to basic humanitarian assistance.” These words, and the government of Canada’s baseless excuse for intervention in Venezuela, are not new.

There is not a humanitarian crisis in Venezuela. As reported by an Independent Expert from the United Nations Human Rights Commission, Alfred de Zayas. “The situation in Venezuela definitely does not reach the threshold of humanitarian crisis.” And we only have to examine the government of Canada’s genocidal treatment of indigenous people to know that the government of Canada is not interested in “democracy” or “human rights.”

As reported in Volume 11, Issue 10 of Fire This Time Newspaper, “Make no mistake about it; the government of Canada is not just following the orders of US President Trump when it comes to attacks on Venezuela. They are also protecting their own interests.

In fact, the government of Venezuela has been in the targets of Canada ever since Hugo Chavez was first elected. This is when the Bolivarian revolutionary process began to put the powerful natural resources of Venezuela into the hands of the people of Venezuela. For example, in 2008, the revolutionary government expropriated two Canadian firms, Gold Reserve and Crystallex International Corp. both of which had invested hundreds

of millions of dollars into gold mining projects in Venezuela.

A report by the Senate of Canada on Venezuela, issued in July 2017, also sheds light on the government of Canada’s interests in Venezuela. These interests that have nothing to do with “democracy” and “human rights” and everything to do with making sure that Canada remains competitive in the world financial market. As the report says, “In other respects, the government has become increasingly dependent on financial support from Russia and China in order to sustain the oil industry, giving these two countries an important stake in the future of the Maduro regime.”

What Is at Stake?

As poor and oppressed people in Canada, we must condemn the hostile action of the Canadian government to expel Venezuela’s leading diplomats, but we also must recognize that this expulsion is an indication of the dynamics between revolution and counter-revolution in Venezuela.

Today Venezuela’s pro-imperialist, counter-revolution is disintegrating. Even the New York Times and the Washington Post are reporting on it: “political opposition is weakened and divide,” “The grim reality is that the opposition’s morale is at rock bottom.”

So, it seems that the government of Canada and the United States can no longer rely on the opposition in Venezuela to carry-out their dirty work. The revolutionary government of President Maduro is stronger than ever before, whether in the polls during the last three elections, in the National Constituent Assembly, which is actively introducing new legislation that is improving the lives of everyday Venezuelans, or out in the streets, where the people of Venezuela continue to bring the gains of the Bolivarian revolutionary process forward.

Every victory of the people of Venezuela for their independence and self-determination makes imperialist governments angrier. Politically, President Maduro and PSUV are gaining ground again, becoming stronger in order to be able to advance the Bolivarian revolutionary process. As their influence increases, and that of the opposition wains, imperialists will have to work differently, and find new henchmen, to regain their control over the people of Venezuela.



Venezuelans checking the voter lists on the day of the municipal elections Dec 10, 2017



Fire This Time Venezuela Solidarity Campaign Picket at the U.S. Consulate in Vancouver, Canada Dec 8, 2017

Defend Venezuela and the Bolivarian Revolution!

Today, the governments of the United States, Canada, and their imperialist allies are recognizing that they have so far been unable to turn back the tide of the Bolivarian revolutionary process in Venezuela, and are continuing to lose their hegemony over Latin America. The people of Latin America have suffered a few set-backs, including the establishment of right-wing governments in Argentina, Honduras, and Brazil, but imperialists have not been able to roll-back every achievement made and strong dynamics of anti-imperialist movement growing in Latin America.

The Bolivarian revolutionary process needs us more than ever before. As the revolutionary forces in Venezuela continue to gain ground and expand the Bolivarian revolutionary process, imperialist’s threats, sanctions and attacks on Venezuela will also increase. We must unite together to demand an end to all forms of imperialist intervention in Venezuela.

Follow Alison Bodine on Twitter:
@Alisoncolette

By Francisco Dominguez

Municipal elections took place in Venezuela on Sunday, electing 335 mayors. This was the 24th national election in Venezuela since 1998 and the third in less than four months, with presidential elections set to take place next year.

Some 9,139,564 people voted — a turnout of 47.23 per cent of the voting population, which compares favourably with the turnout of less than 30 per cent for all six elections for Britain's "metro mayors" elections in May this year.

The turnout is particularly impressive considering that a number of right-wing opposition parties announced they would be boycotting the election.

Nonetheless, and reflecting ongoing divisions within Venezuela's right-wing opposition, several opposition parties did participate by fielding candidates.

Furthermore, many individuals who are members of the boycotting parties stood as independents in many mayoralties.

With over 97 per cent of the votes processed by the National Electoral Council (CNE), "Chavista" candidates had won 23 mayoralties of the capital cities, including Caracas, losing only in San Fernando, Tachira state.

Of the total 335 mayoralties being contested, Chavista candidates had won over 300 at the time of writing, while opposition candidates taken as a whole were successful in in about 30 mayoralties.

The CEELA (Latin American Council of Electoral Experts) observers (15 out of a

Venezuela's Election: A VICTORY FOR THE BOLIVARIAN REVOLUTION



total of 60 international observers) who have been in Venezuela monitoring the election, including the audits carried out prior to the election, the audits during the election and the audits planned for after the election, have declared their confidence in Venezuela's electoral system.

Predictably, much international media coverage of the poll has failed to cover the actual results, as verified by international observers, and contained misrepresentation of elections in Venezuela.

In particular, much media coverage of Venezuela has failed to recognise that the rules governing all elections in Venezuela are

governed by the National Electoral Council, as outlined in the country's constitution.

President Nicolas Maduro and other leading

government representatives this weekend urged those right-wing opposition parties that had boycotted the election, including those elements who have supported violence aimed at forcing out the elected government in recent years, to participate in elections from now on.

This reflects the findings of a recent independent poll which found that 77 per cent of the Venezuelan population thought that opposition plans to boycott the municipal elections were wrong.

In terms of the way forward, Maduro is due to meet all elected mayors later this month to discuss how they can best co-operate to move forward dialogue in the country.

This will include advancing solutions to the country's ongoing difficulties, including those resulting from the ongoing US sanctions designed to choke the country's economy.

The Venezuelan government, with the support of much of civil society, has consistently sought to engage all opposition parties in dialogue to renounce violence as a way to achieve political ends and find peaceful means to address the country's challenges.

The means for such a regional dialogue under the auspices of the Union of South American Nations (Unasur) exist, with the participation of the former presidents of numerous countries.

The Venezuelan government and much of civil society have indicated a commitment to take part in such talks, but the Democratic Unity Roundtable (Mud) opposition coalition has displayed an on-off attitude to doing so.

The latest position is that previously discontinued talks were reinstated on December 1 in the Dominican Republic.

Discussions are ongoing, and dialogue remains the way forward for Venezuela. In contrast to this, the ever-widening sanctions from the Trump administration aimed at forcing "regime change" will only exacerbate the country's divisions and difficulties.

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Venezuela's Election: How it Happened

Francisco Dominguez is the secretary of Venezuela Solidarity Campaign (VSC) UK
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Venezuelan President Maduro Stands with newly elected Mayor of the Libertad District, Erika Farias, Dec 10, 2017.

VANCOUVER CAMPAIGN CONTINUES DEFENDING VENEZUELA AGAINST U.S. & CANADA ATTACKS!

By *Janine Solanki*

On November 3, 2017 Canada's Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland announced sanctions against 52 Venezuelan officials, under the "Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act." These new sanctions strengthen sanctions implemented by the government of Canada in September. The US also added 10 more people to their sanctions list, even targeting the person in charge of one of Venezuela's main food distribution programs.

These sanctions are in violation of international law, as well as the self-determination and sovereignty of the people of Venezuela and the democratically elected government of President Nicolas Maduro. The government of the US, joined by the government of Canada and other imperialist allies, is implementing sanctions as part of their strategy to overthrow the government of President Maduro.



Fire This Time Venezuela Solidarity Campaign Picket at the U.S. Consulate in Vancouver, Canada Dec 8, 2017

The Fire This Time Venezuela Solidarity Campaign has been showing its support for Venezuela and the Bolivarian revolution with monthly actions, demanding that the US and Canada lift the sanctions and stop meddling in Venezuela. In light of the sanctions and escalating inflammatory and threatening statements by the government of Canada against Venezuela, these actions are especially important to show the government that people here in Canada are against the sanctions and meddling in Venezuela's internal affairs.

On December 8, the monthly picket action organized by the Fire This Time Venezuela Solidarity Campaign took place in front of the US Consulate in Downtown Vancouver. The picket started off with a welcoming by Eagle Eyes, an Indigenous elder and activist, who reminded protesters that the action was taking place on the unceded and traditional territory of the Tsleil-Waututh (səlilwətaʔ), the Musqueam (xʷməθkʷəy̓əm), and the Squamish (Skwxwú7mesh) Coast Salish Nations. The picket line marched in front of the consulate, raising voices and picket signs to demand "Canada, US, Hands Off Venezuela!" and "No to Sanctions, No to Threats!". The picket action was joined by Palestinian solidarity activists, who were at the

US Consulate to attend a later action against the recent move by US President Trump to declare that the US would recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and move their embassy to the city. This act of solidarity, recognizing that these struggles against US imperialism are connected, and stronger when united, was later reciprocated as the FTT Venezuela Solidarity Campaign had canceled its monthly information table and petitioning following the picket, and called for people to join the action in solidarity with Palestine.

The importance of activists and peace and justice loving people in Canada standing in support of Venezuela is becoming more and more critical. In response to Canada's sanctions against Venezuela, on December 24, 2017 the Canadian Charge d'Affaires Craib Kowalik was expelled from Venezuela. The National Constituent Assembly (ANC) President Delcy Rodriguez provided reasons for this action, saying that Kowalik showed no restraint in his "permanent and insistent, rude and vulgar interference in the internal affairs of Venezuela." The next day Canada's Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland announced that Venezuela's ambassador to Canada, who Venezuela already withdrew in September in protest of Canada's sanctions on Venezuela, would be officially expelled from Canada.

Visit www.firethistime.net to find out about more actions in support of Venezuela, or follow on Facebook or Twitter @FTT_np.

Let's tell the governments of Canada and the US:

Hands Off Venezuela!

US and Canada Respect the Sovereignty and Self-Determination of the Venezuelan People!

No to Regime Change in Venezuela!

No to Sanctions and Threats Against Venezuela!

*Follow Janine on Twitter:
@janinesolanki*

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healthy environment. Climate Convergence teamed up with 350 Vancouver to enter the main TD Bank in Vancouver at the TD Tower and present them with a fake award for, "1st Prize for Corporate Irresponsibility".

The action was a great success. Over 100 people marched and chanted outside of the bank, while many major news organization in Canada sent reporters and covered the action either on the nightly news or their websites. Coverage was in English, French and Mandarin.

Although the TD Bank put heavy security

at the front door, several protesters were able to slip in a side door and present the bank manager with the "1st Prize for Corporate Irresponsibility". Obviously, they were less than enthusiastic and refused to accept the prize, and the whole exchange was filmed and made available online.

Next month Climate Convergence is returning to a TD Bank in Burnaby, which is near Kinder Morgan's Westridge Marine Terminal. The action will include a march from the bank to the gates of the Marine Terminal, as well as a banner drop over a busy road leading towards the facility.

Both Kinder Morgan and TD Bank are continually trying to convince the public that their business interests are the same as our community interests. The facts show otherwise, and organizers remain committed to highlighting and stopping the deception and devastation these massive corporations create in the name of huge corporate profits which never make it back to poor and working people.

TD Bank – Totally Divest in Kinder Morgan!

KM and TD – Partners in Climate Crime!

No Kinder Morgan Pipeline!

**Report from FTT Teach-in
"From the Russian
Revolution to the Cuban
Revolution: The Question
of Leadership, Building
the Socialist Project,
and Where We are
Today"**

By Janine Solanki

2017 marks the centenary of the Russian Revolution, which in October 1917 changed the course of human history. Millions of people in the working class, the dispossessed class, and women, peasants and soldiers through their political and class consciousness decided to write history from their own point of view in favour of humanity. The overwhelming majority of oppressed people overthrew capitalism and successfully registered the first socialist revolution on earth. The Russian Revolution was the clearest proof that the claim by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels that capitalism is in decay and must be dismantled was correct.

Now, 100 years later, the crisis of capitalism has advanced even further as we see a world of imperialist wars and occupations, environmental degradation under capitalist exploitation of land and natural resources, the rights of poor and working people continuously coming under attack and the worst refugee crisis the world has ever seen due to the effects of imperialism. The gap between rich and poor has reached exorbitant levels, both within advanced capitalist countries and between these countries and oppressed nations. With all this in consideration, discussing the Russian socialist revolution and its relevancy for revolutionary movements today is as important as ever.

On December 2nd, Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice organized a teach-in in Vancouver titled "From the Russian Revolution to

the Cuban Revolution: The Question of Leadership, Building the Socialist Project, and Where We are Today". The event started out with a historical documentary film, outlining the factors for the failure of capitalism in Russia and the factors which led to the victory of the Russian Revolution, including the role of different layers of society and the leadership of the Bolshevik party within it.

The speakers for the evening were Tamara Hansen, Fire This Time editorial board member and coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba, and Alison Bodine, also a Fire This Time editorial board member and chair of Mobilization Against War and Occupation. Tamara and Alison broadened the discussion on the Russian Revolution, also highlighting the exceptional role that women held in advancing the Russian Revolution, and how the program of the Bolshevik Party advanced the rights of poor and working people, as well as for oppressed nationalities within Russia. The speakers also discussed the important factor of leadership in the Russian Revolution, particularly of the Bolshevik Party, which tied in to the question of leadership in socialist revolutions today – and how the Cuban Revolution and its leadership is the true continuity of the Russian Revolution today.

Following the speakers, the participants engaged in a dynamic discussion ranging from the historical aspects of the Russian Revolution, to the crisis of capitalism today and the role of the Cuban Revolution today. Through the pages of the Fire This Time newspaper and Fire This Time events, these are important discussions which will continue to develop, with the goal of creating a better and more just world!



**3YRS SINCE VICTORY OF
THE CUBAN 5 HEROES –
VANCOUVER CONTINUES
MOBILIZING AGAINST THE U.S.
BLOCKADE ON CUBA!**

By Janine Solanki



December 17, 2017 marked 3 years since the historic announcements were made by former US President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raul Castro, that the US and Cuba would be normalizing diplomatic relations. Along with this announcement, the remaining three of the Cuban 5 heroes who had been unjustly held in US jails for 16 years were released and returned home to Cuba. This was a huge victory for Cuba and for Cuba solidarity activists and supporters around the world, who had campaigned for years against the imprisonment of the five Cuban heroes. In the 1990's the Cuban 5 were sent to the US to infiltrate anti-Cuban terrorist groups, in order to protect Cuba from terrorist attacks launched from US shores.

In Vancouver, Canada, the Free the Cuban 5 Committee – Vancouver had organized 110 monthly picket actions, until the victorious release of the Cuban 5. With the Cuban 5 freed and the US and Cuba in talks about the blockade and opening diplomatic relations, Cuba solidarity activists decided they would be returning to the US consulate for monthly protests – but now demanding that the US lift the blockade on Cuba, and return Guantanamo to Cuba. Friends of Cuba Against the US Blockade – Vancouver (FCAB-Van) was established with this purpose and have been at the US consulate every month making their demands heard!

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for, and their ability to leave home independently to use public services. How does Bill 62 make these women safer? How does it help them participate as active members of their communities?

Bill 62 is all about building fear and division between Muslim and non-Muslim women and communities. Humiliation and criminalization based on how someone dresses will only lead to

marginal-ization and further oppression, which should be intolerable to all who consider themselves in favor of women's rights. As people who believe in women's equality, we must fight for their right to access all public services and defend their right to wear whatever they choose.

The capitalist system relies on dividing and conquering to rule. That is why sexism, racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, and so many other forms of division and oppression are consistently used to convince working and oppressed people that they have more in common with the wealthy ruling class, than with each other. It is because of this that there will be no true liberation for women until capitalism is abolished. Evelyn Reed, writer and revolutionary, explained our struggle very well in 1970, when she wrote, "even though the full goal of women's liberation cannot be achieved short of the socialist revolution, this does not mean that the struggle to secure reforms must be postponed until then. It is imperative for Marxist women to fight shoulder to shoulder with all our embattled sisters in organized actions for specific objectives from now on." This includes fighting for the rights of Muslim women. This is why we as people and we as women, stand beside Muslim women and their allies to condemn Bill 62, and why we will take to the streets with women around the world on January 20, 2018 to continue pushing for our rights, and to continue the struggle towards our true emancipation.

Follow Tamara Hansen on Twitter:
@THans01



#MeToo Rally in Los Angeles

OUR HERITAGE



AUDRE LORDE

*In her own words, Audre Lorde was a
"black, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet."
1934-1992*

Who Said It Was Simple

There are so many roots to the tree of anger that sometimes the branches shatter before they bear.

Sitting in Nedicks
the women rally before they march
discussing the problematic girls
they hire to make them free.
An almost white counterman passes
a waiting brother to serve them first
and the ladies neither notice nor reject
the slighter pleasures of their slavery.
But I who am bound by my mirror
as well as my bed
see causes in colour
as well as sex
and sit here wondering
which me will survive
all these liberations.

*This poem was published in 1973 in Lorde's book
"From a Land Where Other People Live"*

*Nedicks was an American chain of fast-food
restaurants*

"By Any Means Necessary..."



MALCOLM X SPEAKS

"Zionist Logic"

Taken from *The Egyptian Gazette*
Sept. 17, 1964

If the "religious" claim of the Zionists is true that they were to be led to the promised land by their messiah, and Israel's present occupation of Arab Palestine is the fulfillment of that prophesy: where is their messiah whom their prophets said would get the credit for leading them there? It was Ralph Bunche who "negotiated" the Zionists into possession of Occupied Palestine! Is Ralph Bunche the messiah of Zionism? If Ralph Bunche is not their messiah, and their messiah has not yet come, then what are they doing in Palestine ahead of their messiah?

Did the Zionists have the legal or moral right to invade Arab Palestine, uproot its Arab citizens from their homes and seize all Arab property for themselves just based on the "religious" claim that their forefathers lived there thousands of years ago? Only a thousand years ago the Moors lived in Spain. Would this give the Moors of today the legal and moral right to invade the Iberian Peninsula, drive out its Spanish citizens, and then set up a new Moroccan nation ... where Spain used to be, as the European Zionists have done to our Arab brothers and sisters in Palestine?...

In short the Zionist argument to justify Israel's present occupation of Arab Palestine has no intelligent or legal basis in history ... not even in their own religion. Where is their Messiah?

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The importance of pushing forward with protest and raising public pressure against the US blockade proved to be the correct decision – in the last three years some positive steps forward were made, but now US President Trump is trying to reverse the progress made, and the US blockade still stands against Cuba. This is despite world opinion against the blockade, as was demonstrated in the 26th annual United Nations General Assembly resolution on November 1st, 2017, which had 191 countries voting in favour of ending the blockade and only the US and Israel shamefully voting against the resolution. The blockade puts a huge strain on the Cuban economy, and now after 60 years those damages total over \$1.3 trillion dollars.

On December 17, 2017, Friends of Cuba Against the US Blockade – Vancouver gathered for a picket action in front of the US Consulate. The monthly action is coordinated with actions at US consulates and embassies in Ottawa, Montreal, and even Kiev, Ukraine! The protest started and later closed with a traditional song and drumming led by Eagle Eyes, an Indigenous elder and activist from the Sechelt nation, which acknowledged that the action was being held on unceded and traditional Indigenous territories. Protesters then held up picket signs demanding an end to the US blockade and calling for the return of Guantanamo to Cuba, and marched and chanted energetically in a picket line in front of the US Consulate. Alongside local speakers, the protesters also heard a solidarity message from Ottawa Cuba Connections, from their picket in front of the US Embassy.

As we go forward into 2018, Friends of Cuba Against the US Blockade is committed to continue organizing and protesting. As with the case of the Cuban 5 heroes, these actions will not stop until the US blockade is lifted, and Guantanamo is returned to Cuba! To find out more about FCAB-Van events and actions, visits www.vancubavblockade.org, follow on Facebook or Twitter @NoBloqueoVan.

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

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If you would like to help with a donation, please make cheques payable to "Nita Palmer".

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NO REGIME CHANGE IN VENEZUELA!

U.S. CANADA HANDS OFF! VENEZUELA!

**FRIDAY,
JANUARY 12** 2018

1. PROTEST ACTION 4PM
U.S./CANADA HANDS OFF VENEZUELA!
US CONSULATE IN VANCOUVER
1070 WEST PENDER ST.

2. INFO TABLING & PETITION 5:30PM
NO MORE US/CANADA SANCTIONS & THREATS!
RESPECT THE SELF-DETERMINATION OF VENEZUELAN PEOPLE!

VANCOUVER ART GALLERY
ROBSON ST. @ HOWE ST.

FIRE THIS TIME - VENEZUELA SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN
WWW.FIRETHISTIME.NET



**LIFT THE U.S.
BLOCKADE ON
CUBA!**



NOW!

RETURN GUANTANAMO TO CUBA!

MONTHLY PICKET ACTION!

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 17TH - 4PM
U.S. CONSULATE

1075 W. PENDER ST. - VANCOUVER, CANADA



FRIENDS OF CUBA AGAINST THE U.S. BLOCKADE-VANCOUVER
WWW.VANCUBAVSBLOCKADE.ORG