

# FIRE THIS TIME



*The Newspaper of the Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice*

Issue 22/23 - February/March 2005

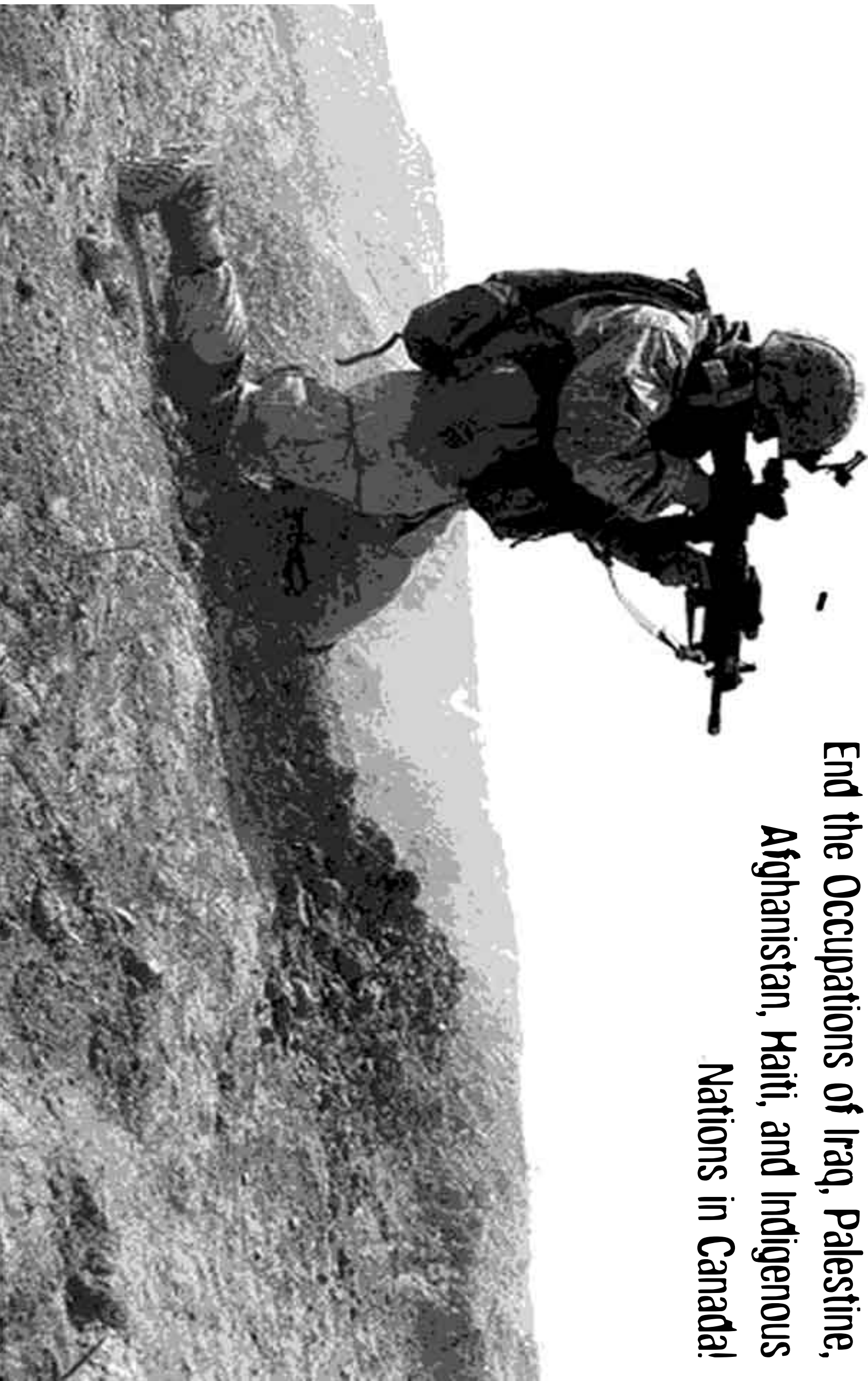
[www.fire-this-time.org](http://www.fire-this-time.org)

FREE

2 Years of Invasion Occupation, Destruction

# Stop the US War Machine!

End the Occupations of Iraq, Palestine,  
Afghanistan, Haiti, and Indigenous  
Nations in Canada!



# Free Elections in Iraq Guaranteed by 160,000 U.S. Troops

By Ivan Drury

"Today the people of Iraq have spoken to the world, and the world is hearing the voice of freedom from the center of the Middle East." - US President George W Bush, January 30<sup>th</sup> 2005

In the months leading up to the January 30<sup>th</sup> elections in Iraq, a great campaign of storytelling was built up around them. George Bush, his friends, and competitors alike called them the first "free elections" Iraqis have experienced in fifty years. The day of the election itself, Bush called the election a "resounding success" that shows the Iraqi peoples "commitment to a free Iraq." But was this election really the "great and historical achievement" that Bush and imperialists around the world labeled it as?

The best reference to understand the results of these elections is to look at another high profile election in 1967 in Vietnam. Trumpeted at the time by then-US-President Johnson as "the beginning of the constitutional process in Vietnam," this election was followed the very next year by the deepening of the war and the eventual expulsion of the US from Vietnam. More recently, there is the example of the "handover of power" of June 30<sup>th</sup> last year when the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) became the Interim Iraqi Government (IIG). After the "handover of power" 160,000 'coalition' troops remained in Iraq and nothing changed. On January 30<sup>th</sup>

2005 the Interim Iraqi Government (IIG) became a National Assembly. Still the occupation continues.

Whatever the initials of the US-front governing apparatus, the landscape of Iraq is still shaped by the same two forces: the occupation vs. the Iraqi people. The main characteristic of the elections is that they have changed nothing of this fundamental equation and have had no real impact on the people of Iraq.

**What elections meant for people in Iraq:**

"The AMS, the Iraqi National Foundational Conference and other groups describe the forthcoming elections under US occupation as a farce and that it will not be truly representative neither will it express the ambitions of the Iraqi people."

-Association of Muslim Scholars statement on why they boycotted the elections

"Two of the food dealers I know told me personally that our food rations would be withheld if we did not vote." - Saeed Jodhet, a 21-year-old engineering student who voted in the Hay al-Jihad district of Baghdad.

In the end the US has settled with the estimate of a 57% turnout of those who registered to vote. There are no statistics to identify exactly how many people in Iraq are eligible to vote compared to how many registered, because no census was performed before the election. US Deputy Secretary Armitage explained that

Continued on page 4



Anti-US Demonstration in Basra, February 27th, 2005.

## Indigenous Struggles

### Indigenous Youth, a Failed Tragedy by the Canadian Colonial State

How criminal colonial policies are destroying Indigenous Youth

By Aaron Mercredi

In December 2004, a copy of a report on the education system in the new Labrador community of Natuashish was leaked to the media. This report, *An Educational Profile of the Learning Needs of Innu Youth*, was commissioned by the Government of Canada to study

the development of Innu youth over a period of two years, and outlines failure after failure of the colonial schooling that was imposed on them.

Some of the most significant results of the report were the failures of providing an adequate education for

Continued on page 27



An Innu youth huffing gas.

## Local Struggles

### VDLC Says No to Canada's Involvement in Haiti

By Shannon Bundock

On February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2005, the Vancouver and District Labour Council (VDLC) passed a progressive resolution against the occupation of Haiti. In particular, the resolution demands that Canada not support or participate in the 'stabilization force' in Haiti, which is led by Canada, France and the US.

The resolution reads:

RESTORE DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT IN HAITI

WHEREAS the democratically elected President of Haiti, Jean-Bertrand Aristide was overthrown in a military coup, and

WHEREAS delegates assembled at the recent World Social Forum in Puerto Alegre have passed a resolution demanding the reinstatement of President Aristide and the restoration of democracy in Haiti, now

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Vancouver & District Labour Council, through the Canadian Labour Congress, call for the restoration of democracy in Haiti, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we demand that Canada not support or participate in the so called "stabilization force" currently deployed in Haiti until the democratically elected government is restored.

The VDLC is a body that represents 120 local affiliated public and private sector unions. As such, a resolution condemning the intervention in Haiti, and calling for Canada to remove its participation is a significant response against the imperialist war-drive in Canada. Through passing this

resolution, the VDLC has set an important example for labour unions in Canada to take a stance against the escalating attacks on poor and working people at the hands of Canada's increasingly aggressive military strategies.

In addition, this resolution comes following two progressive VDLC resolutions, which were passed on November 16<sup>th</sup> 2004. One is in support of American soldiers who fled the US military and are seeking refugee status in Canada. The other resolution, in solidarity with the people of Palestine, condemns the Israeli apartheid wall and calls for

the dismantling of it.

The passing of the resolution puts Haitian people in a better position in their fight for sovereignty and it reflects an internationalist sentiment that is critical for the trade union movement in Canada. Through this solidarity action the VDLC has played an important role in establishing that the interest of working people in Canada is directly connected to the interest of working people across the globe.

US/France/CANADA OUT OF HAITI!

HAITI FOR HAITIANS!

## Also Inside

**The Occupation of Iraq: 3-4**  
Lies, War, & Occupation | 3 The Myth of Iraqi Security Forces | 3

**International Struggles: 5-12**  
Palestine | 5  
Tsunami | 5  
Hands Off Iran! | 6  
Repression in Haiti | 7  
Haiti Solidarity BC | 7  
The Jewish National Fund | 8  
Interview with Hazem Jamjoum | 9

**Special Features: 13-23**  
By Any Means Necessary - Malcolm X | 13  
Sisters in Arms | 14  
Interview with Cuban Vice President Ricardo Alarcon | 15  
Entrevista con Ricardo Alarcón | 16

**Struggles in Canada: 24-27**  
Quebec Students Fight Back | 24  
Interview with Liisa Schofield | 24  
The Left & Canadian Nationalism | 25

War Resisters Welcome! | 26  
Sutikalh Update | 27

**Reports on Local Events & Struggles: 24-28**

Langara 2 Victory | 28  
International Women's Day | 28  
Interview with Meegan Maultsald | 28  
MAWO Feb 26th demonstration | 29  
In Memory of Bob Everton | 29  
APC Demo the Legislature | 30  
Stop Attacks on Hotel Workers | 30  
Pivot Legal Society Report | 30  
MAWO Protests Bush Re-election | 31  
Music of Resistance | 31  
Comox Valley Antiwar Forum | 31  
Students Rights at Langara | 32  
MAWO Workshop Rock for Choice | 32  
Free the Cuba 5 | 33  
Those Sentences - poem | 33  
Imperialism, War, Occupation Forum - 34

**Victory for the Langara 2! | 28**





*This is the newspaper of the*

## Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice

- ISSN 1712-1817 -

www.fire-this-time.org

February/March 2005  
Issue 22/23

### Editorial Board:

Shannon Bundock, Mike Krebs, Ali Yerevani, Nasim Sedaghat, Ivan Drury, Tamara Hansen, Brennan Luchsinger

Editor: Ali Yerevani

### Layout & Design:

Mike Krebs

### Layout Assistants:

Brennan Luchsinger, Shannon Bundock

### Copy Editor:

Tamara Hansen

### Spanish Language

Editor: Carlos López

### Publicity and Distribution

#### Coordinator:

Brennan Luchsinger

Phone/Fax:

(604) 322-1764

Email:

info@fire-this-time.org

Mail: PO Box 21607

Vancouver BC

V5L 5G3

### One year subscription

outside the Lower

Mainland, make cheques

payable to

"Fire This Time"

(Canada \$15, USA \$20,

International \$30)

### Distribution: For Fire

This Time in your area;

across BC, Canada and

internationally please

contact Publicity and

Distribution Coordinator

Brennan Luchsinger

Phone: (604) 338-9006

Email: distro@fire-this-

time.org

### Submissions:

We welcome articles,

letters, and unsolicited

submissions. However,

we cannot promise

publication. Submissions

can be made by email, fax,

or mail. Submissions will

not be returned.

*The opinions expressed in*

*this newspaper are those*

*of the authors, and do not*

*necessarily represent those*

*of Fire This Time.*

*This newspaper could not*

*have been possible without*

*the generous contributions*

*from our supporters.*



# Lies, War, and Occupation

## US/UK, Iraq, and Weapons of Mass Destruction

By Andrew Malieni

### Before the invasion

"...his [Saddam Hussein's] military planning allows for some weapons of mass destruction to be ready within 45 minutes of an order to use them." - UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, September 24<sup>th</sup> 2002

"There's no doubt in my mind but that they [Iraq] currently have chemical and biological weapons." - US Secretary of State Donald Rumsfeld, January 7<sup>th</sup> 2003

### After the invasion

"It's possible that they decided they would destroy them [weapons of mass destruction] prior to a conflict." - US Secretary of State Donald Rumsfeld, May 28<sup>th</sup> 2003

"We've been in virtually every ammunition supply point between the Kuwaiti border and Baghdad but they're [weapons of mass destruction] simply not there." - Lt. General James Conway, May 30<sup>th</sup> 2003

In order to justify their imperialist invasion of Iraq, the US and UK ruling classes first fabricated wild claims about Iraqi weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). Iraq was claimed to have 25,000 litres of anthrax; 38,000 litres of botulinum toxin; and 500 tons of mustard, sarin, and VX nerve gases. Iraq, George Bush and Colin Powell assured, had tried to buy uranium from Niger in order to produce nuclear weapons. It was demanded that Iraq "disarm" itself or face invasion. After the March 2003 invasion, it was frequently claimed that WMDs had been discovered. It was alleged that "mobile germ-weapon factories" had been found. On May 29<sup>th</sup> 2003 George Bush said, "We found the weapons of mass destruction. We found biological laboratories.... And we'll find more. But for those who say we haven't found the banned manufacturing devices or banned weapons, they're wrong. We found them."

All of these claims were lies. The assertion that Iraq attempted to buy uranium from Niger was based on forged documents. Whenever supposed WMDs were found, further laboratory testing always showed it to be something else, like ordinary pesticides. David Kay, the former US chief weapons inspector, admitted that the "mobile germ-weapon factories" were actually equipment used to make hydrogen for weather balloons. Not a single drop of Iraqi WMDs has been found.

The justification that US imperialism offered for invading Iraq, the threat of WMDs, was hypocritical and illogical in the first place. Firstly, if there was a sincere concern that Iraq had WMDs and was willing to use them, why would the US invade? Wouldn't the presence of a huge foreign imperialist military encourage the use of whatever weapons were available? Secondly, the US possesses



US soldiers search a suspected mobile weapons lab near Mosul May, 2003.

massive amounts of atomic, biological, and chemical weapons, not to mention conventional weapons. These weapons are not only at its disposal; the US has an extensive history of using all these forms of weapons. If Iraq indeed had WMDs (which it did not), why should it disarm when the US is preparing to invade it?

Recently, the US officially ended its "search" for the nonexistent WMDs. The Iraq Survey Group, involved in the imperialist occupation forces' official "search," concluded that Iraq destroyed all of its WMDs after the first Persian Gulf War in 1991.

The members of the Iraq Survey Group are now being reassigned to work against the Iraqi resistance. Currently, the supposed Iraqi WMDs are rarely mentioned and instead the justification put forward for the occupation of Iraq is that the imperialist occupiers are somehow bringing liberation and democracy to the Iraqi people.

Both of these justifications put forward for invading Iraq are false. Firstly, there were no WMDs in Iraq. Secondly, the imperialist aggression against Iraq and the occupation of Iraq have not brought any liberation for the Iraqi people. On the

contrary, the imperialist occupiers have killed more than 100,000 Iraqis; imprisoned and tortured an unknown but very large number of Iraqis; and brought massive destruction.

The real reason for the invasion of Iraq is the economic crisis that is facing the US, Canada and other imperialist countries. Iraq has massive oil resources and is a very strategic location for US imperialism in its attempt to expand its domination of the Middle East and beyond. US imperialism is also trying to improve its position in its rivalry with other imperialist countries like France, Germany and Russia. However, the attempts of US imperialism to conquer Iraq are being frustrated by the growing Iraqi resistance.

Poor and working people of the world must stand in solidarity with the anti-imperialist resistance by the people of Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan, Haiti, and Indigenous nations in Canada. The main enemy of poor, working, and oppressed people in imperialist countries is the imperialist ruling class of the country in which they live. The defeat of imperialism anywhere in the world is a victory for all poor and working people.

## What Security? Security for Whom?

### The Myth of the Iraqi Security Forces

By Alison Bodine

Since the occupation of Iraq began, the US/UK occupiers have had to constantly work to prove their legitimacy, both to the people of the world and to the people of Iraq. One of the ways they have tried to do this is through the creation of an Iraqi Security Force (ISF), which is meant to provide stability and security in Iraq (as the name implies). The question is, if the occupiers- as the source of instability and violence within Iraq- could ever recruit and train a force to actually work to protect the Iraqi people, or if it has been an illusion all along.

"Forces are corrupt, frequently do not show up for work, and have many loyalty issues." - Hasim al-Shalaan, Iraqi Defense Minister September 2004

#### Iraqis are not Loyal to the Occupiers

When the words "corruption" and "loyalty" mean the refusal to support and work for the



Iraqi National Guard searching Iraqi woman at a checkpoint March 16th, 2005.

Continued on page 4

# IRAQ: Electoral "Success" a Political Nightmare

From page 2

the number of voters and the voter registration was determined from the lists of people signed up for food rations. As with the Afghan elections, there have been many stories of these food rations being used as ultimatums for pressuring people to vote. As 52 year-old Amin Hajar who owns an auto garage in central Baghdad said two days before the election, "I'll vote because I can't afford to have my food ration cut...if that happened, me and my family would starve to death."

Based on the food ration numbers (or the numbers of the last population count in Iraq) divided by Iraq's median age of 19 years old, between 14million and 18million people were entitled to vote. The US claims that 8.5million votes were cast. However, this does not tell the whole story of the elections.

The imperialist media also made a big deal of the Iraqi diaspora who were reportedly so happy to be rid of Saddam that they were thrilled to finally be able to vote. However, out of about 4million Iraqis living abroad only 265,000 actually voted.

Voter abstention in Iraq was widespread as well, in relation to the radicalization of people by region. For example, it was reported that practically no one voted in Fallujah and that only about 1% of eligible voters in Ramadi went to the polls, including non-Sunni troops and police. The Washington Post reported that in Mosul one polling station did not have one single voter visit all day except for the Iraqi soldiers guarding it. The same was true for Samarra and West Baghdad where, of the tens of thousands of temporarily resettled refugees

from Fallujah who have been placed there, only 500 people voted. All in all, in the areas most ferociously attacked by imperialism (known as "Sunni strongholds") only about 1% of people voted. This represents an effective boycott of the elections by the section of the Iraqi people that is most organized and united in action against the occupation.

The boycott was enforced by attacks focused on polling stations throughout January and the pullout of more than 53 political parties and 30 independent candidates from the electoral race two weeks before the election.

The US has met this boycott saying that this is a sign of just how divided the Iraqi people are, and that anti-occupation sentiment is an isolated phenomenon. While there has been uneven development in the organization of anti-occupation action, the election results communicate a consistent and united idea about what the main problem facing the Iraqi people is. That problem is simply the occupation of Iraq.

Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani, the strongest figure amongst the majority Shia population in Iraq, called on his followers to vote in the election from the position that voting was the first step to ending the occupation. This was the position of the vast majority of the parties that participated in the election, including Sistani's party, the United Iraqi Alliance, which won the election with 140 seats, or 48% of the vote.

The US appointed Prime Minister of Iraq, Iyad Allawi, who made a name for himself by publicly asking the US to bomb Fallujah, came in a distant third place in the elections with only 40 seats, or 14% of the vote. Back in October when the US first began confidently



Basra election room after an anti-elections attack.

## Resistance is Everywhere

From page 3

US occupation of Iraq, it is no wonder they are used to describe members of the ISF. The people of Iraq do not support the occupation and will not defend it. When called to duty during some of the most intense attacks on the Iraqi people since the occupation began, those in Fallujah and Najaf, large portions of battalions refused to fight, some going to join the resistance fighters instead. The Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) realize what the US and other occupiers are trying to get them to do, which is to do the dirty work for them, to defend the US/UK occupation, and Iraqis are refusing to do that.

The actual number of recruits and trainees in all sectors of the ISF, the civilian police force, National Guard, Army, Air Force, Navy, and the Ministry of the Interior, are well below levels expected and necessary. The percentage of those equipped and trained that actually show up for duty, is even lower. Numbers released by the US Department of Defense in the "Weekly Status Report" on the ISF, are grouped together into the category, "Trained/On-hand" in order to avoid having to mention how many of those trained never reported for duty. The struggle of the US to implement an Iraqi Security Force is a constant fight for numbers. This fight is made up of an endless cycle of needing to replace Iraqi's who are refusing to defend the occupation and attack their own people.

### Resistance is Everywhere

One of the main targets of the resistance fighters is civilian police stations because of what these places represent.

They are an attempt to convince the people of Iraq that they should endorse the occupation. Police forces are built in order to control and suppress the strong resistance movement. The basis of their creation is to oppose Iraqi's fighting against the occupation. It is because of this that the Iraqi civilian police can never work for the real safety of the Iraqi people. The police forces are commonly used to fire on peaceful demonstrators in Iraq. They are not ordered to serve and protect Iraqis, but the occupiers instead. The people of Iraq face checkpoints, house raids and violence everyday due to the presence of foreign troops, to ever expect these same occupiers to create a police force that works in the interests of Iraqi people, is flawed in its very roots.

### ISF, a Failed Attempt

The creation of Iraqi Security Forces has been a failed attempt to put an Iraqi face on the US/UK occupation. Iraqi Security Forces trained, funded and equipped by the US military and Multinational forces, will never fight to protect any interests other than those of the US occupation. When the occupation forces claim to be "Creating effective Iraqi military, security, and police forces capable of bringing security to the entire country, of eventually replacing all Coalition forces, and being capable of conducting effective operations while winning the support of the vast majority of the Iraqi people," they are not fooling anyone, including the people of Iraq. The solution to the destruction and instability in Iraq is not Iraqi Security Forces, it is an end to the occupation. US/UK OUT OF IRAQ! BRINGS THE TROOP HOME NOW!

discussing the elections, Bush announced that the US would provide, "strategic advice, technical assistance, training, polling data, assistance and other forms of support" to "moderate, democratically oriented political parties," implying Allawi's "Iraqi List" party. Allawi's weak position was trailed even further by the US appointed President's party, "Iraqis," which took only five seats in the Assembly. This failure was clearly identified by US ruling class think tanks and media corporations alike as the problem that these two leaders were, "too closely associated with the US."

While the imperialist maneuver of holding elections was successful in dividing people in Iraq around the unimportant and inconsequential question of whether or not to vote, it completely failed to break the unity of these same people around the most critical question facing the Iraqi people and US imperialism – the question of being for or against the occupation.

A poll conducted by Zogby International on the eve of the election found that up to 82% of people in Iraq want the occupation to end immediately. Compared to a Gallup poll in March 2004 that found 57% of Iraqis favoring "immediate" withdrawal of all troops, the people of Iraq have become *more* -not *less*-united around the most important question facing them today.

### Electoral "success" a political nightmare

*"Iraqis do not measure legitimacy primarily in terms of elections. They measure it in terms of the actual ability to govern, to give all Iraqis a fair share of wealth and power, to provide personal security, to provide employment and economic opportunity, to furnish education and health services, and to provide water, electricity and sewers."*

- Anthony Cordesman, Centre for Strategic and International Studies, in a presentation to the US Senate, February 1<sup>st</sup> 2005

Even with the elections done and behind them, the US has been unable to answer how the new "Interim Iraqi Government" (IG) represents a change for the people of Iraq. Even though Bush, Rumsfeld, Negroponte, and Allawi

managed to convince almost 60% of the people in Iraq that the elections were a sort of referendum on ending the occupation, they had no intention of making it so. Before performing the June 30<sup>th</sup> "Handover of Power" the US set a trap in the interim constitution they imposed on Iraq to guarantee US control over whatever government would be "elected" in January. This trick was called the "Transitional Administrative Law" (TAL). The TAL embedded itself as the constitution of Iraq, unchangeable except with a 75% majority vote by the government elected in January. The contrast between this requirement and the heavy divisions forced by the same occupying forces between competing parties that participated in the elections in Iraq means that the "Iraqi government" is paralyzed.

The new government has already had problems with the TAL. Despite backing from the US ruling class, their appointed Prime Minister Iyad Allawi was voted out of office in the January 30<sup>th</sup> elections and replaced with Shiite leader Ibrahim al-Jaafari. To protect their interests as represented by their golden boy, the imperialist's TAL states that a 75% majority in the National Assembly must accept the new President before the appointment is complete. On February 23<sup>rd</sup> Allawi, whose heart has not beat without the guidance of the Washington metronome for at least two years, announced that unless Jaafari's party renounces "Islamic law" and embraces "western democracy" he would split from the government and form an opposing governing body. He then publicly backed down from this absurd statement and went into the first meeting of the new National Assembly on March 16<sup>th</sup> 2005 with a new demand.

This "historic" meeting began with mortar attacks by resistance fighters and ended in a deadlock. The assembly was unable to agree on the nomination of a Speaker, President, Vice President, or Prime Minister and did not even set a date to re-convene. Prior to the meeting Allawi announced again, despite his low showing in the election, that he would not

*Continued on page 11*





## A New Leadership for Palestine Mahmoud Abbas and the Sharm al-Sheikh Summit

By Mike Krebs

*'We're pleased that president Abbas is following through on his mandate to take concrete steps on security and to restore law and order...we are going to be supportive partners for him and for his leadership as they try and realize that vision for the Palestinian people.'* – US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice

Since Arafat's death, the US and Israel have been maneuvering to find, and further consolidate, part of the Palestinian political establishment willing to compromise further the goals of the Palestinian liberation movement. The main Palestinian figure in this, Mahmoud Abbas, was elected president of the Palestinian Authority (PA) on January 10<sup>th</sup> 2005.

The big question is, what is this 'vision' of Abbas that Rice is describing, and what does it have to offer to Palestinians? After being subjected to over fifty years of war, occupation, bloodshed, poverty, and humiliation at the hands of the Zionist occupation of their land, does the change in presidency from Arafat to Abbas mark a significant change for Palestinians?

### Sharm al-Sheikh

To date, the most significant move by Abbas in terms of putting forward the approach of his government is the Sharm al-Sheikh summit in Egypt. Here he met with Ariel Sharon during the first week of February 2005, and a verbal agreement was reached between the two leaders for a so-called 'cease-fire.'

What was discussed? In exchange for a 'mutual cease-fire,' The PA and the Israeli government are to open up negotiations to discuss the release of Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli prisons, the removal of some of the Israeli settler outposts set up in the West Bank since Sharon's government came to power, and the pullout of Israeli occupation forces from five cities in the West Bank. At the same time, Abbas is expected to clamp down on Palestinian resistance, for which he will be assisted by US special envoy Lt. Gen. William Ward and \$40 million dollars from the US in financial assistance.

This 'cease-fire' was negotiated with the explicit intent of giving more space for the Israeli government to carry out the 'disengagement plan,' and eventually return to the implementation of the Road Map plan. This plan, for an 'independent' Palestinian state, was drawn up by the US government and negotiated by Bush, Sharon, and Abbas back in spring of 2003.

Ariel Sharon's 'disengagement' plan for Gaza calls for removing all Israeli settlements in Gaza. This involves moving 7,500 settlers, in order to focus on defending and expanding its more valuable settlements in the West Bank, where there are almost 400,000 settlers. This plan is also intended to strengthen Israel's stranglehold on Palestinians living within Gaza. Israel plans to retain military control over the area's borders and space, as well as maintaining the ability of Israeli occupation forces to re-enter the area 'when needed.'

Significantly, the most burning issues of the 'Israeli-Palestinian conflict' were not discussed at all, those



Palestinian woman throwing rock an an Israeli tank.

that relate to the true nature of the conflict. Both Sharon and Abbas dealt with 'Violence' as if it were a mutual problem, not as a case of one side violently occupying the other, then violently suppressing a people repeatedly when they try to resist this violent occupation.

Even more importantly, no larger issues related to the basic rights of Palestinians were even intended to be dealt with. No talk of occupation,

the right of return of the over 750,000 Palestinians and their descendents to the lands that they were forced off of immediately before the establishment of the Israeli state. As with previous frameworks for negotiation between the Palestinian leadership and Israel, issues such as the occupation of Palestinian land by Israel and the right of return are to be dealt with in 'final status' negotiations in some undetermined future.

### The Sharm al-Sheikh Agreement in Practice

Even within the limited framework for 'concessions' laid out in the Sharm al-Sheikh agreement, the reluctance of Israel to carry out even these limited concessions, and the constant delay tactics employed, expose what this 'Agreement' is really about.

On the issue of releasing Palestinians

held in Israeli prisons, most of whom were detained during the second Intifada for resisting the Israeli occupation, to date Israel has only agreed to release four or five hundred at a time. This is a fraction of the over 8,000 prisoners currently being held in some of the worst prison conditions in the world. In addition, according to reports by Palestinian prisoners rights groups, the vast majority of those released have already finished their sentences, while at the same time the Israeli occupation forces continue to subject Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza to arbitrary arrest and detainment on a daily basis.

The promise of Israel to 'pull out' of certain towns in the West Bank is an equally dishonest proposal. The five towns are Ramallah, Bethlehem, Qalqilya, Tulkarem and Jericho, and Israel has already gone back and forth repeatedly with actually pulling out of these cities. At the same time, the Israeli occupation forces still intend to maintain control over the cities by restricting movement in and out by military checkpoints.

This is the case with Jericho, the first city that Israeli forces 'handed over,' where the Israeli government dismantled only two of the several checkpoints controlling access to the city, while maintaining checkpoints at all other entrances into the city. In addition to this absurdity, the Israeli government is certainly not talking about any significant removal

*Continued on page 11*

## Tsunami, an Open Wound of the Criminal Imperialist System

By Thomas Davies

As the tsunami crisis in South Asia drags into its third month, the relief money bidding war of various world leaders is still vaguely audible above the disaster. Paul Martin and Kofi Annan's private helicopters have left the region - but the reality for people on the ground remains the same: those hit hardest by the recent tsunami were from the poorest sectors of South Asian society. These people's vulnerability was a direct cause of the capitalist economic policy of these now "benevolent" nations. On the stage of the current global situation, the South Asia disaster was little more than a photo opportunity to the leaders of many countries. It was an attempt to save face and divert attention away from the ongoing crisis of worldwide poverty and occupation in the Middle East, and it came at the expense of South Asia's poorest.

### Poverty, Nothing New to the People of South Asia

According to the World Bank, South Asia, with a Gross National Income per capita of \$460 for its 1.4 billion inhabitants, is home to nearly 40 percent of the world's poor living



Tsunami victims struggle to have access to clean water.

on less than \$1 a day. The December 26<sup>th</sup> Tsunami killed anywhere from 228,000 to 310,000 of these people, and the count is not yet complete. Conservative estimates place the number of displaced at 1 million,

and an estimated 250,000 are newly homeless. The devastation was immense, and the obvious question to ask is: why were these communities so vulnerable?

### The Poor Hit Hardest, Again

Even mainstream news sources seem to have grasped the reasons for

*Continued on page 6*

# US Out of the Middle East!

## Stop Attacks on Iran! Oppose imperialist intervention in Iran!

By Tamara Hansen  
& Brennan Luchsinger

In recent months the Bush administration has increased its political pressure on Iran. The US Government and media have portrayed this pressure as a response to Iran's nuclear program and the "possibility that Iran is developing nuclear weapons." There has been discussion within the US government of imposing sanctions on Iran through the UN Security Council, as well as the possibility of further intervention. For the past weeks, George W. Bush and Condoleezza

agreed that Iran "poses a threat to the security" of the region. The US and Israel have both spoken to the media about the possibility of a pre-emptive attack by Iran. But history shows that the US and Israel have been the forces engaging in pre-emptive attacks, like the 2003 US invasion of Iraq, or Israel's 1981 attack on an Iraqi power plant.

As pressure on Iran grows, the US has to maneuver and deal, with the possibility of a tighter blockade, sanctions, or in a more favorable situation, to intervene in Iran. Currently the US administration is involved in negotiating a strategy

military presence, the US cannot fully exploit these third-world nations.

Speaking to media on Feb. 22<sup>nd</sup> Bush said, "This notion that the United States is getting ready to attack Iran is simply ridiculous." He then finished his statement by saying, "And having said that, all options are on the table." With bold statements like these the US is pushing its line of a stronger intervention to the EU. While they are not speaking upfront about a military attack, the US is seeking international legitimacy.

Currently the EU is considering offering "economic rewards" to Iran if they abandon their nuclear program. One aspect that is "on the table" and being considered by both the US and EU is that of sanctions. The UN and US have been known to push sanctions as a means of achieving economic and political ends. As we saw in Iraq, UN sanctions have a far more devastating effect on working and oppressed people than they do on the ruling-class within the countries they are imposed on. Such was the case in Iraq where people suffered under sanctions for over 12 years without access to food, water, or medicine. The sanctions on Iraq led to the deaths of more than one and a half million Iraqis. According



Protestor kicking tear gas during Iranian revolution.

to human rights organizations like Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch, half of these deaths were children who were also suffering from an increase in mental and physical disorders with one in five children also suffering from malnutrition.

### Imperialist Strategy and the Basis for Military Intervention Around the World

Over the past year we have heard the US administration accuse Iran of developing nuclear weapons, backing terrorism and hiding members of Al-Qaeda. These are also

excuses we have heard from the US government over the last couple of years as excuses to monitor or invade countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, North Korea, and Syria. However, after finding no links to Al-Qaeda and no Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq we must ask: Why are these nations seeking a role in an intervention in Iran? It is because all of these imperialist countries have one thing in common that is forcing them to expand their boundaries and economic influences: They are all in a state of crisis where their economy is

*Continued on page 8*



Mural in Tehran.

Rice have been meeting with leaders of the European Union (EU) and leaders in the Middle East region to discuss "how to deal with Iran".

Within Iran there has been a great deal of opposition towards how the EU and US are approaching an intervention. Initially, in response to talks between the EU and Iran, Iran's enrichment of uranium was halted. The EU and US allege that Iran is using this uranium to develop nuclear weapons. Iran has recently restarted its uranium enrichment, and the US is seeking to build on this as a possible point to support their intervention. The US government has been constantly agitating that Iran is developing nuclear weapons that pose a threat to the US.

The US has been caught with their foot in their mouths as reports of spies, "drone" planes, and other intelligence gathering sources have surfaced in international media. The *Washington Post* reported on Feb 13<sup>th</sup> that the US has been flying "drone" planes over Iranian airspace for at least the last year. These "drones" (pilot-less planes) have been entering Iran from US military bases in Iraq.

The US, EU and Israel have all

of intervention with the EU. One thing is clear through these discussions: whether it's the EU or the US, imperialists are preparing to intervene in Iran.

### Pressure Grows

The pressure facing Iran from the US is clear now, as the US deployed Special Forces to Iran in January with the task of detecting strategic targets. Speaking to members of the EU in Brussels, George Bush made the goals of the US clear, claiming that Iran had, "Breached a contract with the international community. They're the party that needs to be held to account-not any of us."

Ruling class analysts within the US claim that if Iran develops nuclear weapons it will destabilize the Middle East. Destabilize the Middle East for who? The main force within the Middle East that would be destabilized is imperialism; whether it's the US, UK, or Israel. The occupation of Iraq and the resistance of Iraqi people have led to a very difficult situation for the US government, and their position is weak as a result. Without successfully consolidating their forces and establishing a stable

## Tsunami, An Open Wound of Imperialism

From page 5

the enormous damage. Even the pro-capitalist, imperialist Los Angeles Times observed: "Natural disasters strike rich and poor countries alike. But poor countries and poor people are much more vulnerable to the effects. Their housing stock is flimsier; roads are less developed, making it harder to escape a crisis or reach survivors; health facilities are inadequate; communications are fragmentary."

Subsistence fishing communities compose a significant portion of the population on the affected coastal areas. These communities became ever more vulnerable and were forced into deeper poverty by unequal competition with the factory trawler fleets of the European Union, the depletion of maritime biomass, and by the rise of developments like large-scale commercialized shrimp farming. People in these regions were in crisis long before the tsunami hit, trying to keep speed with the frenzied economic competition of countries like the United States, Great Britain, France, and Canada. This left them completely defenseless against the tsunami.

The poverty in these countries is so well established that the stock exchanges of Indonesia, Thailand, India, and Sri Lanka have not suffered any significant decline in the aftermath of the tsunami. The reason? Large segments of their populations have lived in such a state of immense poverty that their relationship to the national economy is of minimal influence. The tsunami served to reinforce the divisions between the rich and the poor in these countries further.

### Who Will Pay?

Logically, the most vulnerable and

poverty stricken communities are those which continue to suffer. The Western funded tourism industry that also inhabits the coastline is likely to recover quickly as tourist operators and tourists are largely insured for loss, and the bigger companies for disruption to business. Multi-national tourism also has internal funding and can raise finances for rapid reconstruction. The disasters will

and, in particular, the low status afforded to women." -World Bank Report on Poverty in South Asia

Contrary to this racist assessment of South Asians as being inferiorly developed as human beings, understanding the colonialism and imperialism of Western nations is key to understanding the poverty. Most of the countries hit are recovering from centuries of direct colonial occupation. Bangladesh,



A woman and her child sit by the remains of their home, Sri Lanka, January 2005.

also be used as a form of "urban renewal." Tourist resorts and cities themselves have been constantly encroaching on traditional coastal and fishing villages in the region. There is now new opportunity to further supplant enlarged tourist facilities or projects for the military.

### Colonialism and Debt

"South Asia's pervasive poverty is both a cause and consequence of its low level of human development

India, and Sri Lanka were all British colonies from the 1800's to the late 1940's. Indonesia, the scene of the most tsunami casualties, was a Dutch colony until 1947.

The disease resulted from foreign occupation and exploitation was difficult to cure for these countries, especially as the United States emerged from the 1940's as a new imperialist superpower, prone

*Continued on page 9*



# Growing Protests Condemn Ottawa's Role in Haiti Coup and Repression

By Roger Annis\*

Growing numbers of people in Canada and around the world are raising their voices against the February 29, 2004 coup against the constitutional government of Haiti and the bloody repression that has reigned on that island ever since.

## New human rights report

The Center for the Study of Human Rights at the University of Miami published a shocking report in late 2004 on the current situation in Haiti. The 61-page document is based on a visit to Haiti from November 11 to 21, 2004, by a human rights team led by U.S. attorney Thomas Griffin.

The report's introduction states, "After ten months under an interim government backed by the United States, Canada, and France and buttressed by a United Nations force, Haiti's people churn inside a hurricane of violence. Gunfire crackles, once-bustling streets are abandoned to cadavers, and whole neighborhoods are cut off from the outside world. Nightmarish fear now accompanies Haiti's poorest in their struggle to survive in destitution. Gangs, police, irregular soldiers, and even UN peacekeepers bring fear. There has been no investment in dialogue to end the violence.

"Haiti's security and justice institutions fuel the cycle of violence.... As voices for non-violent change are silenced by arrest, assassination or fear, violent defense becomes a credible option." (The full report is available at the website of the Haiti Action Committee: [www.haitiaction.net](http://www.haitiaction.net))

The report contains photos of Haiti's



UN occupation forces in Haiti.

police and rightist gangs in action and their dead victims lying in the streets of the poor neighborhoods, often for days on end. Several thousand people have been killed in the past year at the hands of the rightists and their coup regime. Many of the poor neighborhoods of the capital Port-au-Prince cannot easily access food, water or health services because those who venture in or out become targets of the police. Hundreds of Haitians languish in prison in gruesome conditions with no charges or due process of law.

Griffin interviewed members of the United Nations-sponsored military force in Haiti, currently headed by the government and armed forces of Brazil. He reports on widespread evidence of the UN collaboration with the Haitian National Police (HNP) in repressing and killings opponents of the coup. The HNP, most of whose members were installed after the coup, receives training and arms from police forces of the occupying countries, including the RCMP and many municipal police forces from Canada. A commander of the UN Civilian Police Unit, from Quebec

City, Canada, told the Griffin team that he is "in shock" over the conditions in Port-au-Prince. He said that his UN mandate is to "coach, train and provide information" to the HNP, but all he has done in Haiti is "engage in daily guerilla warfare." "Where are the newspaper reporters?" he asked Griffin's team.

Human rights reports from earlier in 2004 reported the same pattern of killings and repression of supporters of President Aristide and his Lavalas party.

In a rare glimpse from the Canadian corporate media into conditions in Haiti, an article in the February 7, 2005 *Globe and Mail* detailed horrific conditions prevailing inside the prisons there. But the article made only the briefest mention of the Griffin report. The mainstream press in Miami, where a large Haitian exile population lives, was silent on the

in Haiti. They are members of the governing committees of the illegal, coup regime.

A key element of Canadian and UN plans for a future Haiti is the holding of a national "election" later this year. Denis Coderre, special adviser on Haiti to Prime Minister Paul Martin, told a political conference on the future of Haiti, held in Montreal on December 10 and 11, 2004, "What we are looking for is to have a secure environment for elections at the end of 2005."

Martin visited Haiti on November 15. "We must be here for the long term," he told reporters. When questioned about the "justice" system in Haiti, he acknowledged that acts "slowly," but he also stated, "There are no political prisoners in Haiti." (<http://canada.news.designerz.com/pm-martin-canada-in-haiti-for-long-run.html>)

Two months later, on January 28, 2005, Coderre met with Haiti's most prominent political prisoner, the lawful prime minister, Yvon Neptune. Coderre spent one hour with Neptune ... in the latter's jail cell. (Neptune's supporters succeeded in removing him from prison on February 20, out of concern for his life. They delivered him to UN forces, who promptly handed him back over to the Haitian police.)

## Canada embarks on aggressive course

The invasion of Haiti is a centerpiece of the Canadian government's declared aim to make Canada a more aggressive and influential imperial power in the world. Other features of that policy include:

- A commitment to participation in a long-term occupation of Afghanistan and pursuit of the internal war there.
- Deepening Canada's participation in the occupation of Iraq by agreeing to join in training the new, repressive Iraqi army.
- Closer alignment at the United Nations with the colonial settler state of Israel in the latter's suppression of the national rights

## Haiti Solidarity BC: Organizing Against Occupation US/FRANCE/CANADA - OUT OF HAITI!

By Shannon Bundock

On April 1st Laura Flynn- writer, activist, and founder of San Francisco based Haiti Action Committee- will be visiting Vancouver. A forum, called 'The Rise of Resistance in Haiti today Against Occupation & Human Rights Violations,' organized by the recently formed Haiti Solidarity BC (HSBC), will give people in Vancouver the opportunity to hear from an eyewitness and activist on the struggle for freedom and democracy in Haiti.

Laura Flynn lived and organized in Haiti for five years before returning to the US. She continues to write, speak, and organize in defense of the Haitian people's right to sovereignty and democracy.

**The event will take place at 7pm, on April 1st at Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House (800 East Broadway) in Vancouver, BC.**

The group organizing Laura Flynn's talk formed in early

February 2005. Immediately prior to the forming of Haiti Solidarity BC, members of the group were involved in organizing a number of speaking events with journalist, filmmaker, and founder of the Haiti Information Project, Kevin Pina. In Victoria and Vancouver BC, hundreds of people came out to hear Kevin Pina speak against the illegal intervention in Haiti. Following the success of these events, members of the organizing group formed Haiti Solidarity BC.

"We are a recently-formed committee in Vancouver of people whose goal is to educate public opinion in Canada about the violent overthrow one year ago of the elected government of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in Haiti and its aftermath," said an open letter from the committee following their formation.

The first major action of HSBC was a rally and picket held on February 26th with the demands: "End the Occupation..." "For a return of the Constitutional Government." "End the REPRESSION!" and "Respect Human Rights!" The

demonstration came to mark the first anniversary of the coup in Haiti.

On this page in this issue of Fire This Time, we have printed an article by HSBC founding member Roger Annis. Please read it to get a more thorough update and analysis of the current situation in Haiti.

As the people of Haiti face increasingly harsh attacks by occupation forces, resistance is rising and the Haitian people are proving to be a giant obstacle to the stability of occupation forces. Canada continues to have a central role in the occupation of Haiti. As a result, those living within Canada have a great responsibility to build solidarity against Canada's attack on oppressed people abroad. It is within these conditions that Fire This Time welcomes the formation of Haiti Solidarity BC. Through education and action we can join with the people of Haiti to demand:

No to Occupation of Haiti!  
Sovereignty for Haiti Now!  
Canada Out of Haiti!



Protest in Cite Soleil, Haiti, against attack on Haitians by UN troops, January 2005.

report until February 22. An article by Jim Defede appeared in the *Miami Herald* that day.

## Canada: key force in the occupation

The Canadian government was centrally involved in the planning and execution of the coup in Haiti. Five hundred Canadian soldiers occupied Haiti from the time of the coup until July. They have been replaced by police drawn from the RCMP and other provincial and municipal police forces. Military and political officials from Canada and other countries of the UN occupation force play a decisive role in all government decision making

- of the Palestinian people.
- Significant boosts in military recruitment and spending.
- A plan to create a more powerful military strike force.

The head of Canada's armed forces, General Richard Hillier, outlined plans for a beefed-up strike force in a series of press interviews in mid-February. "We're talking about taking army task forces, navy task groups and air capability ... and have it ready to deploy either in Canada or around the world as an entity that says 'Canadian' on it...."

"What we need is something that is

Continued on page 10

# Stop Attacks on Iran!

From page 6

failing to support itself. This calls for imperialist expansion and plundering of third-world nations.

The crisis facing the US can already be seen through the expansion of war and occupation in the Middle East. From the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan, to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the US is expanding its political, economic, and military domination of the world. Strategically the US is expanding its influence in the Middle East to remain in a position of power and complete hegemony and to continue profiting from the plundering of these countries. Looking at the occupation of Iraq we can see the US attempting to consolidate its forces and build a base for further intervention.

## What are the Real Reasons for US Hostility Towards Iran?

The US's plans for intervention in Iran are directly related to the US's current quest for control over the Middle East's resources. Approximately 10% of US oil comes from the Persian Gulf; however strategically the Gulf is much more important in terms of the power it gives the US over European and Asian trade. According to Foreign Policy In Focus (FPF), an international network of more than 650 policy analysts and advocates, "Gulf oil was and remains important because of its impact on the global economy... 30% of European oil imports and nearly 80% of Japan's come from the Gulf. The U.S. exerts significant influence on these countries through control of Gulf oil." Politically and economically the US is seeking to control resources in the Middle East to solve economic problems facing the US and to extend its dominance over other imperialist countries.

However oil is not the only question for the US in Iran, and neither are resources. As we have mentioned in previous issues of FTT, (See issue #5, 'The War on Iraq is not Over') Iran is a much more important target for imperialists than any other country in the Middle East. This is because during the Iranian revolution in 1979 the US military was forced out of the country. Previously, under the Shah, Iran was led by a proxy regime, loyal to US imperialism and responsible for maintaining US imperialist hegemony in the Middle East. When the 1979 revolution removed the Shah and dynasty from power and kicked out US imperialism, the US substantially lost hegemony in the Persian Gulf region and the Middle East. The attacks on Afghanistan, Iraq, the war drive in Syria, and now the attacks on Iran are all indeed steps to restoring the US's absolute hegemony in the Middle East.

In hopes of intervening and eventually forcing a 'regime change' in Iran, the US government hopes to change the balance of forces in the Middle East back in its favour. This change would suppress much of the resistance to imperialism and US intervention that was created during the Iranian revolution in 1979 and has carried through to today. This change in the balance of forces could be done through demoralization and sanctions or through direct military invasion. However, because of Iran's proud anti-imperialist history, any attack by imperialists on Iran will surely be met with a strong show of force and resistance.

With the proposed sanctions and a possible US, EU and/or UN



Barricades in the street of Tehran during the popular insurgency of February 11th 1979.

intervention in Iran it is important to look at the global situation in which Iran exists today. This situation is one of growing political, economical and social instability, which is

highlighted most clearly in the current US occupation of Iraq.

In the global context we are seeing different kinds of hostile interventions being planned for

countries that have been deemed "outposts of tyranny" by the US administration. Cuba, Belarus, Zimbabwe, North Korea, Burma and Iran are the six countries the US government is pointing at as potential targets for this current era of war and occupation.

## The Debate Between the US and EU

As the US is pushing for a harder intervention in Iran, the EU is attempting to grow closer to the Iranian government and appear to the world as a "lesser of two evils". The difference in strategy between the EU and the US does not overshadow the reasons that they need to employ these strategies. They seek to exploit third-world nations and the people that live there. The difference is that the US has the power to do that now. The EU is maneuvering to have that power in the long run, but in the short-run is seeking influence over the Iranian government's decision making and opening new economic opportunity in Iran.

Neither tendency is opposed to an outright attack, but they both question whether if in the aftermath of Iraq it's possible to engage in that level of aggression without major opposition at home and abroad. The EU is pulling a softer line in order to be in a position to benefit from any intervention made into Iran. The US is walking a tightrope between gaining legitimacy or facing another major crisis of opposition, like the one that rose from the global antiwar movement in response to the invasion of Iraq.

## Hands off Iran!

Based on what we know about the US and other imperialist's interests in third-world countries it is important that we recognize that any action imperialists take against Iran will have a harmful effect on poor and working people in Iran. Especially the current talk around sanctions which would be used to weaken the people of Iran the same way the blockade on Cuba or the sanctions on Iraq have been used to impoverish people and weaken them in order to quash resistance and open space for imperialist intervention.

The significance of the increasing pressure on Iran for the antiwar movement is not over whether or not Iran has or is creating nuclear weapons. This does not create instability for working and oppressed people globally any more than the US having nuclear weapons, or Israel having nuclear weapons in the Middle East region. The importance of Iran for the antiwar movement is that its right to self-determination be defended and that Iran regardless of its position of being a "reactionary" or a "progressive" state, be allowed to remain a country politically, economically, and militarily independent of US and EU imperialism. Iran must be defended against these attacks on the basis that all oppressed countries have the right to govern how they see fit, without intervention, and free from the greedy hands of imperialism.

We must demand "Defend Iran's Right to Self-determination!" "Stop attacks on Iran NOW!" "Hands Off Iran!"

## Reclaiming the Land: Palestinian Campaign Targeting the JNF's Charitable Status

By Kole Kilibarda\*

*On the 29<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Land Day, Palestinians and their allies from the Al-Awda Right of Return Coalition in Toronto are launching an initiative to strip the Jewish National Fund (JNF) of its charity status in Canada. The campaign is part of a broader global effort spearheaded by Jewish-Palestinian intellectual Uri Davis to question the racist and apartheid nature of the Israeli state. With prospects of an impending 'peace' designed to legitimate Palestinian Bantustans in portions of the West Bank and Gaza Strip on the horizon - thereby undermining attempts to achieve genuine Palestinian self-determination - it is imperative that Palestinian solidarity activists deepen their analysis of Israel's colonization project and move beyond calls to 'End the Occupation' of lands seized in 1967. An important element in deepening this analysis is to examine how the process of Zionist settlement has unfolded within the lands occupied by this*

*movement since its beginnings and to expose the apartheid system that is the logical result of such a process.*

On March 30<sup>th</sup> 1976, thousands of Indigenous Palestinians who fell under Israeli control in 1948 participated in a mass strike against systematic discrimination. They were also protesting Israeli government plans to expropriate 5,500 acres of Arab-owned land from the villages of Arraba, Sakhnin, Deir Hanna and other towns and villages in the Galilee. The Israeli police responded to the demonstrations with violence, killing six unarmed Palestinian youths, wounding another hundred activists and arresting over three hundred. In the intervening years, these events have become consecrated in Palestinian memory as Land Day. Just as the Sharpeville massacre on March 21<sup>st</sup> 1960 served to galvanize a whole generation of anti-apartheid activists in South Africa, the killing of Raja Abu Rayya, Khader Khalayla, Khadija Shawahneh, Khair Yassin, Mohsen Taha and Ra'fat Zuheiri on March



Israeli soldier pointing gun at Palestinian child, March 8th 2005.

30<sup>th</sup> 1976 served to highlight the second-class status of Palestinians living in Israel.

*Yehud hagalit*, the project of 'Judaizing' the Galilee, was a clandestine government program until 1976 when it was openly adopted as a slogan of the Israeli Housing Ministry. Israel Koenig, head of the Israeli Interior Ministry's

Galilee Division, provided the rationale for this policy in a report drafted for then Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. This report was leaked in 1976. It claimed that the Palestinian citizens of Israel were "a cancer in the Jewish body that had to be curbed and contained"

*Continued on page 12*



# Tsunami, an Open Wound of Imperialism

From page 6

to using the region for military installations against the USSR and its rivals. While not oil rich like the Middle East, South Asia does have one resource of huge interest to imperialists: people. 1.4 billion people to create cheap goods, consume Western-made products, and reinforce inequality. A CBC report on poverty in the region noted: "Despite all the talk about free trade, the West still subsidizes its own agricultural industries at levels that make it impossible for poor countries to compete."

Economically disadvantaged from centuries of occupation and pillaging, the nations of South Asia became increasingly reliant on loans from Western powers to survive. The debt per capita in the region more than quadrupled from \$50 to \$214.38 per person between 1980 and 2000. This, again, is in an area where the average yearly income per family is \$460 a year.

The cycle of poverty - debt - loans - interest - poverty is firmly in place thanks to the opportunism of international lending agencies such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in South Asia. India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka are all in the top five countries to have borrowed from the World Bank in 2003. Meanwhile, the percentage of Gross Domestic Product spend on repaying loans to the IMF grew in Indonesia from 8.7% 1990 to 9.8% in 2002. Thailand's debt repayments more than doubled from 6.2% to 15.6% in the same period.

Luckily enough for the effected countries, finance ministers from the seven largest lending nations graciously agreed to suspend debt payments from countries hit by the waves for the next year (long enough for all the TV cameras to leave).

## Chosen Compassion

So why were George Bush, Tony Blair, and Paul Martin so eager to appear on cameras to solemnly declare solidarity and aide with the people of South Asia? Where was their concern for the 205,500 Iraqis killed as a result of the first Gulf War, their pledges of aid as United Nations Sanctions killed over 1.5 million of these same people in the following 12 years? Why has George Bush donated only little over 500 million to the Tsunami relief efforts while, according to the Christian Science Monitor, continuing to spend over 4 billion a week on the occupation of Iraq?

The answer is simple: these countries do not have any interest in the well-being of the poor and working people of the countries they intervene in. They may find a wealthy bureaucratic layer to deal with and create "governments" with like in Afghanistan and Iraq, but their interests in foreign intervention are economic. An example is around the undeniable illegitimacy of the recent Iraqi elections at the end of January when world leaders were all too happy to have something to divert attention from this glaring fact and regain PR for their often criticized foreign policy.

## The One Exception

One country providing an alternative in positive disaster relief strategies and real solidarity is Cuba. In 2004 the people of the island of 11 million were able to confront two major successive hurricanes. While Hurricane Ivan and Charlie wrought havoc on the lives of equally poor Caribbean nations as well as the United States, Cuba was able to first evacuate 149,000 people during



Tsunami victims find shelter in a refugee camp.

Hurricane Charlie, and then an amazing 1.9 million people to avoid the wrath of Hurricane Ivan. Cuba received worldwide recognition for their disaster strategy, "The Cuban way could easily be applied to other countries with similar economic conditions, and even in countries with greater resources that do not manage to protect their population as well as Cuba does," admitted Salvano Briceno, director of the U.N.

International Strategy for Disaster Reduction.

Even comparatively to the economically richer countries Cuba set a huge example. Charlie killed 4 people in Cuba, but 27 in Florida. Although the hurricanes caused over a billion dollars worth of damage to Cuba and Hurricane Charlie alone destroyed or damaged 70,000 homes, Cuba still maintained its medical teams abroad.

Recognizing that the U.S blockade of Cuba had caused over 70 billion dollars in damage to the Cuban economy in its 42 year history, the country rejected the insulting offer of \$50,000 in hurricane relief from the United States. Through emphasis on community mobilizations and extensive preparations, Cubans were able to protect themselves and set a precedent for people around the world with a real standard of aid and

compassion. One example of which is its Medical Brigades in Haiti. Since 1999, these Medical Brigades have resulted in a verified saving of 81,856 lives. Also, Cuba's Medical Team of 575 was the only medical team to remain in Haiti after the overthrow of President Aristide by a Canadian, U.S and France backed coup.

"It's not bad. Maybe pour in a little scotch?" - Paul Martin's comments regarding water purified by a Canadian Direct Action Response Team (DART) in Sri Lanka

That while standing in the middle of tsunami ravaged Sri Lanka, Paul Martin was able to make such a comment is very indicative of his approach to the entire situation. Mr. Martin was quite aware that he would soon board his helicopter, take himself up on the scotch offer, and leave the region in tatters. Just as other world leaders have been content to sit on and use poverty in South Asia and around the world for whatever economic gain they can muster, the tsunami relief efforts were another chapter in the tragedy written in the blood and sweat of poor people around the world. Unfortunately for imperialist countries, they cannot rely on regular tsunamis to save them from what could be described as the same kind of wave in worldwide sentiment and motion against them. Demanding equality, demanding justice, demanding dignity, at the forefront of this wave are the poor and working people of the world, whose lives were in upheaval long before the tsunami hit.

## 'It's in the Heart of Every Palestinian'

### An interview with Hazem Jamjoum from Al-Awda Toronto on the Palestinian Right of Return

By Mike Krebs

*For over fifty years, the struggle of Palestinians to end the occupation of their country by the Zionist state of Israel has been one of the most crucial axes of the international conflict between imperialism and oppressed people. Israel has served as the major defender, not of simply 'its right to exist' as a racist state, but of imperialist hegemony in the Middle East.*

*The right of Palestinians to self-determination, then, is of crucial importance for oppressed people all over the world under attack by imperialist countries, be it the US, UK, Israel, or Canada. In the current era of imperialist war and occupation, this struggle, alongside the Iraqi resistance against the US-led occupation of their country, takes on an even greater importance for the international struggle to defeat imperialism.*

*Fundamental to Palestinian self-determination is addressing the right of Palestinians to return to the area of Palestine that was taken from them and established as the state of 'Israel' in 1948. Asserting this right poses a direct challenge to the existence of Israel as an exclusively 'Jewish' state.*

*Recently, Fire This Time interviewed Hazem Jamjoum*



Hazem Jamjoum speaking at a MAWO forum, January 22nd 2005.

*from al-Awda Toronto. Al-Awda, which means 'Return' in Arabic, is an international coalition that advocates for the Palestinian Right*

*of Return. In addition to his work with al-Awda Toronto, Hazem is a member of the Sumoud Political Prisoner Solidarity Group, The*

*Coalition Against the Deportation of Palestinian Refugees, and the Arab Student Collective at the University of Toronto.*

FTT: Probably the best thing would be if we start with a bit of background about al-Awda.

**Hazem:** Al-Awda was started right before the second Intifada (which started in September 2000). It had a period where it was becoming a kind of dominant Palestinian grassroots movement in Europe and North America which culminated in large rallies in places like Madrid and New York.

It has grown because the key element for the Palestinian struggle is to achieve the Right of Return, because it recognizes the beginning of the Palestinian conflict in 1948, with the expulsion of the refugees and the takeover of what, in the mainstream view, is "Israel proper": the part of Palestine that was occupied in 1948.

It's also becoming increasingly pressing that refugees have a say in what's going on with the decision-making. Al-Awda is increasingly pressing that refugees have some sort of voice or some sort of influence, and that the Right of Return be pressed. So the al-Awda coalition formed around these ideas.

*Continued on page 10*

# It's in the Heart of Every Palestinian

From page 9

**FTT: What kind of projects is al-Awda working on right now?**

**Hazem:** There is this essential need to have relationships with Palestinian refugees in the West Bank and Gaza, as well as the internally displaced refugees. These are people who didn't leave the land that was occupied in 1948, but aren't allowed to go back to their villages. There are about 253,000 of them. They have Israeli citizenship, but are not allowed to go to the over 530 villages they inhabited that were destroyed in 1948.

So now it's the beginning of working on projects with the coalition, which means supporting other members within the coalition. For example, one is the Appropriation for the Rights of the Internally Displaced, which makes sure that the issues of the internally displaced are in fact talked about.

There's also a union of youth and activity centres- these are social centres that exist in all of the refugee camps, especially the West Bank and Gaza. They have no funding, they are very poor, but they are the main organizing space within the refugee camps. So from things like organizing demonstrations, to replacing somebody's glasses that got broken, to helping people get money to go to university from the refugee camps. This is the only kind of institution or space where that can happen, these social centers.

Another big project that is being worked on now is called the "Cibitas Project". It's a project that's come out of Oxford University by a professor named Carmen Avully. Basically the idea is about the need for refugees to have a voice in official Palestinian decision-making. It starts out with a questionnaire about how refugees in the Palestinian Diaspora think of the need for their role in the input of

the decision-making and how they think that can be achieved. The idea is ultimately to create assemblies within the Palestinian Diaspora where there is some sort of self-organization within the Diaspora communities. This organization can then feed into whatever Palestinian decision making structure exists, to safeguard against the surrender of the rights of refugees, which cannot be surrendered even legally.

Nobody has the authority to surrender the Right of Return, it's fundamental to even internal law norms, and it's fundamental to the Palestinian struggle. Nobody can give up the Right of Return except an individual refugee who is given the choice of return or no return. At that point they can give up, they can say they don't want to return, but they are still entitled to compensation and restitution.

The big campaign that we're trying to work on for our actions is the divestment/boycott campaign. Boycott is much more prominent in Europe, which is probably the main importer of Israeli goods; with North America it's more of a financial relationship. You have investments in Israel and you have corporate links with Canada and the US. But you also have things like the Canadian-Israeli Free Trade Agreement, which applies to both goods that are traded and investments. These are direct manifestations of Canada's links as an economic supporter of Israel.

Many of these corporations are military corporations - they have military connections, be they in terms of arms, or for example, with a company like CAE, which provides flight simulators for Israeli pilots and American pilots. The divestment campaign would hope to raise awareness about that not just that Canada's complacent, and is simply allowing Israel to continue with its occupation and apartheid. It's about



Hazem Jamjoum speaking at a MAWO-SFU forum at SFU, January 23rd 2005.

Canada's direct support, in terms of financial support.

**FTT:** How has the work both internationally and within Canada been received by other groups doing Palestinian support work?

**Hazem:** In the case of Toronto, most of our work for the first three years was essentially trying to educate not just Palestine solidarity groups, but also all kinds of grassroots activists on the issue of the Right of Return. On Palestine in general there was a lot of confusion about the Oslo Process, and the eternal debate about one state versus two state solution, which ties into the Oslo Project.

In Toronto we were very successful:

most grassroots groups within the city really understand the Right of Return and the nastiness of the Oslo Process. The Oslo process only perpetuates apartheid; in fact it's the embodiment of apartheid by creating Palestinian reservations that are supposed to somehow be the Palestinian state. The way I analogize it, basically is that Israel is trying to create an open-air prison with the largest density of the Palestinian population.

**FTT:** Paralleling the last question, what has been the reaction to al-Awda from Zionist groups, both within Israel and outside of Israel?

**Hazem:** For the creation of an exclusively Jewish state, which

is the basic goal of the Zionist project, the Right of Return is the most dangerous thing. Even with just Palestinians who have Israeli citizenship inside the Zionist state of Israel. The Israeli state, especially the planners and the military wing, all recognize something called the "demographic threat" and this is just with the Palestinians who have Israeli citizenship. The "demographic threat" argument is basically that the Palestinians who have Israeli citizenship have a growth rate that will enable them to have some sort of voting majority, and not necessarily a 51% majority, but because they have proportional representation, a party that can get 20, 30, or 40 % is going to be a dominant party within the Knesset, within their parliament.

You can't have an exclusively Jewish state if you're going to have the return. As a result, the Right of Return is the biggest enemy, the biggest fear, of the Zionist project. You will not get more opposition from Zionism to something other than the Right of Return. It's even worse than the "martyr bombings" - it's a very big deal and it's extremely divisive. There is a very small, tiny, minority of Israelis who would agree with the Right of Return.

This obviously seeps into the extension of the Zionist project outside of Palestine, and in Canada there is extreme hostility from Zionist groups to the Right of Return. On top of this Zionism has infiltrated the Canadian elite, especially with the Canadian elite's interconnection with Israel itself, as I talked about, there is a very powerful opposition to the idea of the Right of Return here.

You have events at York University, for example, where they were talking about the Palestinian struggle and Right of Return where 150 Zionists basically assaulted the 30 or 40 Palestinian activists who were there: they encircled them, they heckled them, spat, and physically assaulted them.

In Canada it goes from that kind of thing to the outright dismissing of the Right of Return in the media, and obviously there is a lot of Zionist dominance when it comes to media coverage in regards to the Palestinian issue, particularly on the issue of the Right of Return. At best it's called unrealistic, and the most enlightened argument that you can hope to hear

Continued on page 11

## Canadian Repression in Haiti

From page 7

going to allow us to project power across the shore ... whether that's in the north part of Canada, the coast of Canada, or around the world." (*Vancouver Sun*, February 15, 2005). Hillier says the military wants an assault ship capable of carrying up to 1,500 troops, heavy equipment, and helicopters.

The claim that such a military force serves a "humanitarian" purpose was exposed as a fraud during the recent Asian tsunami disaster. The federal government did not deploy the military's Disaster Assistance Relief Team (DART) until public pressure forced it to do so. By the time the force reached Sri Lanka, sixteen days after the disaster, local and international humanitarian agencies had already met the most pressing emergency needs.

**Why Haiti?**

Why have the world's richest powers ganged up on one of the world's poorest countries?

The government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide implemented modest social reforms for the poorest people of Haiti. It promised more. It enjoyed the support of the overwhelming majority of the Haitian people, and its existence embodied the deep aspirations of that people for more radical and far-reaching reforms. Quite simply, a people engaged



Women in Haiti protesting against the Latortue government.

in their country's politics in this manner represent a potential threat to the banks, mining companies, and sweatshop manufacturers that are reaping big profits from the cheap resources and labor of the Caribbean and Latin America.

There is an urgent need in Canada for student groups, trade unions, the New Democratic Party, and

others concerned with human and social rights to join in condemning the coup and demanding an end to the criminal role of the Canadian government. Too much time has already been lost since February 29, 2004, a now-infamous date in Canadian history.

\*This article first appeared on February 23<sup>rd</sup> 2005 in the

*SOCIALIST VOICE*. Roger Annis ([socialistvoice@sympatico.ca](mailto:socialistvoice@sympatico.ca)) is a founding member of the *Socialist Voice*. The original article has been cut and modified for FTT. For the complete version of this article please visit: [www.socialistvoice.com](http://www.socialistvoice.com). Printed with permission from the author.



# Palestine: New Government, Same Fight



A Palestinian holds up a picture of a relative held in an Israeli prison during a demonstration in Hebron demanding the release of Palestinian political prisoners, February 14th 2005.

the entire Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Encouraged by Sharon explicitly when he was foreign minister in 1998, there are a total of 105 outposts in the West Bank that have gone up in the last decade. Out of these, the Sasson report found that only 24 could be confirmed as being established since 2001, making up less than 1 percent of the total settler population in the West Bank. According to the report, most were still receiving funds from the Israeli government for infrastructure in order to consolidate these settlements.

As with previous negotiations that the Israeli government has tried to force both the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and the PA into, what we are seeing is a huge delay tactic. This is trapping the Palestinian

leadership in negotiations over some of the most surface elements of the entire occupation of Palestine while buying time for the next round of attacks on Palestinians.

So far, alongside the negotiations taking place within the Sharm al-Sheikh framework, Israel has announced that the next phase of the Apartheid Wall will consolidate East Jerusalem within the Israeli side of the wall. This is happening while Israel is carrying out further confiscation of Palestinian land within East Jerusalem. In addition to this and other offensive measures against Palestinians, Israel has announced plans to begin constructing a second wall between Israel 'proper' and the Gaza Strip. Israel intends this wall to be 70 meters in width. It will

further confine Palestinians to the prison camp that Israel intends Gaza to become, and will mean an even deeper confiscation of Palestinian land.

## Abbas and the Oslo Agreements

Overall, this is a continuation of the approach of slowly giving more and more space to Israel, politically and in terms of actual Palestinian territory that Abbas has been actively involved with in the past. The first Oslo agreement, drafted by Abbas and agreed to by Israel and the PLO back in 1993, led to the creation of the Palestinian Authority and negotiations for the so-called 'two-state solution.' Under this, Palestinians would be given a pseudo-state comprised of

*Continued on page 12*

## Self-Determination for Iraq!

From page 4

accept any post except Prime Minister and in the meeting he refused an offer for the post of Minister of Defense.

The deadlock in the new Iraqi National Assembly is deeper than the aspirations of Allawi or the questions around the level of Kurdish or Sunni involvement in the government. The 275-member Assembly *does* represent many different and diverse sections and historically oppressed nationalities within Iraq, but the task of this Assembly – of negotiating these differences and crafting a passable national consensus to base a government upon – is impossible under the watchful eye and iron boot of US imperialist occupation. US imperialist interests contradict the interests of an independent and free Iraq so they place impossible restrictions on what the National Assembly can and cannot do.

The maneuvering and baseless demands of Allawi are a sign of how desperate the US is to keep the Assembly as only a figurehead of governance, a stage-play of representation. The Assembly is directed every step of the way by the 3,000 staff-strong US embassy backed by the occupying troops, limited constitutionally by the TAL, and paralyzed by the 75% vote required to make significant changes. Inherently, it is not able to demand that the US leave Iraq. This critical question overwhelms all the other significant questions that the Assembly is also powerless to approach. Unemployment and poverty? Ask the US corporations that have bought up privatized Iraqi industry. Reconstruction of schools, infrastructure, and industry? See above. Kurdish self-determination? Refer back to Washington's October promise to Turkey that the Kurds would not be allowed to secede and form their own state. Violence, torture and death? Talk to the occupying army.

**What's the solution to the problem of occupation? US/UK OUT OF IRAQ!**

The Iraqi people are faced with tremendous barriers to survival, let alone to winning their self-determination.

The first great barrier is the presence of 160,000 hostile troops of the most

well armed and technologically advanced military in the world. Not only has this military killed over 100,000 Iraqi people; they have arrested, detained, and tortured them by the tens of thousands. A Red Cross report issued at the beginning of 2004 told of how US army intelligence units admitted that 70% to 90% of those arrested in Iraq were arrested by accident. A report issued in March 2005 by the Pentagon admitted a higher instance of death in custody than previously presumed, even with the horrifying pictures of Abu Ghraib flashing in our faces. The report states that 108 people have died in US custody in Iraq and Afghanistan, most of them have been violent deaths at the hands of the US military. These factors of terror, imprisonment, and death waiting on every street corner and even threatened at home -from house to house raids- have had a tremendous impact on life in Iraq. The result has been a steadily increasing anti-occupation sentiment and a growing resistance that, in the two years since the war started, has killed 1,695 and wounded over 11,000 occupying soldiers. In the first two years of the war on Iraq more than twice the number of US soldiers have died than in the first four years of the Vietnam War.

The second great barrier is still the deteriorating material conditions that people under occupation are facing. The people of Iraq are struggling with devastated infrastructure and bombed out schools; unemployment is a still growing problem; and industry is showing no sign of recovery. For example, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has predicted that under existing conditions, oil production will not be back up to a working level until 2009. What this means for people in Iraq is that they have no means of survival in the meantime and the occupiers are not able or willing to disperse the aid that they themselves have allotted to minimize this problem. Of the \$18.4Billion allotted for aid in 2004, only \$2.5Billion reached the Iraqi people. With this money unspent the US House of Representatives approved a bill on March 16th 2005 for an additional \$81.4Billion in supplemental funding for military and reconstruction in Iraq and Afghanistan. But instead of rebuilding homes, the imperialists are

setting out to build a "more secure" US embassy and "enduring bases" to house the US military in Iraq for the long-term.

The new Iraqi National Assembly is unable to address any of the problems facing Iraqi people and as this becomes more and more clear to the Iraqi people, alternatives will have to be sought.

Historically there have been organized and popular alternatives to imperialism and capitalism in Iraq. In the last election that Bush referred to when he said the January 30th farce was Iraq's "first election in fifty years," imperialism had to brutally suppress the popular Communist Party of Iraq (CPI), which had taken 10% of the seats in government, in order to keep power. Today this situation has completely changed. Today's CPI has denounced the occupation on paper but ran candidates in the imperialist election under their coalition, the "People's Unity" party. The isolation of this party is clear, not only in their failure to win no more than two seats in the National Assembly, but in the resistance attacks on their members as collaborators with the occupation.

Iraq today is polarized into two clear camps: for and against the occupation. The CPI has tried to balance on the fence between the two sides, being against both imperialism and what they call the "extremist reactionary" Iraqi resistance. The fence they have tried to stand on has caught fire and they have fallen into the camp of US imperialist, made most clear by their active endorsement of the phony January 30th elections.

## Self-Determination for Iraq!

US imperialism has made Iraq the primary front in the opening of a new era of war and occupation that threatens all working, poor, and oppressed people in the world. The fight of the people of Iraq for national self-determination against imperialist war and occupation threatens the entire US imperialist strategy and has become a fight of enormous international and historical proportions. When the ground shifts in Iraq, it will tremble and crash the world over.

**END THE OCCUPATION NOW!**

From page 5

of troops from the vast majority of occupied Palestinian land.

## The Outposts

Another issue negotiated at Sharm al-Sheikh, the removal of Israeli settler outposts from the West Bank, exposes the hoax behind this 'cease-fire'. Under discussion are outposts established since Sharon came to power. Established by the most far-right of the Zionist movement, these

are essentially the seeds of future settlements, intended to undermine any territorial integrity of areas in the West Bank where there is still a considerable Palestinian majority.

The findings of a recent commission prepared for the Israeli cabinet, called the Sasson report, exposes not only the Israeli government's active support for this continued expansion of Israeli occupation, but that the outposts being discussed for potential removal are but a tiny fraction of

## Hazem Jamjoum Interview Continued

From page 10

from a Zionist or Zionist supporter, is that it's unrealistic - which isn't even true.

90% of the land that was evacuated is national parks and whatnot, so 90% of that land is still there, the houses, although destroyed, are still there. There are situations like the University of Tel Aviv that was built on top of land that was expropriated and its inhabitants were forcibly expelled, but that's the minority of cases in terms of the landside, and even then you can compensate. So it's very realistic.

As a result of being a Right of Return group, or being al-Awda, we are in many ways "enemy #1" because they call what we're fighting for 'the destruction of the state of Israel.' But it's the destruction of the Zionist project, the destruction of the project of creating an exclusively Zionist state and the expulsion, ethnic cleansing, and the essential genocide of the Palestinian people as a result.

FTT: Why is it important for poor, working, and oppressed people in Canada to support the Right of Return?

**Hazem:** Because of the links that exist: Be it the immigration struggle when you have Palestinian refugees that are being targeted by the same

racist and brutal immigration as all other refugees, non-status people, and migrants to this country. Be it the fact that Palestinians are an Indigenous population colonized by essentially Europeans who then brought in Jews from other parts of the world, and the links with other indigenous people, particularly in Canada

This is not just a theoretical link, when you look at the fact that South African apartheid came about as a result of research into the Canadian reservation system, and the current Israeli plan that's creating Palestinian reservations is based on research done on the South African model. So there's a clear and direct link between what's happened in North America, particularly Canada, and what's happening to us in Palestine.

And obviously the fact that Israel operates as the representative, the enforcer, for American corporate power and military power in our regions, it's the same corporate and military infrastructure that's dominating the rest of the world and destroying the rest of the world. So the Palestinian struggle is tightly connected to poverty issues, with aboriginal struggle, with struggles for justice against oppression worldwide, and in Canada where we work.

**FTT: Thank you Hazem.**

# Conditions for Palestinians Under Israeli Occupation Continue to Deteriorate

From page 11

Gaza and the West Bank in exchange for recognizing Israel's right to exist as an exclusive, Jewish state. The issue of the right of return, though not officially given up by the PA at the time, was to be addressed 'in the future,' at least according to the Palestinian Authority.

After years of continued Israeli expansion, colonization, and destruction of Palestine, it became clear to Palestinians that even this concession of a 'two-state' solution was a myth, and that at most offered self-administered Palestinian Bantustans within less than 20% of their country. The Oslo agreements, along with Camp David negotiations in 2000, failed to address the basic right of Palestinians for self-determination, and for Israel they failed to pacify Palestinians. As a result the second Intifada, which was a mass uprising of Palestinians, broke out in September 2000.

Based on this record, along with his current moves, the US and Israel see Abbas as a representative of the Palestinian political establishment who is willing to again compromise Palestinian aspirations for self-determination, and possibly to compromise even more. In addition, by putting pressure on the Abbas government to aid in suppressing Palestinian resistance while at the same time fueling increased

resistance through its brutal policies, Israel and the US still have their eyes on provoking a civil war between Palestinians.

## Hamas Influence on the Rise

In the current climate within Palestinian society, however, this civil war has not happened, even though Abbas' Fatah movement, which has dominated the Palestinian liberation movement since its founding in 1959, has been slowly declining in support, while the rise in support and influence of the Islamist group Hamas continues. As a significant indicator of this, Hamas recently had a surprising success in the municipal elections in Gaza. Out of 118 total seats, Hamas was elected to 76, while Fatah only won 30.

The primary reason for the growth of size and popularity of Hamas among Palestinians is that it is seen as a more militant alternative to the Fatah leadership. Hamas rejected the Oslo agreement, and has engaged in more militant resistance to the Israeli occupation, especially during the second Intifada. The growth of support for Hamas represents the sentiment of Palestinians frustrated with the inability of the Fatah movement to successfully make steps forward for Palestinian self-determination.

At this point, however, Abbas has not made any significant moves to use force against Hamas, even though

they initially refused to recognize the 'cease-fire' and continued to launch mortar attacks from Gaza into Israeli settlements. Instead, Abbas has opened up space to negotiate, while Hamas has shown that it is generally willing to work with the Abbas government within the Sharm al-Sheikh framework.

This includes the likely participation of Hamas in the PA parliamentary elections, due to take place in July of 2005. Previously, Hamas refused to participate due to its rejection of the Oslo process under which this parliament was set up. Hamas leaders, however, have made it clear that they will not participate with the intent to take power within the PA from Fatah, but to serve as an opposition from within. As Hasan Yusuf, West Bank spokesperson for Hamas said in a recent interview with Al-Jazeera, "at this stage, we only want to be in a position to influence the leadership."

This is because, despite their more militant approach to resisting the Israeli occupation, their rise in popularity has coincided with resembling Fatah more and more on the fundamental issues of Palestinian self-determination. Since 1993 the main leaders of Fatah have recognized the state of Israel's right to exist, and support basically the same two-state solution.

## The Conditions Under Which this

## is Occurring

These moves by both the Abbas leadership of Fatah and Hamas towards showing a willingness to capitulate ever more towards the Israeli government are happening at a time when the Israeli occupation of Palestine is further devastating the lives of Palestinians.

Poverty and unemployment continue to skyrocket for the vast majority of Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza, resulting in a recent wave of demonstrations by Palestinians demanding work. On March 12<sup>th</sup> 2005, thousands of unemployed Palestinians stormed the PA parliamentary building in Gaza city, chanting 'No to Starvation' and demanding that the PA act to end to the lockdown of the West Bank and Gaza by Israel, which has prevented Palestinians from entering Israel to work. Before Israel closed down the borders to Palestinian labour as part of its attempts to suppress the second Intifada, over 150,000 Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza traveled into Israel to work.

The continued expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, along with the confiscation of Palestinian farmlands and homes to make way for the Apartheid wall, work to make daily life for Palestinians even more unbearable. Along with the daily harassment, detainings, and beatings of Palestinians by Israeli occupation

forces, and the immense restriction of movement imposed by Israeli checkpoints throughout Gaza and the West Bank, life for Palestinians becomes more intolerable as the most brutal occupation of the 20<sup>th</sup> century continues to ravage their lives.

## Continued Crisis Within Israel

At the same time as the pressures for Palestinians under occupation mount, the pressures on the Israeli government are also compounding. The movement of settlers opposed to Sharon's 'disengagement' plan has shown a growth in size and in ferocity. The supposed 'concessions' offered by Sharon under the Sharm al-Sheikh agreement have fueled even more discontent among layers of Israeli society that are opposed to the application of any brakes to the Zionist aim of complete colonization of Palestine.

Regular demonstrations against the Sharon government by Israeli settlers and their supporters are happening within Israel and the settlements. In February, just before the 'disengagement' plan was voted on by the Israeli Knesset (Parliament), road junctions were taken over all over Israel, with Israeli settlers scrawling on walls 'Rabin is waiting for Sharon'. This refers to Yitzak Rabin, the former Israeli Prime Minister who was assassinated in 1995 by a settler who opposed the Oslo agreements.

## End the Occupation

Regardless of which particular agreements are made between Abbas and the Israeli government out of the Sharm al-Sheikh summit, there will never be a just solution to the historic and daily problems faced by Palestinians living under Israeli occupation without self-determination. The idea of 'land for peace' put forward in past negotiations between Palestinian leaders and the Israeli government is a hoax when talking about Israel. It has never intended to offer land or peace to the people whose land it continues to brutally occupy and steal, and it doesn't intend to offer these things now. Israel is a state founded on occupation, built as a 'Jewish' state to the exclusion of all non-Jewish Palestinians, and under this occupation, life for Palestinians can only get worse.

The fate of Palestinians cannot be separated from that of their brothers and sisters throughout the Middle East who are increasingly affected by imperialist expansion in the region, as the continued US-led occupation of Iraq has shown. As a result of the quagmire that the Iraqi people have created for imperialism with their bold resistance to the occupation of their country, the US and Israel have had to maneuver strategically to at least temporarily cool off the Palestinian resistance through the Sharm al-Sheikh agreement. We must understand, however, that this is only tactical, and with the US and other imperialist countries now working on their plans for how best to intervene in Iran and Syria, the push by imperialist countries to re-colonize the Middle East continues.

The continued economic crisis facing imperialist countries will fuel more wars and occupations in the coming decades as imperialist countries attempt to shoulder most of the burden of this crisis on people of the third world. In this context, the struggle for Palestinian self-determination takes on increasing significance for poor, working, and oppressed people all over the world.

# Reclaiming the Land

From page 8

and argued for a policy of "terror, assassination, intimidation, land confiscation, and the cutting of all social services to rid the Galilee of its Arab population." The Koenig report led to a brutal wave of land confiscations and Jewish settlement in the Galilee that culminated with the general strikes and protests of Land Day.

## Apartheid Israel

Uri Davis' book *Apartheid Israel* helps to underline in no uncertain terms the ongoing colonial and racist nature of the Israeli state itself. Davis' intervention reminds us, once again, that a central component of Israel's colonization project continues to be the so-called 'redemption of the land'. This can be read as: the forcible expropriation of Palestinian livelihood for the purposes of Jewish-only settlement. While international media focuses on the illegal Israeli colonies established in the West Bank and Gaza, it is also important for Palestine solidarity activists to recognize that the Zionist project continues its land-grab within the current Israeli polity - most recently targeting the Bedouin populations of the Naqab.

This land-grab has traditionally focused on areas whose demographic composition remained predominantly Palestinian after the Nakba (Catastrophe) of 1948 - during which 750,000 Palestinians were ethnically cleansed, 220,000 individuals were internally displaced, over 530 villages and 11 towns were destroyed and millions of acres of land were expropriated. The 'internal' colonization that followed this bloody chapter in the establishment of the state of

Israel has translated into forcible attempts to 'Judaize' the Galilee, the Triangle, and the Naqab and the further expropriation of roughly another one-million acres of Palestinian land. While Palestinian land ownership stood at 94% of what became the Israeli state of today, this number was reduced to 3% of all lands in this policy



Unemployed Palestinian workers demonstrate in Gaza, March 13th 2005.

as a result of successive waves of systematic land-confiscation.

## Jewish National Fund (JNF)

The primary vehicles for the fulfillment of these policies are the state controlled Israeli Lands' Administration (ILA) and the privately run Jewish National Fund (JNF) - which according to its Memorandum of Association seeks to control land for Jewish-only settlement. The JNF raises funds abroad for its racist settler-colonial project and is listed as a charitable organization in most Western countries. In Canada, the

JNF raised \$15Million in the early 1970s to establish 'Canada Park' a 'recreational' area built on land occupied by the Israeli military in 1967 in order to cover-up the destroyed Palestinian villages of Imwas, Yallu, and Beit Nuba. Such a blatant manipulation of historical memory in the name of 'nature conservation' highlights the way in

one for Palestinian solidarity organizers and one that allows us to begin challenging the racist structure upon which the dispossession of the Palestinian people in 1948 was built. It is also a fundamental component in achieving the right of return of the Palestinian refugees, which lies at the core of any just and sustainable resolution to this conflict. The successes of the PSC - in November 2004, the Scottish parliament's Communities Committee agreed to take their concerns into account in their deliberations on the new Charities Bill before the legislature - need to be built upon in other countries with strong Palestine solidarity movements like the USA, UK, Canada, Australia, Spain, Italy, Sweden, France, etc.

## JNF: Charity or Zionist Front?

An international effort to challenge the JNF's charitable status could form a crucial component in galvanizing a broader international movement against Israeli apartheid. In Canada, the campaign to target the JNF aims to build upon the success of 'Israeli Apartheid Week' during which student activists at the University of Toronto successfully managed to forward an analysis of Israeli apartheid and the need to oppose it. As the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of Land Day and the entry into force of the *International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid* on July 18<sup>th</sup> 1976 loom next year, it is crucial that Palestine solidarity activists begin coordinating efforts to push for a comprehensive policy aiming to target and sanction the Israeli state for its perpetuation of racist and apartheid practices. Let's make this Land Day a stepping-stone in broadening the international struggle for genuine Palestinian self-determination.

Spurred by Davis' work, activists from the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) in Scotland launched a campaign in the summer of 2004 to strip the JNF of its charitable status in Scotland. The demand put forward by PSC activists is an eminently winnable



# By Any Means Necessary...

## Introduction

*In the struggle of 'us' against 'them,' Malcolm X was one of us. Yes, he was the one who advised us to understand the difference between 'us' and 'them'.*

*In this issue of Fire This Time we are printing some excerpts from Malcolm X speeches on war, imperialism, racism and ruling class violence. It is of vital importance that we remember always that all politics happen within the framework of 'us' and 'them'.*

*Malcolm X is our leader and our teacher, like anybody else who, regardless of background, ethnicity or nationality, is on our side of the 'us' against 'them' division. Whether he or she is called Sitting Bull, Louis Riel, Rosa Luxembourg, Martin Luther King, Che or Rachel Corrie, they are all our source of knowledge and strength.*

*Our connection and heritage of fighting for a better and a just life has not been started from scratch. We are product of the efforts of millions of men and women who believed in changing the relationship of 'us' and 'them' in the interest of 'us'. Therefore, for us, reading and consequently educating ourselves on their struggle is a must. As in their time we are still living in the same era of war, racism, violence and occupation by imperialist countries.*

*Fire This Time is proud to bring in each upcoming issue a part of the experience of these vanguards of humanity from the past in order to build and solidify our vision and our future. This certainly fits with the theme of the second anniversary of the occupation of Iraq, fourth anniversary of the occupation of Afghanistan, sixtieth anniversary of the occupation of Palestine, one hundredth anniversary of the occupation of Puerto Rico, hundreds anniversary of the occupation of Ireland and 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the occupation of America and indigenous land in Canada.*

*At no point in history has human kind had to sacrifice so many lives to achieve peace and justice as in the twentieth century and now the twenty-first century. Malcolm X was one of them. He was one of those who will always shine in the in dark sky of capitalism and imperialism to encourage and inspire us for freedom 'by any means necessary.'*

- Editor

## Malcolm X, Speech 9th November, 1963

Look at the American Revolution in 1776. That revolution was for what? For land. Why did they want land? Independence. How was it carried out? Bloodshed. Number one, it was based on land, the basis of independence. And the only way they could get it was bloodshed. The French Revolution - what was it based on? The landless against the landlord. What was it for? Land. How did they get it? Bloodshed. Was no love lost, was no compromise, was no negotiation. I'm telling you - you don't know what a revolution is. Because when you find out what it is, you'll get back in the alley, you'll get out of the way.

The Russian Revolution - what was it based on? Land; the landless against the landlord. How did they bring it about? Bloodshed. You haven't got a revolution that doesn't involve bloodshed. And you're afraid to bleed. I said, you're afraid to bleed.

As long as the white man sent you to Korea, you bled. He sent you to Germany, you bled. He sent you to the South Pacific to fight the Japanese, you bled. You bleed for white people, but when it comes to seeing your own churches being bombed and little black girls murdered, you haven't got any blood. You bleed when the white man says bleed; you bite when the white man says bite; and you bark when the white man says bark. I hate to say this about us, but it's true. How are you going to be nonviolent in Mississippi, as violent as you were in Korea? How can you justify being nonviolent in Mississippi and Alabama, when your churches are being bombed, and your little girls are being murdered, and at the same time you are going to get violent with Hitler, and Tojo, and somebody else you don't even know?

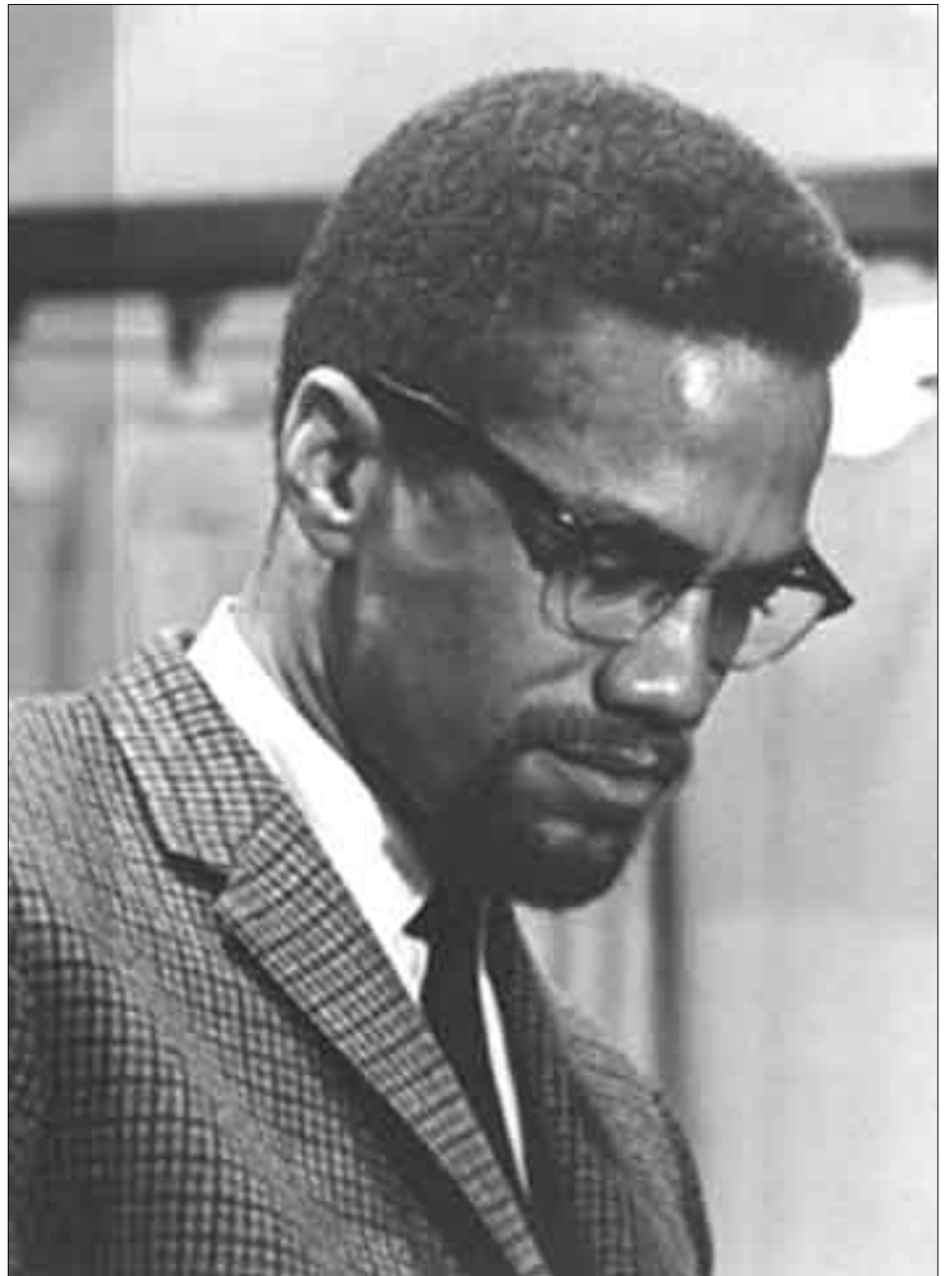
If violence is wrong in America, violence is wrong abroad. If it is wrong to be violent defending black 'women and black children and black babies and black men, then it is wrong for America to draft us and make us violent abroad in defense of her. And if it is right for America to draft us, and teach us how to be violent in defense of her, then it is right for you and me to do whatever is necessary to defend our own people right here in this country.

So I cite these various revolutions, brothers and sisters, to show you that you don't have a peaceful revolution. You don't have a turn-the-other-cheek revolution. There's no such thing as a nonviolent revolution. The only kind of revolution that is nonviolent is the Negro revolution. The only revolution in which the goal is loving your enemy is the Negro revolution. It's the only revolution in which the goal is a desegregated lunch counter, a desegregated theater, a desegregated park, and a desegregated public toilet; you can sit down next to white folks - on the toilet. That's no revolution. Revolution is based on land. Land is the basis of all independence. Land is the basis of freedom, justice, and equality.

## Malcolm X, speech 3rd April, 1964 in Cleveland, Ohio, USA

When we begin to get in this area, we need new friends, we need new allies. We need to expand the civil-rights struggle to a higher level—to the level of human rights. Whenever you are in a civil-rights struggle, whether you know it or not, you are confining yourself to the jurisdiction of Uncle Sam. No one from the outside world can speak out in your behalf as long as your struggle is a civil-rights struggle. Civil rights comes within the domestic affairs of this country. All of our African brothers and our Asian brothers and our Latin-American brothers cannot open their mouths and interfere in the domestic affairs of the United States. And as long as it's civil rights, this comes under the jurisdiction of Uncle Sam.

But the United Nations has what's known as the charter of human rights, it has a committee that deals in human rights. You may wonder why all of the atrocities that have been committed in Africa and in Hungary and in Asia and in Latin America are brought before the UN, and the Negro problem is never brought before the UN. This is part of the conspiracy. This old, tricky, blue eyed liberal who is supposed to be your and my friend, supposed to be in our corner, supposed to be subsidizing our struggle, and supposed to be acting in



the capacity of an adviser, never tells you anything about human rights. They keep you wrapped up in civil rights. And you spend so much time barking up the civil-rights tree, you don't even know there's a human-rights tree on the same floor.

When you expand the civil-rights struggle to the level of human rights, you can then take the case of the black man in this country before the nations in the UN. You can take it before the General Assembly. You can take Uncle Sam before a world court. But the only level you can do it on is the level of human rights. Civil rights keeps you under his restrictions, under his jurisdiction. Civil rights keeps you in his pocket. Civil rights means you're asking Uncle Sam to treat you right. Human rights are some thing you were born with. Human rights are your God given rights. Human rights are the rights that are recognized by all nations of this earth. And any time any one violates your human rights, you can take them to the world court. Uncle Sam's hands are dripping with blood, dripping with the blood of the black man in this country. He's the earth's number-one hypocrite.

He has the audacity—yes, he has—imagine him posing as the leader of the free world. The free world! And you over here singing We Shall Overcome. Expand the civil-rights struggle to the level of human rights, take it into the United Nations, where our African brothers can throw their weight

on our side, where our Asian brothers can throw their weight on our side, where our Latin-American brothers can throw their weight on our side, and where 800 million Chinamen are sitting there waiting to throw their weight on our side.

Let the world know how bloody his hands are. Let the world know the hypocrisy that's practiced over here. Let it be the ballot or the bullet. Let him know that it must be the ballot or the bullet.

When you take your case to Washington, D.C., you're taking it to the criminal who's responsible; it's like running from the wolf to the fox. They're all in cahoots together. They all work political chicanery and make you look like a chump before the eyes of the world. Here you are walking around in America, getting ready to be drafted and sent abroad, like a tin soldier, and when you get over there, people ask you what are you fighting for, and you have to stick your tongue in your cheek. No, take Uncle Sam to court, take him before the world.

## Speech by Malcolm X at the London School of Economics, Feb. 11, 1965

It is only being a Muslim which keeps me from seeing people by the color of their skin. This religion teaches brotherhood, but I have to be a realist—I live in America, a society which does not believe

*Continued on page 14*

# 'They Suck our Blood Like Vultures'



Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali.

From page 13

in brotherhood in any sense of the term. Brute force is used by white racists to suppress nonwhites. It is a racist society ruled by segregationists....

[W]here the government fails to protect the Negro he is entitled to do it himself. He is within his rights. I have found the only white elements who do not want this advice given to undefensive Blacks are the racist liberals. They use the press to project us in the image of violence.

There is an element of whites who are nothing but cold, animalistic racists.1 That element is the one that controls or has strong influence in the power structure. It uses the press skillfully to feed statistics to the public to make it appear that the rate of crime in the Black community, or community of nonwhite people, is at such a high level. It gives the impression or the image that everyone in that community is criminal.

And as soon as the public accepts the fact that the dark-skinned community consists largely of criminals or people who are dirty, then it makes it possible for the power structure to set up a police-state system. Which will make it permissible in the minds of even the well-meaning white public for them to come in and use all kinds of police methods to brutally suppress the struggle on the part of these people against segregation, discrimination, and other acts that are unleashed against them that are absolutely unjust.

They use the press to set up this police state, and they use the press to make the white public accept whatever they do to the dark-skinned public... They have all kinds of negative characteristics that they project to make the white public draw back, or to make the white public be apathetic when police-state-like methods are used in these areas to suppress the people's honest and just struggle against discrimination and other forms of segregation.

A good example of how they do it in New York: Last summer, when the Blacks were rioting—the riots, actually they weren't riots in the first place; they were reactions against police brutality.2 And when the Afro-Americans reacted against the brutal measures that were executed against them by the police, the press all over the

world projected them as rioters. When the store windows were broken in the Black community, immediately it was made to appear that this was being done not by people who were reacting over civil rights violations, but they gave the impression that these were hoodlums, vagrants, criminals....

But this is wrong. In America the Black community in which we live is not owned by us. The landlord is white. The merchant is white. In fact, the entire economy of the Black community in the States is controlled by someone who doesn't even live there. The property that we live in is owned by someone else. The store that we trade with is operated by someone else. And these are the people who suck the economic blood of our community.

And being in a position to suck the economic blood of our community, they control the radio programs that cater to us, they control the newspapers, the advertising, that cater to us. They control our minds. They end up controlling our civic organizations. They end up controlling us economically,

politically, socially, mentally, and every other kind of way. They suck our blood like vultures.

And when you see the Blacks react, since the people who do this aren't there, they react against their property. The property is the only thing that's there. And they destroy it. And you get the impression over here that because they are destroying the property where they live, that they are destroying their own property. No. They can't get to the man, so they get at what he owns. [Laughter] This doesn't say it's intelligent. But whoever heard of a sociological explosion that was done intelligently and politely? And this is what you're trying to make the Black man do. You're trying to drive him into a ghetto and make him the victim of every kind of unjust condition imaginable. Then when he explodes, you want him to explode politely! [Laughter] You want him to explode according to somebody's ground rules. Why, you're dealing with the wrong man, and you're dealing with him at the wrong time in the wrong way.

## *Sisters in Arms*



**Audre Lorde (1934-1992)**

*Audre Lorde was one of the first American poets to advance a strong Black and feminist identity in her work. She was a deeply influential and powerful poet who re-defined the relationship of poetry as art to social and political movements in the US and around the world.*

*This poem was published in 1986 in Lorde's book "Our Dead Behind Us".*

The edge of our bed was a wide grid  
where your fifteen-year-old daughter was hanging  
gut-sprung on police wheels  
a cablegram nailed to the wood  
next to a map of the Western Reserve  
I could not return with you to bury the body  
reconstruct your nightly cardboards  
against the seeping Transvaal cold  
I could not plant the other limpet mine  
against a wall at the railroad station  
nor carry either of your souls back from the river  
in a calabash upon my head  
so I bought you a ticket to Durban  
on my American Express  
and we lay together  
in the first light of a new season.

Now clearing roughage from my autumn garden  
cow sorrel overgrown rocket gone to seed  
I reach for the taste of today  
the *New York Times* finally mentions your country  
a half-page story  
of the first white south african killed in the "unrest"  
Not of Black children massacred at Sebokeng  
six-year-olds imprisoned for threatening the state

not of Thabo Sibeko, first grader, in his own blood  
on his grandmother's parlor floor  
Joyce, nine, trying to crawl to him  
shitting through her navel  
not of a three-week-old infant, nameless  
lost under the burned beds of Tembisa  
my hand comes down like a brown vise over the marigolds  
reckless through despair  
we were two Black women touching our flame  
and we left our dead behind us  
I hovered you rose the last ritual of healing  
"It is spring," you whispered

"I sold the ticket for guns and sulfa  
I leave for home tomorrow"  
and wherever I touch you  
I lick cold from my fingers  
taste rage  
like salt from the lips of a woman  
who has killed too often to forget  
and carries waxch death in her eyes  
your mouth a parting orchid  
"Someday you will come to *my* country  
and we will fight side by side?"

Keys jingle in the door ajar threatening  
whatever is coming belongs here  
I reach for your sweetness  
but silence explodes like a pregnant belly  
into my face  
a vomit of nevers.

Mmanthatsi turns away from the cloth  
her daughters-in-law are dyeing  
the baby drools milk from her breast  
she hands him half-asleep to his sister  
dresses again for war  
knowing the men will follow.  
In the intricate Maseru twilights  
quick sad vital  
she maps the next day's battle  
dreams of Durban sometimes  
visions the deep wry song of beach pebbles  
running after the sea.

*M-man-tha-tisi:* Warrior queen and leader of the Tlokwa (Sotho) people during the mfecane (crushing), one of the greatest crises in Southern African history. The Sotho now live in the Orange Free State, S.A.

*Ma-se-ru:* scene of a great Tlokwa battle and now the capital of Lesotho

*Durban:* Indian Ocean seaport and resort area in Natal Province, S.A.



# Much Ado About Nothing

## Elections Were a Pretext to Extend US Control in Iraq

### Interview with Ricardo Alarcon, Cuba's Vice President

An Interview by Saul Landau\*.

#### Landau: Elections in Iraq?

**Alarcon:** "Much ado about nothing," as Shakespeare said. Elections were a pretext to extend U.S. control. I don't believe the U.S. will withdraw. They can't give a sense they may abandon Iraq without giving the impression of having suffered a big defeat. I don't think elections solve political problems in Iraq. The U.S. occupation remains an issue.

Prior to the elections, CNN international had vast coverage of voting elsewhere, Iraqis in the U.S., Australia and Europe. And the turnout wasn't that big. It may have been a very big fraud. One commentator committed a Freudian slip referring to women voting, saying that Iraq was a secular society and women were accustomed to exercising rights. In the future, women may be deprived of rights in a religious society. But before the occupation, women had rights.

Secondly, Iraqis may have been Shiite, Sunni or Christian. I was there. Some of them wanted me to know what religion they belonged to. Catholic or Muslim, not Shiite or Sunni. Now everyone refers to different ethnic groups. Imagine American Protestants forming hostile groups of Presbyterians versus Episcopalians. It's stupid.

especially when under the guns of the occupier, with CNN filming and soldiers distributing leaflets on the streets – electoral propaganda. Imagine, a machine gun in one hand and leaflets in the other. This image symbolized the nature of those elections. And some people even in those circumstances refused the leaflets. They said: "I don't care." That's a difficult thing to tell a patrolling group on the street.

#### Landau: And the U.S. media?

**Alarcon:** American propaganda machinery excels at manipulating elections. I remember a group of U.S. legislators trying to play a role in guaranteeing fair elections in the Ukraine. Remember the recent contested elections there? At the same time groups in the U.S. were demanding the right to review votes in Ohio, or trying to get recounts because of claims that there were voting violations there. I don't remember a single U.S. senator going from Washington to Cleveland or Cincinnati to see what was happening, but they went all the way to Iraq. Remember the 2004 referendum and elections in Venezuela. A number of U.S. politicians and the U.S. media got very concerned with fair voting in Venezuela but not in their own states. If they were to apply to U.S. elections similar standards to those they applied to Venezuela, my god, in Venezuela even the



Ricardo Alarcon speaking in Cuba.

**Alarcon:** The most beautiful thing, somewhat missed in the media, happened in Puerto Rico. A U.S. territory under U.S. administration had the old fashioned vote, where you mark what you want to mark. It's possible to count and recount once, twice endlessly and assure that whoever gets more votes wins. In the U.S., you cannot do

candidate concedes to demonstrate that his opponent won. Recall how Mr. Gore conceded in 2000? So what? Was he the owner of the people's votes? In the U.S. it's a far cry from one man one vote. And the winner is not necessarily the one who gets more votes as the 2000 election showed.

#### Landau: How would fair elections in Iraq look?

**Alarcon:** Why don't U.S. soldiers vote? Hold a referendum for American soldiers to choose between staying there for the rest of their lives for democracy and freedom, American style, or returning home. It's a relevant issue.

But in Iraq, one group of exiles backed by the CIA ran against another group. Some people that may have favored resistance did not take part. Much was said about how the resistance movement, or terrorists, pressured people not to vote, but not a word about pressure by the occupying forces. Aside from distributing leaflets, the army imposed a curfew, restricted movement, sealed off the country and called it a free election. If anything like that happened in another country imagine the amount of U.S. criticism that would fall on that country. I've heard about this election as a historic development. Well, let's wait another 100 years and we'll find out its historic implications.

#### Landau: You had mentioned before that the U.S. is declining.

**Alarcon:** Comparatively speaking.

**Landau: Specifically, vis a vis Europe. Initially, when Cuba jailed the dissidents in 2003, the European Union responded very critically, going along with the U.S. position, and now the EU is about to resume friendly relations.**

**Alarcon:** Formally, we always

had economic and diplomatic relations with European countries. It was rather childish what the EU did. Unfortunately, following Spanish government advice, the EU followed the American line on Cuba. Even on the Helms-Burton law. Europe at first complained to the WTO about Helms-Burton and then negotiated and reached what they called an understanding with Washington. They withdrew their complaint.

And on May 2004, in the U.S. plan for Cuba, Bush announced that the U.S. will examine on a case by case basis, country by country, in terms of implementing Chapters 3 and 4 [punishing countries and companies trading with Cuba] of Helms Burton more efficiently.

They forgot their commitment to Europe to eliminate or change those chapters and instead declare they will implement them more thoroughly. No complaints, no protests from Europe in what is tantamount to a U.S. slap in Europe's face. With news of the dissidents' arrest [Cuba arrested 75 anti-government activists and charged them with working for the U.S. government against Cuba in March 2003], the Europeans had an opportunity to protest against the illegal arrest of people not only in Cuba, but throughout the western world. I refer to widespread torture and the violation of habeas corpus and other legal principles. Europeans behaved as accomplices to these policies as did on U.S. policy toward Cuba. Then they took some childish steps like refusing high level contacts with Cuba. Some countries ignored that decision. Another step: eliminate cultural exchanges. Last year, the Havana book fair was dedicated to Germany. At the last moment, the German government, following the European position, withdrew

Continued on page 17



Cubans demonstrate against Cuba being added to a US list of countries that "violates human rights" April, 2004.

Those Iraqi religious divisions may lead to war. Remember the religious wars in Europe.

These religious conflicts may infect the next administration in Iraq as a supposed consequence of the elections, but in fact the invaders provoked the religious conflicts. The news talks about pressure from the Arab world. What about pressure from the occupier? The Iraqi who chose not to vote made a statement,

opposition accepted the result of the plebiscite as did international groups. Later, opponents of Chavez accepted them. People from the opposition were elected. The possibility of questioning election results in the U.S. is vanishing. And recounting – that word that will disappear from the English language dictionary.

#### Landau: Anything positive about the U.S. election?

that in many places. So, while the U.S. media focused on Iraqi elections and ignored voting complaints by African Americans, the Puerto Ricans were recounting their ballots, one by one. They get exact results in polling station by polling station, municipality by municipality. They saw who won and who lost. In the U.S. a kind of monarchical principal reigns, as if the candidate was the owner of the people's will. Supposedly, one

# ¿Cómo reaccionaría otro país?

Las elecciones fueron un pretexto para ampliar el control de EEUU

Entrevista con Ricardo Alarcón

Intrevista por Saul Landau\*.

Landau: ¿Elecciones en Irak?

Alarcón: “Mucho ruido y pocas nueces”, como dijera Shakespeare. Las elecciones fueron un pretexto para ampliar el control de EEUU. No creo que Estados Unidos se retire. No puede abandonar Irak sin dar la impresión de que ha sufrido una gran derrota. No creo que las elecciones solucionen problemas políticos en Irak. La ocupación por EEUU sigue siendo un tema.

Antes de las elecciones, CCN Internacional tenía una amplia cobertura de votaciones en otros lugares, iraquíes en EEUU, Australia y Europa. Y la participación no fue tan grande. Puede que haya sido un gran fraude. Un comentarista tuvo un lapso de lenguaje al referirse a la votación de las mujeres y dijo que Irak era una sociedad seglar y que las mujeres estaban acostumbradas a ejercer sus derechos. En el futuro las mujeres pueden ser privadas de derechos en una sociedad religiosa. Pero antes de la ocupación, las mujeres tenían derechos.

Segundo, los iraquíes podían ser sunnís, chiíes o cristianos. Yo estuve allí. Algunos de ellos querían que yo supiera la religión que practicaban. Católicos o musulmanes, no chiíes o sunnís. Ahora todo el mundo se refiere

Esos conflictos religiosos pueden infestar la próxima administración en Irak como supuesta consecuencia de las elecciones, pero de hecho los invasores provocaron los conflictos religiosos. Se habla en las noticias de presiones provenientes del mundo árabe. ¿Qué me dice de la presión de los ocupantes? Los iraquíes que decidieron no votar hicieron una declaración, especialmente bajo las armas del ocupante, con la CNN filmando y los soldados distribuyendo volantes en las calles –propaganda electoral. Imagínese, una ametralladora en una mano y volantes en la otra. Esta imagen simboliza la naturaleza de esas elecciones. Y algunas personas incluso en esas circunstancias rechazaron los volantes. Dijeron: “No me importa.” Eso es algo difícil de decir a una patrulla en la calle.

Landau: ¿Y los medios norteamericanos?

Alarcón: La maquinaria de la propaganda norteamericana funciona muy bien en la manipulación de elecciones. Recuerdo a un grupo de legisladores norteamericanos tratando de desempeñar un papel para garantizar elecciones justas en Ucrania. ¿Recuerda las recientes elecciones protestadas allí? Al mismo tiempo, grupos en EEUU estaban exigiendo



Fidel Castro Y Ricardo Alarcón.

se fueron hasta Irak. Recuerde el referendo y elecciones de 2004 en Venezuela. Un número de políticos norteamericanos y de medios norteamericanos se preocuparon mucho porque hubiera elecciones limpias en Venezuela, pero no en sus propios estados. Si fueran a aplicar en las elecciones norteamericanas normas similares a las que ellos aplicaron a Venezuela, dios mío, en Venezuela hasta la oposición aceptó el resultado del plebiscito, así como grupos internacionales. Posteriormente los opositores

Landau: ¿Hay algo de positivo en las elecciones de EEUU?

Alarcón: Lo mejor, algo que no apareció en los medios, sucedió en Puerto Rico. Un territorio norteamericano bajo administración de EEUU realizó la votación a la manera antigua, en la que uno marca lo que quiere marcar. Es posible hacer el recuento una, dos veces, infinitamente, y garantiza que el que reciba el mayor número de votos gane. En EEUU eso no se puede hacer en muchos lugares. Así que mientras los medios norteamericanos se

quién perdió. En EEUU reina una especie de principio monárquico, como si el candidato fuera dueño de la voluntad de las personas. Supuestamente un candidato acepta los resultados para demostrar que su oponente ganó. ¿Recuerda como lo admitió el Sr. Gore en el 2000? ¿Y qué? ¿Acaso era él el dueño de los votos de la gente? En EEUU no existe la fórmula de una persona un voto. Y el ganador no es necesariamente el candidato que más votos obtenga, cómo se demostró en las elecciones del 2000.

Landau: ¿Cómo serían justas las elecciones en Irak?

Alarcón: ¿Por qué no votan los soldados norteamericanos? Hagan un referendo entre los soldados norteamericanos para que escojan entre quedarse allí por el resto de sus vidas en pro de la democracia y la libertad al estilo norteamericano o regresar a casa. Es un tema pertinente.

Pero en Irak un grupo de exiliados apoyados por la CIA compitió contra otro grupo. Algunas personas que pueden haber estado a favor de la resistencia no participaron. Mucho se dijo de cómo el movimiento de resistencia, o terroristas, presionó a la gente para que no votara, pero ni una palabra acerca de la presión de las fuerzas de ocupación. Además de distribuir volantes, el ejército impuso un toque de queda, restringió el movimiento, aisló al país de sus vecinos y calificó las elecciones de libres. Si algo como eso hubiera sucedido en otro país, imagine la cantidad de críticas provenientes de EEUU que hubiera habido contra ese país. He oído decir que estas elecciones son un hecho histórico. Bueno, esperemos cien años y sabremos cuáles son sus implicaciones históricas.

Landau: Usted ha mencionado anteriormente que EEUU está en decadencia.

Alarcón: Comparativamente hablando.

Landau: Específicamente, con relación a Europa. Inicialmente,

Continued on page 18



La estatua de José Martí en la Plaza de la Revolución, Habana.

a los diferentes grupos étnicos. Imagínese a los protestantes norteamericanos formando grupos hostiles de presbiterianos contra los episcopales. Es estúpido. Esas divisiones religiosas iraquíes pueden provocar la guerra. Recuerde las guerras religiosas en Europa.

su derecho a revisar los votos en Ohio, o tratando de que se hiciera un recuento debido a declaraciones de que había habido violaciones en la votación. No recuerdo que un solo senador de EEUU haya ido de Washington a Cleveland o a Cincinnati para ver lo que estaba sucediendo, pero

de Chávez lo aceptaron. Fueron elegidos candidatos de la oposición. La posibilidad de cuestionar los resultados de las elecciones de EEUU está desapareciendo. Y el recuento –esa palabra desaparecerá del diccionario de la lengua inglesa.

dedicaron a reportar las elecciones iraquíes e ignoraron las quejas acerca de la votación de parte de afro-norteamericanos, los puertorriqueños estaban haciendo el recuento de sus votos, uno a uno. Obtienen resultados exactos en cada colegio electoral, en cada municipio. Vieron quién ganó y



# “...This is Not a Divided Country, or Society...”

## Ricardo Alarcon Interview continued

From page 15

from the fair. In spite of that, many writers, publishers and artists from Germany came to Cuba.

And they added another step. They would invite the so-called dissidents to their official, diplomatic functions like national holidays and so-on. In other words, they tried to insult us. Not to have high level or important contacts with the Cuban government and to put those people [dissidents], those American agents, at the same level as legitimate Cuban authority.

Our answer was simple. We cut off contacts with the embassies here. We said we are prepared to wait the necessary time. On a personal basis, I enjoyed this period. It's a burden to attend these diplomatic functions like receptions and diplomatic dinners if you have work to do. Of course, we continued as before normal functions with African, Asian and Latin American embassies in Havana. But now the Europeans realize it was nonsense and are changing. But more important, I said that Europe had followed Spanish advice. That was when Mr. Aznar headed the conservative government in Spain. In March, Spaniards elected a new government, which withdrew Spanish troops from Iraq, and proposed other progressive steps on women's rights, etc. And regarding Cuba, the new government openly said it wanted to change the Aznar policy. The socialists have a more respectful and friendly approach. That was the source of Europe's new position. Let's hope the EU will follow the new Spanish counsel. By the way, it's as if we're still a Spanish colony, which we're not. But I think we've turned the



Cubans celebrate the anniversary of the July 26th Attack on the Moncada barracks, July 26, 2000.

the very least, an overstatement. He isn't going to carry anything much further. He's already having difficulty in maintaining this fire in Iraq. If he wants to do that around the world he will not succeed. Indeed, he's not succeeding in Iraq.

Cuba is one of the places mentioned, not by him but by [Secretary of State Condoleezza] Rice the day before. I advise them not to try. It will cost a lot of lives if the Americans would attack us, more than those dying in Iraq, because this is not a divided country or society that has been suffering under a dictatorial

not just irrational, a product of arrogance or impulse, not just the product of a person that doesn't read many books. That explains only his strange selection of words.

Consider Bush's simplistic view of the world; or better, take the more analytical and conscious way the CIA views it. A CIA document published a couple months ago and another in December 2000, forecasts based on research and analysis, consider scenarios of war, peace, turmoil and catastrophes. But there is a common denominator expressed in one sentence: "U.S. influence will continue to decline." By the way, the CIA does not call for a change of policy, but simply states as a fact that U.S. influence is less today than 20 or 40 years ago.

The U.S. is not going to rise above the rest of the world. It is the sole superpower in cold war terms. But the U.S. cannot exercise complete power over the rest of the world. Russia continues to have nuclear weapons. Economically, for example, China has emerged as a power. Recently the Chinese president toured Latin America and discussed granting Argentina a credit line of \$20 billion. Forty years ago, at time of the Alliance for Progress, Kennedy offered the entire continent \$20 billion – over a ten year period. Cuba criticized this modest offer at the time because it was too little. Remember, at that time this little island had established relations with that big country China. The other countries in Latin America followed the U.S. line and refused to recognize the existence of China. Now, 40 years later, that once non-recognized country's head of state travels throughout the region and offers much more than the U.S. could when it was at its peak. And the U.S. must accept that China plays that role in the world. The Vice President of China was doing a similar thing in Africa.

Although the U.S. remains the biggest military power, it has trouble controlling a rather small country like Iraq, which it almost destroyed by bombing and an economic embargo before the war.

that time and later, during the Marshall Plan, the U.S. was at the top. Since then it has been declining. That does not mean it is a country in disarray, but it is going downward.

To answer this downhill slide, in my opinion, came the neo-cons who believe that by using the United States' comparatively limited economic and large military resources, but especially by exploiting their advantage in terms of communication technology and near monopoly of information media, they can reverse the trend. That is impossible. The U.S. cannot turn the world back to 1945 and reappear as the only power in the world. The U.S. needs to learn to live in a diverse world with different players, different ideologies and interests and not to pretend to be the owner of the planet.

Those times are gone forever. That is the way history moves. But the new conservative trend departs from traditional conservatism and tries to reverse the world's movement by being interventionist, by sending troops here and there. It is an irrational approach. It's obvious that they will not succeed but their missionary and mythological approach could lead to mistakes even more grave than Iraq.

**“It will cost a lot of lives if the Americans would attack us, more than those dying in Iraq, because this is not a divided country or society...”**

page. I hope the Europeans have matured and will not repeat that nonsense.

**Landau: How do you compare Bush's discourse with that of past presidents? And how do you compare them with his deeds?**

**Alarcon:** Words are not his strongest quality. I think that there are discrepancies in his second inaugural address. He talked about carrying the fire of freedom throughout the world. Without sounding rude, I'd say this is, at

regime. The opposite is true. You will find here a free society, finally emancipated from half a century of oppression and corruption imposed by the U.S. We attained our independence in 1959 – from U.S. domination. That is a fact of history. From an ethnic or cultural point of view we are a unified country, an island on which a common culture and common identity has evolved. We are prepared to make life impossible for an invader.

But more important, what is the meaning of this policy? It is



Ricardo Alarcon speaking in Havana, Cuba. September, 2002.

The reality is that U.S. is only the most powerful entity in one area: information and communication.

It was the only dominant force at end of the Second World War, the only nuclear power. Nagasaki and Hiroshima, by the way, are the only cases in which nuclear power has been used destructively. They were not employed by a terrorist state, but by the U.S. democracy – allegedly to defeat Japan. At

**Landau: In 1945, the U.S. wrote the Nuremberg laws prohibiting aggressive war and also drafted the UN and OAS charters that prohibit intervention. How do you explain U.S. behavior, initiating those laws and then violating them?**

**Alarcon:** The U.S. wrote all those important documents that

Continued on page 19

# “...Este no es un país dividido o una sociedad...”

## Entrevista con Ricardo Alarcón



Cuban social workers at May Day demonstration in Havana.

From page 16

**cuando Cuba encarceló a los disidentes en el 2003, la Unión Europea respondió de manera muy crítica y se sumó a la posición de EEUU, y ahora la UE está apunto de reanudar las relaciones amistosas.**

**Alarcón:** Formalmente siempre tuvimos relaciones económicas y diplomáticas con países europeos. Fue algo infantil lo que la UE hizo. Desafortunadamente, siguieron el consejo del gobierno español, la UE siguió la línea norteamericana respecto a Cuba. Hasta con la ley Helms-Burton. Europa primero se quejó ante la OMC acerca de la ley Helms-Burton y luego negoció y llegó a lo que llamaron un entendimiento con Washington. Retiraron su queja.

Y en mayo de 2004, en el plan de EEUU para Cuba, Bush anunció que EEUU examinará caso por caso, país por país, en términos de implementar más eficientemente los Capítulos 3 y 4 de la Helms-Burton (castigar a países y compañías que comercian con Cuba).

Olvidó su compromiso con Europa de eliminar o cambiar esos capítulos y en su lugar declara que los implementará de manera más completa. Ninguna queja, ninguna protesta por parte de Europa acerca de lo que significa una bofetada de EEUU a Europa. Ante la noticia del arresto de los disidentes (Cuba arrestó en marzo de 2003 a 75 activistas antigubernamentales y los juzgó por trabajar para el gobierno de EEUU en contra de Cuba), los europeos tuvieron la oportunidad de protestar en contra del arresto ilegal no sólo en Cuba, sino en todo el mundo occidental. Me refiero a la tortura y violación del habeas corpus y otros principios legales. Los europeos se comportaron como cómplices de estas políticas como lo hicieron con relación a la política norteamericana hacia Cuba. Luego adoptaron algunas medidas infantiles, como negarse a tener contactos de alto nivel con Cuba. Algunos países ignoraron esa decisión. Otra medida: eliminar los intercambios culturales. El año pasado la feria del libro de La Habana estaba dedicada a Alemania. A última hora el

gobierno alemán, siguiendo esa posición europea, se retiró de la feria. A pesar de eso, muchos escritores, editores y artistas de Alemania vinieron a Cuba.

Y agregaron otra medida, invitarían a los llamados disidentes a sus eventos oficiales, diplomáticos, tales como fiestas nacionales y similares. En otras palabras, trataron de insultarnos. No tener contactos de alto nivel o importantes con el gobierno cubano y poner a esas personas (disidentes), a esos agentes norteamericanos, al mismo nivel que las legítimas autoridades cubanas.

Nuestra respuesta fue sencilla. Suspendimos el contacto con sus embajadas aquí. Dijimos que estábamos dispuestos a esperar el tiempo necesario. Personalmente, disfruté de ese período. Es una carga tener que asistir a esas funciones diplomáticas, como recepciones y cenas diplomáticas, si se tiene trabajo que hacer. Por supuesto, continuamos nuestras funciones normales con las embajadas africanas y latinoamericanas en La Habana. Pero ahora los europeos comprenden que fue una tontería y están cambiando. Pero más importante aún, dije que Europa había seguido el consejo de España. Eso fue cuando el Sr. Aznar encabezaba el gobierno conservador de España. En marzo los españoles eligieron un nuevo gobierno que retiró las tropas españolas de Irak y propuso medidas progresistas acerca de los derechos de la mujer, etc. Y con relación a Cuba, el nuevo gobierno dijo abiertamente que quería cambiar la política de Aznar. Los socialistas tienen un enfoque más respetuoso y amistoso. Ese fue el origen de la nueva posición europea. Esperemos que la UE siga el nuevo consejo de España. Por cierto, es como si aún fuéramos colonia española, lo cual no somos. Pero creo que hemos dado vuelta a la página. Espero que los europeos hayan madurado y no repitan esa tontería.

**Landau: ¿Cómo compara usted el discurso de Bush con el de presidentes anteriores? ¿Y cómo compara usted los hechos?**

**Alarcón:** Las palabras no son su

fuerte. Creo que hay discrepancias en el discurso de su segunda toma de posesión. Habló de llevar el fuego de la libertad por todo el mundo. Sin pretender ser insultante, yo diría que eso, en el mejor de los casos, es una exageración. Él no va a llevar nada a ninguna parte. Ya él tiene dificultades para mantener ese fuego en Irak. Si quiere hacerlo en todo el mundo no va a tener éxito. Es más, no lo está teniendo en Irak.

Cuba es uno de los lugares mencionados, no por él, sino por (la Secretaria de Estado Condoleezza) Rice el día anterior. Les aconsejo que no se atrevan. Les costaría muchas vidas si los norteamericanos nos atacaran, más que los que mueren en Irak, porque este no es un país dividido o una sociedad que haya estado sufriendo bajo un régimen dictatorial. Es todo lo contrario. Aquí encontrarán una sociedad libre, emancipada finalmente después de medio siglo de opresión y corrupción impuesto por EEUU. Nosotros alcanzamos la independencia en 1959 –de la dominación de EEUU. Ese es un hecho histórico. Desde un punto de vista étnico o cultural somos un país unido, una isla en la cual se ha desarrollado una cultura común y una identidad común. Estamos preparados para hacer la vida imposible a un invasor.

Pero más importante aún, ¿qué significa esta política? No es sólo irracional, un producto de la arrogancia o el impulso, no sólo el producto de una persona que no lee muchos libros. Eso sólo explica su extraña selección de palabras.

Considérese la visión simplista que Bush tiene del mundo; o mejor aún, considérese la manera más analítica y consciente en que lo ve la CIA. Un documento de la CIA publicado hace un par de meses y otro en diciembre de 2000 hacen un pronóstico basado en la investigación y el análisis, consideran escenarios de guerra, paz, disturbios y catástrofes. Pero hay un denominador común expresado en una oración: “La influencia de EEUU continuará declinando”. Por cierto, la CIA no hace un llamado a cambios de política, sino que simplemente

menciona como un hecho que la influencia de EEUU es hoy menor que hace 20 o 40 años.

EEUU no va a situarse por encima del resto del mundo. En términos de guerra fría es la única superpotencia. Pero EEUU no puede ejercer el poder total sobre el resto del mundo. Rusia sigue teniendo armas nucleares. Económicamente, por ejemplo, China ha emergido como potencia. Recientemente el presidente chino viajó por Latinoamérica y discutió la concesión a Argentina de una línea de crédito por \$20 mil millones. Hace 40 años, en la época de la Alianza para el Progreso, Kennedy ofreció \$20 mil millones a todo el continente para un período de diez años. Cuba criticó la modesta oferta porque ser muy poca. Recuerde, en aquella época esta pequeña isla había establecido relaciones con ese enorme país, China. Los otros países de Latinoamérica siguieron la línea de EEUU y se negaron a reconocer la existencia de China. Ahora, 40 años después, el jefe de estado de ese país otrora no reconocido viaja por la región y ofrece mucho más de lo que pudo hacer EEUU cuando estaba en la cúspide. Y EEUU tiene que aceptar que China desempeñe ese papel en el mundo. El Vicepresidente de China estaba haciendo algo similar en África.

Aunque EEUU siga siendo la mayor potencia militar, tiene problemas para controlar un país bastante pequeño como Irak, al cual casi ha destruido

relativamente limitados y los grandes recursos militares, pero especialmente explotando su ventaja en términos de tecnología de la comunicación y el casi monopolio de los medios de información, ellos pueden invertir la tendencia. Eso es imposible. EEUU no puede hacer retroceder al mundo a 1945 y reaparecer como la única potencia en el mundo. EEUU necesita aprender a vivir en un mundo diverso con diferentes actores, diferentes ideologías y no puede pretender ser el dueño del planeta.

Esos tiempos pasaron para siempre. Así es como se mueve la historia. Pero la nueva tendencia conservadora parte del conservadurismo tradicional y trata de invertir el movimiento del mundo siendo intervencionista, enviando tropas aquí y allá. Es un enfoque irracional. Es evidente que no tendrán éxito, pero su enfoque misionero y mitológico podría provocar errores aún más graves que Irak.

**Landau: En 1945 EEUU creó las leyes de Nuremberg que prohibían la guerra agresiva y también redactó las Cartas de la ONU y de la OEA que prohibían la intervención. ¿Cómo explica usted el comportamiento de EEUU, que crea esas leyes y después las viola?**

**Alarcón:** EEUU redactó esos importantes documentos que se convirtieron en los cimientos del orden internacional cuando era la potencia más importante del mundo. Ahora que el mundo

**“ La Carta carece de algunos puntos importantes. No menciona al colonialismo, no reconoce el derecho de los pueblos colonizados a la autodeterminación y la independencia. ”**

con bombardeos y un embargo económico antes de la guerra. La realidad es que EEUU es sólo la más poderosa entidad en un área: información y comunicación.

Era la única fuerza dominante al final de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, la única potencia nuclear. Nagasaki e Hiroshima, por cierto, son los únicos casos en que se ha utilizado destructivamente el poder nuclear. No fue empleado por un estado terrorista, sino por la democracia norteamericana, supuestamente para derrotar a Japón. Por esa época y más tarde, durante el Plan Marshall, estuvo en la cima. Desde entonces ha ido decayendo. No quiere decir que es un país derrotado, pero sí va en descenso.

En mi opinión, para responder a esta decadencia llegaron los neoconservadores, que creen que usando los recursos económicos

ha estado experimentando cambios, esos documentos se han convertido en obstáculos para los intereses norteamericanos. Al mismo tiempo, funcionarios de EEUU tratan de manipular esos documentos, como los Convenios de Derechos Humanos. Si uno escucha a los funcionarios de EEUU, ellos están desempeñando una misión de difundir los derechos humanos en todo el mundo. Las ideas de libertad y democracia se encuentran en la Carta de la ONU, pero junto con el principio de no intervención de prohibición de la guerra. Lo único que la Carta de la ONU reconoce como razón legítima para la guerra es la defensa propia, la de una nación sujeta a agresión externa. Incluso en esas circunstancias hay que pedir a la ONU que intervenga. Nadie más puede intervenir. Es

*Continued on page 20*



# “...This is Not a Divided Country, or Society...”

## Ricardo Alarcon Interview continued

From page 17

became the foundation of the international order when it was the most important power in the world. Now that the world has been undergoing change those documents have become obstacles to U.S. interests. At the same time, U.S. officials try to manipulate these documents, like the Human Rights Covenants. If you listen to U.S. officials, they are fulfilling a mission of spreading human rights throughout the world. The ideas

WWI. During the period between the two world wars, Germany became the European superpower, economically, technologically, militarily.

When Hitler set the goal of conquering Europe in the mid 1930s, his dream matched the reality of Europe more than who Bush seeks to conquer the entire world with the current level of U.S. power. Hitler's irrational dream was more rational than the discourse you hear now from American leaders. Hitler made a

history back should remember the origin of previous wars. The Germans didn't accept Versailles and that was the origin of Fascism.

**Landau: While the 75 dissidents received wide support, did the five Cubans in U.S. prisons also get much support from Europe? How do you see the case of five convicted of espionage?**

**Alarcon:** There has been some support. The U.S. detained 5 Cubans, 2 of them U.S. citizens, in September, 1998. They were tried, convicted and sentenced essentially for the crime of having penetrated terrorist groups of Cuban origin openly operating from Miami. These groups carried out bombings and killings in Cuba and in the U.S. That's what happened. In the original indictments you'll see they were also accused, as additional minor accusations, of being undocumented, having forged documents. If they'd said that their mission was to fight U.S.-backed terrorism against Cuba – they'd have to be crazy.

The U.S. Attorney General's office of Southern Florida insisted that it didn't want to discuss the five's motivations. Read the indictment. It's in the court documents. "We know their motivations," the prosecutors said. "They came here to penetrate terrorist groups and we don't want that to be the substance of the trial. We want to focus on the violations of U.S. law that they committed in order to perform their goals. They didn't register as foreign agents and changed their identity. Those were the big crimes."

The defense lawyers called that the "necessity principle." Under certain circumstances an individual may violate a law to stop a greater threat or danger – the lesser evil philosophy. To



Bolivian youths rally in support of Cuba.

**“ The (UN) Charter lacks some important points. It doesn't mention colonialism, nor recognize the right of colonial people to self-determination and independence. ”**

of freedom and democracy are in the UN charter, but together with the principle of nonintervention, prohibition of war. The only thing the UN Charter recognizes as a legitimate reason for war is self defense, a nation subjected to external aggression. Even in those circumstances, you have to ask the UN to intervene. Nobody else can intervene. It's a peaceful ideal. The Charter lacks some important points. It doesn't mention colonialism, nor recognize the right of colonial people to self-determination and independence. But the UN was transformed because after WW II, no one could stop the emancipation of those countries. People became independent and then UN members. It was one of the factors that helped transform the world. How to explain how the U.S. changed its mind after essentially drafting these documents?

Those exercising power were not happy with what happened. The reality problem is a serious one. Psychiatrists help those who have trouble dealing with reality. If you do not acknowledge reality you may be suffering from a serious disturbance. I sometimes feel that some American politicians need professional help to remember that they conceived the UN and its structure. Some American politicians now refer to the UN as something to ignore or despise. Do they forget that it was a U.S. creation? To weaken or break this organization, which is what Bush did, was a terrible thing. The UN does not exist any more because of what happened in Iraq. This is a very serious problem. It is not true that it will reconstruct itself on new bases.

I don't want to sound rude, but that is exactly what Hitler did. He was angry with the League of Nations, with reality, after

very big mistake, trying to conquer the USSR. Stalin committed many crimes. He was a dictator, but the Soviet people stopped Hitler. It was the same mistake that Napoleon made, to try to conquer the East. If he had remained the master of western and central Europe maybe he would have continued to hold power. But he overextended himself.

But fascism was rejected by most people. And resistance to Nazism arose in many places. Our Yugoslav brothers and sisters offered heroic resistance in that



“Hey imperialists, we're not afraid!” Billboard in Cuba.

period. The Nazis never conquered that country. Later on it was made to explode, not by the Nazis, but by western democracies.

**Landau: You use history as a guide.**

**Alarcon:** History is important. Those who believe they can turn

save a life, a defendant may allege in court that he had to ignore some law because he had a more important purpose. That was the issue here. To protect lives from terrorists, the five had to violate laws.

You can't do that openly.

Ironically, those five Cubans were condemned for doing what the FBI was supposed to do and didn't. Instead of investigating terrorism, the FBI investigated them.

Miami is a special place where terrorists have links to local business people and politicians. It's mafia style. So, to protect itself, save lives and reduce damages, Cuba had no option but to send individuals, real heroes, to perform that infiltration duty in

groups. We never denied that. And no one complained. They knew that we were gathering information to defend ourselves.

Once in court, however, the context of Cuba-U.S. relations was ignored. Indeed, most importantly, in written and verbal form during the trial, the U.S. even admitted to condemning these people precisely because they were trying to act against the terrorists. You'll find it written in Rene Gonzalez' sentencing, December 14, 2001, three months after the twin towers attack. The government asked the judge to do something special in Rene's case because he was born in Chicago, he's a U.S. citizen.

The government asked for the maximum sentence for all five. For Rene that meant 15 years. But read the transcript of the court session. The Miami Assistant Attorney General called him a man with such strong convictions and motivations that he would emerge from prison still young and attempt to again penetrate the terrorists to learn their plans and inform the Cuban government.

“You have to do something to put him out of action, judge.” Page 46 of the transcript!

So the court added that when this man gains his freedom, he will be barred from visiting places where individual or terrorist groups are known to frequent. What does it mean? That the U.S. government knows the identity of Miami crime figures and terrorists and which places they frequent.

The sentencing took place in December 2001, 3 months after the terrible attacks against New

that area. That was the issue.

Before doing that we informed the U.S. government about the terrorists' activities. I remember speaking privately with U.S. officials, asking them to please try and stop this. They knew we had our own sources inside those

Continued on page 21

# “...Este no es un país dividido o una sociedad...”

## Entrevista con Ricardo Alarcón

From page 18

un ideal pacífico. La Carta carece de algunos puntos importantes. No menciona al colonialismo, no reconoce el derecho de los pueblos colonizados a la autodeterminación y la independencia. Pero la ONU fue transformada porque después de la 2da. Guerra Mundial nadie pudo detener la emancipación de esos países. Los pueblos se hicieron independientes y luego miembros de la ONU. Fue uno de los factores que ayudaron a transformar el mundo. ¿Cómo se puede explicar la manera en que EEUU ha cambiado de opinión después de haber redactado esencialmente esos documentos?

Los que ejercen el poder no se sienten felices con lo que ha sucedido. El problema de la realidad es serio. Los psiquiatras ayudan a los que tienen problemas para adaptarse a la realidad. Si uno no acepta la realidad puede ser que sufra de una perturbación grave. A veces me parece que algunos políticos norteamericanos necesitan ayuda profesional para que recuerden que ellos concibieron la ONU y su estructura. Algunos políticos norteamericanos se refieren ahora a la ONU como algo a ignorar o despreciar. ¿Olvidan que fue una creación de EEUU? Debilitar o destruir esa organización, que es lo Bush hizo, es algo terrible. La ONU ya no existe debido a lo que sucedió en Irak. Este es un problema muy serio. No es cierto que se reconstruirá a sí misma sobre nuevas bases.

No quiero faltar al respeto, pero es exactamente lo que hizo Hitler. Estaba indignado con la Liga de las Naciones, con la realidad, después de la Primera Guerra Mundial. Durante el período entre las dos guerras mundiales, Alemania se convirtió en la superpotencia europea, tanto económica como tecnológica y militarmente.

Cuando Hitler se propuso el objetivo de conquistar a Europa a mediados de los 1930, su sueño se avenía a la realidad de Europa más que el de Bush de conquistar a todo el mundo con el actual nivel de poder de EEUU. El sueño irracional de Hitler era más racional que el discurso que se oye ahora proveniente de líderes norteamericanos. Hitler cometió un error muy grave. Fue el mismo error que cometió Napoleón, al tratar de conquistar el Este. Si se hubiera quedado como amo de la Europa occidental y central, quizás hubiera permanecido en el poder. Pero se extendió demasiado.

Pero el fascismo fue rechazado por la mayoría de las personas. Y la resistencia al nazismo surgió en muchas partes. Nuestros hermanos y hermanas yugoslavos ofrecieron una resistencia heroica en aquel período. Los nazis nunca conquistaron ese país. Posteriormente se le hizo estallar, pero no fueron los nazis, sino las democracias occidentales.

**Landau:** Usted usa la historia como una guía.

**Alarcón:** La historia es importante. Los que creen que pueden hacer retroceder a la historia debieran

recordar el origen de las guerras anteriores. Los alemanes no aceptaron el Tratado de Versalles, y ese fue el origen del fascismo.

**Landau:** Aunque los 75 disidentes recibieron mucho apoyo, ¿obtuvieron igual apoyo en Europa los cinco cubanos que están cárceles norteamericanas? ¿Cómo ve usted el caso de los cinco condenados por espionaje?

**Alarcón:** Ha habido algún apoyo. EEUU detuvo a 5 cubanos, 2 de ellos ciudadanos norteamericanos, en septiembre de 1998. Esencialmente fueron juzgados, condenados y sentenciados por el delito de haber penetrado grupos terroristas de origen cubano que operan abiertamente en Miami. Estos grupos realizaron bombardeos y matanzas en Cuba y en EEUU. Eso fue lo que sucedió. En las acusaciones originales se ve que también fueron acusados, como delitos menores, de estar indocumentados, de poseer documentos falsos. Si ellos hubieran dicho que su misión era combatir al terrorismo apoyado por EEUU contra Cuba –tendrían que haber estado locos.

La oficina del Fiscal General del Sur de la Florida insistió en que no quería discutir las motivaciones de los cinco. Lean la acusación. Está en los documentos del tribunal. “Conocemos sus motivaciones”,

Los abogados defensores calificaron esto del “principio de necesidad”. Bajo ciertas circunstancias un individuo puede violar una ley para impedir un mayor peligro o amenaza –la filosofía del mal menor. Para salvar una vida, un acusado puede alegar ante un tribunal que tuvo que ignorar alguna ley porque tenía un propósito más importante.

infiltración en esa área. Esa era la cuestión.

Antes de hacer eso, informamos al gobierno de EEUU acerca de las actividades terroristas. Recuerdo que hablé en privado con funcionarios norteamericanos pidiéndoles por favor que trataran de detener esto. Ellos sabían que nosotros teníamos nuestras

ataque a las Torres Gemelas. El gobierno pidió al juez que hiciera algo especial en el caso de René porque él nació en Chicago, él es ciudadano norteamericano.

El gobierno pidió la máxima condena para los cinco. Para René significó 15 años. Pero lean el acta de la sesión del tribunal. El Fiscal Adjunto de Miami dijo que era un hombre de convicciones y motivaciones tan fuertes que saldría de prisión aún joven y trataría de penetrar nuevamente a los terroristas para conocer de sus planes e informar al gobierno cubano.

“Usted tiene que hacer para ponerlo fuera de acción, Señoría”. Página 46 del acta del tribunal. Así que el tribunal agregó que cuando este hombre salga en libertad, le está prohibido visitar los lugares que se sabe frecuentan los grupos o individuos terroristas. ¿Qué significa? Que el gobierno de EEUU conoce la identidad de las figuras criminales y terroristas de Miami y los lugares que frecuentan.

La condena se impuso en diciembre de 2001, tres meses después de los terribles ataques contra Nueva York. El gobierno no arrestó a figuras del crimen organizado, personas violentas o terroristas. En su lugar castigaron a un ciudadano de EEUU y le prohibieron que “moleste a

“ Les costaría muchas vidas si los norteamericanos nos atacaran, más que los que mueren en Irak, porque este no es un país dividido o una sociedad...”

Esa era la cuestión. Para proteger vidas ante los terroristas, los cinco tuvieron que violar leyes.

Eso no puede hacerse abiertamente. Irónicamente, esos cinco cubanos fueron condenados por hacer lo que se suponía que

propias fuentes dentro de esos grupos. Nunca lo hemos negado. Y nadie se quejaba. Ellos sabían que estábamos acopiando información para defendernos.

Sin embargo, una vez en el juicio,



dijeron los fiscales. “Vinieron aquí a penetrar grupos terroristas y no queremos que eso sea la esencia del juicio. Queremos enfocarnos en las violaciones a la ley de EEUU que ellos cometieron a fin de cumplir sus objetivos. No se inscribieron como agentes extranjeros y cambiaron su identidad. Esos fueron los grandes crímenes”.

hiciera el FBI y que no hizo. En vez de investigar el terrorismo, el FBI los investigó a ellos. Miami es un lugar especial donde los terroristas tienen vínculos con hombres de negocios y políticos de la localidad. Es el estilo de la mafia. Así que para protegerse, salvar vidas y disminuir los daños, Cuba no tuvo más opción que enviar a individuos, a verdaderos héroes, a realizar esa tarea de

el contexto de las relaciones Cuba-EEUU fue ignorado. Más importante aún, lo mismo en forma escrita que verbal durante el juicio, EEUU incluso admitió que condenaba a estos hombres precisamente porque estaban tratando de actuar contra los terroristas. Lo encontrará por escrito en la condena a René González, el 14 de diciembre de 2001, tres meses antes del

nuestros terroristas, a nuestras figuras del crimen organizado”.

Antonio Guerrero iba a ser condenado el 27 de diciembre de 2001 a un máximo de cadena perpetua más diez años. Pero eso no satisfacía al Fiscal General. Pidió más. Si Guerrero tuviera dos vidas no se le permitiría visitar los

Continued on page 22



# “...This is Not a Divided Country, or Society...”

## Ricardo Alarcon Interview continued

From page 19

York. The government didn't arrest organized crime figures, violent people or terrorists. Rather, they punished a U.S. citizen and prohibited him from “bothering our terrorists, our organized crime figures.”

Antonio Guerrero was about to be sentenced on December 27, 2001, to a maximum of life plus ten years. But that didn't satisfy the Attorney General. He asked for more. If Guerrero has two lives he will not be allowed to visit places that terrorists frequent. Americans should know about this. They have the right to know. It's an insult to those who died on Sept. 11 to have a government so connected, so engaged, with terrorists, that they protect them. That's the substance of the case against the five Cubans.

**Landau: How have the Five been treated in prison?**

**Alarcon:** Serious violation of the people's most fundamental rights occurred. The U.S. did not allow the wives of two of the five to visit. Rene's six year old daughter was born in the U.S., a citizen, hasn't been able to see her father. She saw him twice when she was four months old. Rene's a poster father; she's seen his poster after she was deprived of paternal protection. The U.S. Government did that because the American people didn't know about it. If the people knew I'm sure they'd ask questions like: “How come the government is so friendly with well known terrorists? Why does the government treat so harshly those who fight against terrorism? Is the U.S. government for or against the terrorists? Mr. Bush.”

**Landau: George Bush has made freedom, democracy and human**



Cuban school children.

rights his issues. Simultaneously, we read of reports of torture in Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo. In light of this, how do you see the U.S. criticism of Cuba for being a human rights violator, because it locked up 75 “dissidents?” How does Cuba's view of human rights coincide with the arrest of those 75?

where you are when the U.S. decided to send prisoners to Guantanamo. As a courtesy, they informed me they would treat those prisoners in accord with the Geneva conventions. They recognized Cuba's sovereignty over Guantanamo and its right to demand that they not use our territory to violate human rights. They didn't have to tell us, by the way, because we can't do anything about Guantanamo. Yet, people who acknowledged atrocities at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo criticized Cuba for having detained and tried individuals accused under a pre-existing law. Cuban defense lawyers had contact with their families while, simultaneously, the U.S. denied thousands of people their most fundamental rights. The “dissidents” were tried in a court

Hitler, no Western leader had publicly suggested extrajudicial execution. Those in Guantanamo – at least someone knows they are there. The “others” – nobody knew where they were captured or taken.

Non-accountability is now in fashion. The principle of habeas corpus dates from the Magna Carta, not the Human Rights Declaration. Habeas corpus has now disappeared. In this context, Cuba was criticized for having detained 75 “dissidents.”

Some facts: March 1996, Clinton signed Helms Burton [designed to punish foreign companies trading with or investing in Cuba]. December 1996, Cuba's National Assembly countered that law. We used legal examples from Canada, Argentina, and Britain, who had

principle of opportunity. There are two ways to implement a law. If you don't stop at a red light, police fine you. You ran the light. That's the automatic application of the law. But the opportunity principle means that the prosecutor doesn't automatically prosecute violators of the law. Rather, he requires political instructions.

So, although we passed the law in February 1998, nobody was arrested. It was a message: don't work with a foreign power against your country. We waited five years – February '98 to March 2003 – to arrest those individuals. I don't think it's fair to criticize Cuba by taking the arrests out of context, as if they happened on another planet.

In March 2003, the US established a new doctrine: war without UN authorization; unilateral war; disproportionate war – in Iraq.

At the time, Cuba sentenced three individuals to death. Like most leaders of the Cuban Revolution, I disagree with the death penalty. We haven't used it often. It goes against our morality. In this case, however, hijackers seized a boat to move people to the States. But a few days before, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Roger Noriega said, following other cases of planes and boats hijacked to the

U.S., that they would consider repetitions of such actions as acts against its national security! Code words for bombing! Recall, Iraq was accused of threatening U.S. national security by having WMD's.

The boat hijacking occurred because the U.S. promoted it by welcoming Cuban hijackers, establishing hijacking as a way to enter your society. At the same time, U.S. officials suggested that such incidents could serve as an excuse for war. Also, John Bolton, another undersecretary of State, claimed that Cuba actually had WMDs, had developed a bio-weapons producing program and shared it with other rogue states. My god, you never found WMD's in Iraq, but there you are in Iraq! The U.S. accused us of planning an attack and having the capability of attacking – just 90 miles from

your shore.

**Landau: The “dissidents?”**

**Alarcon:** We waited five years. We couldn't afford to be patient anymore, if the U.S. planned to attack, and their threats were real. In late February 2003, millions demonstrated around the world against the impending war. The biggest demonstrations ever in Spanish history occurred in Madrid and European and U.S. cities. In Miami, Florida, however, a pro-war demonstration occurred with a four word, big banner: “Iraq now, Cuba later!”

Cuban American Congresspeople and state officials held that banner. A committee headed by well-known terrorist Orlando Bosch called the demonstration. Bosch promoted it on local radio and published an ad in a Miami paper. So that's the context. Noriega saying hijacking would be tantamount to Cuba attacking the U.S., others referring to Cuba as being like Saddam Hussein with WMD's.

**Landau: So you're connecting the Iraq situation with the “dissidents?”**

**Alarcon:** A paid agent of another government trying to overthrow your government receives a severe sentence in many countries. But only in Cuba does the U.S. have an open policy of promoting that behavior – paying, organizing, supporting groups inside our country for the interest of the most powerful country – also our neighbor.

Cuba faced a national security threat from the U.S., as it has since the 19th century. The U.S.' Cuba program [Plan for Assistance to a Free Cuba], includes secret ops of the CIA, going on for years, and the new policy of promoting and fabricating an opposition inside Cuba – working openly through AID. Do you expect to have all that without a legal reaction from Cuba?

We acted legally and we did not precipitate these arrests. We waited patiently, like Job, the biblical figure. And we had to act at a very serious moment for us and the world. Nobody was tortured or had their rights violated, although the press has claimed it. Raul Rivera, the most famous of the so-called “dissidents” recently came out of prison. Many people, including his wife, had accused us of torturing him. He said as he left prison: “I was never tortured, nor ill treated physically or psychologically.”

Nor did any of the 75 suffer torture. I suspect that we were a scapegoat to distract attention away from the real violations still going on in Guantanamo. Nobody in Congress asked Bush about the fact that torture and disappearing people had become a normal practice; nor did European parliaments question it. Instead, people discussed Cuba's jailing of poets, journalists, intellectuals. They exaggerated. Only Rivera was a poet. Some of the others are poorly educated. We took criticism for doing what was our



of law. That was March 2003. In Bush's State of the Union address, he had referred to thousands of individuals accused of involvement in terrorism, detained by the U.S. and its allies. And he added: “Others had suffered a different fate.” In other words, the “others” are no longer a problem. Big applause from both houses! I read in The New Yorker that since

also adopted laws countering Helms Burton. Our law said that Helms Burton is unlawful and we may prosecute those in Cuba who act to implement it. Nothing more! In February 1998, we adopted another law establishing sanctions for those Cubans who try to implement Helms-Burton [receiving U.S. funds, goods and services to publicly support the law]. But there's a principle in the law that lawyers refer to as the

Continued on page 23

# “...Este no es un país dividido o una sociedad...”

## Entrevista con Ricardo Alarcón

From page 20

lugares que frecuentan los terroristas. Los norteamericanos debieran conocer esto. Tienen derecho a saberlo. Es un insulto a los que murieron el 11 de septiembre tener un gobierno tan relacionado, tan comprometido con los terroristas que los protegen. Esa es la esencia del caso contra los cinco cubanos.

### Landau: ¿Cómo han sido tratados Los Cinco en Prisión?

**Alarcón:** Han ocurrido serias violaciones de los derechos más fundamentales. EEUU no ha permitido que las esposas de dos de los cinco los visiten en la prisión. La hija de seis años de René nació en EEUU, es una ciudadana, y no ha podido ver a su padre. Lo vio dos veces, cuando tenía cuatro meses de edad. René es un padre de cartel: ella ha visto su cartel después de que la privaron de la protección paterna. El gobierno de EEUU lo hizo porque el pueblo norteamericano no conoce de esto. Si el pueblo lo supiera estoy seguro de que haría preguntas como: ¿Por qué el gobierno es tan amigo de terroristas bien conocidos? ¿Por qué el gobierno trata tan duramente a los que luchan contra el terrorismo? ¿Está el gobierno de EEUU a favor o en contra de lo terroristas, Sr. Bush?

Landau: George Bush ha hecho suyos los temas de libertad, democracia y derechos humanos. Al mismo tiempo leemos informes de tortura en Abu Ghraib y Guantánamo. A la luz de esto, ¿cómo ve usted las críticas de EEUU a Cuba de ser violadora de los derechos humanos porque encarceló a 75 “disidentes”? ¿Cómo coincide

la visión de Cuba de los derechos humanos con el arresto de esos 75?

**Alarcón:** Vicky Huddleston, la Jefa de la Sección de Intereses de EEUU estuvo sentada donde está usted cuando EEUU decidió enviar a prisioneros a Guantánamo. Como una cortesía me informaron que tratarían a esos prisioneros según las Convenciones de Ginebra. Ellos reconocían la soberanía de Cuba sobre Guantánamo y su derecho a exigir que no usaran nuestro territorio para violar los derechos humanos. No tenían que decirnoslo, por cierto, porque no podemos hacer nada acerca de Guantánamo. Sin embargo, las personas que reconocieron las atrocidades cometidas en Abu Ghraib y Guantánamo criticaron a Cuba por haber detenido y juzgado a individuos acusados con acuerdo a una ley preexistente. Los abogados defensores cubanos tuvieron contacto con sus familias, mientras simultáneamente EEUU negaba a miles de personas sus derechos más fundamentales. Los “disidentes” fueron juzgados por un tribunal establecido.

Eso fue en marzo de 2003. En el discurso de Bush acerca del Estado de la Unión, él se refirió a miles de individuos acusados de participar en terrorismo, detenidos por EEUU y sus aliados. Y agregó: “Otros han sufrido un destino diferente”. En otras palabras, los “otros” ya no son un problema. Gran aplauso de ambas cámaras. Leí en The New Yorker que desde Hitler ningún líder occidental había sugerido públicamente la ejecución extrajudicial. Los de Guantánamo, al menos alguien sabe

que están allí. Los “otros”, nadie sabe dónde fueron capturados.

Ahora está de moda no rendir cuentas. El principio de habeas corpus proviene de la Carta Magna, no de la Declaración de Derechos Humanos. El habeas corpus ha desaparecido ahora. En este contexto, Cuba fue

compañías extranjeras que comercien con Cuba o inviertan en la isla). Diciembre de 1996, la Asamblea Nacional de Cuba responde a esa ley. Utilizamos ejemplos legales de Canadá, Argentina y Gran Bretaña, que también habían respondido aprobando leyes en respuesta a la

otra ley que establecía sanciones para aquellos cubanos que trataran de implementar la Helms-Burton (por medio de la recepción de fondos, bienes y servicios de EE.UU. para apoyar públicamente la ley). Pero hay un principio legal al que los abogados se refieren como el



Young Cubans Rally Against the US Blockade.

criticada por haber detenido a 75 “disidentes”.

Veamos algunos hechos. Marzo de 1996, Clinton firmó la ley Helms-Burton (destinada a castigar a

Helms-Burton. Nuestra ley decía que la Helms-Burton es ilegal y que podíamos inculpar a los que actuaran en Cuba para implementarla. ¡Nada más! En febrero de 1998 adoptamos

principio de oportunidad. Hay dos maneras de implementar una ley. Si usted no se detiene ante una luz roja, la policía le multa. Usted violó la luz. Esa es la aplicación automática de la ley. Pero el principio de oportunidad significa que el acusador no acusa automáticamente a los violadores de la ley. En su lugar, él requiere de instrucciones políticas.

Así, aunque aprobamos la ley en febrero de 1998, nadie fue arrestado. Era un mensaje: no trabajen con una potencia extranjera en contra de su propio país. Esperamos cinco años –febrero de 1996 a marzo de 2003– para arrestar a esos individuos. No creo que sea justo criticar a Cuba sacando a los arrestos fuera de contexto, como si sucedieran en otro planeta.

En marzo de 2003 EEUU estableció una nueva doctrina; guerra sin autorización de la ONU; guerra unilateral; guerra desproporcionada –en Irak.

Por esa época Cuba condenó a muerte a tres individuos. Como la mayor parte de los líderes de la Revolución cubana, no estoy de acuerdo con la pena de muerte. No la hemos usado a menudo. Va en contra de nuestra moral. Sin embargo, en este caso los secuestradores se apoderaron de una nave para llevar a personas a Estados Unidos. Pero unos días antes el Secretario Asistente de Estado de EEUU, Roger Noriega, dijo, después de otros casos de aviones y barcos secuestrados para ir a EEUU, que ellos considerarían las repeticiones de tales actos como actos en contra de la seguridad nacional. Palabras clave para bombardeo. Recuerden, Irak fue acusado de amenazar la seguridad nacional de EEUU por tener ADM.

El secuestro de la nave ocurrió porque EEUU lo promovió al dar la bienvenida a secuestradores cubanos, al establecer el secuestro como una forma de entrar en su sociedad. Al mismo tiempo, funcionarios de EEUU sugirieron

Continued on page 23

## MAWO Organizes Successful Second Annual Anti-War Film Festival in Vancouver

By Kira Koschelanyk  
& Nicole Burton

On December 18<sup>th</sup> 2004, the Britannia Community Centre Auditorium filled with activists and supporters of the anti-war anti-occupation movement in the Lower Mainland for the Second Annual Anti-war Film Festival, organized by Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO). Youth, students, local artists and filmmakers also attended the day-long event which showcased 7 feature films. These films exhibited the historic and present day conditions of war and occupation, as well as oppressed nations' popular resistance to imperialism. Connecting these struggles within the medium of art and culture, the films showed a development from MAWO's First Annual Anti-war Film Festival last December. Together people from across Vancouver came to experience the energy, emotion, and humanity of resistance to war, occupation, on a global and local scale.

The most significant contribution of this event to the development of a diverse anti-war movement was the perspective of international solidarity and the connection between oppressed people's struggles. To emphasize these connections the audience was taken from Atlantic Canada to Iraq, with the such films as: *Is the Crown at War With Us?*, *Control Room*, *the Battle of Algiers*,

*Desafío* (meaning “Challenge” in Spanish), *Palestine Diaries*, *Hearts and Minds*, a Korean Anti-

as a necessary part of human development if we desire to make any change. With the anti-war film

No matter who we are, anti-war films allow us to learn from and connect with the historic and

Mobilization Against War and Occupation Presents  
2nd Annual Vancouver Antiwar Film Festival  
Saturday December 18th  
10 AM - 9 PM  
Britannia Community Center  
Auditorium (1661 Napier St)  
- FREE ADMISSION -  
Featured Films:  
• Shocking and Awful  
• Iraq Uncovered  
• Palestinian Diaries  
• Vietnam: The War at Home  
• Is the Crown at War with Us?  
• Control Room  
• The Battle of Algiers  
• Mission Accomplished?  
• Orphanage  
• Baghdad: One Year After the Occupation  
• Hearts and Minds  
• Panama Deception  
• Afghan Massacre  
Full festival program available soon.  
Please check [www.mawovancouver.org](http://www.mawovancouver.org) for updates.  
[www.mawovancouver.org](http://www.mawovancouver.org)  
info@mawovancouver.org | 604-322-

*war documentary*, and *Shocking and Awful: A Grassroots Response to the War in Iraq*.

The Second Annual Anti-war Film Festival was an important step for the anti-war movement in Vancouver. It is a step away from simply opposing the human tragedy of war and occupation, and moves towards a deeper understanding of people's struggle

festival the anti-war movement is able to expand its scope to be more inclusive of art and culture, which are the primary tools for expression and historic development of the human spirit and humanity as a whole. By connecting imperialist wars and occupations through art and culture, we use a medium that is universal, one that people can relate and feel connected to.

current struggles against war and occupation worldwide.

### We Need Your Help!

Do you have ideas for the 3rd Annual Vancouver Antiwar Film Festival in 2006? Get Involved! Contact Mobilization Against War and Occupation: phone: 604-322-1764, email: [info@mawovancouver.org](mailto:info@mawovancouver.org), web: [mawovancouver.org](http://mawovancouver.org).



# “...Este no es un país dividido o una sociedad...”

## Entrevista con Ricardo Alarcón

From page 22

que tales incidentes podían servir como excusa para la guerra. También John Bolton, otro subsecretario de Estado, aseguró que Cuba poseía ADM, que había desarrollado un programa de armas biológicas y las había entregado a otros estados delincuentes. Dios, ustedes nunca encontraron ADM en Irak, pero allí están ustedes en Irak. EEUU nos acusó de planear un ataque y de tener la capacidad para realizarlo –a sólo 90 millas de sus costas.

**Landau: ¿Los “disidentes”?**

**Alarcón:** Esperamos cinco años. Ya no nos podíamos dar el lujo de ser pacientes, si EEUU planeaban atacarnos, y sus amenazas eran reales. A fines de febrero de 2003 millones se manifestaron en todo el mundo en contra de la guerra inminente. Las mayores manifestaciones que se hayan dado en la historia española ocurrieron en Madrid; también las hubo en ciudades europeas y norteamericanas. Sin embargo, en Miami, Florida, una manifestación en pro de la guerra se realizó con cuatro palabras en una gran banderola: “Irak ahora, Cuba después”.

Congresistas cubano-americanos y funcionarios del estado llevaban esa banderola. Un comité encabezado por el conocido terrorista Orlando Bosch convocó la manifestación. Bosch la promovió por la radio local y publicó un anuncio en un periódico de Miami. Así que ese era el contexto. Noriega diciendo que los secuestros equivalían a un ataque de Cuba a EEUU, otros que se referían a Cuba con ADM, al igual que Saddam Hussein.

**Landau: ¿Entonces usted relaciona la situación de Irak con los “disidentes”?**

**Alarcón:** Un agente pagado por otro gobierno que trata de derrocar a su

gobierno recibe una condena severa en muchos países. Pero sólo en Cuba tiene EEUU una política abierta para promover ese comportamiento –pagar, organizar, apoyar a grupos dentro de nuestro país en pro de los intereses del país más poderoso, que es también nuestro vecino.

Cuba se enfrentó a una amenaza de seguridad nacional desde EEUU, como lo ha hecho desde el siglo 19. El programa de EEUU para Cuba (Plan de Ayuda para una Cuba Libre) incluye operaciones secretas de la CIA, que funcionan desde hace años, y la nueva política de promover y fabricar una oposición dentro de Cuba –trabajando abiertamente por medio de AID (Agencia Internacional para el Desarrollo). ¿Usted espera tener todo eso sin una reacción legal por parte de Cuba?

Actuamos legalmente y no precipitamos esos arrestos. Esperamos pacientemente, como Job, el personaje bíblico. Y tuvimos que actuar en un momento muy serio para nosotros y el mundo. Nadie fue torturado ni se violaron sus derechos, aunque la prensa lo ha asegurado. Raúl Rivero, el más famoso de los llamados “disidentes”, salió recientemente de la cárcel. Muchas personas, incluyendo a su esposa, nos habían acusado de torturarlo. Cuando salió de prisión él dijo: “Nunca fui torturado ni maltratado física o psicológicamente”.

Ni tampoco ninguno de los 75 sufrió tortura. Sospecho que fuimos el chivo expiatorio para distraer la atención de las verdaderas violaciones que estaban ocurriendo en Guantánamo. Nadie del Congreso preguntó a Bush acerca del hecho de que la tortura y la desaparición de personas se había convertido en práctica normal, ni lo cuestionan los parlamentos europeos. Pero la gente discutía el encarcelamiento por Cuba



de poetas, periodistas, intelectuales. Exageraron. Sólo Rivero era poeta. Algunos de los otros tienen poca escolaridad. Recibimos críticas por hacer lo que era nuestro derecho, nuestra obligación. Cualquier país hace lo que sea necesario según la ley para protegerse. Lo hicimos cuando ustedes estaban torturando a cientos en Guantánamo, sin abogados, sin ser acusados –aún están sin abogados defensores, incommunicados.

**Landau: ¿Cuál es la política de Bush para Cuba?**

**Alarcón:** En mayo de 2004 el Presidente Bush presentó el Programa para la Ayuda a una Cuba Libre con el fin de “acelerar el fin del régimen de Castro”, para forzar un cambio de régimen. Primero, aumentar “nuestro apoyo a nuestra gente dentro de Cuba”. Esas no fueron exactamente las palabras, pero

su objetivo era aumentar el apoyo a los grupos en Cuba respaldados por EEUU. En el sitio web de la Casa Blanca usted encontrará sus palabras. Aumentaron el respaldo de \$7 a \$59 millones. Los que recibieron fondos son parte de un deseo extranjero de provocar un cambio de régimen. Eso significa derrocar a nuestro gobierno e imponer otro. Pero no simplemente otro. Quieren acabar rápidamente con la Revolución, ¿para hacer qué? Establecer un nuevo régimen en Cuba, basado en dos principios: restitución de la propiedad a los antiguos dueños y la total privatización. El gobierno de EEUU garantizará la restitución expedita de la propiedad y establecerá una Comisión (norteamericana, no cubana) para la Restitución de Derechos de Propiedad. Y ese será el fin de Cuba. ¡Restitución y privatización, controladas por un gobierno extranjero! El nuevo plan hasta lista los menores detalles acerca del transporte, medio ambiente, agricultura, con asesores enviados por Washington para supervisar.

Por supuesto, al privatizar la educación y el servicio de salud, las personas jubiladas ya no recibirán su pensión. Cuando la Revolución cubana termine, a los jubilados no se les pagará. Washington los organizará en cuerpos de ancianos y los pondrá a trabajar hasta que su salud lo permita. Los norteamericanos debieran leer eso. Se encuentra en el sitio web del gobierno. Estamos citándolo. EEUU ha tenido dos experiencias rehaciendo gobiernos, en Afganistán e Irak. Será difícil implementar aquí esos planes. Por eso es que en la sección de reformas institucionales su primera prioridad es crear una nueva fuerza de policía, entrenada y equipada por EEUU, y adivinen quién tiene el control y el liderazgo.

¿Y qué quedaría de Cuba? Después de que se haya privatizado la propiedad y se haya devuelto a sus antiguos dueños, después de que los más viejos en Cuba hayan muerto laborando en obras públicas, sin atención de salud ni educación, EEUU realiza elecciones para las nuevas autoridades. Después de dismantelar el régimen revolucionario, EEUU aumentará sustancialmente el presupuesto cubano para promover los nuevos partidos políticos basados en los actuales grupos “disidentes” en Cuba.

Esto muestra que los “disidentes” son instrumentos de un gobierno extranjero. ¿Nos pueden acusar de ser duros en el tratamiento que les damos? ¿O hemos tan sido pacientes como Job esperando que ellos recapiten? Cuba es el único país que se enfrenta a un plan tal. ¿Cómo reaccionaría otro país si una gran potencia se atreviera a hacer esto en su contra? Imponer la voluntad de una potencia extranjera por sobre los deseos legítimos del propio pueblo. ¿Eso es democracia?

\*El columnista Saul Landau recientemente regresó de una visita que hizo a La Habana, Cuba. Durante su estancia tuvo la oportunidad de entrevistar a Ricardo Alarcón de Quesada, vicepresidente de Cuba y presidente de su Asamblea Nacional. Landau dirige los medios digitales en el Colegio de Letras, Artes y Ciencias Sociales de la Universidad Cal Poly Pomona y es miembro del Instituto de Estudios para Política. Su libro más reciente es *El negocio de Estados Unidos: cómo los consumidores reemplazaron a los ciudadanos y de qué manera se puede invertir la tendencia*.

# “...This is Not a Divided Country, or Society...”

## Ricardo Alarcon Interview continued

From page 21

right, our obligation. Any country does what's necessary according to law to protect yourself. We did that when you were torturing hundreds in Guantanamo; without lawyers, without charges – still without defense lawyers, incommunicado.

**Landau: What is Bush's Cuba policy?**

**Alarcon:** In May 2004, President Bush presented the Program for Assistance for a free Cuba to “accelerate the end of the Castro regime,” to force regime change. First, increase “our support to our people inside Cuba.” That was not exactly the wording, but its aim was to augment support to U.S.-backed groups inside Cuba. At the White House website you'll find his words. They increased support from \$7 to \$59 million. Those who receive funds are part of a foreign design to bring regime change. That means overthrowing our government and imposing another one.

But not just another one! They want to end the Revolution quickly, to do what? Establish a new regime in Cuba, based on two principles: restitution of property to former owners and complete privatization. The U.S. government will guarantee the expeditious restitution of property and establish a U.S., not a Cuban, Commission on Restitution of Property rights. And that's the end of Cuba. Restitution and privatization, controlled by a foreign government! The new plan lists even minor details on transportation, environment, agriculture, with advisors sent by Washington to supervise.

Of course, by privatizing education and health care, retired persons will no longer get pensions. When the Cuban Revolution ends, retirees will no longer be paid. Washington will organize them into an old people's corps and put to work as long as their health permits. Americans should read that. It's on the U.S. government website. We're quoting from it. The U.S.

has two experiences in remaking regimes, Afghanistan and Iraq. It will be difficult to implement such plans here. That's why in the institutional reforms section, their first priority is creating a new police force, trained and equipped by the U.S. and under the control and leadership of guess who?

And what would remain of Cuba? After property has been privatized and returned to its former owners, after older Cubans have died laboring in public works, without health care or education, the U.S. holds elections for the new authorities. After the Revolutionary regime is dismantled, the U.S. will substantially expand the Cuban budget to promote new political parties be based on current “dissident” groups in Cuba.

This shows the “dissidents” are instruments of a foreign government. Can we be accused of being harsh in dealing with them? Or have we been patient Jobians waiting for them to rethink? Cuba is the only country

facing such a plan. How would another country react if a big power dared to do that against them? Imposing the will of a foreign power over the legitimate wills of the people themselves. That's a democracy?

\*Columnist Saul Landau recently returned from a visit he made to Havana, Cuba. During his stay, he had the opportunity to interview Cuba's vice president and president of its National Assembly Ricardo Alarcon de Quesada. Saul Landau directs digital media at Cal Poly Pomona University in California. He is a fellow of the Institute for Policy Studies. His new book: *THE BUSINESS OF AMERICA: HOW CONSUMERS HAVE REPLACED CITIZENS AND HOW WE CAN REVERSE THE TREND*. Landau has made several films in Cuba, *FIDEL* and *THE UNCOMPROMISING REVOLUTION* are available through The Cinema Guild in New York City. This interview in three parts appeared in February 10, 17 & 25, 2005 in *Progreso Weekly*. ([www.progresoweekly.com](http://www.progresoweekly.com))

## Quebec Students Fight Back Against Liberal Cuts!

By Ivan Drury

In March 2004 the Liberal government in Quebec announced a massive \$103 Million cut to student bursaries as part of their overall assault on the rights of working and poor people in Quebec. One year later a mass general student strike has shut down almost every campus in the province as more than 150,000 students have gone on strike – many campuses in an unlimited strike action.

The Jean Charest Liberals came into power in 2003 with the promise of “reinventing the state” and proceeded to implement a \$15 Billion tax cut over five years. As with the disastrous neo-Liberal experiment in Ontario, BC, Alberta, Newfoundland and all around the world, the program of the Quebec Liberals had an immediate impact on the lives of working people in Quebec. Social housing spending was cut

by 60%, mandatory insurance premiums rose and attacks on workers’ labour and union rights opened up with sweeping legislative attacks on public sector workers in 2003.

These attacks on working people continued with the cuts to post-secondary education spending last year. On top of the conditions already being faced by students under the Liberal government, students in Quebec suddenly found themselves staring down the barrel of an average of twice the student debt load as before, more than \$20,000 after an undergraduate degree.

Based on the historic militancy of both the Quebecois sovereignty movement and the traditional leadership of young people in Quebec, students at Francophone colleges and universities swiftly took the front line position in the fight against the provincial government’s cuts. Throughout 2004 students



Student protest in Montreal, March 12th, 2005.

unions throughout Quebec staged mass demonstrations, petition campaigns and actions demanding the reversal of the

cuts. When more than 150,000 students went on strike on March 16<sup>th</sup> and thousands rallied in downtown Montreal it was with more than 70% support of people in Quebec.

This support tips the balance of forces in the province more in favor of the student strikers and working people in general. It is with this support that the strike continues despite all adversity. On March 10<sup>th</sup> 45 students occupying a public hall as a “strike village” were arrested. Days later these same students then voted to extend the strike. After three weeks of striking, the working class Francophone schools that began the strike on February 24<sup>th</sup> voted to continue the fight until it is won.

The student strike in Quebec must serve as an example for students across Canada of how we must organize to defend our rights but also for all poor and working people under attack by neo-liberal governments. The links between the struggle of students in Quebec and students and all working and poor people throughout Canada should be obvious, especially to people in BC, Ontario and anywhere else these capitalist methods of ‘balancing the budget’ have been used. As the uncompromising Quebec students strike continues, the eyes of people across the country will be on the strikers whose brave fight has come to represent the fight of all working and poor people in Quebec against the Charest Liberal government and promises to go further. Support the Student Strike in Quebec:

Demand the restoration of all bursaries and education funding now!

## Democratic Rights and Students Rights: The Fightback at York University

### An Interview with Liisa Schofield of Grassroots Anti-Imperialist Network (GRAIN) and the Toronto June 30th Organizing Committee

By Shannon Bundock

On March 15<sup>th</sup> 2005, *Fire This Time* spoke with Liisa Schofield, an anti-war activist at York University in Toronto. Liisa is a founding member of the Toronto June 30<sup>th</sup> Organizing Committee. She is also a founding member of Grassroots Anti-Imperialist Network (GRAIN), an anti-war, anti-occupation organization on York campus.

This spring we spoke to Liisa about the attacks that anti-war organizers are coming under at York by the university administration. Specifically, on the brutal police repression on January 20<sup>th</sup> at an anti-war protest which was organized by GRAIN. Liisa also spoke about the role of students in the anti-war movement and the fight that students are leading at York for their democratic rights to mobilize.

**FTT:** York has a long history of political activity. In March 2003 a student strike was effectively organized against the war in Iraq. On January 20<sup>th</sup> of this year, another action took place at York, which garnered a lot of media attention. Why did students decide to mobilize on January 20<sup>th</sup> at York?

**Liisa:** January 20<sup>th</sup> was the day of Bush’s inauguration as President and as Grassroots Anti-Imperialist Network (GRAIN) we decided to

organize. So in the lead up to January 20<sup>th</sup> we were getting all the call outs from the US and international community. We decided to have a “No to Empire” speak-out in the main hall at York. In the lead up we spent a lot of time researching corporations on York’s campus that are pretty explicitly linked to global systems of empire. Like, Lockheed Martin and NewMont Mining that invest very specific research in different programs. They act as private donors, so again, the privatization of the campus.

And then, as well, NATO itself has invested a great deal in one of the departments at York, it’s called the Department of Peace and Security Studies.

So essentially we wanted, on the 20<sup>th</sup>, to have an International Day targeting the US and Bush, but we also wanted to make the links to Canada’s role and also to York. Exposing how York accepts these corporations on campus and even in actual fact looks to bring those kinds of businesses to campus.

**FTT:** How did the administration respond to this protest?

**Liisa:** The context is that we haven’t been able to use Vari Hall in a very long time because there has been a ban on using that space. The administration decided that no groups are allowed to book it or use



Liisa Schofield speaking at Mobilization Against War and Occupation rally in Vancouver, January 20th 2005.

Continued on page 25



# The Left and Canadian Nationalism

By Brennan Luchsinger

On November 30<sup>th</sup> 2004 demonstrations against George W. Bush's visit to Canada took place across Canada. The demands of the different actions ranged predominately from "Bush not Welcome in Canada", to "No to Star Wars Missile Defense" as well as with lesser emphasis on anti-war and anti-occupation slogans. Basically, while Bush as an "American" president and a personality was over emphasized, the issue of war and occupation was down played. The Canadian ruling class and nationalist leftists killed the opportunity what could have been an all-Canada coast-to-coast anti-war, anti-occupation demonstration to a reactionary anti-Americanism. This was done with the hope of enforcing Canadian nationalism. The majority of slogans and the dominant political trend not only lacked strategic focus for the anti-war movement, but also unmistakably promoted Canadian nationalism within the movement. What then, was the impact of these demonstrations and demands on working people in Canada?

Realistically, Bush's visit to Canada was not an infringement on Canadian sovereignty or the interests of the ruling class, but its purpose was to decide on what level Canada and the US can cooperate in their imperialist affairs. When the two leaders met to discuss the interests of the ruling elite it did not put working people in Canada in a position to defend their imperialist leader, nor their imperialist nation. Rather, it opened the opportunity to organize against imperialism in general, and against Canadian and US imperialism in



Protest against George W Bush in Ottawa, November 30th 2004.

particular.

## Canadian Nationalism: Imperialist attacks at home and abroad

The defense of Canadian sovereignty, the false portrait and promotion of Canada as a peacekeeping nation, the opposition to Canadian involvement in a missile defense program, all these factors have one thing in common; they deny the true nature of the Canadian imperialist state. Canada is itself an advanced imperialist country suffering from an economic crisis, and is subsequently expanding its boundaries and military influence across the world.

In October 2001 the Canadian government began its expansion into Afghanistan and the Middle East. In late February of 2004 Canadian forces participated in a coup in Haiti, and took a lead in the subsequent occupation. Meanwhile, at home in Canada the government has been engaged in a constant series of attacks on poor, working and oppressed people. Immigration laws have been tightened, funding to women's centers cut, labour standards have been lowered across the whole country, and the Canadian government continues to attack the most vulnerable layers

at home. These actions of the Canadian government are proof of the reactionary basis of ideas of protecting "Canadian sovereignty". Oppressed people cannot defend the sovereignty of a state which does not represent them.

The demand for sovereignty poses a fundamental question in Canada: The right of Indigenous nations to self-determination. Canada is a colonial nation founded on the genocide of Indigenous people, and we must recognize these oppressed nationalities within Canada, and demand their right to self-determination. For over 500 years Indigenous people have experienced the most brutal forms of suppression under the racist aims of colonial Canada. The extermination of an entire people, the destruction of entire cultures, and the racist dominance established over Indigenous people in Canada has made the question of self-determination of Indigenous people a foundation of any social change in Canada.

The other question of sovereignty in Canada is the suppression of self-determination for Quebec. The federal government of Canada has long denied the demands of the Quebecois for national self-determination, a campaign of oppression most brutally displayed in the deployment of the Canadian military and the war measures act put down of the militant Quebec sovereignty movement in 1970. Quebec nationalism has a different character than Canadian nationalism as it is rooted in the legitimate desire of the Quebecois for an independent national government in order to solve the problems of development and political and cultural suppression that they have suffered under the majority Anglophone Canadian ruling class for centuries.

In order to make gains that put Indigenous people, Quebecois and all oppressed people in a better position, we cannot hide behind the reactionary illusion that the ruling class enforces, that Canada is a progressive peace keeping nation whose sovereignty is threatened by US political and economical domination. On the contrary, the anti-war movement must face the Canadian government and ruling class for what it is: the imperialist enemy of working and oppressed people within Canada and all around the world.

## Missile Defense and the Reality of Imperialist War and Occupation

A major strategic focus of the left in Canada has been the question of on

what level the Canadian state will participate in the Ballistic Missile Defence program. However, the Canadian government's stance on the militarization of space is an abstract distraction from the realities of Canadian imperialism.

Canada is a full partner of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD). It has active and aggressive military forces around the globe including in Afghanistan, Haiti and Persian Gulf, and is consistently expanding its military presence all over the world. What good is a demand to disarm a future weapons program when the Canadian government is already participating in war and occupation across the world? Not only does this demand focus our energies on lobbying a reactionary state into granting concessions that do not improve the position of working and oppressed people to struggle for our rights against imperialism, it eases pressure on the Canadian ruling class from the anti-war movement and makes it easier for them to advance their position against oppressed people through the wars and occupations they are already involved in.

## The Ruling Class of the US and Canada and Working People: Us Vs Them

While the focus of Canadian Sovereignty has protected the ruling class image of Canada's role as a "peacekeeper", it has had other devastating results for the anti-war movement and oppressed people. The divisions that are forced on us by the ruling class in Canada and the US are imposed through this sense of bourgeois nationalism. Bourgeois nationalism teaches us an artificial and backwards loyalty to the ruling class in the imperialist country rather than loyalty to those who we working and oppressed people in imperialist countries share class interests with, regardless of flag, country, nationality, religion or race. If we are to build an effective anti-war, anti-occupation, anti-imperialist movement we must directly oppose this attack by the ruling class, and deny them the ability to promote bourgeois nationalism within our movement in favor of building a movement on a base of genuine internationalism through international solidarity.

## Leaders of the Ruling Class

The anti-Bush demonstrations on November 30<sup>th</sup> also betrayed a tragic misunderstanding of the positions of Presidents and Prime Ministers in bourgeois-capitalist countries like the US and Canada. This misunderstanding is the base of the Canadian nationalist current that has come up in the anti-war movement in Canada. We must understand that the leaders of imperialist nations are nothing more than the representatives of their own ruling class. As Bush is responsible to the ruling elite in the US, Paul Martin is currently responsible to the ruling elite in Canada.

They both have the responsibility of pushing ruling class interests forward and do so by driving back the interests of oppressed people. As leaders of imperialist nations, Bush and Martin alone are not the source of oppression. They are the executive managers of ruling class affairs, including maintaining the ruling class and their corporations as well as suppressing the working and poor class. If either leader fell, the ruling class and capitalist system would remain intact, and swiftly maneuver to gain a new representative. The

## Fightback at York University

From page 24

it ever. If you want to have a protest on campus you have to request to have a protest and then it goes through their elaborate security system and most likely they turn you down.

So we decided that we weren't asking, we were just taking the space. So we gathered in Vari Hall and inevitably there was a crowd watching because people know that you are not supposed to be using that space.

So what we have found out now is that the administration had hired police for that day to come on campus. They'd given them a room, which they had cleared the furniture out of. There were about six police officers from 31 Division. 31 Division is a really well-known bad division in Toronto.

York Security had been monitoring the situation and had asked people to leave and people had refused to leave and then they just brought the police in.

Within two minutes, as you can see on the security tapes, the police stomped on people. You can see people being beat up by batons and people getting arrested. Three people got arrested in Vari Hall and were dragged through all these hallways into this room that had been prepared by the administration.

So people followed and were banging on the door. At that point police opened the door and dragged two more people in. At that point people were handcuffed and put into different corners of the room. That was when Nick was beaten up

in front of everyone. Police kicked him and punched his face and he ended up with really severe injuries. He was taken from custody to the hospital because his injuries were so bad and that was done in clear view of other people.

All of them are now facing charges of 'Assault Police' and one person is being charged with attempting to disarm a police officer, which is just ludicrous.

So now we have gone to all the security meetings with the administration since that time and demanded disclosure to a lot of the information. What has come out in those proceedings is that police were hired, it was premeditated, and they'd gotten permission from the administration days beforehand. They had targeted this specific group of students, targeted GRAIN as a rabble-raising group. They said that these students are known activists and as a result are not even really students. They claimed that we would be destructive and violent and just essentially assassinated our character without ever knowing exactly who we are.

**FTT: It seems that the York Administration has taken a very aggressive stance against political protest on campus. What actions have they taken and why?**

**Liisa:** Well, there has definitely been a trend to try to target and shut down dissent on campus. It has gone through a couple different stages. The changed rules on campus, and the ability to book spaces. You can barely set up tables anywhere anymore. You have to have excessive security for every event. It's making the conditions such that you can't even hold an

event, and if you do, then at any point they can call it off.

They are also going through a process of targeting those who don't play by the rules.

Last year, on March 15<sup>th</sup> Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights (SPHR) had a big theatrical presentation in the middle of Vari Hall. It ended up being a huge demonstration because there was a big Zionist counter-demonstration. That was where Dan [Freeman-Maloy] was targeted for having spoken on a megaphone. He had a three-year suspension, defacto expulsion, for speaking on a megaphone. So when that happens it is obviously the administration's high point of attack.

I think that they are doing this because dissent on campus is bad for business. The administration is attempting to attract a growing number of private donors, like the corporations I talked about before. A progressive campus doesn't fit the profile of the kind of place that banks, oil companies, and business firms would want to invest. I think it is also a process of making academic spaces inaccessible to anyone but well-off students studying business or science.

**FTT: What happened in the days following January 20<sup>th</sup>?**

**Liisa:** I've never really seen, in the four years I've been at York such a huge base of activity happening. Within 24 hours there were thousands of people gathering in Vari Hall. They were speaking out openly about the repression of the five students and were not scared

Continued on page 26

Continued on page 27

# War Resisters Are Welcome Here!

By Alison Bodine

In October 2004 Mobilization Against War and Occupation formed a War Resisters Defense Campaign with the explicit demand that Canada grant refugee status to American War Resisters who seek it. This campaign was launched in recognition of the fact that US soldiers who refuse to be complicit in the ongoing occupation of Iraq are an important part of the fight against Canadian imperialism and the struggle of oppressed people worldwide. MAWO launched the campaign with a very active and visible approach in supporting War Resisters. Working mainly through a petition and the creation of a template resolution for passing at unions and student unions, the campaign approaches defense work broadly and with an understanding of what role War Resisters play in the antiwar movement in Canada and globally.

## War Resisters Defense Campaign

Since Mobilization Against War and Occupation's (MAWO) War Resisters defense campaign began, the US occupation of Iraq has only found itself in a quagmire that thickens everyday. The attacks on troops and other obvious signs that the US is not welcome in Iraq, like protests and strikes, have continued and intensified. More than 1,500 soldiers have been killed since the initial invasion. There are an estimated 200,000 active resistance fighters in Iraq, outnumbering the 160,000 coalition forces. The morale of US troops, at levels lower than during the Vietnam War due to what they are being ordered to do in order to maintain the occupation, can only continue to spiral down from here. It remains important that we, as an antiwar movement, defend their rights. As a war cannot be fought without an army, soldiers have the power to end the occupation.

In January of 2005 Darrell Anderson crossed the border into Canada, joining Jeremy Hinzman, Brandon Hughey and David Sanders in his demand for refugee status in Canada. Darrell served in Iraq, but while in the US for Christmas he made the decision to leave the military and come to Canada. He reasons for joining the military fall along the same lines as thousands of other young recruits who find themselves with little other option for a viable future. He needed money for post-secondary education, but after serving in Iraq and receiving a Purple Heart, Darrell could never go back. Like so many other troops he is haunted by the frequent killing of civilians and the effects that the brutal occupation has on the Iraqi people. He now lives in Toronto, waiting for the decision from Jeremy's case to come through.

When the Canadian government chose to intervene in the December refugee hearing of Jeremy Hinzman,



US war resister Jeremy Hinzman.

they opened a window for Canadian people to call on the government to show its true face. Through the

National campaign and specifically MAWO's in Vancouver, people in Canada have done just that. Canada as an imperialist and colonizing country only exposes itself further by calling on the Immigration and Refugee Board to refuse to accept the illegality of the war on Iraq as part of Jeremy's defense case. It is the denial of a soldier's basic rights established during the Nuremberg Trials, to refuse illegal orders, and denial of the fact that sending soldiers to jail for refusing to be complicit in the occupation, is persecution, not just prosecution.

## Soldiers Basic Rights

This suppression of a soldier's basic right to refuse to fight arises out of a whole slew of other attacks. Stop-loss policies that extend tours of duty indefinitely, cuts to Veterans support systems and more aggressive recruitment tactics have all infringed on the rights of young, working and poor people. Thus, defense of War Resisters in Canada, as soldiers exercising their democratic rights, is the defense of all people oppressed under imperialism.

It is stories like Darrell Anderson's and the many more who will follow him across the border that make MAWO's campaign education work so important to antiwar work. It is the discussions during forums and conversations while petitioning that make it so apparent that the Canadian people are in full support of American War Resisters in Canada. After delivering the first round of 1,200 signatures to Toronto in December, efforts of the campaign have collected another 900 signatures. Initiatives have continued to expand through student groups at SFU, UBC, and Capilano College, where overwhelming response to the petition and demands of War Resisters has shown the tangible ties that exist between students under attack on both sides of the border. Students and young people are the main body for military recruitment in the US and are a big part of the forces in Iraq, it is clear that Canadian youth support the rights of their peers to refuse to fight.

## Join MAWO Campaign

Mobilization Against War and Occupation is continuing to defend American War Resisters in Canada, and to prepare Canadians to react to the precedent setting decision that is going to be made in their name. Our work will continue through unions, student groups and on the streets of Vancouver, popularizing the democratic right of soldiers not to fight and highlighting Canadian Imperialism as we educate. To get involved or for more information e-mail warresister@mawovancouver.org, or visit www.jeremyhinzman.net, www.brandonhughey.org.

## Fightback at York University

From page 25

to gather in that space. People were talking to each other and asking, "Well what was GRAIN talking about? What corporations exist here?" Also people were talking about the violence by the cops.

We set up these video screens with the footage that we had shot on January 20<sup>th</sup>. We repeated it over and over and people were just booing the screen. When security tried to come into the hall they were chased out. So it was a huge reclaiming of that space. That happened over and over again over the few weeks following that. All of a sudden there was a huge outpouring of support for students.

**FTT: Just recently you were put before a Disciplinary Tribunal for speaking at a demonstration on campus. The charges were later dropped. Can you tell us about this and what you think of the result?**

**Liisa:** Last fall we had a vigil outside, in response to the massacres taking place in Gaza in October. It was small and simple, but for that I got a disciplinary letter. I tried to appeal it, but when they give you a disciplinary letter there is no process of appeal. You can't even question whether it is right or not.

Then, in December, when [US President] Bush was coming to Ottawa, we had a free speech rally in Vari Hall organized by CUPE 3903. I spoke on a megaphone about Bush coming to Ottawa, that it was important that students go and that we were selling tickets. It was at the most two minutes on the megaphone.

Sure enough, in January a letter dated January 18<sup>th</sup> was express posted to my house to arrive there on the morning of January 20<sup>th</sup>. It was this scare tactic, like, "This is your last warning, if you participate today, in the action that is happening, then you are going to have big trouble."

So they put me under this disciplinary tribunal. But, in the context of what happened on January 20<sup>th</sup>, people were outraged and there was a huge outpouring of demonstrations every other day after January 20<sup>th</sup>.

My hearing was about a week and a half after January 20<sup>th</sup>. There was a



Liisa Schofield speaking at MAWO forum, January 22nd 2005.

huge build up and it was announced publicly that people should come to the hearing. We went to it and tried to make it a public hearing and they said, "No it can't be public." We just kept demanding that it be public. We got a few people inside and there was crowd outside banging on the door the whole time. The three people from the panel were obviously pretty shaken up and didn't really know what to do.

We also had proof that the whole process was flawed and that the actual rules were wrong. They didn't know what to do that day and were pretty intimidated and called off the disciplinary hearing and said they'd rebook it on a different day.

I got a letter about a week later

reasons. Students are kind of a rapidly radicalizing segment of society. At York, especially doing anti-war stuff in 2003, it was the largest base of activity in the anti-war movement. We had a student strike and it went through successfully.

I also think that in reality students are under attack by the different levels of government throughout Canada. In Ontario, the Conservative government made cutbacks to education, and then the new Liberal government promised to put more money to education, which they didn't do. They just froze tuition for one year and now it is going up again. So I think that we are seeing our education becoming privatized, sold-off. The accessibility and right to education, to go to college, or university is becoming a huge issue.

I also think that students are not alone and can take on the government and their neo-liberal policies because these policies are obviously wide spread. I think that when students unite with issues of Healthcare, First Nations Communities, and Poverty issues it becomes a much stronger united base.

**FTT: Finally, can you update us on what is happening with the students that were arrested on January 20<sup>th</sup> at York and what you see in the future of political protest on campus?**

**Liisa:** In terms of people's charges, there are seven charged at this point. There were five initially and then two more. Those charges are mostly 'Assault Police' and there are other ones like 'escape police custody'. All these really trumped-up charges which are totally ridiculous. It may mean that we are allowed to use Vari Hall again because there is huge support for that. I think the administration is feeling really threatened right now.

You never want to think in the way that, "Oh there was a bad moment, but this glorious thing came out of it." But it is true. It took a huge smack on the head for people to wake up and see what was going on around them. Now there is a huge base of activity. In that context the free speech movement, and GRAIN are continuing.

**Thank you Liisa.**

**Liisa:** I think it is important for students to organize for several



# Self-Determination is the Solution

From page 2

the Innu children. The study found that only one in three Innu children in Labrador ever attends school, and most never make it to high school. Fifteen-year-olds who were tested were an average of five years behind on their math and reading levels. Of these statistics, the most damning is the fact that since 1993, only three of the hundreds of students studied have actually graduated from high school.

The report also found many other problems facing young people in Natuashish. Thirty-five percent of children studied suffer from fetal alcohol syndrome. A separate report found that close to three-quarters of youth showed high levels of distress and more than 40 percent had contemplated or attempted suicide. These problems coupled with the amount of media attention that alcoholism and gas huffing has received paint a very grim picture for young Innu.

## Colonial History

*"The situation is there since a long time and it's very difficult to cure, and it's a problem of alcoholism and drugs. It's a human tragedy and we're doing our best to help them."* - Jean Chretien, November 2000

The truth is that alcoholism and drug abuse, just like poverty, are merely limbs of the struggle of the Innu.

notions about Indigenous people in this country.

The traditional territory of the Innu, called 'Nitassinan,' encompasses much of what is now Labrador and Eastern Quebec. The Innu, a nomadic people, have lived there for over 6,000 years. Like many other Indigenous nations who were kicked out of their traditional territory and moved onto small reservations, the Innu faced expansion of industrial and military bases on to their territory. While logging, mining and hydroelectric projects have moved in to steal resources from the Innu, low-flying bomber jets training at nearby NATO bases scared all of the wild game away and devastated traditional hunting. In an effort to further consolidate Innu land, the government of Canada tried to make their land-grab easier by first removing the Indigenous people who had a claim to Nitassinan. The Innu were eventually forced to relocate to an island on Davis Inlet in 1967, where the government of Canada promised them decent housing, plumbing, and a decent standard of living.

Not only were the Innu suddenly cut off from their traditional territory and way of life, but living conditions rapidly deteriorated when the government of Canada abandoned its promises of helping them. Living in cramped living spaces without



Innu Reserve at Davis Inlet.

Natuashish. This was part of a plan that was hatched in the late 1990's after the horrific conditions that the Innu were subjected to were exposed to the world when the media focussed on the prevalence of gas-huffing and suicides among Innu children. Based on the report outlining the problems facing Innu youth since they have been moved to the new settlement, it is only a band-aid solution to the problem.

Is it any wonder why a third of the population does not attend school at all? And of those who do actually attend, why 17% of them less than 20% of the time? Most teachers are non-Innu, and only 2% are certified to teach English as Second language. For most Innu children, English is a foreign language, and so this education is taught with a colonial language and colonial curriculum.

Throughout the establishment of Canada, one of the most vital and brutal tactics the settler state

used has been against Indigenous children. Whether it was when young Indigenous children were kidnapped from their homes and shipped off to residential schools to learn colonialist values, to have their language beaten out of them every time they used it, or losing their dignity from sexual abuse at the hands of their teachers. Or whether it was the legislation that allowed school officials to forcibly sterilize Indigenous girls in Alberta and BC in the 1920s and '30s. These were all part of a strategy of attacking future generations to destroy the culture, dignity and livelihood of Indigenous people whose values come into constant conflict with those of colonialist Canada.

## Self-determination is the Solution

Although the Innu are a devastating example of what Canadian colonialism has brought to Indigenous people, it is no exception. Throughout the country, young Indigenous people face much higher rates of poverty

than non-Indigenous people, worse levels of access to healthcare and worse standards of living. Looking at education alone, in 2001, the drop-out rate among Indigenous youth in their early 20's was 50%, and those who stayed in school had a far less chance of graduating from post-secondary education. Much like the troubles affecting Innu youth, these are symptoms of colonialism. In order to move forward as people and as nations, we need to recognize that our interests do not lie with the government of Canada or its education system. The interests of Indigenous nations lie with themselves and all other people who are under attack by the same government. Demanding self-determination for Indigenous nations is a fundamental step forward to solve the problems of poverty, alienation and desperation that have been brought against Indigenous people for centuries.



Innu youth huffing gas.

The root of these problems lies in the colonialism that they have suffered at the hands of the Government of Canada. But, it is much easier for ruling class politicians to redirect the blame away from Canada and place it on individual acts of alcoholism or drug abuse, playing in to racist

running water, reliable heating, or a sewage system; disease and alcoholism surfaced and spread throughout the community.

## Genocide Continues

In 2002, 680 residents moved from Davis Inlet to a new settlement called

## Canadian Nationalism

From page 25

way to bring effective change is through fighting their agenda and breaking through the barriers to the international unity of working and oppressed people, like bourgeois nationalism, that are created by imperialism.

## What Next

We must approach the question of sovereignty not from the perspective of the bourgeois Canadian state, but from the position of demanding national rights for oppressed nationalities *against* the Canadian state. Oppressed people cannot organize a movement based on a demand for Canadian sovereignty that denies the true nature of Canada as imperialist.

In this spiraling era of war and occupation where the attacks of imperialism are being sharpened, the left has the responsibility of responding to these attacks through a clear focus and demands that clearly represent the interests of oppressed people, and the struggle for freedom and humanity. Following the interests of the Canadian ruling class, the Canadian



Protest against George W Bush in Ottawa, November 30th 2004.

government is staging oppressive attacks against Indigenous nations, Quebec, communities of immigrants and refugees, women, people of colour, and youth within Canada. At the same time they are carrying out these same attacks at a higher scale against people with the same interests and positions in Afghanistan, Haiti, Iraq and countless other places in different ways around the world. We must understand that the reactionary interests of the Canadian ruling class oppose the justice, dignity and freedom that we are fighting for. In

order to build an effective anti-war movement we must counter all these attacks, not with the rubber sword of bourgeois nationalism, but with a united worldwide movement of thundering internationalism, solidarity and anti-imperialism.

**FOR A UNITED MOVEMENT AGAINST IMPERIALIST WAR AND OCCUPATION!**

**SELF-DETERMINATION FOR ALL OPPRESSED NATIONS!**

**NO TO REACTIONARY CANADIAN NATIONALISM!**



## Sutikalh Update

March 10, 2005

To all supporters;

This is a notice to inform you that our anniversary for this year is on April 30th and May 1st, at Sutikalh.

On April 30th, 2005 is a drop in day for all to come and enjoy the fresh air. On May 1st, 2005 is a planned day with a ceremony at 10:00 am, and at noon will be lunch followed by speeches of attending elders, chiefs, and open to supporters who would like to share with us, and Drumming and singing.

So mark these dates on your calendar and we will see you there.

For further information you can email me or contact Ramona Joe, 604-894-2462; Chief Gary John, 580-259-8227; Gina, 250-256-7523, or myself at 604-894-2400. Any donation is greatly appreciated.

Thank you,

Rosalin Sam,

Lil'watool of the St'at'imc territory

# Defending Students' Rights to Organize!

## Langara 2 Establish an Important Victory Against Injustice

By Nicole Burton

On Monday, February 22<sup>nd</sup> the Executive Board of the Langara Students' Union (LSU) passed a motion to rescind the ban they had previously placed against Langara students Nicole Burton and Kira Daley. The ban had prevented the two from entering their Student Union Building. This great turning point in the ongoing struggle of the 'Langara 2' has come nearly four months after the LSU Executive's decision to ban the two student activists. The original ban was carried out with a baseless cover-up motion stating protection of "the general health and safety of students, executives, and staff of the Union" as the justification for the ban. At the same time the LSU Executive voted, without any credible justification whatsoever, to dissolve the highly active Peace and Social Issues Committee and ban the anti-war coalition Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) from organizing in the Student Union Building. (For more information read the interview with the Langara 2 in Fire This Time Issue #20-21)

The lifting of the ban was the direct result of a broad and consistent defense campaign run by the Langara 2 and their supporters both on and off-campus. With the formation of the Langara 2 Defense Committee (L2DC), a massive letter-writing campaign began. Groups and individuals across Canada sent over 100 letters in response to the LSU's decision to ban the Langara 2. Included in this list of supporters were other Students' Unions; a wide spectrum of anti-war, student, women, and social justice activists; and most notably, Langara students themselves. By the end of January 2005, over 500 Langara students had signed the on-campus petition demanding that the ban against Nicole and Kira be lifted immediately, and that their complaint of harassment against a staff member of the LSU, Richard Bell, be investigated.

Because of the mass scale organizing



The Langara 2: Nicole Burton and Kira Daley.

done at Langara the lifting of the ban comes as a victory for the democratic rights of all oppressed people, but first and foremost for Langara students. This is because the Langara 2 defense campaign was carried out in response to attacks on students at Langara, and also because while Nicole, Kira, and other student anti-war activists in the Peace and Social Issues Committee were intimidated and harassed, it was students at Langara who fought alongside them to have this dangerous precedent eliminated.

The restoration of Nicole and Kira's democratic right as students to access their Student Union Building is an important advancement for students' rights in the battle at Langara. Also, it is an overall advancement for students as oppressed people as part of the ongoing national and

international struggle of students fighting for their rights.

### The Best Defense is Offence (Organized Action)

In January the return to school for the spring semester meant an increase in activity around the Langara 2 Defense Campaign. More than before, the case of the Langara 2 was an issue all over campus, from the cafeteria to the classrooms.

Students formed an on-campus defense committee called "the Langara 2 Defense Committee" and organized daily petitioning and discussions in the cafeteria as well as announcements to inform students in the classes of supportive Langara instructors.

At the same time, a new group formed called, "Langara Students United Against War and Occupation"

which took on the task of reviving anti-war work on campus that had been essentially shut down with

the dissolution of the LSU's Peace and Social Issues Committee. Both Langara groups challenged the legitimacy of the LSU Executive's banning of the Langara 2 through daily political organizing work with Langara students. Through this work Kira and Nicole showed *through action* that they are committed to defending, strengthening, and furthering the rights of Langara students. This action in particular challenged and exposed the notion that the Executive Board had banned the Langara 2 from the Student Union Building in the interests of Langara students.

### Sabotage, Slander... and the Lifting of the Ban

While external grassroots organizing was building pressure upon the LSU, notice was given of LSU Executive Committee elections in the end of January. Nicole and Kira completed the nominations process and became candidates for the positions of Academic Affairs Coordinator and University Transfer Course Union Representative, respectively. Together, they joined forces with Sangdo Kim, a Langara international student and longtime Students' Union organizer in South Korea to launch a major elections campaign

Continued on page 35

# Rock For Choice, Rock For Change

## An Interview With Meegan Maultsaid

By Kasia Machelak

Meegan Maultsaid is a local musician and the founder of the Rock for Choice Vancouver Chapter (R4C). This annual event connects music, politics, and people through eleven days of concerts and a daylong conference. As a long time activist, fighting for women's rights to choice and connecting their struggle with struggles that are going on internationally, Fire This Time was fortunate to have the opportunity to interview Meegan about her perspective on this important event.

**FTT:** First of all I want to congratulate you and the Rock for Choice organizing collective on the success of the 11<sup>th</sup> annual Vancouver R4C and your continued fight for women's right to choice. As this is an international event, which connects culture, art, and resistance, what's your idea behind Rock for Choice and why did you feel the need to bring this important struggle to Vancouver?

**Meegan:** The Vancouver chapter of Rock 4 Choice hosts the only annual event, though in the US there are still sporadic shows, which are usually pretty huge and high profile. I started the event because I felt the pro-choice movement in Vancouver



Meegan Maultsaid.

could use some support from the music community. Women's rights around reproductive freedoms are never safe as far as I'm concerned. In the recent federal election, lots of anti-choice MP's were elected,

Continued on page 32

# Celebrate March 8: International Women's Day

By Nasim Sedaghat & Nicole Burton

Throughout this century women all over the world have won many rights by sacrificing their lives. International Women's Day (IWD) is a recognition of these sacrifices and an opportunity to celebrate women's achievements. IWD is the story of women as the creators of wealth and life. International Women's Day is rooted in centuries of women's struggles to participate in society on an equal basis with men.

On March 8<sup>th</sup> 1857 women working in clothing and textile factories in New York City, staged a protest.

They were fighting against inhumane working conditions, low wages, and for a shorter work week. In August 1907 the idea of an annual demonstration in support of working women and women's rights was first proposed by Clara Zetkin at a caucus of socialist women prior to the Second International annual meeting in Germany. On March 8<sup>th</sup> 1908 15,000 women marched through New York City demanding shorter work hours, better pay, voting rights and an end to child labour. In 1910 the proposal by Clara Zetkin, at the International Socialist Congress in Copenhagen, designated March 8<sup>th</sup> as the annual International Women's Day. This was decided in recognition of the demonstration by New York needle

trades workers in 1908. It was on March 19<sup>th</sup> 1911 that Alexandra Kollontai helped organize the first International Women's Day in Germany and Europe. Meetings and demonstrations were also held in several other European countries. March 8<sup>th</sup> 1917 Russian women became the vanguard of changing the history of human kind by marching on Petrograd demanding bread and peace. With the half a million Russian workers already on strike, the demonstration by the women forced the resignation of Czar Nicholas II and sparked the Russian Revolution. On March 8<sup>th</sup> 1968 Chicago women revived the celebration of International

Continued on page 34



# The Governments of US/UK/Israel are the Axis of Evil! Canada Out of Haiti!

## Vancouver Rally and March Protesting War and Occupation

By Nicole Burton

On Saturday, February 26<sup>th</sup> hundreds of people rallied in downtown Vancouver to declare, "The Governments of US/UK/Israel are the AXIS of EVIL!" Organized by Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO), the event was held to protest the ongoing occupations of Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, Haiti, and Indigenous Nations in Canada. The demonstration also acknowledged the weekend of February 26<sup>th</sup> as the 1<sup>st</sup> year anniversary of the invasion of Haiti, led by Canada, the United States, and France in February of 2004. Through a diverse program of speakers, performances and mobilizing in the streets, the demonstration was a united opposition to world imperialism -- from Iraq, to Haiti, to Palestine.

The program opened with Dustin Johnson of the Tsimshian nation, a UBC student and member of the Indigenous Students Society at UBC. He spoke of the imperial and colonial conquests of North America, his own tribe, and the need to build an international anti-occupation movement that continues to demand self-determination for Indigenous

nations in Canada. Demonstrators then welcomed Roger Annis to the stage as an organizer with Haiti Solidarity BC (HSBC). This new group, which organizes against US and Canadian intervention in Haiti, staged a picket earlier in the day to recognize the first anniversary of the invasion of Haiti. Many activists attended the picket and then joined the MAWO demonstration, for a full day of protest against war and occupation. In speaking, Roger connected the defense of Haiti as an occupied nation to the global solidarity work for Iraq, Afghanistan, and Palestine.

The next speaker was Junie Desil, a member of Vancouver Status of Women and Haitian-Canadian activist who has taken a strong stance against the occupation of Haiti. Junie was followed by Asif Ali Shah, who spoke powerfully against the occupations of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Palestine, as an organizer from MAWO, a recent immigrant to Canada, and a fighter for social justice who has lived under the conditions of occupation.

Led by banners, signs and the chanting of hundreds the rally marched into the streets of downtown Vancouver chanting, "US/UK



Mobilization Against War and Occupation march, February 26th 2005.

OUT!" The march stopped outside of the US Consulate, where Kasia Machelak, a MAWO organizer and co-ordinator of Kwantlen Students Against War and Occupation (KSAWO) declared that, "One year after the brutal invasion of Haiti, after the deaths of thousands and over 100,000 killed in Iraq, we

echo and support the demands of those under occupation. We demand self-determination NOW! US OUT NOW!!"

Marchers continued to chant as they reconvened at the Vancouver Art Gallery for a special live performance by Vancouver-famous hip-hop artist Ndidi Casade, who gave the demonstration an added pulse with beats and rhymes against war and injustice.

The stage was then taken by Sophie Ziner, Women's Representative to the North Island College Students' Union and anti-war organizer in the Comox Valley on Vancouver Island. As a pro-Palestinian activist and Jewish woman, Sophie spoke of the criminal and racist occupation of Palestine by Israel. Linking this to Iraq, Afghanistan, Haiti, and Indigenous Nations in Canada, she explained how the anti-war movement must support the heroic resistance within these nations, and fight against war and occupation within imperialist countries themselves. The last speaker of the day was Nasim Sedaghat, a MAWO organizer and member of Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice. Nasim spoke as a longtime social justice fighter, a participant in the anti-imperialist Iranian revolution, and a refugee now living and organizing in Canada. Nasim asked the demonstration, "Who is the real 'Axis of Evil' in the world today?" She declared that those imperialist countries that strangle and destroy the lives of oppressed people commit the greatest acts of evil and terror in the world. Our incredible task, she said, is to build an anti-war movement that understands this and demands self-determination in solidarity with people under occupation. "United around the world, brothers and sisters, we will defeat this force that is the destruction of humanity, and we will win!"

## In Memory of Bob Everton, A Working Class Revolutionary Soldier (1952-2004)

By Rennie Amundsen\*

It is hard to express the admiration that many in the left held for Bob Everton, who passed away in mid-December. Bob was a revolutionary long-time political activist and community organizer. While attending the wake for Bob, held at the Wise Hall, I saw many of the long-term left some of whom I hadn't seen in years. The thoughts of the passed and memories of Bob filled me and I cried at the loss of a friend, comrade, and companero.

I first heard of Bob Everton when friends at Spartacus Books were feverously organizing to secure Bob's release from the Chilean stadium where he and thousands of others were being held following the US backed coup in Chile. The public pressure on the government of Canada worked and ten days after the coup Bob was released. Our first introduction was at a meeting held in the back of Spartacus Books. The meeting was held to organize a group to do solidarity work and support the resistance against the fascist coup of General Pinochet. When Bob got up to speak it was not about the horrors he had experienced, instead it was of the torture and murders of thousands of Chilean workers and students. He talked of the heroism of Chile's greatest singer Victor Jara. Jara stood in front of the crowd of prisoners in the stadium and led them in songs before being brutally beaten and shot. I remember this meeting some thirty years ago as if it was yesterday. Bob spoke optimistically and dynamically of the possibility of turning back the coup with international solidarity. Bob spoke with a sparkle of hope in his eyes showing us how from defeat and demoralization left groups and political parties were organizing the resistance within Chile. Our job here in Canada was to organize the democratic and revolutionary sections in support of the Chileans resisting the coup.

The Chile Solidarity Committee was born that day. We organized hard and fast



Bob Everton speaking at MAWO forum on the illegality of occupation, March 28th 2004.

with demonstration after demonstration. We held meetings with community groups, students, and unions. Bob was an excellent public speaker who loved talking to people about the power relationships in society; the role of US hegemony; and his extraordinary vision for the future of the world. We organized together for four years day in and day out. Bob was everywhere and talked to anyone and listened to them all as well. Over the years we had many disagreements as we were making posters or writing leaflets or organizing meeting after meeting. He always respected opposing opinion on political organizing.

It is impossible for me to write this without pointing out that Bob taught me one of the most important lessons of my life. Bob taught the politics of pluralism and working through the anger I had from

passed disputes with my former comrades. Bob's legacy lies in his way of dealing with disputes in the social movement. It was because of his life-long commitment to pluralist politics in the left that he was able to discuss issues with almost anyone in the left without falling into sectarian discourse. He never approached the struggle in a manner that blocked debate. He never let personal or political disputes get in the way of building a movement.

Bob continually pointed out how what we in the left have in common is more important to the struggle than fighting over our differences. Bob taught us by example to embrace our communalities while seeking to understand our differences. He was a rare visionary who saw the possibility of an alternate future.

Building social movements and

community struggles was at the heart of Bob's politics. His commitment was to struggle, solidarity, and social change. He did this work with an easygoing, friendly, and open style. Because of his optimism, humour, and enthusiasm and for his life-long commitment to the struggle I was proud to call him a friend and a comrade. Bob Everton was a true revolutionary and will be sorely missed.

For more on Bob Everton see <http://memorial.resist.ca>.

\*Rennie Amundsen is a long time social justice and anti-imperialist activist. He was a founding member of the Chile Solidarity Committee along with Bob Everton. Rennie is currently involved with Rebuilding the Left (RTL) and Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO).

# "We've Faced Four Years of Attacks... it's Time to Fight Back!"

## Anti-Poverty Committee Demonstrates Against Throne Speech at the BC Legislature

By Shannon Bundock

On February 15<sup>th</sup> 2005 inside the BC legislature, the provincial budget was tabled. The Liberal government attempted to present the budget as a positive reflection of their work over the past four years, with the largest-ever surplus, anticipated at \$2 billion. Understanding how the Liberals 'achieved' this surplus is not hard to figure out. Outside the legislature, on the steps to the front doors, over 150 poor and working people rallied against the attacks that the BC Liberals have carried out throughout their term. Joblessness, low wages, lack of access to employment assistance, skyrocketing tuition, and gutted social services are a testament to the human cost of this surplus. According to Seth Klein, of the Canadian Centre for Policy alternatives (CCPA), "BC has seen a significant redistribution of income from the poorest among us to the wealthiest. This budget fails to restore the deep and painful spending cuts of recent years. Spending outside health and education remains \$1.2 billion lower than in 2001/02."

The Anti-Poverty Committee of Vancouver organized the rally, which was called for February 15<sup>th</sup> 2005. It brought out three busloads of poor and working people from Vancouver to join with their brothers and sisters in Victoria.

The demonstration marched through the city of Victoria, stopping at various government offices and demanding that the BC Liberals

reverse the cuts they have made against poor and working people over the past four years. "Raise the Rates!" was chanted in response to the reductions in welfare and disability benefits. Speeches were made about the devastating impact of women's centre closures, the freeze on the construction of social housing, the poverty faced by indigenous communities and attacks on workers.

Many of the participants in the rally and march came from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, the poorest neighborhood in Canada, with alarming rates of homelessness, unemployment and poverty. The newly passed and enacted, "Safe Streets Act" specifically targets this community. The act criminalizes panhandling, 'squeegeeing' and even 'trespassing' in parking lots in an attempt to displace poor and homeless people within BC. One of the rally's main demands was against this act, with signs reading, "Scrap the Safe Streets Act!"

As the Liberals attacked, and continue to attack homeless and deeply impoverished sectors of society with one hand, they have been chipping away at the stability and standard of living of working people with the other hand. Over 20,000 jobs have been eliminated from the public sector and contracted out. As well, when first in office, the BC Liberals introduced a new \$6 an hour minimum wage for first-time workers. The impact of this has meant a lowering of the bar for all working people and a reduction in available, stable, and decent



Anti-Poverty Committee Demonstration against Throne Speech at the BC Legislature, February 15<sup>th</sup> 2005.

paying work. As unemployment steadily increases and inflation rises, the attacks of the last four years will not lessen. Instead they will become more and more severe. Internationally, the government of Canada is fighting these problems through the economic plundering of third-world countries. At home, both federally and provincially, poor and working people face a similar fate, of being exploited, attacked and robbed. Within BC nearly every community has faced attacks; from students, to women, to people of color, to indigenous communities. This opens

the space for building unity and coming together based on sharing a common interest and fighting a common enemy.

After marching through the streets the demonstration arrived at the Victoria legislature. The energy was high as demonstrators pushed through to the legislature steps. Final speeches were made and the mic was opened for participants to voice their demands.

As attacks increase, poor and working people have the opportunity to unite and fight against the forces that are assailing them both provincially

and internationally. Mobilizations, like the rally on February 15<sup>th</sup>, are a part of the process of building a movement in BC that can effectively fight against the BC Liberal's agenda. Along with education and dynamic action, poor and working people in this province can fight to go beyond the BC Liberals and their specific attacks. They must fight for an end to attacks by any level of government, on poor and working people both provincially and across Canada.

STOP ATTACKS AT HOME AND ABROAD!

## Stop Attacks on Hotel Workers! Vancouver Activists Picket Line in Defense of Workers Rights

By Noah Fine

Following an urgent appeal from the Metropolitan Hotel Workers Committee (MHWC) for solidarity across Canada and internationally, Fire This Time (FTT) and Youth Third-World Alliance (Y3WA) organized a picket at the Metropolitan Hotel in downtown Vancouver. This picket was to protest the firing of an organizer with the MHWC and a worker at the hotel, Emily Tang. This action on Sunday January 30<sup>th</sup> 2005 was timed alongside a picket in Toronto, with other actions throughout the US, and beyond.

At the beginning of September 2004 Emily spoke out against racist discrimination at the hotel at a film showing in Toronto. She was issued an order stating that if she continued to speak out against the hotel she would be fired. One month later she was suspended. Upon arrival back at work after a three month suspension, Emily was promptly fired.

As it is the duty of all progressive social movements to organize around workers rights Y3WA and FTT along with other progressive

individuals and groups gathered at Metropolitan Hotel in Vancouver. The delegation was briefed upon arrival by FTT coordinator Shannon Bundock who expressed the importance of defending free speech, and democratic and labor rights for all workers. She also explained the racist and discriminatory attacks on workers by the Metropolitan Hotel.

The protest was fired up by Shannon's critical speech and started chanting "Justice for Emily Tang!" "Defend Workers Rights!" and "Reinstate Emily Now!"

Fire This Time had also written a letter addressed to both the hotels owner Henry Wu and the manager of public relations at the Vancouver branch Judy Ahola. However, this letter could not be handed directly to Wu or Ahola because the management at the hotel had been advised to lock the doors to prevent unwelcome entry. This was more specifically to block our protest demanding that the hotel practice workers rights.

For more information on the Metropolitan Hotel Workers Committee visit: [www.metropolitanhotelsworkers.org](http://www.metropolitanhotelsworkers.org).

**PIVOT** Advancing the interests and improving the lives of marginalized persons through law reform, legal education, and strategic legal action.

## No to Police Harassment, Brutality, and Torture!

### Pivot Legal Society's Fifty Affidavit Complaints

By Ivan Drury

The Pivot Legal Society has been active in advocating for the legal and democratic rights of poor and oppressed people in the Downtown Eastside since forming in the fall of 2000. In the last issue of Fire This Time (FTT) we introduced a new feature in our paper, the Pivot Box, to recognize, support, and popularize the work that Pivot is doing on a consistent and ongoing basis. This month Fire This Time looks at Pivot's first major project, their affidavit campaign, as it comes to a hopeful conclusion, three years after beginning.

The fifty affidavits produced by interviewing and taking affidavit statements from people who live and work in the Downtown Eastside (DTES) present a horrifying picture of the harassment, brutality, and torture that poor and working people are subjected to by the

Vancouver Police Department (VPD).

The systemic brutality exposed in Pivot's report, "To Serve and Protect" and their subsequent mass police complaint has great implications for the rights of all poor and working people. Fire This Time supports Pivot in their call for an accessible, effective, and accountable police complaints process, and for an end to police harassment and brutality in the DTES and everywhere.

This short interview was conducted in the days leading up to the International Day Against Police Brutality (March 15<sup>th</sup>) with John Richardson, the Executive Director of the Pivot Legal Society.

**FTT: John can you tell us the background on the 50 complaints?**

**John:** We began taking affidavits from people in the DTES about three years ago. These affidavits were concerned with police

misconduct. We gathered the affidavits for about 9 months and in September 2002 we released our first report called, "To Serve and Protect" which documented the affidavits and analyzed them.

In February 2003 we presented that report to the Police Complaints Commissioner and in June we asked him to consider all the affidavits as a submission of complaints. In July he subsequently ordered an external investigation by the RCMP.

The RCMP investigated for a year and they finished their report in November 2004 and delivered it under seal to the police chief and the Police Complaints Commissioner. It's left to Police Chief Jamie Graham to read all the information the RCMP has come up with and write a summary report describing it and also handing out penalties to officers that have been found to have committed acts of misconduct.

Continued on page 33



# MAWO Protests George Bush's Re-Election

By Alison Bodine  
& Noah Fine

January 20<sup>th</sup> marked the day of Bush's inauguration into office for the next four years. This means four more years of war and occupation in this era of expanding imperialism, for not only the US, but all imperialist countries, including Canada. On this day Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) organized a rally and march with hundreds

of Vancouver's youth, students and people of the third-world who rallied under gray clouds against imperialism. Their demands were: "Bring the Troops Home Now!" "End the Occupation of Iraq!" "Self Determination for Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan, Haiti and Indigenous Nations in Canada!" Everyone contributed to the consistent, responsive, and dynamic presence of the anti-war rally. This showed their

Continued on page 32



The Korean Students Network Against War performing at MAWO rally against the inauguration of George W. Bush, January 20th 2005.

## The Music of Resistance:

### MAWO Fundraiser A Success!

By Tamara Hansen

The energy was high on Saturday March 5<sup>th</sup> when Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) had one of its monthly cultural nights and fundraisers at El Cocal on Commercial Drive. As people arrived the sounds of DJ Kid Knowledge; the smells of El Salvadorian cuisine; and MAWO's posters, banners and leaflets against the occupation of Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine Haiti, and Indigenous Nations in Canada greeted them.

when all of the performers joined together on stage at the end of the night for a final spontaneous and improvised performance.

Mobilization Against War and Occupation hosts monthly cultural nights and fundraisers not only to raise money but also to show the human and cultural aspect of our fight against war and occupation.

Because war and occupation brings the flow of people's daily lives to a halt and puts them in a situation where they are fighting for survival everyday it also brings the



The Obese Chief performing at MAWO fundraiser on March 5th, 2005.

The energetic MC Alison Bodine, an organizer with the Coalition Against the War on the People of Iraq and Internationally (CAWOPI) at UBC, opened the night by introducing the first band, a funky ensemble of drums, guitar, trumpet and turntables, "The Milky Way Travelers".

The next performer was Ramon Flores a Latin American guitarist and song writer. Following him, Oaklani a local hip-hop, jazz and folk artist performed a very powerful set with a guest. After this indigenous hip-hop artist Manik Iderful and his guests Curtis Clearsky and the Obese Chief heat up the stage and got the audience involved in chanting, 'MAWO! MAWO!'

Energy built through the performances as the night went on. This culminated

development of their culture to a standstill.

It is important for the anti-war movement to recognize the affects war and occupation have on people's culture and also recognize the importance of incorporating arts and culture into the fight against imperialism, war and occupation.

Mobilization Against War and Occupation's March 5<sup>th</sup> fundraiser was diverse in style; dynamic; and performers were representative of different oppressed people. This is an important and reflects the work MAWO does in trying to open up space for people from oppressed groups to get involved in building a diverse and unified movement against war and occupation.

## Comox Valley: MAWO participates in a full day of anti-war, anti-occupation action

By Sophie Ziner

On March 4<sup>th</sup>, three organizers from Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) brought their anti-war efforts to the Comox Valley, a community on Vancouver Island. In collaboration with local activists there, and as a part of MAWO's continued efforts to reach out to communities outside Vancouver, a full day of anti-war, anti-occupation action and dialogue took place.

The day began with twelve presentations in two high schools, Highland Secondary and Vanier Secondary. Presentations focused on Iraq and what the invasion means in this new era of war and occupation. The students- those in classes and those in student activist clubs- proved to have a very good level of understanding and analysis pertaining to current events. Many asked probing questions about the motivations behind imperialist aggression and what can be done to stop it. Presentations were made and discussions were carried out with over 400 students.

That evening a public forum called, "War Occupation and Crisis, the US/UK occupation of Iraq" was held at North Island College's Stan Hagan Theatre. Over 50 members of the community attended over half of whom were youth, including students that had attended the presentations in high schools earlier in the day and students from the college. There was also representation from a broad range of long-time social, labour, faith, and environmental activists from the Valley.

Local hip-hop artist MC Chickweed of the band The D.A.P. opened



Panelists at the anti-war forum in Courtenay BC. (L-R) Kira Koshelanyk, Barb Biley, Clive Ansley and MC Sophie Ziner.

the forum with a spoken word performance about the brutality of war. The line-up of speakers began with Clive Ansley, a human rights lawyer based in the Comox Valley, who highlighted the illegal nature of the invasion and occupation of Iraq.

Barb Biley, who represented the Comox Valley Peace Group, an organization that has been working in the region for over 25 years, followed Ansley. Biley focused on uncovering Canada's role in the invasion and occupation of Iraq.

Kira Koshelanyk, co-chair of Mobilization Against War and Occupation, closed the presentations with an overall look at the new era of war and occupation, the world economic crisis, and Canada's role as an imperialist country following its own interests. She emphasized the common fight we all face against imperialism and especially our responsibility to support people in Iraq fighting for their freedom.

After the three speakers had presented, the floor was opened up

for discussion, which continued until 10pm when the building was closed down. Dialogue was not limited to questions for the speakers, instead members of the audience responded to and expanded on each other's commentary. Discussion focused on Canada's role in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Haiti and what this involvement means for people in Canada. Even after the room had been emptied out, many people lingered outside to continue to talk about the issues that had been brought to life through collective discussion in the forum.

Overall the response from the community was very positive. The success of this full day of activity in the Comox Valley shows the great potential for expanding anti-war, anti-occupation work to other small communities in British Columbia. The anti-war movement is alive wherever poor and working people are found and the events in Comox Valley on March 4<sup>th</sup> prove the importance of bringing people together.

# Langara College Forum Discusses Student's Democratic Rights

By Kasia Machelak

On December 1<sup>st</sup> 2004, over one month after the undemocratic banning of two Langara Students from their Students' Union building, the Langara 2 Defense Committee (L2DC) held a second forum at Langara College. The forum entitled "Fighting for Women's Rights, Student's Rights and Democratic Rights in the Classroom, on Campus and Beyond," drew over 20 students and community members. These were people who were interested in finding out about the case of the 'Langara 2' and how this case relates to student organizing and historical movements for social justice.

The forum was opened by MC Victor Finberg; a long-time activist, Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) organizer, and 'Langara 2' supporter. The two speakers at the forum were, Kasia Machelak, a Kwantlen student and anti-war organizer with Kwantlen Students Against War and Occupation (KSAWO), and Nicole Burton, one of the 'Langara 2' and a MAWO organizer.

What this forum established was the continued organizing on campus for the right of students, as oppressed people within society, to fight for their democratic rights and to fight for justice. Since Students' Unions were fought for by students in order to advocate for their democratic rights, it is an attack on all students that the Langara 2 were banned from their Students' Union building

The forum focused on connecting attacks on student organizers across Canada, and the importance of continuing to fight against these attacks whether they are made by the Administration, Students' Unions or



Nicole Burton (right) speaking at forum about student's democratic rights, December 1st 2004. Also on the panel were Langara staff member Victor Finberg (l) and SFU student Kasia Machelak (middle).

outside organizations. The historical importance of students as the leadership in social justice struggles was spoken about powerfully by Burton. Following the presentations there was a dynamic open discussion period where nearly everyone in

attendance participated. During the discussion the political necessity of upholding the integrity of Students' Unions was reinforced, as was the demand that the ban be lifted on the Langara 2.

## January 20th Day of Action

From page 31

sense of connection to the global anti-war movement that is fighting for and unifying oppressed people through global action.

Kelly White opened the rally with a welcome to the Coast Salish territory that Vancouver sits on. Using her strong and powerful message for the unity of all oppressed people to set the tone for the entire afternoon. From there, Najuli from the Muslim community was the first to take the stage. After her, Shawn spoke for the International League of People's Struggles. Ben West from the Capilano Students' Union then brought the voice of students and youth with a strong message of support for the struggles and resistance of oppressed people everywhere. Kelly Burnham, an ex-US soldier, brought with him the demand that Canada grant refugee status to American War Resisters who seek it and the crowd responded in full support.

Along with January 20<sup>th</sup> being an International Day of Action there was a strong cross-Canada connection in Vancouver through

3 speakers from Toronto. Mostafa Henawi, an organizer with the June 30<sup>th</sup> Organizing Committee and Al-Awda, a Palestinian Right of Return Coalition, was the first to bring the two cities together in the fight against the occupation of Iraq. He linked Canadian imperialism to Iraq with motivating words like- "Which Iraqis voted to have SNC bullets made in Toronto, made in Vancouver, shell Iraqi homes, kill people in Baghdad? Which Iraqi voted for that? For too long, Canada has been able to hide the myth, and it stops, it stops today. We have to continue the resistance here from Halifax to Vancouver and Toronto and Ottawa. We have to stand together not just to oppose the US, but Canada as well and we are beginning to see that. When people begin to see the myth of the role that Canada plays around the world, then we can change the system, then we can fight imperialism, then we stop the US, and then we can have real dignity around the world and real self determination."

The Korean Students Network Against War continued the tradition of protest

Continued on page 34

## Interview with Meegan Maultsaid

From page 28

sort of being rewarded for their anti-choice positions. Also is it obvious that in the US, with Bush re-elected for 4 more years, there is a serious threat to Roe Vs. Wade and women's choice. So it is an important battle and one that is not "over" or "won" by a long shot. I feel it's crucial to keep the dialogue happening, to keep it as a topic that youth care about. That's the significance of what R4C does; it brings the discourse to younger people.

**FTT: As the founder of R4C Vancouver, what positive changes have you noticed over the past 11 years in organizing this event? Have you run into any difficulties in organizing this event because of the increased attacks on women and oppressed people across the board, or have the increased attacks on women by the provincial and federal governments in recent years mobilized people towards getting involved?**

**Meegan:** The biggest change I've noticed is the interest in the project, from both an organizing standpoint & from the public. Believe it or not, there have been few obstacles to organizing this event. Once, some anti-choice folks came to one of the shows and handed out pamphlets, but it was pretty insignificant in terms of "opposition" to our work.

**FTT: One of the most important aspects I noticed during Rock for Choice was the fact that women are the main leadership and that this is the strength of the event. What can we do as co-fighters within the social justice community to get people to build**

**this event in the future?**

**Meegan:** Obviously, since this affects women in a very deep & significant way, the main people who want to dedicate their time to the project are women. But I also feel it is, and should be, an important issue for men to get involved in, so we are certainly not against our male allies participating. My only disappointment this year was that more people didn't attend the conference, and that's an area where other activists could support us, by helping us build a stronger conference and also by coming & participating. I thought we had some really strong workshops, and it was too bad there weren't more people to offer different perspectives.

**FTT: Finally I'd like to get your assessment of this year's Rock for Choice overall and outlook for next year.**

**Meegan:** In terms of funds raised, this was our biggest year. We raised close to \$8,000, which even beats our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary profits. But politically, it felt less cohesive, mainly because we farmed out some of the nights to raise more money and also to try and get different communities involved. But then it turned into so many nights that even between our collective, we couldn't represent strongly at every show. So perhaps the politics got a bit lost at some of the nights, but needless to say, I think overall it was a successful year for us. For next year, we have some ideas of how to build the conference into a more mobilizing-type day, and I think we'll possibly have fewer nights, with more emphasis on the politics and less on the rock music.

**FTT: Thank you Meegan.**

## MAWO Workshop at Rock 4 Choice Sparks Discussion on Womens' Role in Social Activism

By Kasia Machelak

On January 29<sup>th</sup> 2005 Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) participated in Rock for Choice's all day conference at Simon Fraser University, Harbour Centre. For the second year in a row MAWO was invited to bring a perspective on women in the context of war and occupation. In one of nine workshops throughout the day MAWO provided an analysis of the position of women under war internationally. The workshop opened the opportunity for people to discuss the politics of this global attack on people- especially on women, and to get involved in organizing against imperialist attacks.

The two facilitators of the workshop were Kira Koshelanyk, MAWO co-chair and coordinator of Youth Third-World Alliance, and Kasia Machelak, MAWO organizer and student organizer. The workshop was an opportunity to open up dialogue about the significant roll women hold in the resistance to imperialism, and as organizers against war and occupation. Throughout the hour of discussion the importance of connecting the struggles that women

face on a daily basis, as oppressed people, was emphasized. From Iraq to Palestine and from Haiti to Afghanistan to Indigenous Nations in Canada, women face the most overt attacks, but also fight back and continue to struggle the hardest.



The reality is that when women are under attack at home and abroad, it is an assault by the same ruling class, because of the increasing economic crisis they face. The worsened position of women living under war and occupation is connected to the struggle for the liberation of women in other areas of the world. The way this was brought into the workshop was through the open discussion where everybody in attendance contributed their observations of recent attacks on women. With the reduced access to choice, information, and resources

for women in this province the BC government's attacks have impacted poor and working people the most heavily and within this group women are the majority.

Since women have historically been the essence of society, or the people who maintain culture and families, war and occupation threatens the continuation of societies by putting increased pressure on all people, but especially women. By displacing people through the physical destruction of homes, millions of people face a lack of resources such as food, water and medicine and are forced to live in refugee camps. It is therefore no surprise that women suffer the most from chronic malnutrition, disease and stress. Examples that were highlighted in the workshop were the daily struggles women face, such as waiting in 17 hour line-ups for cooking fuel, and being responsible for providing clean water, which is in short supply.

In one hour, the dynamic discussion left all participants feeling a sense of unity with oppressed women around the world, and feeling mobilized to stand in solidarity with all people to demand an end to imperialist war and occupation.



# Worldwide Solidarity Expands as Cuban Five Nominated for Nobel Peace Prize

By Thomas Davies

For the seventh New Year in a row, five anti-terrorist Cubans held in US prisons saw the passing of the year from behind bars. While physically imprisoned, worldwide understanding and solidarity continues to grow against the injustice of their imprisonment. These five men, the "Cuban Five," were recently nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, and play an increasingly important role in exposing US imperialist and terrorist activity, which has continually attacked Cuba for over 40 years.

In 1998, Cuban officials presented the United States with huge amounts of evidence collected by the Five outlining terrorist activities against Cuba emanating from Miami. The Cuban Five have harmed no one, yet after receiving this evidence the United States jailed them instead of the proven terrorists. After 17 months in solitary confinement, the Five were convicted by a jury in Miami of all counts against them - ranging from conspiracy to commit espionage to conspiracy to commit murder. In the 14,000 pages of court transcript, no espionage evidence was ever produced - a fact openly admitted by the prosecution.

Recently, their case got a significant boost when Professor



James Petras of Binghamton University nominated all five for the Nobel Peace Prize. In his explanation of their nomination Petras emphasized, "By acting against US backed Cuban-American terrorist gangs, the Cuban Five were upholding the right of the Cuban people to decide for themselves their present and future form of governance. Among the vast majority of Cuban and Latin American peoples the Cuban Five are seen as heroes..." Today, the Cuban Five are seen as heroes around the world, because they

shed light on US hypocrisy in the so-called "war on terror" and are furthering Cuba's overall efforts to defend itself against US aggression.

The United States continues to deny visas for Olga Salaneva and Adriana Perez, the wives of two of the Five- René Gonzales and Gerardo Hernandez. Ivette Gonzalez, René's 6-year-old daughter, is still completely shut out from contact with her father as well. She recently opened the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil and urged

participants to light thousands of candles for dignity. Her opening was another indication of the mass support and awareness that is building around the campaign to "Free the Five!"

## Join the Campaign!

Cuban Five supporters around the world continue to wait expectantly for the results of a March 2004 appeal for a new trial at the Atlanta 11th Circuit of Appeals. International campaigns to build awareness and action around the case are also ongoing. Along with these major developments, the Free the Cuban Five Committee - Vancouver continues to collect signatures demanding the Five's immediate release. A forum series is also being organized for the upcoming months focusing on the history of US sponsored terrorism against Cuba and the continual developments in the case of the Cuban Five. Among a growing movement of over 210 solidarity groups worldwide, we undertake our work in an effort to connect the Five's struggle to Cuba's overall fight for dignity and self-determination.

To get involved in the committee contact: 777-889-7664 / cuban5\_van@yahoo.com / P.O Box 21607, Vancouver, BC V5L 5G3

## POEM

### Those Sentences

By Antonio Guerrero  
(One of Cuban 5)

They were sentences  
-sophism infamy raging -  
cruel sentences.  
They were cold sentences.  
Behind each one of them  
masked rancor.  
Those bullets of death  
found in our chests.

invulnerable principles  
All that happened  
revealed their fallacy  
confirmed our axiom  
We won! With dignity  
we raised our voices  
against those sentences.

## Pivot Report

From page 30

That report was due February 28<sup>th</sup> and we are expecting Jamie Graham's statement in the middle of March.

**FTT: How has the VPD responded to the complaints process?**

**John:** According to our records there was actually fairly systemic non-cooperation by the VPD with the RCMP investigation. I know that was a real impediment to their ability to make findings. But we're not going to see what the RCMP determined; all we are going to see is the police chief's version of the findings.

There are issues of whether we have confidence in his findings given his previous dealings. Even before reading the report - I don't know even to this day whether he has read this report - he publicly called the affidavits preposterous. In our view he prejudged the whole outcome of the investigation. We have concerns about his objectivity as a trier of fact. And he is being asked to reverse his previously stated position in this whole thing

without any kind of transparency in the process.

**FTT: What does the investigation mean for people, especially poor and oppressed people in this province?**

**John:** Well, we asked the Police Complaints Commissioner to look into systemic issues, not to treat these affidavits as individual instances but to look for patterns, look for evidence that there is an institutional problem. We have the view that institutional problems require an institutional remedy. I think the problems of policing in the DTES are not going to be solved by hanging a few token bad apples out to dry - there's a deeper problem with the culture and attitude of the Vancouver Police Department.

At the end of the day there's going to be some kind of review of the way the VPD does business, its relationship with marginalized people and there has to be some improvements.

*Fire This Time encourages our readers to take a look at the original 50 affidavit complaints enclosed in the Pivot report, "To Serve and Protect" available at: [www.pivotlegal.org](http://www.pivotlegal.org)*

انقلاب به روایت عکسهای اکبر ناظمی  
صحنه های متشنشده از انقلاب ایران سال ۱۳۵۷

**AKBAR NAZEMI**  
*Unsent Dispatches from Iranian Revolution*  
1978-1979

**PRESENTATION HOUSE GALLERY**  
333 Chesterfield Ave. North Vancouver V7M 3G9 604.986.1351

**MARCH 5 - APRIL 17, 2005**  
Opening day March 5, 12 to 8pm  
EVENT: Saturday March 5, 4pm Presentation & discussion  
with Akbar Nazemi and curators Pantea Haghighi and Bill Jeffries

این نمایشگاه غیرانتفاعی است، ورود برای همگان رایگان است

Gallery Hours  
Wednesday to Sunday 12 to 5pm  
Thursdays from 12 to 8pm  
Monday and Tuesday by appointment  
[www.presentationhousegall.com](http://www.presentationhousegall.com)

©2005 gratefully acknowledges support from the City of North Vancouver, the District of North Vancouver, the British Columbia Arts & Culture Commission of North Vancouver, the DTES, the BC Gaming Foundation, the BC Arts Council, & the Canada Council for the Arts. Distribution and royalties agreement is provided through Strategic and Creative Design & Services Inc.

# Imperialism - War - Occupation

## MAWO Forum Discusses Anti-War Movement

By Mike Chimenti

On January 22, Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) held an important forum at the Collingwood Neighbourhood House in Vancouver. The forum, entitled "Imperialism, War, Occupation: What we have learned from the occupations of Indigenous Nations in Canada, Palestine, Iraq, Haiti, and Afghanistan" inspired around 50 people to participate in discussions and listen to presentations given by organizers from Toronto and Vancouver. This significant forum helped establish and strengthen links between anti-war, anti-occupation organizers from across the country who are continuing to broaden the anti-war, anti-occupation movement in Canada.

The event was MC'd by MAWO co-chair Kira Koshelanyk who opened the forum by introducing MAWO and discussing the concrete reality of war and occupation for people living under occupation. The first presenter, Mostafa Henawi, an organizer with the June 30<sup>th</sup> Organizing Committee in Toronto, as well as Al Awda -



Speakers at the January 22nd MAWO forum (from left to right): Aaron Mercredi, Hazem Jamjoum, Liisa Schofield, Mostafa Henawi, and forum MC Kira Koshelanyk.

Toronto, the international right to return coalition for Palestinian refugees, spoke about anti-war work in Canada.

Discussing the importance of people standing in solidarity with oppressed people and the role of people opposed to war and

occupation, Mostafa said that "our role and our obligation is to directly oppose the government here that is not only supporting the

occupations, but is the occupier." Mostafa outlined the importance of resistance during the era of war and occupation and described the need for groups to forge links and build relationships. "Our strength is together, it always has been, not just nationally, but internationally."

Liisa Scofield, also an organizer with the June 30<sup>th</sup> Organizing Committee and the Grassroots Anti-Imperialist Network (GRAIN) at York University, followed Mostafa by expanding the discussion of Canada's role in global war and occupation. Outlining the role of Canadian corporations in the occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq, Liisa shared her view that "we have a specific responsibility" to resist Canadian political and corporate involvement in colonial war and occupation. "In Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver, we sit in a position of being in the center of the Canadian empire. It is important to look at what our responsibility is here, and how to stand in solidarity and resistance with those living under war and occupation by the Canadian state."

The third presenter, Hazem Jamjoum, an organizer with Al Awda Toronto, gave an in depth analysis of the concrete situation of Palestinians living under Israeli occupation and the state of the Intifada. Discussing the role of supporters of oppressed people, Hazem highlighted the goal of anti-imperialist work. "As solidarity activists, we try to open space for the indigenous resistance to be able to create its own space for self-determination. We're standing up and being counted, we're empowering each other, we're educating each other."

Aaron Mercredi, an organizer with MAWO, wrapped up the presentations by discussing the importance of expanding co-operation between people opposed to war and occupation across the country. "One of the most important tasks we have to do as organizers in Canada and activists fighting against war and occupation is making the links between different people in Canada and finding ways of working together."

The discussion period following the presentations allowed people to engage the panelists openly and critically, further expanding the issues raised during the forum. The success of this forum and discussion period allowed people in Vancouver to connect themselves not only to people across the country, but to poor, oppressed and working people across the world who fight against imperialist war and occupation demanding self-determination for all oppressed nations.

### Jan 20: MAWO Rallies Against War

From page 31

dancing, bringing Korean culture to the stage and pumping everyone up for the march across downtown. The march left united, chanting the whole way and for the first time making a stop in front of the headquarters of SNC Lavalin, a Canadian corporation that manufactures bullets for Iraq and supports occupations all around the world. There Liisa Scofield from the June 30<sup>th</sup> Organizing Committee and a York University organizer told us why we stopped in front of SNC and what they represent as a main tool of Canadian imperialism.

When we returned charged-up from the power of taking the streets, there were three more speakers. Hazem Jamjoum, from Al-Awda in Toronto, continued to fight Canadian Imperialism with his voice reverberating off all of the buildings surrounding the Vancouver Art Gallery. Next, Alison Bodine, president of the Coalition Against the War On the People of Iraq and Internationally (CAWOPI) at UBC and an organizer with Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO), brought the rally to the situation on the ground in Iraq. With the vocalization of a final resolution to concretize the explicit demands of the rally, Shannon Bundock closed the rally on the best note possible, getting the rally shouting and cheering one last time, "Self Determination for Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, Haiti, and Indigenous Nations in Canada!"

## International Womens Day

From page 28

Women's Day in the USA. Finally, on March 8<sup>th</sup> 1975 the United Nations recognized March 8<sup>th</sup> as International Women's Day.

Every March 8<sup>th</sup> women across the world unite to celebrate and recognize the ongoing battle women have waged for centuries for equality and justice. For nearly 150 years, International Women's Day (IWD) has stood as a commemorating point in the ongoing fight for the liberation of women- as workers, youth, immigrants, and a group systemically suppressed by class society. Whether organizing against the attacks of the Liberal Government on women's centres and services in BC, or against the attacks of occupation forces in Iraq, Afghanistan and Haiti, women's struggle and women's leadership compose a fundamental pillar in any fight for social justice at home and abroad.

This unifying and international perspective was shared by hundreds of women's rights activists in Vancouver on the weekend of March 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> 2005. "Unite Today for Justice Tomorrow!" was the theme of the events which were organized by Vancouver's International Women's Day Committee. The IWD Committee organized a number of events to commemorate women's ongoing

legacy of struggle and sacrifice.

Activities began on March 4<sup>th</sup> with dinner and festivities at the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre. There, women's rights activists and supporters gathered and celebrated International Women's Day in conjunction with speakers and music. On March 5<sup>th</sup> over 400 people rallied at the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre and marched to make the collective voice of women for all to hear: "Women UNITED will never be defeated!", "Women's rights are human rights!" "Women's centres under attack - What do we do? Stand up! Fight Back!" The march was opened and led by Indigenous elders with respect and honour given to the first women of this territory- now occupied by Canada. The streets of downtown Vancouver were filled with the faces of proud and powerful women: workers, students, youth, indigenous, immigrants, refugees, and women of colour. The rally settled outside of the Vancouver Public Library, where speakers emphasized and expanded on the international and historic importance of the day. The MC of the rally Shannon Bundock started, "Today women are coming to the streets, across the globe, today women fight for justice! As our sister face war and occupation in the Middle East, in Latin America, they stand up and resist. As we face poverty,

violence, cuts to services at home in BC, we too stand up and resist. With women's leadership we will show the world we can make change...in fact change cannot be made without us. For us, for our children, our mothers, our sisters and our brothers too. Because no one can be free until women are free!"

Women then came to the stage and announced International Women's Day in 10 different languages, displaying the depth and scope of the women's movement.

The rally closed with a call for demonstrators to participate in the numerous workshops scheduled for the day, discussing issues from social services for women to international solidarity with women abroad. Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) held a workshop on "Women's Resistance and Women's Leadership," which was facilitated by MAWO organizer Nasim Sedaghat and the main talk was given by the MC of the rally and MAWO co-chair Shannon Bundock. The forum was a presentation and discussion of the constant attacks women face from imperialism, and the example of leadership that women must provide to build an effective global movement for women's rights, women's liberation, and the liberation of all of humanity from injustice.



# Victory for the Langara 2: Victory for Students and all Oppressed People

From page 28

around the slogan, "Access! Accountable! Action! ...& Fun!"

With over a dozen other students and supporters, the "AAA" campaign took the school by storm and changed the entire dynamic of the campus to focus on significant issues affecting students. "AAA" candidates distributed and collected hundreds of campaign surveys completed by students outlining what the most pressing issues they face are that they would like the LSU to fight for. As a result of this direct contact and consultation with students, music and dance performances, and discussing key student issues, more students were mobilized to vote during the election period than any other in Langara's recent history.

During the elections period, however, not all activity on campus was in the interest of educating and mobilizing students to get involved in student elections. On Thursday February 3<sup>rd</sup> two days after campaigning for the elections began, hundreds of leaflets were distributed on campus that contained false and libelous allegations of "misappropriation of funds" against Nicole and Kira in an attempt to sabotage their election campaign. Particularly at this time, in the midst of running a democratic campaign for office in the LSU, these fabricated allegations were dangerously irresponsible. The illegal and slanderous materials themselves were without clear credit to their source or maker, lacking contact information or an author to be held accountable. Distribution continued

the LSU elections polling station, despite the obvious bias against the three candidates attacked and slandered by the leaflets. In protest Kira and Nicole submitted letters of complaint to the LSU Electoral Committee and the LSU Executive Committee. Copies of these were also submitted to the President of Langara College and the Langara College Building Services Manager to inform them and appeal for intervention in the interest of preserving the integrity of the college. Finally, on Wednesday February 9<sup>th</sup>, the President of the College chose to intervene and enforce that the materials slandering Kira and Nicole were not acceptable to distribute in the college and would be removed. The decision was an important step in the ability of the AAA candidates to defend themselves against sabotage and attack as only this action resulted in the stopping of the distribution of these slanderous and anti-democratic leaflets on college grounds.

However, the saboteurs of the elections continued to go about their dirty work and on Wednesday February 9<sup>th</sup>, a Langara student found a small slip of paper in a classroom with a list of candidates supported by the anti-democratic grouping within the LSU Executive and Staff for every available board position. White slips began turning up in the cafeteria, while another was found directly in a polling station where students were voting. Some students claim to have received them from Executives, "reminding them" who to vote for this election. The clandestine acts of sabotage throughout the democratic process in the LSU elections were

polling.

Finally, on Thursday February 10<sup>th</sup> attacks against the "AAA" candidates turned to physical intimidation and provocation. While students came out in record numbers for the last day of voting in the Student Union Building, while scrutineers documented everything happening to ensure a fair election, an unidentified Langara Student approached one of the two scrutineers, cornered him aggressively, and demanded to know his name. When the scrutineer replied that he was a scrutineer there to ensure fair elections, the student moved to the other scrutineer and demanded the same information. Seeing the unidentified student's provocations, an LSU staff person responded by accusing the *scrutineers* of intimidating students and called security into the Student Union Building, an area not within college security's jurisdiction except under extraordinary circumstances. The provocation escalated with the unidentified student demanding that security remove the scrutineers.

Sangdo Kim entered the Student Union Building, concerned to see the elections scrutineers being cornered and harassed by campus security. Immediately, the unidentified student shifted away from the scrutineers and turned to Kim interrogating and shouting at him. The unidentified student cornered Sangdo Kim and yelled at him, accusing him of being a liar. Sangdo did not respond to this initial provocation, but the unidentified student leaned in close and whispered directly in his ear repeating, "Liar, liar, liar... you're a fucking liar..."

In a complaint to the LSU executive dated Feb 14<sup>th</sup> Nicole and Kira stated their opposition to this provocation attack, "We must understand that Kim is an international student who is subject to racist humiliation in all areas of his life in Canada and this degrading attack understandably had much more meaning for him than simply irritation or frustration. In this context, this attack on Kim was a racist assault, in its attempt to single him out and provoke him on the basis of his oppressed position. In self-defense Kim stepped back and demanded that the unidentified student stop harassing and provoking him."

Turning away from the unidentified student, Sangdo immediately left the Student Union Building. By the time he left the building, the individuals within the LSU Executive and Staff who had been running the slander campaign against the AAA candidates had already begun to spread the slanderous rumour that the provocation of Sangdo had been "violence at the polls" and that Sangdo and MAWO were responsible. Nicole and Kira wrote a complaint to the Electoral Committee and LSU Executive and proved, with attached witness statements that not only had there been no "violence" at the polls, but that the attack on Sangdo was a premeditated trap to provoke him. Additionally, the statements proved that this provocation was part of the larger campaign of slander and sabotage against the AAA candidates by individuals within the LSU Executive and Staff that had overshadowed the entire LSU elections.

a clear violation of LSU's own elections policy. In response to each noted violation, Nicole and Kira submitted complaints to the LSU Elections Committee, documenting the sabotage of the elections and pressuring the Elections Committee to hold fair and unbiased elections. Also as a result, Nicole and Kira requested on Wednesday and Thursday that some of their supporters come and act as scrutineers for the last days of



Nicole Burton, Mobilization Against War and Occupation secretary, and one of the Langara 2, chanting at the MAWO March 19<sup>th</sup> international day of action in Vancouver, March 19<sup>th</sup> 2005.

## Sabotaged Elections Cancelled! Ban against the Langara 2 Lifted!

As a result of the mounting pressure on the Elections Committee to hold fair elections- through letters documenting the elections violations, as well as the incident with the unidentified student earlier that day, at the end of polling on February 10<sup>th</sup>, the elections were declared null and void. No ballots would be counted, and the process of elections would be re-done, despite the record turnout of nearly 500 students to the polls, an over 100% increase from recent semesters. Both Nicole and Kira continued to run in the re-election.

Less than two weeks later, on February 21<sup>st</sup> (the first day of re-elections campaigning) Nicole and Kira were notified that the ban was being lifted, rescinding the Executive Board's decision that had barred the two students from their Union for 120 days.

## Victory for the Langara 2: Victory for Students and all Oppressed People

For oppressed people – whether we are women, youth, students, immigrants, refugees, workers - it is fundamentally important to defend ourselves when attacked. Not only must we defend the rights we have now, which have been hard fought and won by our brothers and sisters before us, we must defend them in the interest of advancing our position beyond what we have now. If we do not defend what we already have we cannot advance.

Not only is it important to protect the rights won and gains already made by women, students and other oppressed peoples' struggles, it is also important *how* we do this. The campaign to lift the ban on the Langara 2 was carried out by consistent action and through the mobilization of students. The campaign engaged them in the process of collecting signatures for the campaign by educating and convincing other students to sign the petition. This process made the campaign into an effort by a broader base of students at Langara while bringing supporters into the campaign

from all across Canada as allies. This method of mass defense work also brought the support of many students at Langara to the side of oppressed people against reactionary attacks, 500 of who signed the petition. This campaign also had the effect of raising the political consciousness of many students at Langara through discussion on the critical questions of democratic rights, students' rights and women's rights.

The success of the Langara 2 campaign also establishes that with effective political work we can succeed in defending and making gains for oppressed people. Specific to Langara College, the recent LSU decision made the central demand of the campaign a reality, "Lift the Ban!" meaning a victory for the work of the students over the past four months. This result is very important in increasing the confidence of students in our ability to strategize effective political action and build and run successful political campaigns.

Finally, the LSU decision to rescind the ban is an important step forward in establishing the leadership of oppressed people. In the defense case of the Langara 2, students took the lead and executed a successful campaign that won the case and confirmed their strength, ability, and potential of young people, women and students as a leadership in the broader fight for social justice.

The next stage of this struggle is for Langara students to continue with political organizing work, specifically around anti-war work which had previously been dominant on campus but was suppressed by the LSU ban and the disbanding of the only existing anti-war group on campus. With this renewed confidence in our ability to struggle and be victorious as students and as oppressed people, the political landscape at Langara has been shifted in our favor. With the lessons and victory of the Langara 2 defense case in mind, we must continue to struggle, to defend ourselves, to advance, and fight for our right to organize, educate, and mobilize at Langara and beyond.



Kira Daley, Mobilization Against War and Occupation co-chair, and one of the Langara 2, speaking at the MAWO March 19<sup>th</sup> international day of action in Vancouver, March 19<sup>th</sup> 2005.

on Monday February 7<sup>th</sup> just before the close of the campaigning period, and then again on the first day of polling, Tuesday February 8<sup>th</sup>. The slanderous leaflets distributed on February 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> included a photo of the three "AAA" candidates, taken directly from their campaign materials.

LSU executives were seen distributing these leaflets and then minutes later serving as monitors at



MAWO Vancouver in Action

**SATURDAY APRIL 23**

**STOP THE U.S. WAR MACHINE**

**RALLY AND MARCH**  
1 pm @ Vancouver Art Gallery (Georgia St + Howe St)  
**US/UK OUT OF IRAQ! HANDS OFF SYRIA AND IRAN! BRING THE TROOPS HOME NOW!**  
END THE OCCUPATIONS OF IRAQ, PALESTINE, AFGHANISTAN, HAITI AND INDIGENOUS NATIONS IN CANADA!  
MOBILIZATION AGAINST WAR AND OCCUPATION

**4 THE PEOPLE SATURDAY APRIL 200**

A NIGHT OF LIVE HIPHOP PERFORMANCES FEATURING:

SONS OF ZADOK  
SLOW P.J.S  
P.O.S  
BEHIMEL  
P.J. SAFE  
MAYN PASCAPPE

To raise funds for Mobilization against War and Occupation Builds the activist movement in Vancouver and the Lower Mainland. Hatreds to end occupation and promoting self-determination.

featuring:  
live breakdancing  
live mcs and vocals

**MOBILIZATION AGAINST WAR AND OCCUPATION**

LICK CLUB, 455 ARBUTT ST DOORS @ 8:30 COVER  
HTTP://WWW.MAWOVANCOUVER.ORG  
INFO@MAWOVANCOUVER.ORG

Action in Vancouver

**Refugee Camp at Langara:**

**"Shattering the myth of Canadian multiculturalism and humanitarianism"**  
Langara Student Union  
March 21- 23 All day  
Speakers March 21 @ 2:30  
Hosted by LSU

- Gail Davidson, Lawyers Against the War  
- Alfred Lambremont Webre, Institute for Cooperation in Space

Presented by the Vancouver Public Library and the Necessary Voices Society. For information about the event, please contact Thomas Hicks of the Necessary Voices Society at necessaryvoices@telus.net.

**Direct Action Against the Safe Streets Act**

Saturday, April 16th at 2pm  
Victory Square - Cambie & Hastings

Organized by the Anti-Poverty Committee. For more information call 604-682-2726, or email apc@resist.ca.

**People's Inquiries Into Police Violence**

Wednesday, March 30th: 'Policing poverty'  
Wednesday, April 6th: 'Women, police brutality and compliance in violence against women'

All forums will begin at 6:30 pm and will take place at 16 East Hastings Street, Tellier Towers (next door to the Downtown Eastside Residents' Association office).

Organized by the Anti-Poverty Committee. For more information call 604-682-2726, or email apc@resist.ca.

**Class War starts in the schools!**

**Demonstration against Gordon Campbell and BC School Trustees**

Saturday, April 2nd @ 5pm  
Burrard Street Skytrain Station

Organized by the Anti-Poverty Committee. For more information call 604-682-2726, or email apc@resist.ca.

**World Peace City**

Wednesday April 6th at 7:30pm  
Alice MacKay Room, Vancouver Public Library

Panelists include:  
- Ellen Woodsworth, Vancouver City Councillor



On The Rise

**An Evening of Indigenous Youth Performance, Films, and Inspiration**

**April 30th At The Sty Wet Tan, (The Great Hall) at the UBC First Nations House of Learning (Musqueam Territory)**

Featuring:  
AZTLAN  
UNDERGROUND  
K-os Dancer: DEDOS  
Tsimshian Youth Activist: Dustin Johnson  
East Vancity Blackfoot Rapper: Curtis Clearsky  
Squamish/Nisga'a MC: Mandy Rose  
Cree Activist and Film Maker Nitanis Desjarlais and more...  
ALSO screening the Films: Aotearoa: 5th World Indigenous Youth Conference, NYM RoadBlock & HIJOS DE LA TIERRA

Films start at 630pm, performances start at 745pm, doors close at 11pm, so make sure to get there early!

Tickets are \$10/ \$5 for students  
Tickets can also be bought at the door

All Proceeds go to the International Indigenous Youth Conference

To volunteer, get involved, donate, or hook up tickets call (604) 562-1028 Ange Sterritt. For more information visit [www.longhouse.ubc.ca/directions.html](http://www.longhouse.ubc.ca/directions.html)

Co-Sponsored by The Indigenous Students Society, The Sty Wet Tan First Nations House of Learning, and Redwire Native Youth Media

**Distribute Revolutionary Change in your Area!**

For distribution of *Fire This Time* in your area; across BC, Canada and Internationally please contact:

**Brennan Luchsinger**  
Publicity and Distribution Coordinator  
Phone: (604) 338-9006  
Email: [distro@fire-this-time.org](mailto:distro@fire-this-time.org)

Free Public Film and Forum

**U.S. Imperialism, Cuban Resistance, and the Era of War and Occupation:**  
Why Defending Cuba is Important Today

**iAbajo El Bloqueo!**

**Saturday April 9 6:30pm**  
Collingwood Neighbourhood House  
5288 Joyce St.  
2 blocks South of Joyce Street Skytrain Station

Vancouver Communities In Solidarity With Cuba (VCSIC)  
[vancouvercommunitiesin solidaritywithcuba.org](http://vancouvercommunitiesin solidaritywithcuba.org) | 778-883-3223

Not organized by Collingwood Neighbourhood House

**The Rise of Resistance in Haiti Today**

Against Occupation and Human Rights Violations

Friday April 1st / 06  
7pm  
Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House  
400 East Broadway Vancouver

Public Forum:  
The rise of resistance in Haiti today is a direct result of the occupation of Haiti by the United States and the international community. This is a call to action for all who are interested in the struggle for human rights and social justice in Haiti and around the world.

**May Day 2005! Organizing Committee**

**Organizing Meeting Thursday March 31st 6pm**  
Britannia Community Centre Learning Resource Room

In the spirit of working class unity and struggle, we will be organizing to take to the streets on May 1st, 2005. We will mobilize on this historic date to highlight the heroic struggles of workers across the world for rights, freedom and dignity. This is a call out for a broad organizing committee and all who are interested are encouraged to attend!

Initiated by: Youth-Third World Alliance  
contact:  
[youththirdworldalliance@yahoo.ca](mailto:youththirdworldalliance@yahoo.ca)/778.881.6156

Action in Toronto

**Land Day Demonstration to Strip the JNF of its Charity Status**

Wednesday March 30th at 12:30 PM  
Meet at Dundas Square (Dundas and Yonge)  
Organized by: Al-Awda - Toronto ([www.al-awda.ca](http://www.al-awda.ca))

**Women, War and Resistance Speaking series schedule**

**Tuesday March 29th: Colonialism and its Impact**  
8pm Sidney Smith (100 St George Street) room 2102

**Wednesday March 30th: Migrants and Refugees**  
7pm Sidney Smith (100 St George Street) room 2135

**Thursday March 31st: Prisons**  
7pm Sidney Smith (100 St

George Street) room 2118

**Friday, April 1 Resisting War and Occupation**

7pm Sidney Smith (100 St George Street) room 2117  
MC: Navyug Gill (South Asian Political Forum)

Organized by: Arab Students' Collective, Coalition for Indigenous Sovereignty, Philippine Women's Centre, No One Is Illegal, Near and Middle Eastern Studies Student Union, South Asian Political Forum, Al-Awda Toronto (Palestine Right of Return Group), Prisoner Justice Action Committee, Sumoud: Political Prisoners Working Group, June 30th Organizing Committee  
For more information, please contact [arabstudentcollective@yahoo.ca](mailto:arabstudentcollective@yahoo.ca).