

U.S. & SYRIA: FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW

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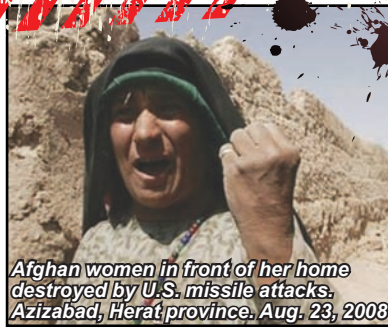
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LOOK WHO'S TALKING: CANADIAN GOVERNMENT PREACHES HUMAN RIGHTS

US/CANADA/NATO WAR ON WOMEN IN AFGHANISTAN



Afghan women leaves her home for U.S. army search



Afghan women in front of her home destroyed by U.S. missile attacks. Azizabad, Herat province, Aug. 23, 2008



Afghan women begging



Canadian soldiers raid house

By Nita Palmer

Lal Bibi is demanding justice. In May, the 18-year-old Afghan woman was abducted by five armed men, chained to a wall, raped and beaten for five days. The men responsible were all members of the US-trained Afghan Local Police, essentially a militia charged with quelling the growing armed resistance to the occupation in Afghanistan. The situation is grim for the young woman, who went through the ordeal because her cousin allegedly offended a family with ties to the local militia commander.

"If the people in government fail to bring these people to justice I am going to burn myself," she said in an interview with the New York Times. "I don't want to live with this stigma on my forehead. People will mock me if these men go unpunished, so I want every single one of them to be punished."

Lal Bibi's story is just one among thousands in the ongoing tale of injustice against Afghan women and girls. A number of stories of Afghan girls being raped and beaten at the hands of US-trained police forces have surfaced recently. This spring alone, there have been five reported cases of women killed, mostly by their family members. As well, two girls' schools have come under attack in Takhar province. The girls were poisoned in their classrooms, most likely by conservative radicals opposed to the education of women.

These are just a couple of incidents which are a reflection of the horrifying reality

of daily life for women in Afghanistan, who have faced many years of brutality and suffering. However, they also bring to light an important question: why, after nearly 11 years of the US and NATO "improving women's rights" in Afghanistan, do abuses of women's rights run rampant in the country?

Where are Afghan Women Today?

In the lead up to the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan, the grim women's rights situation was cited as one of the main justifications for the US and NATO sending troops to the country. Pictures of women hidden under burqas filled the media, as did reports of the Taliban placing bans on women receiving an education, working, even wearing high heels. The forces behind the US/NATO invasion and occupation promised to improve the situation. So, where are Afghan women today after ten years of occupation of their country?

One simple statement sums up the situation of women's rights in Afghanistan today: Afghanistan is the worst place in the world to be a woman. This was the result of a 2011 study by the Thomson Reuters Foundation. Reasons for this include desperate poverty, nearly non-existent health care, ongoing violence and insecurity and systemic violence against women.

Basic health care is a right denied to most Afghans, but Afghan women in particular. When it comes to maternal health, Afghanistan is also one of the worst places in the world to be a mother. A 2012 report by Save the Children

ranked Afghanistan 164th out of 195 countries in terms of conditions for mothers. Only Niger, which is currently experiencing a major food crisis, ranked lower. According to the Afghan Health Ministry, about 18,000 women die during childbirth each year - about one in every 11 women. In comparison, the maternal mortality ratio in neighbouring Tajikistan is about one in 430. In Canada, it is about one in 12,800. One of the main reasons for this is a lack of access to health care before, during and after childbirth. A 2010 survey by Save the Children found that only 14% of Afghan women have a medical professional attend the birth of their child, resulting in tens of thousands of unnecessary deaths of mothers and children.

Afghan women are also denied the basic right to live in safety. Numerous annual reports by the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission have found a steady increase in domestic violence. In 2006, Global Rights reported that 87% of Afghan women had experienced some type of physical, sexual or psychological violence. To make matters worse, women who experience this violence typically have no recourse. In fact, today hundreds of Afghan women sit in jail because they are victims of crimes. Victims of rape are charged with adultery, while those who run away from violence at home are accused of conspiring to commit adultery. While the government of Afghanistan has made a show of eliminating this violence by passing the Elimination of Violence Against Women law in 2009, the law is rarely implemented in a legal system rife with corruption. Most legal cases still



Demonstration in Kabul, Afghanistan on December 10, 2011



Demonstration in Afghanistan



Afghan women protest against NATO

go through tribal courts, where women have virtually no rights or voice. To make matters worse, in 2011, the United States put \$15 million into the funding of these courts, thereby supporting the continued injustice against women.

However, the injustice faced by women in Afghanistan's legal system does not appear only in the local level or the tribal courts. At a recent conference of the Afghan Parliament's Women's Affairs Committee, Afghan Justice Minister Habibullah Ghaleb called safe houses for women fleeing abuse places of "immorality and prostitution". With this sort of anti-woman attitude from the man at the highest level of Afghanistan's so-called justice system, how can women expect to receive fair treatment in the courts?

The War on Women's Rights

The US/NATO occupation of Afghanistan has done anything but improve women's rights in that country. Many of the US' allies in the country - including those in government - are warlords who are opposed to women's rights as much or more than the Taliban ever were. Although they may talk of improving women's rights, the office of Afghan President Hamid Karzai published a statement in March which declared, among other things, that women are subordinate to men and must have a male relative with them when they leave the home. This is the new "democratic" government, "committed to women's rights" that the US, Canada, and other NATO countries support politically, financially and militarily.

There have been no real improvements for women's rights in Afghanistan since the 2001 invasion. In fact, the ongoing bombings, violence and general lack of security in the country have only made

an already difficult life nearly impossible for women. The forces which are there under the guise of protecting them constantly terrorize Afghan women and their families through midnight house raids. Those widowed at the hands of US and NATO troops are often forced into prostitution in order to survive, while thousands of others resort to begging or are forced to sell their children in order to survive.

Given the terrible conditions of life for women in Afghanistan, it should come as no surprise that suicide rates among Afghan women are on the rise. A report published in 2009 by Canada's Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that "self-immolation is being used by increasing numbers of Afghan women to escape their dire circumstances, and women constitute the majority of Afghan suicides." The report went on to record that in Herat province alone, 80 women had attempted suicide by setting themselves on fire. Many of them died.

The US and NATO occupation forces have claimed victories for women's rights in Afghanistan such as the opening of new schools and clinics and women becoming members of parliament or of the Afghan National Police. However, these so-called gains are merely a carefully crafted performance with no real substance behind them. They proclaim victory in educating women because a handful of girls' schools have been built, while under the Taliban girls were not allowed to attend school. However, in reality NGOs such as the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan operated schools for girls across the country, despite official restrictions on girls' education. "During Taliban [rule] we were never actually forced really to close girls schools," Anders Fange, a Swedish lecturer on Afghanistan who formerly worked for the Swedish

Committee for Afghanistan, stated in a 2011 interview with Radio Free Europe. Today, however, 550 girls schools have been closed due to numerous attacks and a general lack of security.

The most basic human right is the right to life and to live secure from harm - a right which Afghan women are denied. Until women in Afghanistan have the right to live safely and securely and be treated like human beings, what is the importance of having a few women in parliament or in the police force? After all, how can the average Afghan woman receive an education, work, or enter political life if she is struggling just for day-to-day survival? The so-called "successes" brought by the US/NATO occupation are a thin veil for the suffering faced by the vast majority of Afghan women.

Under the Taliban, life was extremely difficult for Afghan women. They had few rights, education was extremely limited and certainly not encouraged and they were constantly victims of violence. Today, under the government of President Hamid Karzai and the US/NATO occupation, Afghan women have few rights, extremely limited access to education, and are constantly victims of violence. However, today Afghan women also must contend with the constant insecurity and suffering brought by war and occupation.

Some will argue that the terrible situation for Afghan women is inevitable, that it is an endemic part of a fundamentally anti-woman culture. While it is certainly true that sexism is an ingrained part of Afghan society (as it is all over the world), Afghanistan's recent history shows that the idea that it would be impossible to achieve women's equality in the country is patently false. The following was published in a report by the US State

Department in 2001: “Prior to the rise of the Taliban, women in Afghanistan were protected under law and increasingly afforded rights in Afghan society. Women received the right to vote in the 1920s; and as early as the 1960s, the Afghan constitution provided for equality for women. There was a mood of tolerance and openness as the country began moving toward democracy. Women were making important contributions to national development. In 1977, women comprised over 15% of Afghanistan’s highest legislative body. It is estimated that by the early 1990s, 70% of schoolteachers, 50% of government workers and university students, and 40% of doctors in Kabul were women.” Does this sound like a society that is fundamentally against women’s equality?

What Can be Done?

With the United States claiming they will end their combat mission in Afghanistan in 2014, the question of women’s rights in Afghanistan has again surfaced in the media. Many media institutions as well as aid organizations have said that if the US and NATO leave Afghanistan, the women’s rights situation in the country will worsen. However, the statistics show that the last ten years of occupation has brought nothing but hardship and suffering to Afghan women. Many Afghan women quietly acknowledge that, as bad as life was under the Taliban, they would prefer it to foreign occupation. Furthermore, the support for many of the biggest enemies of women’s rights by the US and NATO has only served to make the struggle for equality more difficult.

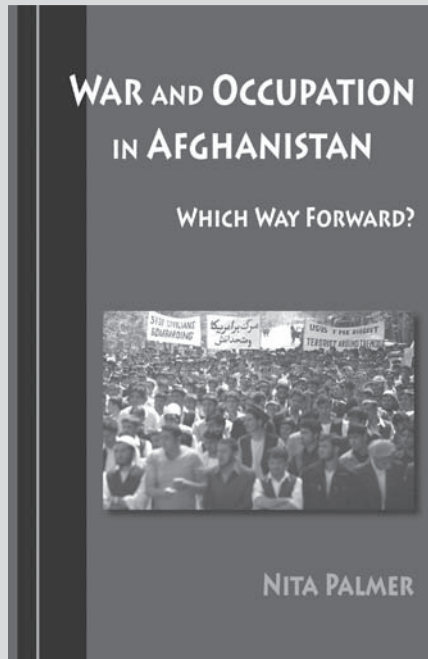
The only real solution is for Afghan women to fight for their own rights. This is no small task, but it is one already being taken on by Afghan women’s organizations - and through their history, Afghan women have proven they are fully capable of this responsibility. However, they cannot fight for their rights when they are fighting for their very survival. The most important action we can take to support our sisters in Afghanistan is to call for a complete withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan. Afghan women will face a monumental task in the struggle for their rights, yes; but equality, freedom and justice have not, and will never be, brought from the barrel of a gun.



Canadian soldier with a "Pork Eating Crusader" patch

Battle of Ideas Press

WAR AND OCCUPATION IN AFGHANISTAN WHICH WAY FORWARD?



“The problem of Afghanistan boils down to just two words: foreign occupation. The Canada/US/NATO occupation forces claim that corruption, poverty, drug production, the presence of the Taliban and other social or political crises are the fundamental problems of Afghanistan which they must fix. The irony of this claim is that the same occupation forces have proven themselves completely incapable of fixing these problems or of bettering the lives of Afghan people one bit after eight years of occupation. Under the watchful eye of the occupation forces, corruption has become rampant in Afghanistan, from the local level all the way up to the highest levels of government. Afghanistan has gone from producing less than 10% of the world’s opium in 2001 to producing a staggering 93% of the world’s opium in 2008, according to the UN World Health Organization.”

BY NITA PALMER

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

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CUBAN EX-PRISONERS DENOUNCE REPRESSION AND POLICE BRUTALITY ...IN MADRID

*Reported by Joseph Manzaneda,
Coordinator of Cubainformación*

Translated by Rock around the Blockade

<http://www.ratb.org.uk/news/international/262-cuban-ex-prisoners>

On 23 May, the Cuban 'dissident' ex-prisoner Diosiris Santana described a scene of police brutality towards several of his compatriots: 'They were dragged on the floor, hit in the face and arm, one has been left with a broken nose and foot'.

Anyone would think that his accusation was directed against the Cuban police. But no, Santana told of the actions of the Municipal Police of Madrid during the arrest of four Cuban ex-prisoners camped outside the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Spain.

'I am concerned by this situation; I had never seen this in Spain,' said another of the 'dissidents', Francisco Bacallao, referring to the police violence. A somewhat cynical comment in this case, given that Bacallao has lived for years in Madrid where, just days before National Police had evicted, with much greater violence, dozens of people from the 15M movement in the nearby Puerta del Sol.

The Cubans were protesting due to the end of the financial support that the 115 ex-prisoners and their 647 family members had received from the Government of Spain during 2010 and 2011. This was following an agreement with the previous Government and the Catholic Church in Cuba. Recall that, within days of arriving in Madrid, the exiles broke with the government of Rodriguez Zapatero, which had welcomed them. Several others travelled to Brussels with assistance from the opposition-Popular Party to defend the hard-line policy and sanctions against Cuba contained in the so-called European Common Position.

Ironically, now the Popular Party is in government, at the height of budget cuts, it has decided not to extend the economic aid, finishing the 18 months of provision signed in the host agreement. The Popular Party has even rejected a proposal of the group Union, Progress and Democracy (UPyD) to allocate 2.5 million Euros to these Cubans.



And so it is that those who call for the establishment of a capitalist free market system in Cuba are now being devoured by it in Spain.

In April, one of them, Alberto Santiago Du Bouchet, committed suicide in the Canary Islands. His family stated that he 'could not cope' with the uncertainty following the announcement of the end of the financial support. Most of

this group has experienced economic hardship. Bárbara Pura Yurubi Dueñas, a family member of one of the exiles, wrote in desperation in a letter that she may lose custody of her daughter as she was financially unable to look after her. Several members of the group have expressed their desire to return to Cuba.

For others, however, the solution is ... in the US. One of the 'ladies in white' Sabina Martín demanded a few months ago to be taken there: 'Since we came to Spain, none of what we were promised has been fulfilled by this government. We want to go to the US where democracy and human rights are truly defended'. She continues to be presented in the Spanish media as a 'fighter for human rights' in Cuba. The website of Union, Progress and Democracy Party (UPyD) has made opposition to Castro a key tenet of its politics, has supported several of the dissidents. It describes Sabina Martín as a 'freedom fighter' and a 'woman (...) with great common sense'. Let's review some examples of her 'common sense'.

In June 2011, Martín was expelled, with her family, from centre of the Spanish Commission for Refugee Aid (CEAR) in the city of Malaga for physical aggression, including threats and insults to workers, taking alcohol and knives into the centre and not attending employment workshops. Sabina Martín told the Spanish news agency EFE that behind her expulsion from the CEAR centre of Malaga was - of course! - the Cuban government. Martín's husband, showing the same great 'common sense', accused the CEAR of expelling the family by a 'military

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Statement on NATO claim of "progress" for women and girls in Afghanistan

The United National Anti-War Coalition (UNAC) calls on people and organizations everywhere to immediately and energetically refute the absurd claim that Afghan women have made "progress" during ten years of NATO military occupation. In fact, the conditions of women in Afghanistan have deteriorated under occupation and the Obama administration has made it clear, the U.S./NATO intends to stay there, at least through 2024, if not indefinitely.

UNAC asserts as false this statement signed by several heads of state of NATO at their summit in Chicago in May, 2012: In the ten years of our partnership the lives of Afghan men, women and children, have improved significantly in terms of security, education, health care, economic opportunity and the assurance of rights and freedoms. There is more to be done, but we are resolved to work together to preserve the substantial progress we have made during the past decade.

Recent facts to the contrary include:

- Afghan women have an average life expectancy of 51 years. According to UNICEF, 68% of children under five suffer from either stunting or wasting due to malnutrition. Afghanistan ranks last in both maternal mortality and infant mortality as compared with other nations of the world.
- Immediately after the fall of the Taliban there was short term improvement in the area of women's inclusion in government and of education for girls. However, especially since President Obama ordered the surge of troops in Afghanistan in 2006, security for women has deteriorated.
- Current abuses against women by

the regime include jailing women for adultery who are victims of rape, as well as Parliament passing and President Karzai signing legislation giving husbands the power to coerce sex and withhold food from their wives at their discretion. Women's groups in Afghanistan cite the root cause as the presence of warlords who abuse women being seated in the national and provincial governments.



- Women's organizations working to reduce poverty and empower women and girls say they receive little or no funding from their government. For example, the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) stated position is that "There has been no improvement in lives of this, the most miserable and ill-fated portion of Afghan society, since the establishment of transitional government." Samira Sayed-Rahman of Afghans for Peace said, "They claim they're sending little girls to school." There are buildings with "no teachers, no books, no supplies."

- In a statement to the NATO protestors May 20 in Chicago, Malalai Joya, the former Parliamentarian who faced assassination attempts for denouncing the occupation and warlords, wrote, "We have many problems in Afghanistan — fundamentalism, warlords, the Taliban. But we will have a better chance to solve them if we have our self-determination, our freedom, our independence. NATO's bombs will never deliver democracy and justice to Afghanistan or any other country".

We call for the immediate withdrawal of NATO troops and bases from Afghanistan and for the redirection of all funding to those Afghan organizations actually providing food, healthcare, infrastructure repair, and education.

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Amnesty Shilling for US Wars ...



Women in Afghanistan in a Hospital Waiting Room

June 18, 2012

By Ann Wright* and Coleen Rowley**

The new Director of Amnesty International USA – Suzanne Nossel – is a recent U.S. government insider. So it’s a safe bet that AI’s decision to seize upon a topic that dovetailed with American foreign policy interests, “women’s rights in Afghanistan,” at the NATO Conference last month in Chicago came directly from her.

Nossel was hired by AI in January 2012. In her early career, Nossel worked for Ambassador Richard Holbrooke under the Clinton Administration at the United Nations. Most recently, she served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Organizations at the U.S. Department of State, where she was responsible for multilateral human rights, humanitarian affairs, women’s issues, public diplomacy, press and congressional relations.

She also played a leading role in U.S. engagement at the U.N. Human Rights Council (where her views about the original Goldstone Report on behalf of Palestinian women did not quite rise to the same level of concerns for the women in countries that U.S.-NATO has attacked militarily).

Nossel would have worked for and with Hillary Clinton, Madeleine

Albright, Samantha Power and Susan Rice, and undoubtedly helped them successfully implement their “Right to Protect (R2P)” – otherwise known as “humanitarian intervention” – as well as the newly created

“Atrocity Prevention Board.”

This cornerstone of President Barack Obama’s foreign policy (which has served mainly to rationalize the launching of war on Libya) is now being hauled out to call for U.S.-NATO military intervention in Syria.

“Smart Power” = smart wars?

In fact, Nossel is herself credited as having coined the term “Smart Power,” which embraces the United States’ use of military power as well as other forms of “soft power,” an approach which Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced at her confirmation as the new basis of State Department policy.

An excerpt from Nossel’s 2004 paper on “Smart Power” published in the Council on Foreign Relations’ Foreign Affairs magazine sounds a lot like Samantha Power’s (and also traces back to Madeleine Albright’s) theories:



Anti-U.S. Protest in Kabul, Afghanistan. Dec. 10th, 2011

“To advance from a nuanced dissent to a compelling vision, progressive policymakers should turn to the great mainstay of twentieth-century U.S. foreign policy: liberal internationalism,

which posits that a global system of stable liberal democracies would be less prone to war.

“Washington, the theory goes, should thus offer assertive leadership — diplomatic, economic, and not least, military [our emphasis] — to advance a broad array of goals: self-determination, human rights, free trade, the rule of law, economic development, and the quarantine and elimination of dictators and weapons of mass destruction (WMD).”

Perhaps the AI’s hiring of a State Department shill as executive director of its U.S. affiliate was merely coincidental to how/why its “NATO Shadow Summit” so closely mimicked the CIA’s latest propaganda assault, but...

The “CIA Red Cell,” a group of analysts assigned to think “outside the box” to anticipate emerging challenges, was right to worry in March 2010 when the State Department’s Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) found that 80 percent of French and German citizens were opposed to continued deployment of their countries’ militaries in the U.S.-NATO war in Afghanistan.

Even though public apathy had, up to that point, enabled French and German politicians to “ignore their voters” and steadily increase their governments’ troop contributions to Afghanistan, the CIA’s newly-created think tank was concerned that a forecasted increase in NATO casualties in the upcoming “bloody summer ... could become a tipping point in converting passive opposition into active calls for immediate withdrawal.”

In a “confidential” memo, the “Red Cell” wrote: “The Afghanistan mission’s low public salience has allowed French and

German leaders to disregard popular opposition and steadily increase their troop contributions to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). Berlin and Paris currently maintain the third and fourth highest ISAF troop levels, despite the opposition of 80 percent of German and French respondents to increased ISAF deployments, according to INR polling in fall 2009.

“Public Apathy Enables Leaders To Ignore Voters ...

“Only a fraction (0.1-1.3 percent) of French and German respondents identified ‘Afghanistan’ as the most urgent issue facing their nation in an open-ended question, according to the same polling. These publics ranked ‘stabilizing Afghanistan’ as among the lowest priorities for US and European leaders, according to polls by the German Marshall Fund (GMF) over the past two years.

“According to INR polling in the fall of 2009, the view that the Afghanistan mission is a waste of resources and ‘not our problem’ was cited as the most common reason for opposing ISAF by German respondents and was the second most common reason by French respondents. But the ‘not our problem’ sentiment also suggests that, so far, sending troops to Afghanistan is not yet on most voters’ radar.

“But Casualties Could Precipitate Backlash

“If some forecasts of a bloody summer in Afghanistan come to pass, passive French and German dislike of their troop presence could turn into active and politically potent hostility. The tone of previous debate suggests that a spike in French or German casualties or in Afghan civilian casualties could become a tipping point in converting passive opposition into active calls for immediate withdrawal.”

The CIA “Special Memorandum” went



a step further, inviting “a CIA expert on strategic communication and analysts following public opinion” to suggest “information campaigns” that State Department polls showed likely to sway Western Europeans.

The “Red Cell” memo was quickly leaked, however, furnishing a remarkable window into how U.S. government propaganda is designed to work upon NATO citizenry to maintain public support for the euphemistically titled “International Security Assistance Force” (ISAF) waging war on Afghans. Here are some of the CIA propaganda expert’s suggestions:

“Messaging that dramatizes the potential adverse consequences of an ISAF defeat for Afghan civilians could leverage French (and other European) guilt for abandoning them. The prospect of the Taliban rolling back hard-won progress on girls’ education could provoke French indignation, become a rallying point for France’s largely secular public, and give voters a reason to support a good and necessary cause despite casualties. ...

“Outreach initiatives that create media opportunities for Afghan women to share their stories with French, German, and other European women could help to overcome pervasive skepticism among women in Western Europe toward the ISAF mission. ... Media events that feature testimonials by Afghan women would probably be most effective if broadcast on programs that have large and disproportionately female audiences.”

‘NATO: Keep the Progress Going!’

Amnesty International struck similar themes in announcements posted online as well as billboard advertisements on Chicago bus stops, telling “NATO: Keep the Progress Going!” beckoned us to



find out more on Sunday, May 20, 2012, the day thousands of activists marched in Chicago in protest of NATO’s wars.

The billboard seemed to answer a recent Huffington Post article, “Afghanistan: The First Feminist War?”

“The feminist victory may be complete in America, but on the international stage it’s not doing so well with three quarters of the world’s women still under often-severe male domination. Afghanistan is an extreme case in point in what might be termed the first feminist war ... a war that now may not be won even if Hillary Clinton dons a flack jacket and shoulders an M16 on the front lines. Still, since the Bush Administration to the present America’s top foreign policy office has been held by women ... women



who have promised not to desert their Afghan sisters.”

Our curiosity was further piqued because we consider ourselves to be women’s rights and human rights proponents and also due to our own prior federal careers in intelligence and military. (Colonel Wright is retired from the State Department/US military and Rowley is from the FBI.)

So along with a few other anti-war activists, we packed into a taxi to head to the Chicago hotel where Amnesty International’s “Shadow Summit” featuring former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and other female foreign relations officials was being held. We happened to carry our “NATO bombs are not humanitarian”; “NATO Kills Girls” and anti-drone bombing

posters that we had with us for the march later that day.

As we arrived, an official-looking black car dropped off Melanne Verveer, U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues, who was to be a main speaker (on the first panel, along with former Secretary Albright; U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky, D-Illinois; and Afifa Azim, General Director and Co-Founder, Afghan Women's Network; along with Moderator Gayle Tzemach Lemmon, Deputy Director of the Council on Foreign Relations' Women and Foreign Policy Program).

Verveer cast a cold glance at us and would not answer Ann Wright's questions as she scurried into the hotel with her aides surrounding her and us following behind. At first the hotel security guards tried to turn us away but we reminded the registration desk the Summit was advertised as "Free Admissions" and that some of us were members of Amnesty International.

So they let us register and attend as long as we promised to leave our signs outside and not disrupt the speakers. The hotel conference room was about half full. We stayed long enough to hear the opening remarks and the moderator's first questions of Albright and the other speakers on the first panel.

All generally linked the protection and participation of Afghan women in government as well as the progress made in educating Afghan women to the eventual peace and security of the country as envisioned by the new strategic "partnership" agreement that Obama had just signed with Afghan President Hamid Karzai.

Ms. Verveer said Afghan women do not want to be seen as "victims" but are now rightfully nervous about their future. When we saw that audience participation was going to be limited to questions selected from the small note cards being collected, we departed, missing the second panel as well as kite-flying for women's rights.

We noted, even in that short time, however, how easy it was for these U.S. government officials to use the "good and necessary cause" of women's rights

to get the audience into the palm of their collective hand — just as the CIA's "strategic communication" expert predicted!

Secretary Albright?

Not everyone was hoodwinked however. Even before the "Summit" was held,



Amnesty realized it had a PR problem as a result of its billboard advertisement touting progress in Afghanistan. An Amnesty official tried to put forth a rather lame defense blaming an accidental poor choice of wording.



But many readers (and AI members) posted critical comments and questions, including concerns about Albright's involvement given her infamous defense of Iraqi sanctions in the 1990s, which were estimated to have caused the deaths of a half million Iraqi children, with the comment "we think the price is worth it."

Under the blogger's explanation: "We

Get It / Human Rights Now," there were comments like these:

"Could someone from AI please explain why Madeleine Albright was invited to participate in this event? We (and especially those of us who are familiar with AI) should all be able to understand that the wording on the poster was a genuine, albeit damaging, mistake. But why Ms. Albright?"

"The posters are pro-NATO and play into prevailing tropes about so called 'humanitarian intervention' via 'think of the women & children' imagery. The posters & the forum that includes Albright are neither slight slips nor without context. AI is coping heat because they have miss-stepped dramatically. There is NOTHING subtle about either the imagery nor the message!

"It is not a case of 'oh sorry we didn't realize it it could be interpreted that way!' They used pro Nato imagery & slogans ahead of & during a controversial summit that has thousands protesting in the streets. Tell me again how that is not taking sides?"

"They asked a notorious apologist for mass murder of children to speak on the right of women and children...tell me again: how is that not taking sides. So it is absolutely reasonable for past supporters (and board members like myself) to be asking how it is that Amnesty USA so lost its bearings they could make a critical SERIES of errors like this?"

Of course the defensive AI blog author never answered the numerous questions asking why Amnesty had chosen Madeleine Albright as their main speaker. So we will venture an answer that probably lies in the fact that all of the powerful feminist-war hawks who have risen to become Secretary of State (or are waiting in the wings) are now taking their lead from the ruthless Grand Dame who paved the way for them, Madeleine Albright — (see Coleen Rowley's recent articles: "Obama's New 'Atrocity Prevention Board': Reasons for Skepticism" and "Militaryization of the Mothers: You've Come a Long Way, Baby, from Mother's Day for Peace").

It's also possible the highest ranks of the feminist wing of military interventionism (i.e. Madeleine Albright, Condi Rice, Hillary Clinton, Susan Rice, Samantha Power, et al) are so passionate and hubristic about the nobility of their goal

and “American exceptionalism” that some have simply succumbed to a kind of almost religious (blind faith) type fervor.

The Road to Hell

Nossel’s and Albright’s theories are flawed in many ways but suffice it to say that democracies are actually not less prone to war. A long list of “democracies” – including Nazi Germany, the Roman Empire, the United Kingdom, France and the United States itself – disprove this assertion.

In any event, the U.S. has been terribly hypocritical in its support of “democracies” in foreign countries, often toppling or attempting to topple them (i.e. Iran’s Mossadeqh, Guatemala’s Arbenz, Chile’s Allende) in order to gain easier control of a foreign country through an allied dictatorship.

No one is going to argue that the goals of humanitarianism, preventing atrocities and furthering women’s rights around the world are not “good and necessary” (in the words of the CIA strategic communications expert). We would go so far as to say these ARE truly noble causes!

Testimonials about human rights’ abuse are often true and fundamentalist regimes’ treatment of women seems to vary only in degrees of horrible. But while it’s true that many women lack rights in Afghanistan, some would argue that it’s conveniently true. And that the best lies are always based on a certain amount of truth.

The devil, however, lies in the details of promoting equality and accomplishing humanitarianism. Most importantly the ends, even noble ends, never justify wrongful means. In fact, when people such as Samantha Power decide to bomb the village Libya, to save it, it will backfire on a pragmatic level.

It must be realized that it is the nobility of the U.S.-NATO’s motivation that – as CIA propaganda department has advised – should be relied upon to convince otherwise good-hearted people (especially women) to support (or at least tolerate) war and military occupation (now known to encompass the worst of war crimes, massacres of women and children, torture, cutting off body parts of those killed, as well as increasing mental illness, self-

destructive behavior and suicides among U.S. soldiers and the corresponding cover-ups of all such horrible means).

In the decades after Vietnam, a number of military scholars identified declining American public support for that war as the main factor responsible for the U.S. “losing” Vietnam. One lesson learned and quickly implemented was to get rid of the military draft and put the wars on a credit card so fewer citizens would pay attention.

Some control also had to be gained over the type of free media (that led to trusted



TV anchor Walter Cronkite broadcasting his public souring on the Vietnam War). A whole series of war propaganda systems, from planting retired generals as “talking heads” on TV to the assistant to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld deciding to “embed the media,” have worked pretty well to maintain the necessary level of war momentum in mainstream media and amongst public opinion.

But now, with American polls approaching the same problematic levels as those in Europe cited by the “CIA Red Cell,” we suddenly see major human rights organizations like Amnesty International (as well as others) applauding Obama’s (and the feminist war-hawks’) “Atrocity Prevention Board.”

Such sleight of hand seems to work to work even better amongst political partisans. By the way, it should be noted that Congress may allow these Pentagon propagandists to target American citizens through the National Defense Authorization Act of 2013. Should we connect the dots?

There are some clear lines where the laudable need to further human rights

should not be twisted into justifying harsh economic sanctions that kill hundreds of thousands of children or, even worse, “shock and awe” aerial bombing that takes the lives of the women and children the “humanitarian” propagandists say they want to help.

Madeleine Albright’s response about the deaths of a half million children on 60 Minutes, that “the price was worth it,” illustrates the quintessential falsity of what ethicists call “act utilitarianism” or concocting fictional happy outcomes to justify the terrible wrongful means.

It also seems that a human rights NGO, in this case Amnesty International, which had gained a solid reputation and hence the trust of those it has helped through the years, will be jeopardized in aligning itself with the U.S. Secretary of State and NATO.

This is exactly how the Nobel Peace Prize got corrupted, aligning itself with the U.S. Secretary of State and NATO, which is why Nobel laureate Mairead Maguire withdrew from the Nobel Peace forum held in Chicago during NATO.

Good NGOs and non-profits that want to maintain the trust in their humanitarian work tend to be very careful to maintain their independence from any government, let alone any war-making government. When NGOs, even good ones, become entwined with the U.S./NATO war machine, don’t they risk losing their independent credibility?

**Ann Wright is a 29-year U.S. Army/Army Reserve Colonel and a 16-year U.S. diplomat who served in Nicaragua, Grenada, Somalia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Sierra Leone, Micronesia, Afghanistan and Mongolia. She resigned in 2003 in opposition to the Iraq war. She returned to Afghanistan in 2007 and 2010 on fact-finding missions.*

***Coleen Rowley, a FBI special agent for almost 24 years, was legal counsel to the FBI Field Office in Minneapolis from 1990 to 2003. She wrote a “whistleblower” memo in May 2002 and testified to the Senate Judiciary on some of the FBI’s pre-9/11 failures. She retired at the end of 2004, and now writes and speaks on ethical decision-making and balancing civil liberties with the need for effective investigation.*

REFLECTIONS BY
FIDEL CASTRO

UNUSUAL DAYS



On June 7, 2012, under the title “Assassin-in-Chief”, an internet website published the following: “...you aren’t just electing a president of the United States; you are also electing an assassin-in-chief.”

“Thanks to a long New York Times piece by Jo Becker and Scott Shane, ‘Secret ‘Kill List’ Proves a Test of Obama’s Principles and Will’, we now know that the president has spent startling amounts of time overseeing the “nomination” of terrorist suspects for assassination via the remotely piloted drone programme he inherited from President George W. Bush and which he has expanded exponentially.

The language of the piece about our warrior president [...] focused on the dilemmas of a man who - we now know - has personally approved and overseen the growth of a remarkably robust assassination programme in Yemen, Somalia, and Pakistan based on a ‘kill list’. Moreover, he’s regularly done so target by target, name by name. [...] According to Becker and Shane, President Obama has also been involved in the use of a fraudulent method of counting drone kills, one that unrealistically deemphasizes civilian deaths.

“Historically speaking, this is all passing strange. The Times calls Obama’s role in the drone killing machine ‘without precedent in presidential history’. And that’s accurate.”

“It is the strangest of bureaucratic rituals: Every week or so, more than 100 members of the government’s sprawling national security apparatus gather, by secure video teleconference, to pore over terrorist suspects’ biographies and recommend to the president who should be the next to die. This secret ‘nominations’ process is an invention of the Obama administration, a grim debating society that vets the PowerPoint slides bearing the names, aliases, and life stories of suspected members of al-Qaeda’s branch in Yemen or its allies in Somalia’s Shabab militia. The nominations go to the



What I have written here is a brief summary of current affairs in the United States.

The day before, June 6, 2012, which was equally sinister, an article entitled “Has China’s Economy Run Out of Steam?” published by BBC World stated the following:

“Several indicators have begun to point to an economic downturn in the country, including sharp slowdowns in electricity demand and industrial production, as well as in factory output and retail sales.

“China has already been suffering for several months from the chill wind blowing from Europe - its biggest export market, even bigger than the US.

“The country’s manufacturing sector has been contracting for the last seven months thanks mainly to weak export demand, according to a recent survey.”

“Money has more or less stopped flowing into China since September, and in April actually began to leave the country. This is highly unusual.”

“To make sure the Yuan doesn’t strengthen too much, China blocks speculators from buying the currency.

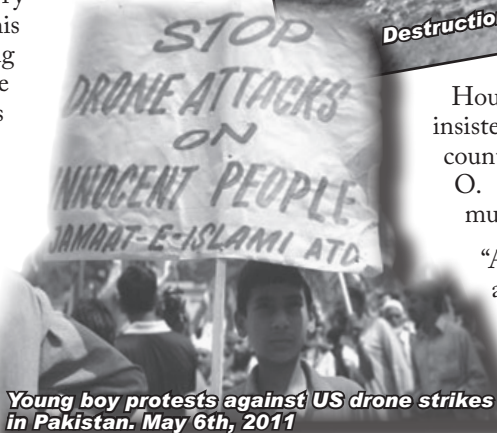
“For almost two years since mid-2010,

Continued on page 13



White House, where by his own insistence and guided by counterterrorism ‘tsar’ John O. Brennan, Mr. Obama must approve any name.”

“As we learned last week again in the Times, we not only have an assassin-in-chief in the Oval Office, but a cyber warrior...”





DÍAS INSÓLITOS

Bajo el título “El asesino en jefe”, el día 7 de junio de 2012, en un sitio de Internet se afirma: “...no solo elegirán a un presidente de EE.UU.; también estarán eligiendo a un asesino en jefe”.



“Gracias a un largo artículo del *New York Times* de Jo Becker y Scott Shane, ‘Secret ‘Kill List’ Proves a Test of Obama’s Principles and Will,’ (Lista secreta de asesinatos, prueba de los principios y la voluntad de Obama) sabemos ahora que el presidente ha pasado una cantidad sorprendente de tiempo supervisando la “nominación” de presuntos terroristas para asesinarlos mediante el programa de *drones* [aviones sin tripulación a control remoto] que heredó del presidente George W. Bush y que ha expandido exponencialmente.”

“El lenguaje del artículo sobre nuestro presidente guerrero [...] se concentra en los dilemas de un hombre que, como sabemos ahora, ha aprobado y supervisado el crecimiento de un programa de asesinatos notablemente poderoso en Yemen, Somalia y Pakistán basado en una “lista de asesinatos”. Además lo ha hecho regu-

larmente, objetivo tras objetivo, nombre tras nombre [...] Según Becker y Shane, el presidente Obama también ha estado involucrado en el uso de un método fraudulento de recuento de asesinatos de drones que minimiza las muertes de civiles.

“Hablando históricamente, todo esto es bastante extraño. El *Times* califica el papel de Obama en la maquinaria de asesinatos mediante drones de ‘sin precedentes en la historia presidencial’. Y así es.”

“Es el más extraño de los rituales burocráticos: Más o menos cada semana, se reúnen más de 100 miembros del creciente

nefasto círculo de discusión que estudia las diapositivas de PowerPoint con los nombres, alias y biografías de presuntos miembros de la filial de al Qaida en Yemen o sus aliados en la milicia Shabab en Somalia. Las nominaciones van a la Casa Blanca, donde por su propia insistencia y guiado por el ‘zar’ del contraterrorismo John O. Brennan, Obama debe aprobar cada nombre.”

“Como nos informó la semana pasada el *Times*, no solo tenemos a un asesino en jefe en el Despacho Oval, sino a un ciber-guerrero...”

Esto que escribo es una breve síntesis sobre la actualidad de EE.UU.

El día anterior, igualmente siniestro, 6 de junio de 2012, la BBC Mundo, bajo el título de “¿Se desinfla la economía de China?”, afirma:

“Varios indicadores empiezan a apuntar hacia una bajada económica en el país asiático, con una fuerte disminución de la demanda de electricidad y de la producción industrial, así como en el rendimiento de las fábricas y las ventas al por menor.

“China sufre desde hace meses a causa del viento frío que procede de Europa, que es su mercado de exportación más grande, incluso mayor que el de

Estados Unidos.

“El sector manufacturero del país se contrae desde hace siete meses debido sobre todo a la débil demanda exportadora, según un reciente estudio.”

Continúa en la página 13



La gente busca entre los escombros después del ataque de un avión no tripulado de EE.UU. en Pakistán mató a 18 personas, entre ellas 10 mujeres y niños. 28 de octubre 2010



Los niños caminan entre los escombros de casas destruidas por el ataque de un avión no tripulado de EE.UU en Pakistán. 04 de octubre 2011

aparato de seguridad nacional del gobierno, en una videoconferencia segura, para estudiar las biografías de presuntos terroristas y recomendar al presidente quiénes deben ser los próximos eliminados. Ese proceso secreto de ‘nominaciones’ es un invento del gobierno de Obama, un

Continued from page 11

the government has dutifully allowed the Yuan to strengthen against the dollar. But in the last month, as the economy has got into trouble, it started to push the Yuan's value down again.

"...many firms financed the import of raw materials such as copper, iron ore and aluminum for the building industry."

"The unused copper shipments piling up in China's warehouses have become so great that there is hardly any space to store the surplus."

"This could of course be nothing more than a short-term blip. But the fear is that it could be the beginning of the end of a building boom that has created far more apartments than the country really needs."

"There are stories of entire new ghost towns having been built.

"It seems many of these empty flats were being bought by Chinese businesses and families as an investment, in preference to leaving their money in a low-interest bank account."

"China's growth rate barely dropped below the magic 10% figure at a time when the West fell into its deepest recession since World War II."

"For example, China has built the world's biggest high-speed rail network, five times the size of France's TGV, from scratch.

"China is in the middle of a delicate transition, with a new generation of leaders taking over - something that only happens every 10 years.

"There is a political struggle going on - evidenced by the removal of the colorful Chongqing governor Bo Xilai.

"A lot of party members have personally done very well out of the building and lending boom of the last three years. If

the boom is coming to an end, they will be even more keen not to be among the inevitable losers.

"How that struggle plays out - especially if China faces a lot of unemployed workers protesting on the streets - is anyone's guess."

I am far from sharing that sinister false rumor spread by the Yankees about China's destiny, and I wonder if we could ignore the fact that China has the biggest reserves of rare earth metals of the world and huge stocks of shale gas, which will allow it to exercise its power over the world's energy production when the power of lying and subjugation come to an end. It is too much already.



Fidel Castro Ruz

June 9, 2012

Viene de la página 12

"El dinero ha dejado de llegar a China más o menos desde septiembre, y en abril de hecho comenzó a abandonar el país. Esto es altamente inusual."

"Para evitar que el yuan se fortalezca demasiado, China impide que los especuladores compren la moneda.

"Desde mediados de 2010, el gobierno chino había permitido de forma diligente que el yuan se fortaleciera respecto al dólar, pero en el último mes, conforme la economía entró en crisis, comenzó a depreciar de nuevo el valor del yuan."

"...muchas empresas financiaron la importación de materias primas como cobre, mineral de hierro y aluminio para la industria de la construcción."

"Los envíos de cobre sin utilizar que se acumulan en los almacenes de China se han hecho tan grandes que apenas hay espacio para guardar el excedente."

"Esto podría no ser más que un problema pasajero de corto plazo. Pero el temor es que pueda ser el principio del fin del boom inmobiliario por el que se han construido muchos más aparta-

mentos de los que el país verdaderamente necesita."

"Hay ciudades fantasmas completamente construidas.

"Parece que muchos de estos pisos vacíos estaban siendo comprados por empresas y familias chinas como una inversión más atractiva que depositar el dinero en una cuenta bancaria con bajo interés."

"La tasa de crecimiento de China apenas cayó por debajo de la cifra mágica del 10% en un momento en que Occidente caía en su recesión más profunda desde la Segunda Guerra Mundial."

"Por ejemplo, el gigante asiático construyó de la nada la red de ferrocarriles de alta velocidad más grande del mundo, cinco veces el tamaño de la red francesa de alta velocidad."

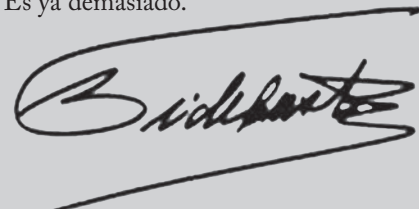
"China está en medio de una transición delicada, con una nueva generación de líderes que se acerca al poder, algo que sólo ocurre cada 10 años.

"Hay una lucha política en ebullición, puesta en evidencia por la destitución del llamativo gobernador de Chongqing, Bo Xilai.

"Muchos de los miembros del partido se beneficiaron del boom inmobiliario y del crédito de los últimos tres años. Si este auge llega a su fin, no querrán formar parte de los perdedores inevitables.

"Cómo se desarrollará esa batalla, especialmente en el caso de que China se enfrente a protestas multitudinarias de trabajadores desempleados en las calles, es una incógnita para todos."

Estoy lejos de compartir este siniestro infundio yanqui sobre el destino de China, y me pregunto si acaso puede ignorarse que China posee las más grandes reservas de tierras raras en el mundo y enormes volúmenes de gas de esquisto, que le permitirían ejercer su poder sobre la producción energética mundial cuando cese el poder de mentir y avasallar. Es ya demasiado.



Fidel Castro Ruz

Junio 9 de 2012

12 y 5 p.m.

Five Decades of Inanity - and Still Going...

by Saul Landau*

In 1991, The Soviet Union disappeared. Washington changed its anti-Cuba rhetoric from Cold War to human rights. But one issue remains: a U.S. economic colony that broke loose in 1959 still refuses to surrender.

The “punish Cuba” policy, now 53, has grown gray and became downright inane in the 1980s when Reagan transferred day-to-day Cuba policy to right wing Cuban-Americans in Miami – except, of course, when periodic crises erupted. But underneath this apparent idiocy lies a more pernicious absurdity.

In May, for example, the State Department rejected visa requests from eleven Cuban scholars, also advocates for improved relations between Cuba and the United States. Scores of other Cubans obtained their visas to attend the Latin American Studies Association meeting in San Francisco.

Simultaneously, Mariela Castro, director of Cuba’s Sex Education Institute, also Raul Castro’s daughter, got her visa, much to the delight of leaders of San Francisco and New York’s gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgender communities, which she visited. They admire her heroic work on LGBT rights.

This strange mixed message produced rumors that the denial of visas showed a deal between hack Cuban-American U.S. Senators and a frustrated – and mediocre – State Department. Marco Rubio (R-FL) and Bob Menendez (D-NJ) had placed a hold on Roberta Jacobson’s appointment as Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs. By denying some visas, and tightening travel to Cuba rules, State assuaged (a little) the two Cuban American solons. Do White House strategists hope Mariela’s visit will strengthen gay support (money and votes) for Obama?

Meanwhile, the Washington-Havana adversaries have not developed even a petty “mend relations” agenda. Indeed, State has rejected or remained silent on Cuba’s proposals on migration – but only for two years. The White House has no time for Cuba as it pursues the President’s re-election.

In May, U.S.-Cuba policy oozed its way into CNN’s “The Situation Room.” Wolf Blitzer interviewed Alan Gross (U.S. prisoner in Cuba), and Josefina Vidal (U.S. desk in Cuba’s Foreign Ministry). That week, State Department Press Secretary Victoria Nuland assured the press and Secretary of State Hilary Clinton insisted Alan was innocent despite Judith Gross’ (wife) state-

ment: “We know now that [Alan] did break Cuban law.”

Hilary also ignored Desmond Butler’s Associated Press dispatch on Gross’ misdeeds. In Cuba, Gross played his part in a U.S. government-backed “regime change” policy. Gross got paid by Development Alternatives Incorporated, which contracted with USAID.

Like Clinton and Nuland, Blitzer also reflected his ignorance – or denial – of Butler’s account of Gross’ 2009 “trip reports” from Cuba. Butler describes from Gross’ own written account to his company, how Alan smuggled illicit material and set up impenetrable communications networks in Cuba.

Blitzer also re-introduced the Cuban 5 theme. In the 1990s, Cuba sent intelligence agents to Miami to infiltrate exile groups paring violence against Cuban tourist sites. Cuba recycled to the FBI the agents’ findings about explosive and arms caches in the area. In 1998, after using the agents’ information to seize caches of explosives in Miami, the FBI arrested the Cuban agents – its own informants. In a 2001 trial an intimidated Miami jury declared them guilty of major crimes and a judge condemned them to draconian sentences.

Could President Obama release them – after the election, of course – in return for Alan Gross? “No way,” said State. Gross is innocent. The 5 were convicted of serious crimes. This kind of petty mendaciousness has reached embarrassing levels. Gross admitted he had violated Cuban laws and the AP story confirms his guilt.

Then, another strange event occurred. Carlos García-Pérez, director of U.S. government financed Cuban Broadcasting Office (Radio and TV Marti), “called the archbishop of Havana a lackey who is colluding with an oppressive regime.” (William Booth, Washington Post May 5).

Does President Obama think the Cardinal, who favors a dialogue, is simply a messenger

for Cuban President Raul Castro? Or does this inanity spring from deeper inane roots?

Fifty-two years ago, on my first trip to Cuba, I watched social change, happiness emanated from the poor; anger from those who lost wealth, property, privilege, status and prestige. I also witnessed violence when CIA-backed exiles from Miami bombed the island.

For five plus decades the U.S. has embarrassed Cuba. The CIA backed an invasion of exiles at the Bay of Pigs in April 1961 and sponsored thousands of armed attacks on the island – terrorism.

After half a century plus, Cuba has exported a million plus Cubans to Florida, and they have made changes in that state – and in U.S. destiny. In 2000, they helped George W. Bush become U.S. President. Cuba’s counter-revolution had acted to alter U.S. – not Cuban – destiny.

Although Cuba’s heady revolutionary days have passed, Latin America has followed its independence road.

In March, imperial ignorance and arrogance characterized President Obama’s role at the April Cartagena Summit of the Americas. Washington continued to refuse to allow Cuba to participate in future hemispheric discussions. Even the U.S. puppet government of Honduras voted with 30 other states to include Cuba for future meetings. Only Canada voted the U.S. line. Fifty-three years of accumulated bile.

Obama’s answer to his critics here and in Cuba? “They know we can do better.”

**Saul Landau, Saul is Professor Emeritus at California State University, Pomona, and a senior fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies at the Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism. He has produced more than 40 films on social, political and historical issues, and worldwide human rights, throughout his career. Throughout his career, he has been the recipient of the Letelier-Moffitt Human Rights Award, the George Polk Award for Investigative Reporting, and the First Amendment Award, as well as an Emmy for “Paul Jacobs and the Nuclear Gang.” Professor Landau’s most recent film, “Will the Real Terrorist Please Stand Up?” was screened at this year’s Vancouver International Film Festival.*



*By Manuel Yepe**

A CubaNews translation. Edited by Walter Lippmann.

I often wonder how much an ordinary US citizen must suffer when all over the world he hears the shouts, or reads the words “Yankee, go home”.

How much worse must be the feelings of US uniformed military in any of the Third World countries that has suffered frequent invasions, occupations, bombings and the resulting killings of inhabitants who could be relatives of any citizen in the country where they are. In these countries, indignation frequently reaches justified extremes and uncontrollable reactions against American military.

When I was a very small boy, during the World War II era, I liked the US military.

My mother worked as a salesperson on commission at a shop owned by Chinese traders in Havana called La Valencia. The shop sold mostly to tourists. My father used to “draw” US

that did the voyage and his mother (my grandmother) would carry a sewing machine to contribute by working as a seamstress to help support the family.

When the war ended, we all moved – my father, mother, my brother and I – to Tampa where we stayed for nine months. Later, my parents tried to remain in the United States permanently, but could not get the necessary visa. Plans changed and we returned to Cuba.

of hostility and threats of aggression from the government in Washington against the Revolution in power, I have understood that it is not the military –the human beings- to blame for all the crimes against the peoples in the world, including the American people- but the oligarchic cupola based in Wall Street that should be the target of global repudiation.

Today I understand that our rejection



THE SHAME OF THE YANKEE MILITARY

military, who at the time were the only foreign visitors who could be allured in Havana, so that my mother could make them customers of La Valencia and get the sales commission.

As a norm, the officers and enlisted men stationed in American military bases in Cuba at the time came from well-off families. They had enough clout to be stationed far from the battlefields and relatively close to their homes.

Consequently, most of the US officers and privates I heard of were generous and nice. Their contributions, through purchases at the shop of the Chinese, represented the main income of my family. My father could speak English quite well, because he came from a family of cigar workers who used to transfer every year to the United States during the “tiempo muerto” [literally “dead time” when there was no production] to find temporary employment in the cigar factories of Key West, or Tampa, in Florida. They travelled in flimsy vessels

This was a happy event for my brother and I because in Ybor City, the neighborhood for Blacks and Latinos where we lived, we had to experience many incidents of racial discrimination and xenophobia and some abuse from the military who -with helmets and machine guns- patrolled the frequent drills known as “blackouts” and imposed the concealment measures that we Black and Latino children often challenged.

In the last years of the decade of the 1940s, a shameful event took place: a group of drunken US marines climbed the statue of Jose Marti in Parque Central and urinated on it. All Cubans felt a righteous anger and I also felt certain guilt for having liked the young American military I had met at La Valencia. Now, after experiencing the harsh insurrectional struggle against a dictatorship supported by US military advisers in the armed forces and police, and more than half a century

and struggle against imperialism should not be expressed through the burning of US flags or insults to their military, politicians, diplomats and other representatives. It’s far more effective to raise demands or carry out of actions that directly affect the interests of the big banking, media, trade and industry transnational corporations that drive the world at their convenience today.

July 2012.

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

LA VERGÜENZA DE LOS MILITARES YANQUIS

Por Manuel Yepe*

Con frecuencia me pregunto cuánto debe sufrir un ciudadano común de Estados Unidos cuando escucha o encuentra por doquier en el mundo los gritos o letreros de “yankee, go home”.

Mucho peor ha de sentirse un militar uniformado de esa nación destacado en cualquiera de los países del tercer mundo que haya sufrido las frecuentes invasiones, ocupaciones, bombardeos y consecuentes asesinatos de pobladores que pudieran ser familiares de cualquier ciudadano del país donde ellos se encuentran. Allí, la indignación alcanza, en no pocas ocasiones, justificados extremos y reacciones incontrolables contra los militares estadounidenses. Cuando era un niño muy pequeño, en tiempos de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, los militares estadounidenses me inspiraban simpatía.

Mi madre trabajaba como dependienta comisionista en una tienda propiedad de comerciantes de origen chino llamada Valencia, en La Habana, consagrada a la venta a turistas. Mi padre se dedicaba a “cazar” militares estadounidenses, que por entonces eran los únicos visitantes extranjeros susceptibles de captación en La Habana, para llevarlos a que mi madre los convirtiera en clientes de Valencia y obtuviera la correspondiente comisión.

Como regla, los oficiales y soldados destacados en las bases militares norteamericanas en Cuba, por esa época, procedían de familias de ingresos superiores a la media. Tenían influencias suficientes para ser asignados bien lejos de los campos de batalla y relativamente cerca de sus hogares.

Por tal motivo, los oficiales y soldados yanquis de que oía hablar eran casi todos generosos y agradables. Sus aportes mediante sus compras en la tienda de los chinos constituían el principal

sustento de mi familia.

Mi padre hablaba bien inglés porque procedía de un entorno familiar de obreros tabacaleros que acostumbraban a trasladarse todos los años a Estados Unidos durante el “tiempo muerto”, para buscar empleo temporal en fábricas de cigarros de Cayo Hueso o Tampa, en el estado de la Florida. El viaje lo hacían en frágiles chalanas que se dedicaban entonces a estas transportaciones y su madre (mi abuela) llevaba consigo una maquina de coser para ayudar al sustento familiar como costurera.

Al final de la guerra nos trasladamos todos -padre, madre y los dos hermanos- a Tampa donde permanecemos unos nueve meses. Luego, mis padres pretendieron quedarse definitivamente en los Estados Unidos, pero no pudieron obtener la visa requerida. Los planes cambiaron y regresamos a Cuba.

Fue una feliz ocurrencia para mi hermano y para mí, porque en el barrio para negros y latinos de Ybor City donde vivíamos sufrimos en carne propia numerosos incidentes de discriminación racial y xenofobia y alguno que otro atropello por parte de los militares con cascos y ametralladoras que custodiaban los frecuentes ejercicios conocidos como “blackouts” (apagones), imponiendo las medidas de ocultamiento que a veces desafiábamos los niñitos negros y latinos.

Cuando, a finales de la década de los años 1940, tuvo lugar el vergonzoso incidente de los “marines” norteamericanos que, en estado de embriaguez, escalaron la estatua de José Martí en el Parque Central y se orinaron allí, a la indignación



**“No to Yankee Military Bases”
Movilización 1 de Mayo, Bogotá-Colombia**

que sentimos todos los cubanos se agregó, en mi caso, un sentimiento de culpa por haber albergado alguna vez tanta simpatía por aquellos jóvenes militares que había conocido en “Valencia”.

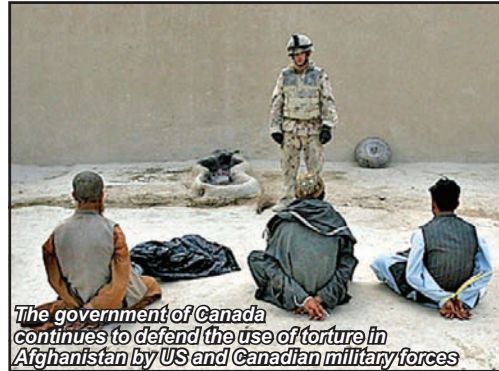
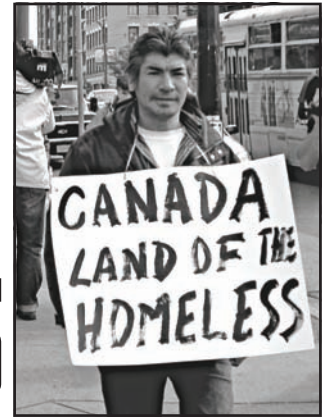
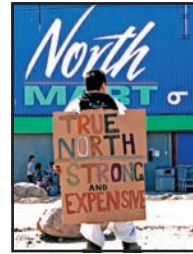
Ahora, tras las experiencias de la cruenta lucha insurreccional contra una dictadura apoyada por asesores militares de Estados Unidos en todas las fuerzas armadas y la policía, y más de medio siglo de hostilidad y amenazas de agresión contra la revolución en el poder por parte del gobierno de Washington, he comprendido que no son los militares -en tanto que seres humanos- los culpables de todos aquellos crímenes contra los pueblos del mundo, incluido el norteamericano, sino la cúpula oligárquica que asienta en Wall Street la que debía ser blanco del repudio mundial.

Hoy comprendo que no es con la quema de banderas de Estados Unidos ni ofensas a sus militares, políticos, diplomáticos y demás representantes que deben proyectarse las expresiones de rechazo y lucha contra el imperialismo, sino ejecutando o exigiendo acciones que afecten directamente los intereses del gran capital, las grandes corporaciones de bancos, de medios de información, de comercio y de la industria transnacional, que hoy manejan el mundo a su conveniencia.

Julio de 2012.

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

LOOK WHO'S TALKING: CANADIAN GOVERNMENT PREACHES HUMAN RIGHTS



The beginning of June saw more troubles for Canada's human rights record, when the UN Committee Against Torture issued a damning report focusing on several alarming situations, and listed more than 20 reforms that Canada must enact to comply with the Convention Against Torture it signed on to in 1985.

The Committee's report found the Canadian military

By Thomas Davies

It was only a few years ago when Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper floated the idea that the animal which would now best represent Canada is...a wolverine. Speaking on Canada – U.S relations, he was elaborating on his theory that Canada, “may be smaller, but we’re no less fierce about protecting our territory.” The beaver, Canada’s official national animal, apparently paints a picture which is altogether too peaceful and constructive for the Prime Minister. To be more accurate though, the image of the three, “See no evil, speak no evil, hear no evil” monkeys covering their eyes, ears, and mouths would be best suited to describe the Canadian government. Just look at its shameful denials of a recent flurry of official criticisms of its human rights abuses by the United Nations.

The Canadian government seems to think that if it pretends not to see its human rights abuses, does not talk about its human rights abuses, and does not listen to others pointing out its human rights abuses, that it is basically not accountable for having committed them in the first place. The irony is that it is so quick and to speak out and act out against other countries which it deems to have violated human rights.

Lack of Food for Thought

Canada’s publicity problems flared up in May, when the UN right-to-food envoy Oliver

de Schutter made an 11 day official visit. The trip included visits to remote indigenous communities and urban centres where he found, “very desperate conditions and people who are in extremely dire straits.” The government refused to arrange any meetings between him and cabinet ministers, which is essentially unheard of internationally. Instead, they focused on bashing him in the media. Federal Health Minister Leona Aglukkaq called de Schutter “ill informed” and “patronizing” when talking about the massive health problems of northern indigenous communities. Meanwhile, the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and the Inuit Circumpolar Institute submission to the UN envoy pointed out government-funded research that shows that 68.8% of adults in Nunavut do not have secure access to food — six times higher than the Canadian average.

De Schutter responded to the criticism with facts, “It’s even more shocking to me to see that there are 900,000 households in Canada that are food insecure and up to 2.5 million people precisely because this is a wealthy country. It’s even less excusable,” he continued, “It’s not because the country is a wealthy country that there are no problems. In fact, the problems are very significant and, frankly, this sort of self-righteousness about the situation being good in Canada is not corresponding to what I saw on the ground, not at all.”

How Many Rights Can you Violate at Once?

knowingly complicit in torture and human rights abuses against detainees in Afghanistan and Canadian citizens in third countries. It also drew special attention to Omar Khadr, a Canadian citizen who has been imprisoned in the notorious Guantanamo Bay prison for 10 years, since he was 15 years old! A deal was made to return him to Canada, but Public Safety Minister Vic Toews has so far refused to approve the transfer.

The use of “security certificates” to indefinitely imprison “suspected terrorists” without providing any evidence was also found to be a clear violation of due process, and the report also added that, “information obtained by torture has been reportedly used to form the basis of security certificates...”

The reports found fault as well with recently passed Bill C-31, which gives unilateral power to “ministerial discretion” over refugee decisions and includes mandatory detention for individuals who “irregularly” enter Canada and excludes them and nationals of so called “safe” countries from having an appeal hearing of a rejected refugee claim. These changes, the report pointed out, mean the principle of non-refoulement could not be inadequately upheld in Canadian legislation and practice. “Non refoulement” is a principle of international law whereby refugees cannot be returned to places where their lives are at risk.

Canada didn’t fare any better as June came

to a close either. Navi Pillay, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights condemned Quebec's Bill 78, which restricts and criminalizes public protests and threatens huge fines in response to a growing wave of student protests against raises to tuition fees. "Moves to restrict freedom of assembly in many parts of the world are alarming," she said. "In the context of student protests, I am disappointed by the new legislation passed in Quebec that restricts their rights to freedom of association and of peaceful assembly." This was followed two days later by the UN special rapporteur Maina Kiai, who listed Canada as one of the countries where "the laws are particularly harsh in terms of restricting the freedom of association."

It Doesn't Matter How Many Fingers You Point Elsewhere

The response to these criticisms by the Canadian government was a complete lack of responsibility, and an attempt to cloud the real issues of human rights abuses in Canada by pointing the finger at other countries instead. In her response to Mrs. Pillay, Canada's representative at the UN Human Rights Council, Elissa Goldberg, used up an entire hand's worth of fingers pointing at Belarus, Sri Lanka, Syria, North Korea, and Mali in her short speech which did nothing to address the real issues raised by these high ranking UN officials. You would think that a country which is so diligent in calling out others in constant press releases by the Foreign Affairs Department would have at least a little time to do some soul searching of its own. In fact, in the last two months, the Canadian government has condemned Kenya, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Syria, Mali, and Iran in repeated press releases while refusing to constructively address or engage the huge issues which have been raised against it in the same period.

This really is nothing new. In 2009 the Canadian government was pointing something more similar to a middle finger at the UN Human Rights Council when it said flat out that more than half of the 68 recommendations made by other countries to improve Canada's human rights record were unacceptable. These included such mild recommendations as launching a national poverty elimination program. It also included the recommendation by many countries that Canada sign the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People.

The Original Sin

It was this UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People that the Canadian government finally signed on to in November 12th, 2010 after being among the only four countries in the world (the U.S., Australia and New Zealand included) which voted against

this non-binding document. In fact, in its statement on the ratification it stated that, "...the Declaration is a non-legally binding document that does not reflect customary international law nor change Canadian laws," and reiterated Canada's opposition to clauses related to "dealing with lands, territories and resources; free, prior and informed consent when used as a veto; self-government without recognition of the importance of negotiations;



Abuse and torture of Afghan prisoners under the watch of the Canadian military in Afghanistan



Children of Attawapiskat First Nation lead the struggle for their right to education



Indigenous activists protest before the G20 summit in Toronto, June 24th, 2010

intellectual property; military issues; and the need to achieve an appropriate balance between the rights and obligations of Indigenous peoples, States and third parties."

So basically the Canadian government said, "We disagree with basically everything in this document, but because we will be under no new obligations if we sign it, we've decided the photo opportunity would be a good move."

It is when someone takes even a brief look at Canada's human rights record in regards to indigenous people that all their bluster and posturing regarding human rights becomes so

much cruder. From the widespread killings and displacement which accompanied the founding of Canada in 1867, to the 1927 Indian Act which forbid Indigenous people from forming political organizations, speaking their native language, or practicing their traditional religion, to the denial of the right to vote for indigenous people until 1960, to the residential schools which forced thousands upon thousands of indigenous children from their families into an environment of abuse and systemic assimilation. The last residential school did not close until 1990, and over one-third of indigenous people in Canada today have been affected either directly by residential school experiences or indirectly as family or community members linked to survivors.

Is it accidental then that the most recent statistics by that Canadian government find that suicide rates of Registered Indian youths (aged 15 to 24) are eight times higher than the national rate for females and five times higher than the national rate for males? What about the estimated 500 aboriginal women who have been murdered or gone missing in violent circumstances in Canada in the past 20 years? What has Stephen Harper done about the fact that an indigenous woman in Canada is five times more likely to die of violence circumstances than a woman of any other race?

What Lies Beneath

"The nation that cheers and applauds its international nature made of humanitarianism, human rights, anti-apartheid, aid to the suffering third-world Native masses. Bullshit -- Canada's a liar. It's hypocritical and two-faced. Look in Canada's back yard, its crimes, inequities and injustices are there to see."- Howard Adams, indigenous rights activist and professor

It was almost exactly 2 years ago during the June G-8 and G-20 summits in Toronto that Canada broke its record for the largest mass arrest in its history. Stephen Harper's "wolverine" was bearing its claws against its own population with approximately 1,105 people violently arrested, 75% of whom were then released without charge. As with anything else in the world, the true nature of the Canadian government is revealed best when it is challenged, and in every case it has shown no reservations in disregarding the human rights standards it demands so strongly of other countries. It might not be pleasant to admit we live in a country which is a huge human rights abuser, but the sooner we acknowledge that facts the sooner we can hold the Canadian government accountable and improve the situation. The Canadian government is doing a good enough job with the "See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil" act that we have no need to imitate it when it comes to our own efforts to build a better world.

By Janine Solanki

Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) is an antiwar coalition in Vancouver, BC, Canada, made up of dozens of organizations and individuals united against imperialist war and occupation. Since the September 11th New York World Trade Center attacks in 2001, our world entered a new era of war and occupation – first with the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan that is still continuing, followed by the war and occupation of Iraq, the opening of new fronts of intervention throughout Africa, escalating threats on Iran, the increasing suppression of Palestinians, coups and covert operations throughout Latin America, and most recently the tragic intervention in Libya and now the current target of imperialism, Syria.

Through MAWO's consistent events and actions, including conferences and forums, pickets, rallies and marches, petition drives, cultural nights, and festivals, MAWO provides an avenue for public education, organization and mobilization against war and occupation. These efforts extend beyond Vancouver, with MAWO participation in antiwar and social justice activities throughout BC as well as internationally and especially in the U.S., with a purpose of building a united, international and effective antiwar movement that goes beyond borders.

The Fire This Time newspaper tries to reflect in each issue the work of MAWO to share not only the events MAWO is organizing, but more importantly how MAWO is organizing and on what campaigns, as an example for other antiwar and social justice activists to assess for further building an united front against imperialist war and occupation.

Hands off Iran and Syria!

In the last year, the demand of Hands Off Iran and Syria became a critical point for the antiwar movement to act on. The mass movements and uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa both were a setback for U.S. imperialism as their puppet regimes were disposed of, as well as an opportunity for the U.S. to intervene in the independent countries which



May 26th 2012 - Petition Drive/Rally

MAWO ACTIVITIES SET AN EXAMPLE FOR THE ANTIWAR MOVEMENT



May 26th 2012 - Petition Drive/Rally



May 29th 2012 - Forum on Palestine

stand in the way of U.S. hegemony in the Middle East. This began with Libya, and the result of a NATO intervention that demolished the country and threw it into chaos. Now Syria and Iran are facing the same build up of sanctions and preparation and threat of military intervention. MAWO's "Hands Off Syria and Iran" campaign have included rally and petition campaigns with the main focus of "Hands Off Iran and Syria."

These actions take place monthly, and are a tool for both public outreach and protest. The Saturday May 26 rally setup in the busy downtown Robson street in front of the Vancouver Public Library, engaging many people in discussion and collecting over 150 petition signatures. MAWO also organizes public forums to give organizers and the public an opportunity to discuss, debate and educate themselves on this and other issues, which is expanded on further in this article.

Self-Determination for Palestine!

MAWO supports the demand of self-determination for Palestine, and supports the heroic resistance of the Palestinian people who have been struggling for their land, rights and dignity for over 64 years. On May 29th MAWO organized a public forum, marking the 64th anniversary of "Al-Nakba," known in English as "The

Catastrophe" which saw the formation of Israel through violent theft of Palestinian land, brutal massacres and the forced expulsion of Palestinians. This forum gave a historical overview on Palestine as well as more recent news through video and news clips, followed by the speaker, Noah Fine, a young

anti-zionist Jewish activist, who is active in the social justice movement and student union activism, and is the coordinator of the Free the Cuban 5 Committee Vancouver. MAWO's forum always leave space for discussion and debate, and in this forum the discussion centered on the role that antiwar organizers and activists in Canada have in defending the right of Palestine to self-determination.

Free Bradley Manning Now!

Bradley Manning is the accused Wikileaks whistleblower, a 24-year-old U.S. Army intelligence analyst who has been in prison in the U.S. for two years without trial. He is accused of leaking the “collateral murder” video footage showing the killing of civilians, including two Reuters journalists, by a U.S. Apache helicopter crew in Iraq. He is also charged with sharing documents known as the Afghan War Diary, the Iraq War Logs, and U.S. diplomatic cables with WikiLeaks. Since April 2012 MAWO has taken up the campaign with the “Free Bradley Manning Campaign Vancouver Canada”, and regularly organizes petition drives, forums and picket actions to demand his freedom. This organizing effort is in coordination with the Bradley Manning Support Network in the U.S., and MAWO has responded to their call for international actions during several of Bradley Manning’s pre-trial hearing dates. MAWO’s most recent action was the June 7th picket action at the U.S. Consulate, during a set of Bradley Manning’s pre-trial hearings. Many MAWO supporters and activists came out for the protest, as well as a number of people who joined a MAWO action for the first time, eager to defend Bradley Manning and demand justice and freedom for this “Soldier of Humanity.”

Saudi and All Foreign Troops Out of Bahrain!

Over a year and a half since the beginning of the mass movements and uprisings swept the Middle East and North Africa, how much is known about the continuing struggle of the people of Bahrain? Syria, a country whose government U.S. imperialism aims to topple, is headline news, but Bahrain, with a government who works in step with the U.S. government, and a country that hosts the U.S. Navy 5th Fleet, is pointedly left out of mainstream news. On June 12 MAWO organized the public forum titled “Still on the Streets: Bahrain’s Mass Movement on the Move” to discuss the ongoing mass movement in Bahrain, and the hypocrisy of the U.S. government that condemns and threatens the government of Syria,

but praises and aids the government of Bahrain as they are repressing protesters. The forum speaker was Nita Palmer, author of the book “War and Occupation in Afghanistan: Which Way Forward”



May 29th 2012 - Forum on Palestine



June 7th 2012 - Bradley Manning Picket Picket Action



June 23rd 2012 - Petition Drive / Rally



June 7th 2012 - Bradley Manning Picket Picket Action

published by Battle of Ideas Press, as well as an editorial board member of the

Fire This Time Newspaper, who wrote on Bahrain in Volume 7 Issue 3 of FTT. Participants had many questions, and appreciation was voiced to the fact that this forum provided critical information on Bahrain that is very difficult to access elsewhere. MAWO continues to have the demand “Saudi and all foreign troops out of Bahrain” a part of the ongoing demands at our rally and petition campaign, as one of the U.S. governments allies, Saudi Arabia, still has troops in Bahrain, which were sent their to repress and contain the protests.

International action for international strength and unity!

In MAWO we emphasis how important international coordination and cooperation is in building a united and effective antiwar movement. Imperialist governments know they are stronger working together against us— and antiwar organizations, who have common demands and struggles, also must work together against imperialist war and occupation. Most recently, MAWO participated in an International Period of Action with the central demand of “Hands Off Syria and Iran” which was initiated by the United National Antiwar Coalition in the U.S. between June 23rd and July 1st. On July 23 MAWO organized a rally and petition campaign as part of this period of action, and collected signatures on MAWO’s petitions against the government of Canada’s sanctions and threats against both Iran and Syria. A few days later MAWO also organized a public forum on June 26th, titled “In the Crosshairs: What are Imperialists Planning for Iran and Syria?” The forum included news

clips and both MAWO co-chairs Alison Bodine and Janine Solanki spoke on the build up for an attack on Iran and Syria, which was followed by a discussion that ranged from the facts of this war drive, to what we as antiwar activists should do to counter these impending attacks. While these two events took place in Vancouver, events as part of the International Period of Action were taking place in 29 cities mainly throughout the U.S.

THE U.S. & SYRIA

FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW



*By Joyce Chediak**

The following timeline reviews the progression of U.S.-NATO intervention in Syria and counteracts the Big Lie in the corporate media aimed at preparing open imperialist military aggression against the Syrian people.

Sanctions follow establishing opposition

- Washington has funneled money to a right-wing Syrian opposition group since at least 2005. (Washington Post, April 16, 2011)
- The U.S. reopened its embassy in Damascus in January 2011 after six years. This was no thaw in relations. The new ambassador, Robert S. Ford, who served until October 2011, is a protégé of John Negroponte, who organized death squads in El Salvador in the 1970s and in Iraq while ambassador there in 2004-05. These terror squads killed tens of thousands. Ford served directly under Negroponte at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad.
- Ford “played a central role in laying the groundwork within Syria as well as establishing contacts with opposition groups.” Two months after he arrived in Damascus, the armed insurgency began.

(Global Research, May 28)

- Armed opposition to Bashar al-Assad began in March 2011 in Daraa, a small town on the Jordanian border. Mass protest movements usually start in large population centers. Later, Saudi Arabia admitted sending weapons to the opposition via Jordan. (RT, March 13)
- The U. S. and its NATO allies used grassroots protests in Egypt, Syria and elsewhere as a cover to build support for right-wing insurgencies whose goal was not to help the Syrian people but to bring Syria into the pro-imperialist camp. Any excesses or mistakes by the Assad government were not the real issue.
- The Arab League, European Union and U.S. begin imposing economic sanctions, a form of warfare, against Syria in November 2011 on the pretext of stopping state-sanctioned violence against protesters. Stepped-up sanctions and freezing of Syrian assets caused the value of the Syrian pound to drop by 50 percent against the dollar, with the cost of necessities often tripling.
- Exiles who received U.S. funding became part of the Syrian National Council. SNC’s Burhan Ghalioun said he would open up Syria to the West, end

Syria’s strategic relationship with Iran (and with the Lebanese and Palestinian resistance), and realign Syria with the reactionary Arab regimes in the Gulf. (Wall Street Journal, Dec. 2, 2011)

U.S. & NATO escalate involvement

- Ex-CIA agent Philip Giraldi admitted that the U.S. was involved in Syria and laid out the U.S. plan: “NATO is already clandestinely engaged in the Syrian conflict, with Turkey taking the lead as U.S. proxy. Ankara’s foreign minister, Ahmet Davitoglu, has openly admitted that his country is prepared to invade as soon as there is agreement among the Western allies to do so. The intervention would be based on humanitarian principles, to defend the civilian population based on the ‘responsibility to protect’ doctrine that was invoked to justify Libya.” (theamericanconservative.com, Dec. 19, 2011)
- Giraldi continued: “Unmarked NATO warplanes are arriving at Turkish military bases close to ... the Syrian border, delivering weapons from the late Muammar Gaddafi’s arsenals as well as volunteers from the Libyan Transitional National Council who are experienced in pitting local volunteers against trained soldiers. ... French and British special

forces trainers are on the ground, assisting the Syrian rebels while the CIA and U.S. Spec Ops are providing communications equipment and intelligence. ...

- “The frequently cited United Nations report that more than 3,500 civilians

have been killed by Assad’s soldiers is based largely on rebel sources and is uncorroborated. Likewise, accounts of mass defections from the Syrian Army and pitched battles between deserters and loyal



soldiers appear to be a fabrication, with few defections being confirmed independently. Syrian government claims that it is being assaulted by rebels who are armed, trained, and financed by foreign governments are more true than false.”

- The “Free Syrian Army” has rear bases in Turkey, is funded by Saudi Arabia and Qatar, and is made up of defecting Syrian soldiers. Spiegel Online sites a source in Beirut who reports seeing “hundreds of foreign fighters’ who have attached themselves to the FSA.” (Feb. 15)

- The U.N.-mandated commission of inquiry, in its February 2012 report, documented torture, taking of hostages, and executions by armed opposition members.

- The first heavy fighting in Syria’s capital, Damascus, started in March. Pipelines were blown up, and huge explosions ripped through intelligence and security buildings in Christian areas on March 16, killing at least 27 people. The Syrian government charged then that terrorist attacks supported from abroad have been responsible for eight car bomb attacks since December, killing 328 and wounding 657. This got little Western media attention.

- Human Rights Watch on March 20 accused armed Syrian opposition members of “Kidnappings, the use of torture and executions ... of security force members, individuals identified as members of government-supported militias, and individuals identified as government allies and supporters.”

- In the Baba Amr neighborhood of Homs, the armed opposition has formed its own laws, courts and death squads, according to Spiegel Online. Abu Rami, an opposition commander in Baba Amir, interviewed by Spiegel, said in the city of Homs his

group has executed between 200 and 250 people. (March 29)

U.N. steps in

- Former U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan went to Syria in

March at the behest of the U.N. and Arab League to put together a peace proposal. But Annan and the U.N. are not impartial. Annan is an architect of the “responsibility to protect” doctrine, cited by former CIA agent Girdali as the planned pretext for intervention in Syria. The U.N. endorsed this doctrine under Annan’s tenure.

- In 2004, Annan gave U.N. approval to the U.S., French and Canadian intervention that deposed Haiti’s President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Annan’s stated reasons were the same then as now in Syria: an alleged impending “humanitarian catastrophe.” Annan provided a similar U.N. cover for France to tighten its colonial grasp on the Ivory Coast in 2006. In Syria, Annan’s calls for a Syrian government ceasefire and for outside “humanitarian” aid are really calls for foreign intervention.

- Syria agreed to an Annan-brokered ceasefire March 27. The opposition refused. While the Western heads of state and the corporate media heaped blame on Assad for “not honoring” the ceasefire, the West kept arming the opposition.

- What the U.S. government really thought of the ceasefire was revealed by

Robert Grenier, former director of the CIA’s Counter-Terrorism Center, who called upon those who would “help” Syria “to climb metaphorically into the ring and dirty themselves,” adding, “what the situation needs is not high-minded sentiments, but effective, lethal aid.” (Al Jazeera, March 29)

- As the imperialists “climbed into the ring,” they continued to blame Assad. Speaking at an anti-Assad “Friends of Syria” meeting in Istanbul on April 1, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said Assad had “defiled” the ceasefire. She called for Damascus to unilaterally stop fighting and withdraw from areas of heavy right-wing infiltration. She said the U.S had pledged at least \$25 million in “nonlethal” aid to the Syrian opposition, which included satellite communication equipment.

- By May, the reactionaries “have begun receiving significantly more and better weapons ... paid for by Persian Gulf nations and coordinated ... by the U.S.” (Washington Post, May 15) “The Syrian rebels have received their first ‘third generation’ anti-tank weapons. They are supplied by Saudi and Qatari intelligence agencies following a secret message from President Barack Obama.” (debkafile.com, May 22)

The Houla massacre

- Right before a scheduled visit to Syria by Annan, news broke of a horrible massacre of 108 people in Houla on May 25, which included whole families and as many as 48 children. Headlines worldwide blamed the Syrian government, and all Western capitals called for increased sanctions and more international pressure on Assad.

- By May 27, the imperialists had coordinated their “international outrage” and expelled Syrian

diplomats from the U.S., the Netherlands, Australia, Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Bulgaria and Canada.

- The U.N. Security Council reacted to the massacre — with no investigation as to who was responsible — by unanimously



continued on page 27



OUR STRUGGLE

AROUND THE WORLD

Cuba: The Largest Graduation of Medical Doctors Ever

<http://www.cubanews.ain.cu/>

HAVANA, Cuba, July 11 (ACN) Cuba will graduate the largest number of medical doctors ever when 11 000 new professionals receive their diplomas this month.

According to Granma newspaper, the total of graduates includes 5 315 Cubans and 5 694 professionals from 59 countries of the world. The graduation ceremonies are scheduled to take place in Eastern Guantanamo and Havana provinces, on July 18, and in Ciego de Avila and Artemisa provinces, July 24.

The countries with the largest number of doctors formed in Cuba are Bolivia (over 1400), Peru (453), Nicaragua (429), Ecuador (308), Colombia (175) and Guatemala (170). The number of new Cuban doctors nearly doubles the figure existing on the island before the 1959 Revolution triumph.

However, the total figure of Cuban and foreign health professionals, including the new medical doctors, who will graduate this school year reaches 32 171 and this adds the specialties of dentistry, psychology, nursing and health technologies, according to information made available by the Cuban Health Ministry's Department of Higher Medical Courses.

Meanwhile, Cuban professors are training over 29 000 students in medicine, nursing and health technologies in Venezuela, Bolivia, Angola, Tanzania, Guinea Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Gambia and East Timor, Granma newspaper reported.

Professor Mariheta Cutino, National Director of the Higher Medical Courses Department stressed the high academic level of the over 43 000 professors who are in charge of making the integral training of the new health specialists possible.

Cuba has medical universities in all its provinces, except for the western territories of Mayabeque, Artemisa and the Isle of Youth, where there are independent faculties.

Nearly 109 000 medical doctors graduated in Cuba since the triumph of the Revolution in 1959 up to 2010.

Bolivia Will Nationalize one of the World's Largest Metal Reserves

<http://www.cubanews.ain.cu/>

HAVANA, Cuba, July 9 (ACN) Bolivia's Evo Morales confirmed his government's decision to nationalize the Mallku Khota reserves of indium and iridium, located in the Department of Potosi and considered one of the largest reserves of those metallic ores, so far being exploited by Canada's South American Silver (SAS).

The decision implies the exploitation of the Mallku Khota reserves by Bolivia's Mining Cooperation (COMIBOL) and the cease of the Canadian SAS monopoly.

"Spain is rising up!" Raging miners invade Madrid

RT- <http://www.rt.com/news/spanish-madrid-coal-workers-918/>

Thousands of Spanish miners and their supporters flooded the streets of Madrid in a second day of mass protests, just hours after the country's leader announced a nationwide tax hike. Workers marched up the city's main avenue, wearing hardhats and carrying walking sticks, to protest outside the Industry Ministry. Many walked for nearly three weeks in the blazing sun before finally reaching Madrid. The crowd chanted, "Miners, stick it out, Spain is rising up!" as they made their way toward Madrid's central square on Tuesday.

"We didn't expect such a big welcome. The fact that people are coming into the street and mobilizing is a good sign," Roberto Quintas, a miner of 22 years, told AFP. Workers set off fireworks, generating large puffs of smoke along the streets. Some came from the north of Spain, where protests outside coal mines resulted in clashes with police just three weeks ago.

The miners were joined by relatives and supporters, also angry at cuts made in response to the economic crisis. Wednesday's protest came as the country's leader announced a nationwide tax hike. Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy says he will raise VAT by 3 per cent as part of the plan to trim the public budget by 65 billion euro over the next two-and-a-half years. He also announced a 3.5-billion-euro cut to local government spending. The fourth austerity package in seven months will raise the sales tax to 21 per cent and do away with tax rebates for home buyers. Unemployment benefits for workers will also be scaled back.

PM Rajoy asked public workers to make an "exceptional effort," as the government takes away their end-of-year bonuses. MPs are included in the cuts, and will have their budgets slashed by 600 million euro. He told parliament that the measures he was announcing should be adopted without delay. Miners arrived in the Spanish capital overnight, wearing hard hats with lights turned on. The protesters were joined by ordinary citizens, also angered by cuts made in response to the economic crisis. Spain's working class has been hit with increased pressure in recent months, faced with higher taxes and new regulations, which make it cheaper to fire employees. The country has also seen recent funding cuts to education and national healthcare.

The measures are in return for a eurozone bank bailout and a one-year extension for Madrid to decrease its budget deficit to 3 per cent. The workers marched hundreds of miles from the north of Spain, where demonstrations outside coal mines have resulted in clashes with police. Protesters are fighting against the government's decision to slash coal industry subsidies by 63 per cent. Unions say the plan threatens 30,000 jobs and could destroy their livelihoods.

Workers are also unhappy with cuts against funding for miners to learn new professions and for school grants for their children. The Spanish government argues that it currently pays disproportionately high subsidies to the industry, which it claims is a small and unprofitable part of the economy.

"Nationalization is our Obligation," said Morales, cited by regional media. He said that he had proposed the nationalization of the reserves last year, but there were some problems to implement it as he referred to differing opinions about the measure among groups of the local population.



THE CUBAN FIVE:

I spoke with Gerardo and Rene Mariela Castro

Immediately after the closing session of the 30th International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA) in San Francisco (California), I attended a very moving meeting organized by the Solidarity Committee for the Freedom of the Cuban Five, coordinated by Gloria La Riva, with the participation of many intellectuals from Cuba and the United States. Present at the meeting were Alice Walker, Danny Glover, Saul Landau, and Miguel Barnet, among many others.

To our surprise, René made a phone call and, when my turn to speak to him came, he reminded me, laughing, when some years back, in an interview I gave to CNN I was talking about Sexual Education in Cuba and the set was full of images demanding the freedom of the Cuban Five. He said that when he saw the images in his prison cell it was very funny to see how the cameras were trying unsuccessfully to make a close-up to hide the images. The faces of the Cuban Five accompanied me during the whole interview.

Rene has a way of communicating that seems he hasn't suffered, and I don't even want to imagine how he has been able to survive during these 14 years. I wanted to meet him when he came to say goodbye to his seriously ill brother, in those 15 days full of restrictions and a mixture of very strong feelings; but I preferred to respect his long-awaited family privacy. If I were Olguita, I wouldn't forgive anyone interrupting the few hours of

their intense love reunion after so many years.

Few minutes later, Gerardo called and I could barely speak to him. I listened to him with a lump in my throat. It's hard to think about two life sentences and a



15-year sentence, with no proofs for such judgment. But his strength of spirit is contagious and I heard his message of hope, his appreciation to all those persons who are fighting for them, his greetings to professionals and activists who, together



with CENESEX, have dedicated the last two yearly Cuban Activity Against Homophobia to asking president Obama to free the Cuban Five,

Both Rene and Gerardo asked me to convey to Fidel and Raul their unremitting willingness to defend the

Revolution wherever they may be, and that our people can always count on them.

The issue of the five Cubans unfairly imprisoned in US jails for more than 13 years has been silenced and manipulated by the US media. During my trip to that country, I mentioned the issue as part of the interviews requested by CNN and Democracy Now! to talk about the topics I deal with in my work. But, inevitably, the media is always asking me political questions about the reality of the island, as if being the daughter of the President meant holding a public office. Though I always say what I think, I refuse to accept an additional responsibility beyond that of being the Director of CENESEX, a Cuban citizen and a civil society activist. That is why I make it clear that I'm very fond of my father, but I speak from my standpoint as a person and appreciate the chance I am given to express myself.

In the conversations I had with these two media, I reiterated that the Cuban Five are innocent and should return to Cuba without further delay. They were in that land to protect the Cuban and American populations from terrorist acts that notorious groups in South Florida have planned and perpetrated against my country, not only in Cuban soil but in American soil and in other nations as well. I also said that state terrorism has cost the Cuban people more than five thousand victims in terms of dead and

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LOS CINCO: Hablé con Gerardo y René Mariela Castro

Instantáneamente después de la clausura del XXX Congreso Internacional de la Asociación de Estudios Americanos (LASA), en San Francisco (California), participé en una emotiva reunión organizada por el Comité de Solidaridad por la libertad de Los Cinco, que coordina Gloria La Riva, con la asistencia de numerosos intelectuales de Cuba y de los Estados Unidos. Allí estaban Alice Walker, Danny Glover, Saul Landau, y Miguel Barnet, entre muchos otros.

Para sorpresa de todos, René llamó por teléfono y, al llegar mi turno de hablarle, me recordó entre risas cuando años atrás, en una entrevista de CNN, yo comentaba sobre Educación Sexual en Cuba y un set lleno de imágenes reclamaba la libertad de Los Cinco. Para él fue muy divertido cuando la entrevista irrumpió en su celda y se percató de que la cámara se esforzaba cerrando el plano para impedir, que fuesen vistas, pero resultó infructuoso. Los rostros de los Cinco me acompañaron durante toda la entrevista.

René tiene una manera de comunicarse que parece que no ha sufrido; y no quiero imaginar cómo ha podido sobrevivir en estos 14 años. Quise conocerlo cuando vino a despedirse de su hermano gravemente enfermo, en esos 15 días llenos de restricciones y una mezcla de fuertes emociones; pero preferí respetar su anhelada privacidad familiar. Si fuese Olguita, no le perdonaría a nadie interrumpir las pocas horas de su intenso reencuentro amoroso, después de tantos años.

Pocos minutos después, llamó Gerardo y apenas le pude hablar. Me dediqué a escucharlo con un nudo en la garganta. Pensar en dos cadenas perpetuas y 15 años de prisión, sin evidencias para la

permanente a defender la Revolución, donde quiera que se encuentren, y que nuestro pueblo puede contar siempre con ellos.

La situación de Los Cinco cubanos presos injustamente en cárceles estadounidenses hace más de 13 años ha sido silenciada y manipulada por los medios de comunicación de los Estados Unidos. Durante mi viaje a ese país, abordé el tema en CNN y Democracy Now!, como parte de entrevistas solicitadas por esos medios para tratar los temas que trabajo. Pero, inevitablemente, los medios me hacen preguntas políticas sobre la realidad de la Isla, como si ser la hija del Presidente fuese un cargo público. Aunque siempre respondo lo que pienso, me niego a aceptar una responsabilidad adicional a las que ya tengo como directora del CENESEX, como ciudadana cubana y como activista de la sociedad civil. Por eso aclaro que me encanta mi papá, pero hablo desde mi responsabilidad personal, y agradezco la oportunidad que me dan para expresarme.



Los niños Cubanos protestan para la libertad de los 5 Cubanos

sentencia, se hace muy difícil. Pero su fortaleza de espíritu es contagiosa y escuché su mensaje de esperanza, su agradecimiento a todas las personas que los apoyan, su saludo a profesionales y

actos terroristas que connotados grupos del Sur de la Florida han planificado y ejecutado contra mi país, no solo en territorio cubano sino también en los Estados Unidos y en otras naciones.



activistas, que junto al CENESEX hemos dedicado ya dos Jornadas Cubanas contra la Homofobia para pedirle al presidente Obama la libertad de Los Cinco.

Tanto René como Gerardo me pidieron transmitir a Fidel y a Raúl su disposición

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PASTORS FOR PEACE CARAVAN WILL ARRIVE IN CUBA

Havana, Jul 3 (Prensa Latina)

The 23 Pastors for Peace Caravan will arrive in Cuba on July 21, after traveling around 80 U.S. cities to collect humanitarian aid for the Caribbean island.

CARAVANA PASTORES POR LA PAZ ARRIBARÁ CUBA

La Habana, 3 jul (PL)

La 23 Caravana de Pastores por la Paz arribará a Cuba el 21 de julio, después de recorrer 80 ciudades estadounidenses para reunir ayuda humanitaria dirigida a la isla caribeña.

Kenia Serrano, presidenta del Instituto Cubano de Amistad con los Pueblos (ICAP), manifestó a la prensa que este 2012 se cumplen 20 años de la primera iniciativa de ese tipo promovida por el reverendo Lucius Walker, con el fin de romper las barreras impuestas por el bloqueo de Estados Unidos.

Otros propósitos de la acción, expresó, son reclamar el derecho de los estadounidenses a viajar a la isla, la devolución de la base naval de Guantánamo, la eliminación de Cuba de las listas espurias elaboradas en Washington y la liberación de los cinco

Kenia Serrano, president of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP), told reporters that 2012 marks the 20 anniversary of the first such initiative promoted by the Rev. Lucius Walker, in order to break the barriers imposed by the U.S. blockade.

The purposes of this initiative also include claiming the right of U.S. Americans to travel to the island, the return of Guantanamo Bay, eliminating Cuba of spurious lists drawn up in Washington and the release of Cuban Five convicted in U.S. jails, said Serrano.

The delegation, with 60 member from USA, Canada, Mexico, Germany and the UK will stay in Cuba until July 31 to meet an agenda that includes a tribute to the Rev. Walker, who died on September 7, 2010.



President of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the People (ICAP) Kenia Serrano Puig gives a press conference on the Caravan. July 3rd, 2012

antiterroristas cubanos condenados en esa nación.

La delegación, integrada por 60 caravanistas de Estados Unidos, Canadá, México, Alemania y Reino Unido, permanecerá en Cuba hasta el 31 de julio para cumplir una agenda que incluye un homenaje al reverendo Walker, fallecido el 7 de septiembre de 2010.

Asimismo, los activistas recibirán varios talleres sobre temas como la actualización del modelo económico y la importancia del desarrollo sostenible, a la vez que compartirán con estudiantes de la Escuela Latinoamericana de Medicina.

También recorrerán centros de interés histórico y cultural, y visitarán otras provincias cubanas como Matanzas, Villa Clara and Sancti Spiritus.

Activists will receive several workshops on topics such as updating the economic model and the importance of sustainable development and will also share with other students from the Latin American School of Medicine.

The members of the caravan will tour sites of historic and cultural interest, and visit other Cuban provinces such as Matanzas, Villa Clara and Sancti Spiritus

On Monday, July 2, a humanitarian cargo from Canada began its advance on U.S. soil after being arbitrarily blocked by the authorities in Washington in the border zone of White Rock-Blaine, on the northwest coast of the USA.

The caravan members camped across the border in protest until they received unconditional permission to pass the convoy, consisting of wheelchair sports and educational tools donated by various cities and communities in the province of British Columbia, Canada.

Para la pastora cubana Estela Hernández, uno de los valores más altos del proyecto radica en el apoyo que el pueblo de la nación caribeña recibe por parte de los propios habitantes de Estados Unidos, en actos que van más allá de razones políticas, por ser muestras de amor.

Nos conmueve mucho, apuntó, pensar que esas personas atraviesan el país corriendo riesgos y haciendo sacrificios para compartir lo que tienen, pues en la mayoría de los casos se trata de gente pobre movida por fuertes sentimientos de solidaridad.

En la caravana llegan los bienes más variados, desde ómnibus y equipos médicos hasta implementos deportivos, materiales escolares, artículos para la enseñanza artística, entre muchos otros, pero lo fundamental es el gesto que entraña, consideró.

Este lunes, un cargamento humanitario procedente de Canadá inició su avance por territorio estadounidense tras permanecer bloqueado de forma arbitraria por las autoridades de Washington en el cruce limítrofe de White Rock- Blaine, en la costa noroeste de Estados Unidos.

Los caravanistas acamparon frente a la frontera en señal de protesta hasta que recibieron el permiso incondicional para pasar el convoy, consistente en sillas de ruedas, implementos educativos y deportivos donados por varias ciudades y comunidades de la provincia de Columbia Británica, de Canadá.

condemning Syria for allegedly using tanks and artillery after agreeing to a ceasefire. Ignored were statements from the Assad government that it was not responsible. A closer look showed this was the case.

• Marat Musin, reporting for Russia's ANNA News, was in Houla and interviewed witnesses right after the massacre. Musin determined that the massacre was committed

by the so-called Free Syrian Army, not the Assad forces. His report concluded: "The attack was carried out by a unit of armed fighters from Rastan, in which more than 700 gunmen were involved. They brought the city under their control and began with a cleansing action against loyalist [pro-Assad] families, including elderly people, women and also children. The dead were presented to ... the U.N. and the 'international community' as victims of the Syrian army." (May 31) The conservative German newspaper, the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, corroborated the ANNA report on June 7.

• Residents knew many of the killers by name and identified them as local criminal elements now working for the FSA. (Syria News, May 31) Anti-Assad forces then posed as villagers and invited the U.N. observers in. Some put on uniforms of the Syrian soldiers they had killed and said they were defectors.

• A widely shown photo of dozens of shrouded bodies, which the BBC first presented as the aftermath of Houla, was really taken by photographer Marco di Lauro in Iraq in March 2003.

• BBC world news editor Jon Williams admitted in his blog June 7 that there was no evidence whatsoever to identify either the Syrian Army or Alawite militias as the perpetrators of the May 25 massacre. United Kingdom's Channel 4 senior reporter Alex Thomson said June 7 that the opposition led him into a line of fire



and tried to get him killed by Syrian military forces so it would "look bad" for Assad.

• There has been no independent investigation of Houla to date, yet at a June 7 meeting, Annan and current U.N. General Secretary Ban Ki-moon again made statements putting the responsibility for the Houla massacre on Assad.

• Major General Robert Mood, head of the U.N. Supervision Mission in Syria, suspended patrols of the 300-member team on June 16, citing "spiraling violence in restive areas." The suspension was right before the G-20 Summit in Mexico, providing

another opportunity for imperialism to criticize Assad.

• In initial remarks, Annan called the Houla massacre the "tipping point." The

deaths at Houla have been used by the U.S. and NATO to more aggressively and openly organize for Assad's overthrow. U.S. officials and Arab intelligence officers admit that the CIA is in southern Turkey funneling weapons to the FSA. It is also there to "make new sources and recruit people." (New York Times, June 21)

• As a result, "The onetime ragtag militias of the Syrian opposition are developing into a more effective fighting force with the help of an increasingly sophisticated network of activists here in southern Turkey that is smuggling crucial supplies across the border including weapons, communication gear, field hospitals and even salaries for soldiers who defect. The network reflects an effort to forge an opposition movement ... that together can not only defeat ... Assad but also replace his government." (New York Times, June 26)

* Joyce Chediac is a frequent contributor to Global Research, www.globalresearch.ca

Battle of Ideas Press

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

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

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

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Battle of Ideas Press

CUBA'S HEALTH CARE SYSTEM
WHERE HUMANITY COMES FIRST
BY ELLEN BERNSTEIN

"The unfailing dedication of Cuban health care professionals has led to dramatic improvements in quality of life, for millions of people who previously had no other hope of receiving decent medical care. IFCO/Pastors for Peace is pleased to honor the diligent health care professionals of the Cuban health care system. We especially pay tribute to Cuba's national leadership, whose vision of universal health care as a right of every citizen sets an example for the world."

Ellen Bernstein has served as Associate Director of the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO) since 2003. She has been a key staff member of IFCO's project Pastors for Peace, and has been deeply and integrally involved in IFCO's historic work with Cuba.

September 2010, paperback, 149 pages, illustrated, \$6.00
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deployment’.

During their tent protest in Madrid, Sabina Martín claimed that her and her families lives were in danger. The Miami media even reported that ‘undercover agents’ threatened their safety.

The ‘lady in white’ also blamed the Cuban government for her current situation, for not having informed its citizens about the economics problems in Europe. ‘In Cuba, no one knows that in Spain there are so many unemployed and things are so bad,’ she told the press, adding that had she known she would not have agreed to come. Anyone who watches Cuban television, which reports almost daily about unemployment in Europe, will know this is a ridiculous comment.

Those who have always accused the Cuban media of exaggerating the problems of capitalism, now complain that they don’t do enough. The accusation is absurd and can be disproved simply by watching

story: the political utilisation of a group of people who the US government financed and organized as a battering ram against the Cuban government, the European right-wing institutions and media used them to justify the policy of sanctions against Cuba; and they have now been left stranded.

The names of many of these people, like Diosiris Santana, the same man who denounced the violence of the Municipal Police of Madrid, appear in manifestos supporting the most extreme positions against their own country: for the maintenance of Europe’s Common Position, the ban on travel to Cuba from US, and ultimately the economic blockade of the island.

It’s an old story repeated for over 50 years, first in Miami, now in Madrid.



“Ex Cuban prisoners waiting for work in Spain amidst a rising unemployment rate”

Cuban TV, whose news programs on the crisis and unemployment in Europe are almost daily.

Despite being a grotesque case, the drama of this group is the repetition of an old

UNITED NATIONAL ANTIWAR COALITION (UNAC)

STATEMENT ON SYRIA

- Hands off Syria and Iran!
- End the Drone Wars!
- We Need Jobs, Education and Healthcare, Not Endless War!

The ominous signs of impending war with Syria escalate. NATO holds a special meeting to respond to the downing of a Turkish fighter plane and issues threats of future action. The U.S. government is supplying arms and logistical support to Syrian militias. The media bombards us with arguments that support foreign intervention.

These are the facts that impel us to oppose any military, economic, diplomatic, or covert intervention aimed at controlling the internal affairs of Syria or any other country:

- Sanctions harm the people of Syria causing food shortages, power outages, and block the distribution of goods.
- The U.S. is directly involved in arming and training Syrian militias. Supplying arms to opposition militias in Syria contributes to the escalation of

violence, the possibility of civil war and/or direct foreign military intervention, and total destabilization. The people who always suffer the most are the people not engaged in the armed struggle.

- We see the results of ‘humanitarian’ U.S. wars and occupations in Iraq and Afghanistan today, where the people, especially women and children, are worse off than before, with millions dead, injured, and/or displaced, an infrastructure and economy in shambles, and there is no peace. A country that has a river of Iraqi and Afghan blood on its hands has no right to tell other countries what to do.

- The U.S. government’s goals in Syria are to gain dominance in a part of the world that holds the vast majority of the known oil reserves and to gain strategic advantage as it seeks to isolate and contain competitors like Russia and China. The U.S. has no interest in democracy or the humanitarian well-being of a country’s peoples anywhere in the world, especially in areas where the U.S. has economic or strategic interests.

While activists may hold different views of Syria’s internal political system, we must all agree that the U.S. government has no right to impose its will on other countries, especially those formerly colonized and exploited by the West. In all cases, we must support the right of nations to self-determination – that is to be able to decide on and resolve internal conflicts free from any foreign intervention.

The United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC) demands:

- No U.S. or NATO Intervention in the Internal Affairs of Syria!
- No War!
- No Sanctions!
- No Intervention!
- Self-determination for the Syrian people!

www.UNACpeace.org

Cuban 5 Heroes Supporters in Vancouver Maintain Their Presence with Another Picket Protest in Front of the US Consulate in Vancouver

By Alison Bodine

"Truth is like a colossal arm, which raises justice up where the avarice of men cannot reach." – Antonio Guerrero, June 8th 2001

When Antonio Guerrero, one of the Cuban 5 political prisoners held in U.S. jails wrote these words 11 years ago, the outrageously long sentences against the Cuban 5 had just been announced in a Miami courtroom. These same words were reprinted on June 8th, 2012 in a letter written by Antonio from his Florida jail cell that commemorated the anniversary and the continued commitment of the Cuban 5 and their supporters all over the world to win their freedom.

The Cuban 5, Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González and René González, have now been imprisoned in the U.S. for over 14 years. They were arrested in 1998 after being sent by Cuba to the U.S. to infiltrate anti-Cuba terrorist organizations, saving lives and preventing the injury of people in Cuba and North America. After turning over 20,000 pages of documents to the FBI detailing planned attacks against Cuba and exposing anti-Cuba organizations that operate openly in Florida, the Cuban 5, not the terrorists, were arrested. They were charged with conspiracy to commit espionage and conspiracy to commit murder



and sentenced from 15 years to two-life sentences plus 15 years.

On June 5th in Vancouver, Canada the Free the Cuban 5 Committee – Vancouver organized their 79th monthly picket action to free the Cuban 5 heroes. Each month peace-loving people in Vancouver gather in front of the US Consulate in downtown Vancouver to demand freedom for the Cuban 5 and that Rene, who completed his prison sentence last year and is now being forced to serve parole in the U.S., be allowed to return to Cuba. The picket took these demands all the way to the highest floors of the Consulate with loud and energetic chanting and a program of dynamic speakers. Noah Fine, the Coordinator of the Cuban 5 Committee – Vancouver was the MC introducing the speakers who addressed the picket action, David Whittlesey, a long-time civil rights and social justice activist; Nestor Otero, an organizer with the Free the Cuban 5 Committee – Vancouver; and Alison Bodine the co-chair of Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO).

This protest action was part of an International campaign for the "5th of the month for the Cuban 5."



The legal options that the Cuban 5 have are rapidly running out, making organizing on the streets with an International voice even more important in the struggle for their freedom.

For more information about the Cuban 5 and how to get involved visit: www.freethe5vancouver.ca

FREE THE CUBAN 5 NOW!

Che's Birthday

Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba Commemorates the Life of Che Guevara

By Alison Bodine

This year marked the 84th birthday of Ernesto Che Guevara, the revolutionary fighter and thinker who continues to educate and inspire people all over the world. To commemorate the life of a man who devoted himself to humanity organizers, activists and artists joined together for a cultural evening on Friday June 15th, 2012 organized by Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC).

The large North hall of Joe's Café on Commercial Drive in Vancouver was transformed with photographs and banners as a backdrop to musical performances, educational speeches, poetry and dance. The true impact of the life of Che Guevara could be seen in the room packed with people of all generations and walks of life who came together that evening.

The celebration began with a multimedia presentation spanning the life of Che Guevara and his struggle for the creation of a new human being and a new world. Following the presentation, Colleen

Glenn the MC of the evening, President of the Richmond NDP and on the Executive Committee of VCSC, reminded us all of Che's words "I don't care if I fall as long as someone else picks up my gun and keeps shooting" and the crowd cheered "We are still fighting!"

Next, Gisela Lara, First Consul at the Consulate General of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in Vancouver, spoke about the influence of the ideas and methods of Che on the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela. Tamara Hansen, the Coordinator of VCSC was the final speaker of the evening, talking about the example of Che Guevara for all of us fighting for social justice and a better world.

Beautiful sounds of music and poetry filled the entire evening, as a dynamic line-up of local talent took to the stage to commemorate the life of Che. Musical performances included Joaquin Ernesto, Jose Gimenez from Sangre Morena, and hip-hop artists Joose Justis and Attikus. They were joined by the poet and VCSC

organizer Shakeel Lochan, who read an original poem especially written for the evening that included segments from Che's writing "Man and Socialism in Cuba." Azza Rojbi and Maiké Larson, also organizers with VCSC, also read Che's letter to his children (1965) and Che's farewell letter to Fidel (1965), both of which brought Che's deep humanity and commitment to the minds of everyone in the room.

Throughout the celebration small pieces of the life and legacy of Che Guevara presented themselves. At the end of the evening we all left knowing that Che, born 84 years earlier, is still very much alive in the hearts of people all over the world from Cuba to Tunisia, and Egypt to here in Canada.

Viva Che!
A Better World is Possible!
Venceremos!
We Will Win!



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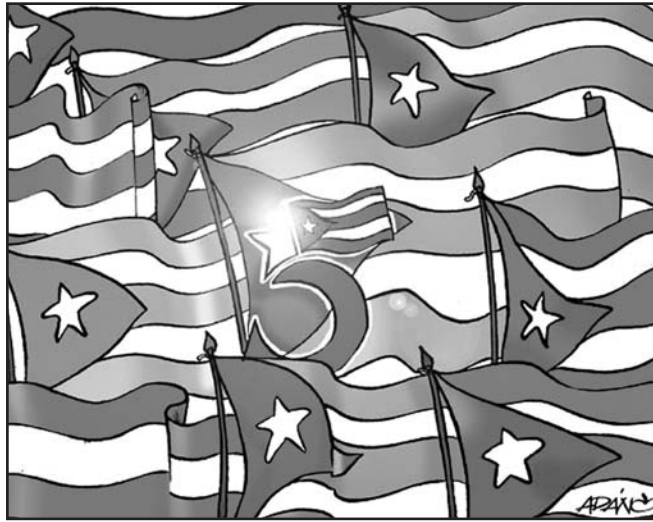
permanently injured. The work done by the Cuban Five prevented a higher figure.

I recently read in Cubadebate that new evidence, unknown at the time of the trial against the Cuban Five, has surfaced and that Gerardo Hernandez's lawyers (Tom Goldstein and Martin Garbus) have submitted a request to the South District Court in Florida for an oral hearing and for the Court to order the Government to hand in the documents and other materials in its power,

If this request succeeds, world public opinion would have the chance to learn about payments made by the US government in Miami to 84 persons linked to the media, 7 TV channels, and 13 radio stations, who during the trial against the Cuban Five unleashed a strong media campaign to influence public opinion against them.

It is known that these journalists have

received thousands of dollars and they are still using a biased and manipulative language, with an outrageous lack of ethical and professional behavior in the field of Social Communication, having a negative impact on the process to establish



the truth during the legal process that has deprived five innocent persons of their freedom for almost 14 years.

I was surprised to learn that the Miami

Court disregarded the statements made by witnesses from the Pentagon and the FBI who assured there were no evidences that Rene, Ramón, Gerardo, Fernando, and Tony committed espionage against the US government nor that their actions endangered the national security of that powerful country.

I remember with great pain, the 17 months these young men, with no reason at all for such punishment, remained in "the hole", as well as the long list of violations of their human rights as prisoners. I cannot imagine the ordeal Gerardo Hernandez went through when learning about his mother's illness and passing away. According to American laws, as a prisoner, he cannot be granted the possibility of saying farewell to his loved ones.

I'll never get tired of demanding an end to this too far long injustice.

The Cuban people do not abandon its brothers, much less its heroes. They have given up their freedom in exchange for ours.

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También dije que el terrorismo de estado ha cobrado al pueblo de Cuba más de 5 mil víctimas entre fallecidos y lesionados permanentes. El trabajo realizado por Los Cinco en Miami impidió que fuesen más.

Recientemente, leí en Cubadebate que surgieron evidencias desconocidas en el momento del juicio de Los Cinco, y que los abogados de Gerardo Hernández (Tom Goldstein y Martin Garbus) presentaron una moción al tribunal del Distrito Sur de la Florida, en la que solicitan una audiencia oral y que la Corte ordene a ese gobierno entregar los documentos y otros materiales que obran en su poder.

De prosperar esta petición, la opinión pública mundial tendría la oportunidad de conocer sobre los pagos realizados por el gobierno estadounidense en Miami a 84 personas vinculadas a los medios, 7 cadenas de TV y 13 estaciones de radio, que durante el juicio contra Los Cinco desarrollaron una poderosa campaña mediática para influir en su

contra.

Se sabe que estos periodistas han recibido miles de dólares y que todavía usan un lenguaje tendencioso y manipulador, con una escandalosa falta de rigor ético y profesional en el campo de la



Comunicación Social, y que ha impactado negativamente en el esclarecimiento de la verdad durante un proceso legal que ha privado de su libertad, por casi 14 años, a cinco personas inocentes.

A mí me sorprendió que el

tribunal de Miami desestimara las declaraciones presentadas por testigos del Pentágono y del FBI, cuando aseguraron que no existen evidencias de que René, Ramón, Gerardo, Fernando y Tony realizaran labores de espionaje contra el gobierno de los Estados Unidos, ni que sus acciones pusieran en peligro la seguridad nacional de ese poderoso país.

Recuerdo con mucho dolor los 17 meses que, sin ninguna razón para tanto castigo, permanecieron estos jóvenes en "el hueco" junto a una larga lista de violaciones a sus derechos como convictos. No puedo imaginar el martirio de Gerardo Hernández cuando recibió la noticia de la enfermedad y posterior fallecimiento de su madre. De acuerdo con las leyes norteamericanas, a él, en su condición de recluso, no se le puede conceder la posibilidad de despedirse de sus seres queridos.

No me cansaré de reclamar el fin de esta larga injusticia. El pueblo de Cuba no abandona a sus hermanos y mucho menos a sus héroes. Ellos han consagrado sus libertades por las nuestras.

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Who is VCSC?
VANCOUVER COMMUNITIES
IN SOLIDARITY WITH CUBA

For more information contact:
vancubasolidarity@gmail.com
778-882-5223
www.vancubasolidarity.com



Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) is an organization working to build solidarity and support for Cuba in Vancouver, Canada and internationally. To do this, we organize frequent educational events, cultural events, conferences, mobilizations and actions in support of Cuba's sovereignty against Imperialist attacks and in defence of the gains of the Cuban revolution.

We also support campaigns:

- 1- Against the US Blockade on Cuba
- 2- To Free the Cuban 5 held in US Jails
- 3- To Extradite anti-Cuban Terrorist Luis Posada Carriles to Venezuela

Throughout the lower mainland, at events, actions, festivals, high schools and campuses, we engage with thousands of people about Cuba. Our work aims to bring Cuba, as a country making important social gains, to youth, students, women, Latin American people, people of the third world and other working and oppressed people in Canada, as an example of building a better world.

We welcome new members and encourage everyone to get involved with VCSC to build a larger, stronger Cuba solidarity movement in Canada!

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