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Free the 5 Cuban Heroes Held in U.S. Jails!

HONDURAS:



U.S. COUNTER REVOLUTION STRIKES BACK IN LATIN AMERICA



Kabul University students protest occupation. May 10, 2009.

By Nita Palmer

“Did they come here to build our country or kill our innocent children?”

This is the question that Abdur Rahim asked after his three children were killed by a US airstrike in Kandahar province. Abdur is not alone – he is just one of tens of thousands of Afghans asking this question as they are faced with the horror of watching their sons and daughters and loved ones die at the hands of foreign occupation forces.

For the last eight years, the Canada/US/NATO forces occupying Afghanistan have claimed that they are there to help Afghan people, to bring ‘freedom’, ‘democracy’ and ‘security’ to Afghanistan. Instead, thousands of Afghans like Abdur have watched their families be killed, their homes destroyed, and their

years, hundreds of billions of dollars spent, and currently about 65,000 troops occupying the country – and life certainly hasn’t gotten better in Afghanistan. What has been accomplished in the past eight years? The suicide rate among women is higher than ever. Life expectancy remains at a dismal 44 years of age, and the literacy rate is less than 30%, according to UN statistics. On top of this, the civilian death toll at the hands of the occupation forces is climbing rapidly, with a 25% increase in civilian deaths in the first half of 2009 alone. The occupation forces continue to make hollow apologies for these ‘unfortunate accidents’, offering as compensation a few hundred dollars for wives, husbands, children, and parents killed.

There are no official records kept of the number of Afghans killed in this war, although the number

and political strategists are recommending that thousands more troops should be sent to Afghanistan, in addition to doubling Afghan military and police forces.

As for Canada, there are currently nearly 3,000 Canadian Forces troops stationed in the Kandahar area of southern Afghanistan. The government of Canada has stated that they will be pulling all combat troops out of Afghanistan by 2011, but it looks more and more as though the mission may extend well beyond this. After all, the government of Canada has already promised to pull troops out of Afghanistan in 2005, again in 2007, and once again in 2009. Each time, the mission has been extended without any public consultation or debate among people in Canada. Now, they are promising the mission will end in 2011, but what evidence do people in Canada have that this is not just another bluff? And of course, even if Canada’s combat mission

AFGHANISTAN

US, NATO and Canada Intensify the Killing of Innocent People

As the resistance continues to grow, so does the campaign of the occupation forces to destroy it. Upon coming to office, newly elected US President Barack Obama immediately sent 21,000 more troops to Afghanistan.

stay alive and feed their families.

Elections Under Occupation: Democracy at Gunpoint

Amidst this crisis, federal and provincial elections will be held on August 20th in Afghanistan. In an article titled “In Afghanistan, a Time to Debate and Decide”, US Ambassador to Afghanistan Karl Eikenberry stated, “Afghanistan’s elections present an opportunity for the country’s citizens to create a future of prosperity and peace for their children.” But do they really? Even if these were to be elections carried out smoothly and without any foreign interference, how much opportunity do Afghans have to think about who should lead their country when their first priority is just staying alive? How much opportunity do they have to learn about candidates and vote when less than 30% of the population is literate? Speaking to the New York Times, Abdul Hadi, the election commissioner for Helmand province, said “The people are not that interested in elections... They voted before and did not see any result... They don’t want to put their lives in jeopardy for one vote.”

But besides this, these elections will not be carried out smoothly and definitely not without foreign

to effectively govern Afghanistan. But the truth is, the much talked-about ‘failures’ of Karzai are really just a reflection of the overall failure of the imperialist occupation of Afghanistan. Karzai himself is in no position to fix the problems of civilian deaths, lack of security, or any of the other problems in Afghanistan brought about by the occupation. In fact, Karzai is nothing more than a convenient scapegoat for the problems of the occupation by the occupation forces. With blaming and scapegoating Karzai, the imperialist forces in Afghanistan want to bring a new face to the government in Afghanistan, and therefore buy time to consolidate their imperialist goals in the country.

However, plans for getting rid of Karzai and putting a new face on the same old puppet government and same old occupation are not going as well as the imperialists hoped. Karzai’s two main contenders – Dr. Abdullah Abdullah and Dr. Ashraf Ghani (both listed by the International Council on Security and Development as ‘likely to receive US support’) – are not expected to beat Karzai in the presidential polls. The Afghan elections were delayed this year from May to August, officially with the reason of lack of

country thrown into more turmoil and instability than ever.

The Farce of Reconstruction

The statistics section of the Government of Canada's website on the mission in Afghanistan claims that, "Canada is supporting projects that will strengthen democratic development and build public institutions in Afghanistan", and boasts of schools and clinics being built, new agricultural projects, and roads being reconstructed. But painting a little makeup over the deep human crisis in Afghanistan will not solve the fundamental problems of people in that country. These developments are not fundamental improvements in Afghanistan. Rather, they are just small 'bubble zones' where some access to education, health care, and other basic necessities exist. The reality of Afghanistan is that still nearly three quarters of the country lacks access to clean drinking water, never mind health care or education.

But even within the 'bubble zones', tragedies continue. There are often no children to attend the schools that are built, either because they have to work to feed their families or because there is so little security that their parents are afraid to let them leave home lest they get killed on the way to school. The hospitals sometimes function as little more than death beds due to a lack of basic supplies and sanitation. This is on top of ongoing bombings, checkpoint shootings and nighttime house raids by foreign forces.

It has now been almost eight

is at least in the tens of thousands. As for foreign troops, the number of deaths continue to rise as Afghan resistance to the occupation grows and the occupation forces continue their drive to secure Afghanistan for their imperialist interests. July 2009 was the deadliest month for foreign troops in Afghanistan since the 2001 invasion, with 74 troops killed.

Quagmire and Social Stagnation

With the lack of any real improvement in the quality of life for Afghans, both the Afghan government and the occupation forces are rapidly losing credibility in the country. Afghan people have not welcomed with open arms the wonderful 'progress' that the occupation has brought them. Instead, they have fought back tooth and nail against the occupation forces that are destroying their country. The International Council on Security and Development reports that the Taliban, one of the main forces fighting against foreign occupation, now have a permanent presence in 72% of Afghanistan.

The increased campaign of war against the people of Afghanistan has done nothing to slow down Afghan resistance to the occupation. Nor has the recent campaign of bombings which has extended beyond Afghanistan's borders into neighbouring Pakistan done anything to stop the Taliban or slow the resistance. It has only added to the misery and frustration – and resistance – of people on both sides of the Afghanistan/Pakistan border.

in Afghanistan ends, that does not mean an end to Canada's participation in the occupation. According to the Globe and Mail, Alain Pellerin, executive director of the Conference of Defence Associations, "suggested that as many as 1,000 Canadian troops might remain in Kandahar, perhaps as trainers or to provide security for the provincial reconstruction team, long after the 2011 exit date for combat operations."

As imperialist countries increase their war drive against the Afghan people, they are finding themselves more and more in a quagmire. The more troops and bombs and weapons they send to try to destroy the Afghan resistance and secure Afghanistan for their interests, the stronger is the Afghan resistance against them. They are faced with the challenge of how it will be possible to secure their interests in Afghanistan when Afghan people are pushing against them every step of the way.

With the opposition to the foreign troops and their puppet Afghan government, Afghanistan has come to a point of political and social stagnation. Human progress cannot be imposed on Afghanistan by an outside force, at the barrel of a gun and with the price tag of human lives. This is not the kind of 'progress' that Afghan people want. Any real progress and development in Afghanistan must come from Afghan people themselves. But even thinking about building a better future for their country is not possible today, while the primary concerns of the majority of Afghans are simply being able to



Afghans protest civilian killings. Kabul, Afghanistan, November 27 2008.

interference. Two weeks before the elections, officials are already reporting that at least 10% of polling stations will not open due to lack of security. And just how open and democratic can an election be when the government has little control over the majority of the towns and villages in the country? But in addition to all of the other blocks and challenges for Afghans to participate in this 'democratic' election, there is also one fundamental fact: Afghanistan is occupied. That means that ultimately, whatever happens in Afghanistan is decided by the occupying powers – whether it comes under the veil of 'democratic elections' or not.

Karzai's Failure or Imperialist Failure?

In recent months there has been much talk in the media about the failures of current Afghan President Hamid Karzai to deal with corruption, to bring security, and

security, but really as a stall tactic to garner more support for the preferred candidates of the imperialists in the elections. However, even after stalling, Karzai is still ahead, with support from many layers of the ruling class and some tribal leaders in Afghanistan. It remains to be seen what the outcome of the elections will be, but we can be assured that whatever the results, they will not bring any fundamental change to the lives of people in occupied Afghanistan.

Afghanistan in the New Era of War and Occupation

As we look at each claim of the occupation forces in bringing security, stability, women's rights, democracy, or reconstruction to Afghanistan, they all crumble before our eyes. In eight years, the occupation forces have managed to achieve none of these sup-

continued on next page

Fire This Time is Back!

Dear Readers,

We are happy to tell you that Fire This Time newspaper is back again on a regular basis. We are confident that with our new political and financial arrangement and new way of organizing our production process, we will be able to get this valuable revolutionary newspaper into your hands on time. Fire This Time ceased to publish for the last couple of months due mainly to financial problems. Since the first time that this newspaper came out in February 2003, we have been struggling with financing Fire This Time. We have always relied on the generous contributions of our supporters and readers. We have never received even one cent from any mainstream, progressive, or other institution. This was an ambitious project, with grassroots support and thousands of hours of volunteer work. We did not wish anybody to impose their agendas on us in exchange for their money. However, we must confess that while we were good political activists and publishers, we were lousy financial managers. Nevertheless, we have learned from all these years and we are certain our new way of management will enable us to put out Fire This Time regularly.

Fire This Time is a revolutionary newspaper. By revolutionary we mean we are against capitalism and imperialism and for a revolution-

ary change, for a classless society, for a society based on the principle of 'from everyone according to their ability and to everyone according to their need'. We are for a better world and in order to reach that goal we believe in and participate in what Fidel Castro called the Battle of Ideas.

We have taken a side in the battle between dark forces and the forces of humanity. We are objective in the sense that we do not reject reality, but we are against the order of the current reality. We are for fundamental change. Thus, Fire This Time is a platform to reflect, to advocate for and to create a vision for this vital change. Humanity is on the verge of total collapse - and we can change it. The potential, capacity and capability of human beings is high, but it is shown contempt by the forces of capital and its war machine. No conscious men and women in this world can be indifferent to this near apocalypse.

Fire This Time newspaper does not represent its editorial board. Fire This Time in fact represents a new effort within the working class movement for a revolutionary change. Thus, it is not just a newspaper to reflect leftist ideas - whatever this so called left means today - it is an organizer of an attempt or if you will a revolutionary project building called Fire This Time Movement for Social

Justice. This is the backbone of a movement which is run by dozens of political activists who are workers, students and oppressed nationalities whose average age is about 25 years old. Although small right now, in reality Fire This Time is related and connected to hundreds of thousands of anti-capitalist forces whose struggles are reflected in the pages of Fire This Time. This is not just a lonesome voice on the internet without real roots, with a bunch of heavy duty "Marxists" acting like lonely generals looking for an army in their subjective world of cyberspace in their desperate battle for political survival. This is a newspaper by fighters in action for fighters in action.

Fire This Time newspaper was born out of necessity. We were active in various movements with different newspapers and newsletters. In a certain period of time in Vancouver around 2002-2003, radical movement came to a stall and young activists - not from the far left or traditional left - developed many disagreements. What was so significant was that the majority of these non-traditional activists lost their revolutionary perspective. Fire This Time came out of that era of splits and fragmentation. We, a group of political activists who believed in a revolutionary perspective, decided to publish this newspaper. We did not publish Fire This Time because we wanted to be differ-

ent and distinguished, like many petty bourgeois political tendencies. It was a necessity. We first looked around to join any existing political tendency that could present our vision. After many considerations and looking more carefully into what we wanted to achieve in the long run and looking into the potential and actual capacity of the left as a whole, we decided to go ahead with our own political tendency. Not because we had better ideas for building a revolutionary movement, but we did not see any viable left to join or to have them as our vanguard. The most important decision we have made, though, was that like Fidel, Che, Raul and the Cuban revolutionaries, we would build this movement BY SETTING AN EXAMPLE in action and leadership, not by opposing and fighting with other political tendencies - something that is customary in the leftist movement.

In our short history we have had a lot of support and encouragement. Many working class fighters, leftists of all kinds, intellectuals, workers, unemployed people, long-time activists and those new in politics, young people and old have all seriously encouraged us and asked us to continue. A kind reader said once, "this is the only paper that has the guts to say the truth with no other agenda". However, the most encouraging support came from the streets, where our writers, supporters and allies distributed

more than 150,000 papers, in addition to 50,000 distributed in the marches and rallies, political events and by mailing. We are also proud to have attracted many political writers and analysts from all over Canada, the US and Europe, as well as from our great revolutionary nation, Cuba. This issue is a good example of that.

Fire This Time is back. We are back firmly and determined to get the paper out regularly and be in constant communication and connection with you, our great readers.

If you believe we are doing a good job; if you believe what we are doing and what we are saying and claiming is the same; if you think it is worth it to support this little revolutionary newspaper, then we would like to appeal for your financial help. We assure you that you are our reason for existence and we depend solely on you. Thank you.

For a Better World,
Fire This Time newspaper
editorial board

CANADA: Imperialist Abroad | Imperialist at Home



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posed 'goals' that they set out to do – something that should have been easily achievable with the billions of dollars poured into Afghanistan during that time. But the reality is that these were never really the goals that the Canada/US/NATO occupation force had in mind for Afghanistan. The occupation of Afghanistan truly is about the imperialist consolidation and hegemony of power in the Middle East and Asia. Afghanistan is sometimes called the "rooftop of the world" because it sits between the Middle East, China, and Europe as a perfect place from which to access many trade markets. As the global

economy plummets, imperialist countries like Canada, the US, Britain and others are looking to expand their trade markets and gain more resources in an attempt to stave off total economic collapse. In this race for trade markets and resources, a new era of war and occupation opened with the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan and continued with the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the 2004 invasion of Haiti, the 2006 US-backed invasion of Somalia by Ethiopia, and includes sanctions or threats of attack against Iran, Sudan and other countries. Today, Afghanistan has become



**Kabul University students protest occupation.
May 10, 2009.**

a central focus in this new era of war and occupation – and Afghan people its primary victims.

Self-Determination is the Only Solution

should go in. None of this is possible when the entire country has the gun of imperialist interests leveled at its head.

The call for self-determination

and for 'OCCUPIERS OUT NOW!' is a call on the tongues of millions of Afghan people, and is a call we must follow here as well. Joining with our brothers and sisters in Afghanistan, we must educate, organize and mobilize people here in Canada and around the world to demand:

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Political Editor - Ali Yerevani
editor@firethistime.net

Editorial Board: Tamara Hansen, Aaron Mercredi,
Alison Bodine, Nita Palmer, Thomas Davies,
Ali Yerevani
editorialboard@firethistime.net

Layout & Design - Nita Palmer & Thomas Davies

Copy Editors - Nita Palmer

Publicity & Distribution Coordinator

Nita Palmer

Contributors to this Issue:

Andrew Barry, Payvand Pejvack, Manuel Yepe, Arnold August.

Contact

Phone - (604) 322-1764

Fax - (604) 322-1763

Email - info@firethistime.net

Mail - PO Box 21607 Vancouver BC, V5L 5G3

Subscriptions

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Distribution

For Fire This Time in your area across BC, Canada, and Internationally contact Publicity and Distribution Coordinator Nita Palmer:
Phone : (604) 780-7604
Email : distro@firethistime.net

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If you find Fire This Time to be an effective tool in the struggle of oppressed people for justice, more than ever, we need your support. On top of our regular costs of production, we regularly send members of our editorial board on assignment throughout North America, the Caribbean and beyond in order to make Fire This Time a better resource. These efforts have strained our finances.

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

This Newspaper could not have been possible without the generous contributions from our supporters.

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The Canadian Government on Honduras: Lessons for Today and Tomorrow

*By Arnold August**

July 7, 2009

On June 28 Peter Kent, Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas) in the Canadian Stephen Harper Government of the Conservative Party issued a statement in preparation for the Organisation of American States (OAS) emergency meeting to be held later that same day at 3 P.M. Kent declared that “Canada condemns the coup d’état that took place [on June 28] in Honduras, and calls on all parties to show restraint and to seek a peaceful resolution to the present political situation, which respects democratic norms and the rule of law, including the Honduran Constitution.” The next day, June 29, the important right-wing Canadian national newspaper, National Post, approvingly analyzed the government’s statement indicating that it “...echoed the mushrooming opposition to the coup, but didn’t mention Mr. Zelaya by name or directly call for his return to power.” On June 29, in a White House joint press conference with visiting Columbian President Uribe, President Obama stated that “...the coup was not legal and that President Zelaya remains the president of Honduras, the democratically elected president there.” This statement represents a verbal shift in US policy. Reflecting this change in wording, the next

Obama said Monday [June 29] that Washington believes Mr. Zelaya ‘remains the democratically elected president...’”

On July 1, the Organization of American states (OAS) including Canada resolved unanimously to “condemn the coup” and “to reaffirm that President Zelaya is the constitutional President of Honduras and to demand the immediate, safe and unconditional return of the president to his constitutional functions.” On July 2 the National Post wrote that “though Canada has followed the lead of Venezuela and other leftist Latin American countries in demanding Mr. Zelaya’s reinstatement, Peter Kent, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs for the America’s, said Ottawa’s support is focused on efforts led by the OAS....There is reason to believe that responsible individuals in the [current] government will recognize that an unacceptable line was crossed and that they must return to the democratic side....While Mr. Kent said there could be no compromise on whether Mr. Zelaya is reinstated, he signalled that Mr. Zelaya’s action ahead of his ousting had not gone unnoticed either.” The newspaper went on to quote Mr Kent: “The [provisional government – parenthesis by National Post] must first restore the democratic order of rule of law. Once there, the people of Honduras and

meeting recommended Saturday night [July 4] that Zelaya not return immediately because of the danger in which he could find himself.” There is no doubt that President Zelaya’s landing in Honduran capital’s international airport, under the conditions of July 5, presented a danger for him, his entourage and the tens of thousands of his supporters awaiting him in the face of the full armed force and repression of the military. But what did the Canadian government do to add its voice and prestige to force the military de facto government to give way? Did it join with the countries of Central and Latin America and insist that the OAS and UN resolutions be applied in spirit and in letter? By recommending that Zelaya not return consists of an indirect or virtually direct signal of encouragement to the military regime to blame President Zelaya for any violence or bloodshed resulting from the application of the international resolutions.

On July 6, US State Department spokesperson Ian Kelly held a press briefing on Honduras and other issues. Regarding Honduras, in his opening statement, Mr. Kelley stated that “our goal remains the restoration of the democratic order in Honduras.” A reporter could not help but notice that there was something very unclear and ambiguous. Taking into consideration the nebulous and double-standard US defi-



Protest in support of President Manuel Zelaya at Honduran Attorney General’s office. Tegucigalpa, July 7, 2009.

The United States has for several decades used the Two-Track foreign policy towards Latin America: on the one hand direct intervention including military force and on the other hand “soft” diplomacy and negotiations, the latter both openly and behind closed doors. The July 6 briefing as indicated above is an example of how the current Washington administration simultaneously uses both Track I and Track II. It is very positive indeed the Mr. Kelley stated on July 6 that the State Department will meet with President Zelaya on July 7 and not the de facto government if a representative of the latter should later come to Washington. However, this commitment only emerged once again as a result of questioning by reporters. While there are of course contradictions amongst US institutions such as the White House, the State Department, CIA, the FBI, the Pentagon, the South Florida extreme

come to this is the establishment National Post and the section of the ruling circles which it represents. However, as we can see from the above, the Conservative Party and the conservative section of the ruling circles can easily accommodate itself to both Track I and Track II as the Honduran issue shows, even if the foreign policy changes like a chameleon from one day to the next.

The Obama government, in comparison to the Canadian Conservative government, is supposed to be on the center-left and opposed to the right-wing Bush era policies. The essence of all this is that Track I and Track II are two wings of the same policy consisting of domination and control, it is just a question of which one is more efficient and “works”. Both tracks are useful for “conservatives” as well as “liberals” and the two tracks can blend into each other from one moment to the next.

day, June 30, the 192-member United Nation General Assembly met on Honduras and unanimously adopted a resolution which “demands the immediate and unconditional restoration of the legitimate and Constitutional Government of the President of the Republic, Mr. José Manuel Zelaya Rosales.” The Canadian delegation of course voted with the other 191 UN members. Once again the National Post expressed in its June 30 edition what seems to be their approval, indicating that:

“The decision by Canada to join the measure’s sponsors marked an evolution of [Canada’s] position on Mr. Zelaya’s removal Sunday by the Honduran armed forces... Until Tuesday [June30], Canada had called for resumption of the democratic process in Honduras, but stopped short of calling for Mr. Zelaya’s reinstatement. The United States appeared to hold a similar position, until U.S. President Barack

those of the [provisional - parenthesis by National Post] government have every reason to believe that the OAS is paying attention and is well aware of transgressions made by all parties.’” This statement represents a further departure from the UN and OAS resolutions, in favour of which the Canadian Government voted and whose essence in both instances demanded the immediate, safe and unconditional return of President Zelaya.

On July 4, the day before the stand-off on the Honduran airport runway between on the one hand President Zelaya and the people of Honduras and on the other hand the military government, according to a Reuters cable, Peter Kent declared to the OAS session: “It is far from clear that current conditions could guaranty his safety upon return.’” This policy was confirmed by CNN on July 4 when it was reported that “the Canadian delegate to the OAS

of democracy, a question by a reporter was quite significant. A reporter asked: “Have you figured out ... when you see say you seek the restoration of democratic order, have you guys yet figured out what that means?” Mr. Kelley: “Well, I think it means – in the most immediate instance, it means the return of the democratically elected president to Tegucigalpa [Honduran capital].” If the reporter did not raise the issue, this key demand of the world’s people would not have been made explicit, even if it be only in words. Another discussion between M. Kelley and other reporters centered on the issue of Washington’s links and aid to Honduras. It remained unclear as Mr. Kelley evasively responded under questioning that some aid continued while other assistance was cut off or in the process of being evaluated and/or eliminated.

Regarding the US military ties with the de facto government, Mr. Kelley said in response to reporters’ questions that the “Southern Command has minimized contact with Honduran military.” Notice that contact has continued but has only been “minimized”, without any specification. However, specifications—did—come into the picture when reporters asked about the Soto Cano US military base in Honduras. Question by reporter: “Was there any talk of allowing Zelaya’s plane to land at the U.S. military base there?” Response by Mr. Kelley: “... That base is controlled by the Honduran authorities, so it is not up to us to allow landing rights or anything.” How convenient!

right-wing, etcetera, the US policy towards Honduras from June 28 up to an including July7 consists of this twin Two-Track policy: Track I: indirectly if not directly being involved in the military coup and the current thinly veiled support for the military. Track II: simultaneously using talks and diplomacy to “diffuse” the situation; but diffuse it is favour of whom?

On the one hand there are words of wisdom concerning restoring democracy and the elected president, while on the other hand placing the military coup leaders and the violently kidnapped President almost on the same footing.

The Canadian governments for its part have for many years been a spokesperson for Track II. (There have been exceptions for example the late Prime Minister’s Trudeau’s sincere outreaching to Cuba and Latin America during his 1976 visit to Cuba, thus reflecting the sentiment of the vast majority of Canadian people). Engagement and diplomacy but for ulterior motives is supposed to predominate in Ottawa and in this way attempting to distinguish themselves from the US brutal policy of intervention which almost always held the upper hand over Track II. The people of Canada in its vast majority have a marked disdain for policies of intervention and aggression. The current Canadian government is part of the right-wing tendency. There are really no hot beds of neo-cons in Canada flaming Track I policies as is done by such elements as the Cuban and Venezuelan exile communities in South Florida. The closest one can

One of the lessons to be learned and on which action has to be taken immediately is to hold the Canadian government responsible for its violation of the OAS and UN resolutions. The Conservatives must change their position right now and distance itself from the US policy and instead ally itself with the vast movements in South America. Already, some political parties in the Canadian Parliament have courageously and honourably raised objections to the Canadian government Honduras policy from June 28 to date. There can be no delays. The Honduran de facto government must be forced to step aside now and allow the President to return. If the Canadian government is so concerned about the danger to the President if he returned to his country and people, the answer does not lie in keeping him away, but rather in forcing the abdication of the usurpers according the international resolutions and positions. I believe that the coup against Honduras is a blow directed against the movements for sovereignty and progress of all the peoples of Latin America. The peoples of the world, especially now in Latin America, must be forever vigilant and oppose the Two Track policy of imperialism coming from the north. The peoples in the south of the Americas have been carving out their own concepts of sovereignty and democracy over the last 50 years through many sacrifices and struggles and thus deserve the full support of peoples in Canada and the USA.

**Arnold August, Montreal, Canada is an author and journalist specializing on Cuba.*



Rally in support of President Manuel Zelaya. Tegucigalpa, July 4, 2009.

El-Gobierno Canadiense Acerca de Honduras: Lecciones para Hoy y Mañana



*Por Arnold August**

7 de julio de 2009

El 28 de junio Peter Kent, Ministro de Estado para Asuntos Exteriores (encargado de las Américas) del gobierno conservador canadiense de Stephen Harper, emitió una declaración previa a la reunión de emergencia de la Organización de Estados Americanos (OEA) que se celebraría el mismo día a las 3 de la tarde. Kent declaró que “Canadá condena el golpe de estado que ha tenido lugar [en Junio 28] en Honduras, y llama a todos los partidos a demostrar refrenamiento y buscar una solución pacífica a la actual situación política, que respete las normas democráticas y el apego a la ley, incluida la Constitución Hondureña.” Al siguiente día, el 29 de junio, el importante periódico de derecha canadiense, el National Post, analizaba con aprobación la declaración del gobierno indicando que ella “...se hacía eco de la rápida y creciente oposición al golpe, pero no mencionaba al señor Zelaya por su nombre, ni hacía

el Presidente de los EE.UU, Barack Obama dijo el lunes [junio 29] que Washington considera que “ ‘El Sr. Zelaya continúa siendo el Presidente electo democráticamente....’ ”

El 1 de Julio, la Organización de Estados Americanos (OEA) incluyendo a Canadá, resolvió unánimemente “condenar el golpe” y “reafirmar que el Presidente José Manuel Zelaya Rosales es el Presidente constitucional de Honduras y exigir la restauración inmediata, segura e incondicional del Presidente a sus funciones constitucionales.” El 2 de Julio el National Post reportó que “aunque Canadá ha seguido el liderazgo de Venezuela y otros países de izquierda latinoamericanos que demandan la reinstalación del señor Zelaya, Peter Kent, Ministro de Estado para las Relaciones Exteriores (encargado con las Américas), dijo que el respaldo de Ottawa se centra en los esfuerzos liderados por la OEA... Hay razón para creer que individuos responsables en el gobierno [actual] reconocerán que fue cruzada

portaba que “el delegado canadiense a la reunión de la OEA recomendó el sábado por la noche [Julio 4] que Zelaya no retorne inmediatamente a causa del peligro en que se podría encontrar.” No hay dudas que el aterrizaje del Presidente Zelaya en el aeropuerto internacional de la capital de Honduras en las condiciones del 5 de Julio, presentaba peligros para él, sus acompañantes y las decenas de miles de partidarios que lo esperaban, frente a la represión de las fuerzas armadas en completa disposición de combate. Pero ¿qué hizo el gobierno canadiense para sumar su voz y prestigio a forzar al gobierno de facto a deponer su actitud? ¿Se unió él a los países de América Central y América Latina en insistir que las resoluciones de la ONU y la OEA fueran aplicadas en su letra y en su espíritu? La recomendación de que Zelaya no retornara es una señal indirecta o virtualmente directa para estimular al régimen militar y a culpar al Presidente Zelaya por cualquier acto de violencia o derramamiento de sangre resultante de la aplicación de las resoluciones internacionales.

El 6 de Julio, el vocero del Departamento de Estado Norteamericano, Ian Kelly, sostuvo una conferencia de prensa con reporteros acerca de Honduras y otros temas. Con respecto a Honduras, en su declaración inicial, el señor Kelly afirmó, que

el retorno del presidente democráticamente electo a Tegucigalpa.”. Si el reportero no hubiera planteado el tema, esta demanda clave de los pueblos del mundo hubiera podido no ser explicitada, aun cuando sea sólo en palabras. Otra discusión entre el Sr. Kelly y diversos reporteros, se centró en el tema de los vínculos de Washington y su asistencia a Honduras. Quedó sin aclarar, debido a las respuestas evasivas del Sr. Kelly ante el cuestionamiento de los periodistas, si se mantenía cierta ayuda en tanto otra se eliminaba o estaban en proceso de ser evaluada y/o eliminada.

En relación a los vínculos militares con el gobierno de facto, el Sr. Kelly dijo, respondiendo a las preguntas de los reporteros, que “el Comando Sur ha minimizado el contacto con los militares de Honduras”. Adviértase que el contacto ha continuado y que solo ha sido “minimizado”, sin más especificaciones. No obstante, las especificaciones se hicieron más tarde, cuando el reportero preguntó acerca de la base militar Soto Cano en Honduras. La pregunta formulada por el reportero: “¿Se habló en algún momento de permitir al avión de Zelaya aterrizar en esa base militar?”. La respuesta del Sr. Kelly fue: “...Esa base es controlada por las autoridades de Honduras, así que no nos está dado a nosotros dar derechos de aterrizajes o cualquier otra cosa”. ¡Qué conveniente!

Los Estados Unidos por varias décadas han usado la política de Dos Car-

ción y agresión. El actual gobierno canadiense es parte de la tendencia de derecha. En realidad no hay en Canadá hogar para los neoconservadores que alimenten las llamas del Carril I como son los elementos del exilio cubano y venezolano en el sur de la Florida. Lo más próximo a esto que podemos encontrarnos es el National Post y la sección de los círculos elites que él representa. No obstante, como podemos ver de lo expuesto más arriba, el Partido Conservador y la sección conservadora de los círculos gobernantes pueden acomodarse muy bien tanto al Carril I como al Carril II como muestran los sucesos de Honduras, incluso si la política exterior cambia como un camaleón de un día para otro.

El gobierno de Obama, en comparación con el gobierno Conservador Canadiense, se supone que esté en el centro izquierdo y opuesto a la derechista de la era de la política de Bush. La esencia de todo es que los Carriles I y II son dos alas de la misma política de dominación y control, es todo cuestión de cuál de ellas es más eficiente y “funciona”. Ambos carriles son útiles para los dos, “conservadores” y “liberales”, los dos carriles se pueden mezclar uno con el otro en un instante.

Una de las lecciones que debemos aprender y sobre la cual actuar inmediatamente, es que tenemos que hacer responsable al gobierno de Canadá por su violación de las resoluciones de la OEA y la ONU. Los

un llamado directo a su retorno al poder”.

El 29 de junio, en una conferencia de prensa en la Casa Blanca brindada durante la visita del presidente colombiano Uribe, el Presidente Obama declaró que “...el golpe no fue legal y el Presidente Zelaya sigue siendo el Presidente de Honduras, el Presidente democráticamente electo en ese país”. Esta declaración representa un cambio en el discurso político de los EE.UU. Reflejando este cambio de palabras, al día siguiente, el 30 de junio, los 192 miembros de la Asamblea General de la Organización de las Naciones Unidas (ONU) celebraron una sesión extraordinaria acerca de Honduras y de modo unánime adoptaron una resolución que “demanda la inmediata e incondicional restauración del gobierno legítimo y constitucional del presidente de la república don José Manuel Zelaya Rosales.” La delegación canadiense, por supuesto, votó con los restantes 191 miembros de las Naciones Unidas. Y de nuevo el National Post expresó en su edición del 30 de Junio lo que parecía ser su aprobación, indicando que:

“La decisión de Canadá de unirse a los patrocinadores de esas medidas marcó una evolución de la posición [de Canadá] acerca del derrocamiento el domingo del Sr. Zelaya por las fuerzas armadas de Honduras.... Hasta el martes [junio 30], Canadá había llamado a reasumir el proceso democrático en Honduras, pero se había abstenido de llamar a la reinstalación del Sr. Zelaya. Los Estados Unidos parecen sostener una posición similar, hasta el que

una línea inaceptable y que ellos deben regresar al lado democrático... Mientras que el señor Kent decía que no puede haber compromiso acerca de si el señor Zelaya es reinstalado, señalaba que el accionar anterior del señor Zelaya no había tampoco pasado inadvertido”. El periódico de nuevo cita al señor Kent:

“ ‘el [gobierno provisional- paréntesis es del National Post] debe primero restaurar el orden democrático y el apego a la ley. Una vez ahí, el pueblo de Honduras y aquellos del gobierno [provisional- paréntesis del National Post] tienen toda la razón para creer en que la OEA está prestando atención y estará bien al cuidado de las transgresiones de cualquiera de las partes.’ ” Esta declaración representa un alejamiento de las resoluciones de la ONU y la OEA, a favor de las cuales el Gobierno de Canadá votó y cuya esencia en ambas instancias demandaba el retorno seguro, incondicional e inmediato del Presidente Zelaya.

El 4 de Julio, el día antes del enfrentamiento en el aeropuerto de Honduras entre los partidarios del Presidente Zelaya junto al pueblo de Honduras por un lado y el gobierno militar por el otro, Peter Kent, según un cable de Reuters, declaró a la sesión de la OEA. “ ‘No está nada claro que las condiciones actuales puedan garantizar su retorno seguro.’ ” Esta política fue confirmada por la CNN el 4 de Julio cuando re-

“nuestra meta lo sigue constituyendo la restitución del orden democrático en Honduras”. Un reportero no pudo evitar destacar que había algo que no estaba claro y era ambiguo. Teniendo en cuenta la definición nebulosa



Protesta contra el golpe de estado en Honduras. Tegucigalpa, 7 de julio 2009.

y con doble moral de democracia para los EE.UU, el reportero realizó una pregunta que resultó muy significativa. Él preguntó: “¿Que tienen ustedes en cuenta, cuando se refieren a una restauración de un orden democrático?, ¿qué significa esa cosa, muchachos?” El señor Kelly expresó: “Bueno, yo pienso que eso significa, de modo más inmediato,

riles para sus relaciones con América Latina: por un lado la intervención directa incluida la militar y por el otro lado la diplomacia “suave” y las negociaciones, estas últimas lo mismo abiertas como a puertas cerradas.

La política de los EE.UU hacia Honduras desde el 28 de junio hasta el presente día 7 de Julio es esta misma doble política, esto es, involucrados indirectamente, si es que no directamente, en el golpe militar, al mismo tiempo que usan los discursos y la diplomacia para “resolver” la situación; pero ¿resolverla a favor de quien? Por un lado las palabras sabias de restaurar la democracia y al Presidente electo, pero al mismo tiempo ponen a los líderes del golpe de estado y al presidente secuestrado violentamente, casi al mismo nivel.

Los gobiernos de Canadá por su parte han sido por muchos años voceros del Segundo Carril hacia Latina América. (Han habido excepciones, por ejemplo el sincero acercamiento a Cuba y América Latina del Primer Ministro Trudeau durante su visita a Cuba en 1976, que reflejaba el sentimiento de la amplia mayoría del pueblo canadiense). Compromiso y diplomacia pero para motivos ulteriores se supone que predominan y en este sentido tratan de distinguirse de la política brutal de intervención de los EE.UU que casi siempre ha predominado por encima del Segundo Carril. El pueblo de Canadá en su inmensa mayoría repudia fuertemente las políticas de interven-

Conservadores deben cambiar su posición inmediatamente y distanciarse de la política de los EE.UU y en su lugar, aliarse inmediatamente con los amplios movimientos de América del Sur. Ya algunos partidos políticos en el Parlamento Canadiense han planteado objeciones valientes y honorables acerca de la política del Gobierno Canadiense respecto a Honduras desde el día 28 hasta el día de hoy. No puede haber demoras. El gobierno de facto de Honduras tiene que ser obligado a retroceder ahora y permitir el regreso del Presidente. Si el gobierno canadiense está realmente preocupado por el peligro que corre el Presidente si regresa a su país y su pueblo, la respuesta no puede ser mantenerlo alejado, sino forzar la renuncia de los usurpadores de acuerdo a las posiciones y las resoluciones internacionales.

Creo firmemente que el golpe contra Honduras es un golpe dirigido contra la soberanía y el progreso de todos los pueblos de América Latina. Los pueblos del mundo, especialmente ahora en América Latina, deben estar siempre vigilantes y opuestos a la política de Dos Carriles del imperialismo proveniente del Norte.

Desde hace ya más de 50 años, los pueblos latinoamericanos, tras muchos sacrificios y luchas, han venido labrando sus propios conceptos de soberanía y democracia; por ello merecen el pleno apoyo de los pueblos de Canadá y Estados Unidos.

** Arnold August vive en Montreal, Canadá y es un autor y periodista especializado en Cuba.*

HONDURAS - U.S. COUNTER REVOLUTION STRIKES BACK IN LATIN AMERICA



By Thomas Davies

“The outside world sees us as bad guys but inside the country we are the ones who saved democracy... We did it out of duty and for love of country because democracy was at risk.” – Honduran General Romeo Vásquez Velásquez, justifying his participation in June 28th coup d’état in Honduras

On June 28th the world was shocked to learn that Honduran President Manuel Zelaya had been removed by force from the country by members of the Honduran military, and a new government under Roberto Michelletti imposed in his place. Condemnation came quickly from around the world as the United Nations, Organization of American States, and European Union all denounced the coup, and not one country has officially recognized the newly imposed government. It is obvious then why General Velasquez and others has taken to the airwaves to try and justify the “democratic” and “constitutional” nature of their new and brutal regime in Honduras. To understand the truth of the situation, we must look at who organized the coup, how they did it, and why they have attempted to overthrow

control of telecommunications, and increased spending in health and education.

Importantly, he also joined ALBA (the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas) in August of 2008. ALBA, which was created by Cuba and Venezuela as an alternative to the US Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), emphasizes solidarity and cooperation over the economic domination and privatization which has characterized US initiated trade agreements in Latin-America. Honduras joined Bolivia, Cuba, Dominica, Nicaragua and Venezuela in the initiative, and Honduras’ business elite and their US backers were furious. To them, Zelaya responded, “When I met George W. Bush, no one called me an anti-imperialist and the business community applauded me. Now that I am meeting with the impoverished peoples of the world, they criticise me... Who has told them they have an absolute right to privatise?”

Polarization

The confrontation heightened on March 24th, when Zelaya called for a non-binding referendum on June 28, to allow Hondurans to vote on whether or not to create a committee to examine the possibilities of changes to the constitution. The Supreme Court, ruled by the country’s oligarchy, called the referendum illegal, and when the now infamous General Velasquez refused to mobilize the military in

Costa Rica, would be the mediator of talks between Zelaya and the coup-government to resolve the crisis. After one month of back and forths and watered down proposals which have all been refused by the coup government, it is clear that the negotiations were never meant to accomplish any sort of resolution. Juan Barahona, leader of the National Front Against the Coup, the broad Honduran coalition coordinating many of the protests, has already said, “We don’t see any possibilities to arrive at an agreement in the talks in Costa Rica. These talks could just be a way to buy time for the coup to consolidate its power and also to buy time to exhaust the resistance.”

On June 24th when Zelaya briefly crossed the Honduran border by land from Nicaragua to meet with supporters, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was quick to condemn him as “reckless” and working against “the broader efforts to restore democratic and constitutional order” (read: US organized negotiations). This looks very sensible to say from Washington, but how can she balance that statement with her silence as the coup government imposes military rule over Honduras and murders pro-Zelaya demonstrators? What kind of incentive would the coup government, which imposes itself by force, have to negotiate away its power anyways? Who is really the reckless partner in this twisted soap opera?



Protest against the coup in El Paraiso, Honduras. July 28, 2009.

If Obama had really turned a new leaf, why did the US sign a new accord with the repressive Colombian government to lease seven more military bases and more than double the US troop presence there? Why does he still advocate for the criminal US blockade against Cuba, and the persecution of the Cuban 5 – imprisoned in US jails for exposing US sponsored terror against Cuba?

Beyond this context, and the obvious desire of the US to stop the political process in Honduras before it goes too far, there are other obvious connections:

- Coup leader General Romeo Vasquez Velasquez and Gen. Luis Javier Prince Suazo, head of the Air Force which transported the president to Costa Rica – were both trained in the US at the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, formerly known as the School of the Americas. The school is also nicknamed “School of the Coups” for having trained

five minutes, because the Honduran economy – all of our military, trade and migration activities – depend on the United States.”

Suppression and Resistance Continue

Despite the obvious fact that they are not only fighting against their own oligarchy, but the US as well, Hondurans have continued to mobilize against the coup and for the return of Zelaya.

Not one day has gone by since the coup d’état where that hasn’t been massive mobilizations in the streets of Honduras. Honduras’ three principal labour centrals, the Unitary Confederation of Honduran Workers (CUTH), General Workers Central (CGT) and Confederation of Honduran Workers (CTH) have organized repeated national strikes. Thousands of teachers have been on a national strike since the day after the coup, and have been joined by 15,000 nurses and other workers at 28



Rally in support of President Manuel Zelaya. Tegucigalpa, July 20, 2009.

the democratically elected President of Honduras.

Roots of the Conflict

“Some say Manuel Zelaya threatened democracy by proposing a constitutional assembly. But the poor of Honduras know that Zelaya raised the minimum salary... They know he defended the poor by sharing money with mayors and small towns. That’s why they are out in the streets closing highways and protesting (to demand Zelaya’s return),” - Honduran Bishop Luis Santos in a July 30th interview with the Catholic News Service.

The coup was a culmination of tensions which have been boiling over in Honduras as President Zelaya demonstrated increasing willingness to implement reforms in favour of the Honduran people. He increased the minimum wage by 60 percent in a country known for its huge sweatshop industry, worked towards ensuring public

its established election duties, Zelaya then ordered him to be fired. Soon after, the military showed up at Zelaya’s door.

The right-wing in Honduras and North America have tried to justify the violent removal of the democratically elected President before the end of his term by saying Zelaya violated the Honduran constitution in proposing to extend his Presidential term, and that the constitution allows for such a manoeuvre against him based on this. False. There is no proof the proposed constitutional convention would have even discussed presidential terms. In fact, the only one in Honduras to have tried to commit such an act is Michelletti, who in 1982 led various congressmen in trying to introduce legislation that would have done just that!

Negotiation or Consolidation?

On July 7th, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced that US ally Oscar Arias, President of

Coup in Honduras – Made in America?

“...the Honduran coup leaders can’t even breathe without the support of the United States.” - Fidel Castro, in June 28th Reflection on the coup

There are some who say that because the US spoke publicly against the removal of Zelaya from Honduras, and has suspended some aid to Honduras, that this is a sign of the new US policy towards Latin-America based on peace and good-will. This is unfortunately false.

Consider this – the US has proven links to the rich oligarchs who attempted to overthrow democratically elected Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez in 2002, and they immediately recognized that coup-government before Chavez was brought back to power by the massive mobilization of the Venezuela people. The US Ambassador to Bolivia, Philip Goldberg, was also expelled from Bolivia on September 11, 2008 when it was documented that he met with opposition leaders, and was involved in coordinating and funding their terror in an attempted coup.

For over a century the US has owned much of Latin-America through direct military suppression and the organization of friendly client regimes. It continues to have massive economic interests there which have been jeopardized by a wave of popular movements demanding control of their country’s resources and political institutions, and the elections of left-leaning governments. Those economic interests did not disappear with the election of Barack Obama.

the leaders of the many coups in Latin-America, and for its curriculum which has included assassination and torture.

- The Honduran coup leaders are just two of over 60,000 Latin American graduates of the school. All Honduran officers from captains and above are trained at the SOA. The “SOA Watch” database lists 3,566 graduates of the school from Honduras alone, and the US has continued to train Honduran military officers after the coup.

-The US also continues to operate the Soto Cano military base in Honduras, complete with over 550 U.S. military personal stationed at all times

- A close ally of Bill and Hillary Clinton, Bennett Ratcliff, was appointed as an actual member of the negotiating team for the coup government in the Costa Rica negotiations. According to a source cited by the New York Times, “Every proposal that Micheletti’s group presented was written or approved by the American.”

- Although the US stopped \$18.5 million in military aid to Honduras and suspended the visas of certain coup leaders, they have refused to officially designate forcible removal of Zelaya a “coup,” and continue to provide a reported \$180 million of foreign aid. This is a violation of the Foreign Appropriations Act, which states the US must suspend all aid to any country “whose duly elected head of government is deposed by military coup or decree.”

As Zelaya said himself recently while in Mexico, if Obama really wanted to reverse the coup, “those putschists would only last

hospitals who declared themselves on an indefinite strike. Around the country roads and bridges have been blockaded to disrupt “business as usual”. A national march was launched on August 5th, with protesters leaving from every corner of Honduras and marching up to 15 hours a day to meet in either one of the country’s main cities, San Pedro Sula or Tegucigalpa.

Curfews have been declared by the coup government across Honduras, and the military has also had a constant presence on the street. At least 10 people have been murdered for their participation in anti-coup protests, including 2 union organizers, an LGT-BQ organizer, a radio journalist, and several young demonstrators. Thousands of arrests have been made, and Velasquez promised on Honduran television to “go after” demonstration organizers. Riot police in Tegucigalpa used tear gas and water cannons against over 3000 students rallying in support of Zelaya at the National Autonomous University. The university’s rector Julieta Castellanos was also beaten to the floor.

What’s Next?

Every peace loving, justice seeking person around the world should denounce the coup in Honduras, and call for the return of President Manuel Zelaya.

The basis of this support need not come from complete political agreement with Zelaya. It is no secret that Zelaya has not yet developed the same revolutionary vision and objectives which exist in Cuba, Venezuela, and Bolivia and their leaders. He continues to be a

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IMPERIALIST CAMPAIGN CONTINUES AGAINST SUDAN

HANDS OFF SUDAN!

By Thomas Davies

“What we see is the remnants of genocide...”

“At some point, we’re going to have to unwind some of these sanctions, so we can do the very things we need to do...”

“There is no evidence today that Sudan is involved as a state sponsor of terror...”

- United States Special Envoy to Sudan, Scott Gration, while speaking at a US Senate Africa Committee Hearing, July 30th 2009

These comments made by a someone who US President Barack Obama refers to as “one of my top national security advisors” sent shockwaves through Washington, and those who have been actively campaigning for foreign military intervention in Sudan mobilized to counter-attack what they saw as a softening of the US position against Sudan. However, after the ensuing commotion, it continues to be clear that the US is not softening its position towards military intervention in Sudan, but is desperately trying to find a way to save its efforts against the African country. By all accounts

against Sudan.

President Barack Obama has said, “There is no question that the United States military is currently spread thin with our earlier commitments in Afghanistan and Iraq. But, that does not mean that we should not be providing the resources that we can... This should be a swift and clear-cut decision. It is not only an issue of saving lives in the Sudan. It is necessary to support our interests in the



Sudanese women protest ICC warrant for the arrest of President Omar al-Bashir. March 7, 2009.

question, has he lifted his head from the sand for long enough to see what has happened in the Middle East with this approach?

ICC, Rhymes with Hypocrisy

The next prong in the strategy against Sudan was the March 2009 issue of a warrant for the arrest of Sudanese President Bashir and two others in connection with the humanitarian disaster in the Darfur region of Sudan. It is

diers by rebel forces in Darfur.” ICC Watch points out that Thomas Lubanga, a citizen of the Democratic Republic of Congo, is on trial in by ICC for allegedly using young boys in his rebel movement, while the ICC ignores that the UN’s Peacekeeping child protection unit has placed Darfur rebels the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) on a list of child soldier recruiters.

Who is Stalling the Process?

For all the accusations against the Sudanese government for filibustering and stalling the peace process, it has been the supposed rebel movements who are responsible for the breakdown of peace talks. The AU/UN Chief Mediator Djibril Bassolé met on August 6th with the Sudanese presidential adviser Ghazi Salah Eddin Attabani, to discuss the new developments. It was announced following the meeting that peace talks had been adjourned due to differences between the different rebel factions. It is suspect enough that that US envoy to Sudan Scott Gration has said he was working hard “to unify the (Darfur) rebels so that there is a spokesman for that group,” but this shows that one more of the prevailing justifications for military intervention against Sudan is not what it seems to be on the surface.

up to now, it has been a failure.

It wasn't long before Mr. Gration, a retired Air Force General, gave interviews clarifying that he supported sanctions on Sudan, and would favour amending only sanctions which are preventing the US from sending heavy machinery and other equipment to develop southern Sudan ahead of a 2011 referendum on whether to secede from the north. He also spoke in favour of the International Criminal Court's March 2009 decision to issue a warrant for Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir's arrest on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

All of this is happening in the build up to a US administration "policy review" of its Sudan initiatives. There are rumours of heated debates within the administration, but it is crystal clear that all the major players continue to support an aggressive position



Washington DC Protest demanding "Hands off Sudan!" March 2009.

region."

Susan Rice, the US Permanent Representative to the UN has promised to "go down in flames" advocating "dramatic action", and has publicly called for US or NATO airstrikes on Sudan, a possible naval blockade, "and other military options if those don't succeed." Vice President Joseph Biden has been somewhat more direct, "I would use American force now."

Failures on Top of Failures

The current focal point of foreign intervention is the joint United Nations/African Union military force which was pressured into Sudan in 2007. It was supposed to have 26,000 soldiers on the ground, but as of May 2009, the UN's 192 member nations had only scraped together less than 10,000 uniformed soldiers and police officers. No one has so far been willing to provide even one of the 18 transport helicopters requested by the mission. General Martin Luther Agwai, the Nigerian military officer who is the outgoing commander of the forces showed some frustration when he recently said there is little point in "having boots without capabilities."

It is understandable that countries would be reluctant to join US-backed military initiatives after seeing the disasters and quagmires in Iraq, Afghanistan, Haiti, and Somalia. Even though Obama has said that Sudan is a good option for countries not wishing to participate in Afghanistan or Iraq, it is clear that projections by UN Secretary General Ban-Ki Moon that 90% of the forces will be on the ground by the end of the year are deceptively optimistic.

Eric Reeves, a well funded figure in the pro-military intervention lobby in the United States, wrote recently in an op-ed to the Los Angeles Times saying that the UN/AU force "has lost the confidence of most Darfuris." His solution? More military. This begs the

important that we are always clear in not denying the plight of millions of people in Darfur, where drought, poor infrastructure, and government connected militias have accentuated tensions between traditionally nomadic subsistence herders and substance farmers, but in all fairness we must also be clear as to why the ICC singled out Sudan, and what kind of legitimacy the ICC has to begin with.

The ICC is not a comprehensive international body. Member states comprise only 27% of the world's population, and the vast majority of its budget comes from European parliaments.

There have been 14 people so far indicted by the ICC, all 14 of them are from Africa. The ICC's creators deemed the waging of aggressive wars, like those waged by imperialist countries in Iraq, Afghanistan and beyond, to be outside the court's jurisdiction. In the words of late British foreign secretary Robin Cook, who helped pioneer the court, "This is not a court set up to bring to book prime ministers of the United Kingdom or presidents of the United States."

So at a time when it is clear that the largest atrocities being committed in the world – the US/UK in Iraq, US/Canada/NATO in Afghanistan, Israel in Palestine, the UN in Haiti, Ethiopia and the US in Somalia – are being completely disregarded by a so-called international court, any of its decisions are suspect and deserve to be considered in the light of the political objectives of the tiny elite who control it. While the US was later able to pressure a handful of African countries to state otherwise, the African Union and the Arab League have both publicly opposed Bashir's indictment.

The organization ICC Watch has also challenged the chief prosecutor of the ICC Luis Moreno-Ocampo, to account for why he has not launched an investigation into the "clear and all too well documented use of child sol-

What is so Important About Sudan to Begin With?

Fire This Time reported the following in Volume #3, Issue 4

"Sudan, the largest country in Africa, is believed to have oil reserves rivaling those of Saudi Arabia, and large deposits of natural gas. In addition, it has one of the three largest deposits of high-purity uranium in the world, along with the fourth-largest deposits of copper. It's obvious these resources are coveted by Western powers, especially since China is currently Sudan's largest trading partner and has significant control over oil resources there."

"Sudan also borders nine other African countries (Afghanistan borders six in the Middle East) and has access to the Red Sea and the Middle East beyond it, unlike many land-locked African countries. Conquering Sudan would mean the best head start for any foreign power wishing to expand across Africa. If we see that they are interested in doing this in the Middle East, why would it be any different in Africa?"

This situation has not changed in the past five years of heavy imperialist campaigning against Sudan. The countries who dishonestly continue to cry crocodile tears over Darfur and take advantage of many people with honest humanitarian intentions, also continue to use war and occupation as their primary weapon in solving their economic and political catastrophes. Their failures are obvious around the world, and we cannot allow them to drag Africa down with them. No matter how the U.S. administration comes out spinning its campaign against Sudan and the people of Africa, it is the responsibility of people of conscience the world over to demand:

US/UN HANDS OFF SUDAN!

IMPERIALIST HANDS OFF AFRICA!



AN OPEN LETTER TO THE ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT: HOW SHOULD WE REACT TO THE EVENTS IN IRAN?

*By Phil Wilayto**

The “Iranian people” have not spoken.

What’s happening in Iran today is a developing conflict between two forces that each represent millions of people. There are good people on both sides and the issues are complicated. So before U.S. progressives decide to weigh in, supporting one side and condemning the other, let’s take a little closer look.

Who Won the Election?

On June 12, 2009, nearly 40 million Iranians, some 85 percent of the electorate, cast votes for one of four presidential candidates. The following day, the government announced that the incumbent, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, had won 62.63 percent of the vote, enough to avoid a run-off with his leading rival, former Prime Minister Mir Hossein Mousavi, who was said to have received 33.75 percent of the vote (CNN, June 13, 2009).

“Before the vote count ended, Moussavi [sic] issued a sharp-

rick Doherty, had to say about the election, in an opinion piece published in the Washington Post just after the election:

Many experts are claiming that the margin of victory of incumbent President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was the result of fraud or manipulation, but our nationwide public opinion survey of Iranians three weeks before the vote showed Ahmadinejad leading by a more than 2 to 1 margin -- greater than his actual apparent margin of victory in Friday’s election.

But in Iran, two-thirds of the population is under the age of 35, and Mousavi carried the youth vote, right?

tive players in this mega conspiracy.

It also should be remembered that the “reformist” candidate, Mohammad Khatami, won the presidential election in 1997 when the Interior Ministry was controlled by “conservatives,” and that Ahmadinejad, a “hardliner,” won in 2005 when that ministry was controlled by “reformists.”

What about reports that some voting stations reported more votes than registered

voters?

First of all, Iran doesn’t register voters. Voting eligibility is determined by one’s birth certificate. And because voters aren’t required to vote at their local polling station, there might well be more votes recorded than eligible voters at any one station. That’s not proof of fraud.

How about the fact that some of the candidates lost in their own home districts? Wouldn’t they at least be able to count on a “favorite son” vote?

It’s true that Mousavi, an ethnic Azeri, didn’t even win the majority of that voting sector. But here’s what Ballen and

ly worded letter urging the counting to stop because of ‘blatant violations’ and lashed out at what he indicated was an unfair process” (CNN, June 13, 2009).

Mousavi denounced the results as a fraud and hundreds of thousands of his supporters poured into the streets of Tehran and other major cities to protest the election results.

Was the election fair, or was it rigged?

In the West, we have been conditioned to think of President Ahmadinejad as a kind of crackpot dictator who is now the target of an angry and aroused citizenry. Mousavi supporters are projected as “the Iranian people,” while Ahmadinejad is seen as being supported by little more than the military, the Revolutionary Guards, and the volunteer Basij organization.

This is a misconception, one result of the fact that few Western observers of Iran are interested in the issue of class.

Of Iran’s nearly 71 million people, about 40 percent live in the countryside. For the most part, these are lower-income Iranians. Add to them the urban poor and working class, and you have about two-thirds of the population -- the section that economically has benefited the most from the 1979 Revolution.

Ahadinejad himself comes from the rural poor -- a blacksmith’s son and the fourth of seven children, born in the village of Arādān near Garmsar, about 40 miles southeast of Tehran. His family moved to Tehran when he was one year old. Before becoming president, he was the mayor of Tehran, with his main base of support in southern Tehran, the much poorer part of the capital. Despite economic difficulties due in large part to the sharp drop in world oil prices, Ahmadinejad has retained this class support through his promotion of services and subsidies to the poor -- programs which depend on the continued state ownership and control of the oil and gas industries.

So, just from the demographics, it seems reasonable that Ahmadinejad could have won two-thirds of the vote.

That view is supported by a major voter survey, funded by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, conducted three weeks before the election by an organization called Terror Free Tomorrow: The Center for Public Opinion. TFT isn’t exactly a leftist group: its advisory board includes Arizona senator and former presidential candidate John McCain; Lee H. Hamilton and Thomas Keen, who co-chaired the 9/11 Commission; and former Senate Majority Leader William H. Frist.

Here’s what the survey report’s authors, Ken Ballen and Pat-

Again, from Ballen and Doherty: Much commentary has portrayed Iranian youth and the Internet as harbingers of change in this election. But our poll found that only a third of Iranians even have access to the Internet, while 18-to-24-year-olds comprised the strongest voting bloc for Ahmadinejad of all age groups. *The only demographic groups in which our survey found Mousavi leading or competitive with Ahmadinejad were university students and graduates, and the highest-income Iranians.* (emphasis added)

So people voted their wallets, not their age or ethnicity -- and there are a lot more poor people in Iran than there are those from the middle class.

But the voters use paper ballots, which are counted by hand. How could 40 million ballots be counted in a matter of hours?

First of all, the results were announced the day after the election (CNN, June 13, 2009), not after a few hours, as had been widely reported.

Secondly, there are 60,000 voting stations in Iran. That works out to an average of less than 700 votes per station. Counting that many ballots would take hours, not days. Each station then reported its votes electronically to the Interior Ministry, which added them up and announced the results. So it’s perfectly possible that the votes were counted locally and those results compiled centrally and then announced on Saturday, June 13.

Is that how quickly election results are normally announced? No, it usually takes about three days, not one. However (and I haven’t seen this reported anywhere in the Western media), this was the first year in which the local tallies were electronically relayed to the center, which could well explain why the national total was available so quickly.¹

But couldn’t the votes have been deliberately miscounted, either at the local polling stations or at the Interior Ministry?

By law, each candidate is allowed to have observers at the local polling stations, to watch over the voting and the counting of ballots. As for compiling the local returns at the Interior Ministry, an Iranian-American friend who was in Iran at the time of the election told me:

Over 200,000 young and college students and graduates (almost all pro-Mousavi) took part in the computerized data entry and data transfers. To claim -- beyond a reasonable doubt -- that a grand theft or a massive fraud had taken place, it implies that most or all of these people must have been ac-

Doherty had to say about that:

The breadth of Ahmadinejad’s support was apparent in our preelection survey. During the campaign, for instance, Mousavi emphasized his identity as an Azeri, the second-largest ethnic group in Iran after Persians, to woo Azeri voters. Our survey indicated, though, that Azeris favored Ahmadinejad by 2 to 1 over Mousavi.

So did the vote break down between progressive “pro-democracy” forces and backward, uneducated traditionalists?

The vote broke down between the educated middle class and the poor and working class. On the other hand, the voting survey referred to above found that “nearly four in five Iranians -- including most Ahmadinejad supporters -- said they wanted to change the political system to give them the right to elect Iran’s supreme leader, who is not currently subject to popular vote. Similarly, Iranians chose free elections and a free press as their most important priorities for their government, virtually tied with improving the national economy.” (By the way, those responses don’t sound typical of a people afraid of questioning their government.)

So it’s not like all the “democrats” are lined up on one side of the struggle, and all the “hardliners” on the other. It’s class prejudice to think that working people are not capable of figuring out their own interests and that bread-and-butter issues might be more important to them than to the better-off middle class.

Mousavi has called for new elections. If it has nothing to hide, why won’t the government agree, to settle the dispute once and for all?

On June 19, Iran’s supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, announced that specific complaints by the three losing candidates would be fully reviewed and the ballots of disputed boxes recounted. The Guardian Council, the 12-member religious body that oversees elections, announced it would conduct a partial recount of the votes, despite the fact that the deadline for complaints had already passed. Council spokesman Abbasali Khadkhodaei had already said it had received 646 complaints from the three candidates. On June 20, it was announced that a randomly selected 10 percent of the ballots would be recounted. And the Interior Ministry has posted the box-by-box and precinct-by-precinct tallies on its Web site.

But Mousavi continues to demand a whole new election.

Who Started the Violence?

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OPEN LETTER TO THE ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT

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In some ways, the June 12 presidential election was unique for Iran. In the past, some Iranians who oppose the government, both in Iran and in diaspora enclaves like Los Angeles, have urged voters to boycott the elections, hoping to deny the government legitimacy. In the last presidential election, in 2005, the turnout was 62 percent -- substantial (the U.S. turnout in 2008 was 61 percent), but not overwhelming.

This year, for the first time, the Iranian government organized televised debates, which seem to have had a big effect on the public. This is from BBC News on June 10: "The campaign at first appeared to be relatively dull, our correspondent says, but there has been an amazing surge of enthusiasm since the first of several TV debates." The debates weren't just lively, they were downright confrontational -- at times even nasty. And the campaign crowds grew: "Huge crowds have been out on the streets, as the rival candidates held their last election rallies. . . . The BBC's Jon Leyne in Tehran says the crowds gathering in the capital in support of rival candidates sound more like boisterous football crowds than election campaigners" (BBC, June 10, 2009).

At that time, the government had a hands-off approach to the large crowds of rival supporters squaring off in the streets:

"For at least 10 days before the elections, the streets of Tehran were the scene of mass rallies by supporters of Ahmadinejad and Mousavi, and the government tolerated them," reports Rostam Pourzal, who was there. "The rallies were really inconveniencing the public in a big way, by arraying against each other at very strategic intersections and public squares in Tehran. They were very peaceful, very nonviolent, but a public nuisance, and the security forces just stood around in small numbers and watched."

Both Ahmadinejad's and Mousavi's rallies were large, but Mousavi and his supporters

violence.

This is from the New York Times on June 13, 2009, the day the protests began (emphasis and an endnote added);

"Death to the coup d'état!" chanted a surging crowd of several thousand protesters, many of whom wore Mr. Mousavi's signature bright green campaign colors, as they marched in central Tehran on Saturday afternoon. "Death to the dictator!"²

Farther down the street, clusters of young men hurled rocks at a phalanx of riot police officers, and the police used their batons to beat back protesters. . . . As night settled in, the streets in northern Tehran that recently had been the scene of pre-election euphoria were lit by the flames of trash fires and blocked by tipped trash bins and at least one charred bus. Young men ran through the streets throwing paving stones at shop windows, and the police pursued them.

Interestingly, that story also reported that "... the working-class areas of southern Tehran where Mr. Ahmadinejad is popular were largely quiet, despite rumors of wild victory celebrations."

Then there's this report from the Associated Press, also on June 13: *Opponents of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad clashed with police in the heart of Iran's capital Saturday, pelting them with rocks and setting fires in the worst unrest in Tehran in a decade. . . . The brazen and angry confrontations -- including stunning scenes of masked rioters tangling with black-clad police -- pushed the self-styled reformist movement closer to a possible moment of truth: Whether to continue defying Iran's powerful security forces or, as they often have before, retreat into quiet dismay and frustration over losing more ground to the Islamic establishment.* (emphasis added)

That report continued with barely disguised glee at the aggressiveness of the protesters: But for at least one day, the tone and tactics were more combative than at any time since authorities put down student-led protests in 1999. *Young men hurled stones and bottles*

and street battles after the elections. The report said the deaths occurred after protesters 'tried to attack a military location.' It gave no further details, but it was a clear reference to crowds who came under gunfire Monday after *trying to storm a compound for volunteer militia* linked to Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guard. . . . The deaths Monday occurred on the edge of Tehran's Azadi Square. An Associated Press photographer saw gunmen, standing on a roof, opening fire on a group of demonstrators *who tried to storm the militia compound.* (emphasis added)

While many U.S. activists talk about the attack on student dormitories by members of the Basij, few bring up the protester attack on the Basij compound the following day. Here's how the Associated Press on June 19 described both incidents:

So far, the Basij has refrained from widespread attacks on demonstrators. But witnesses say the militiamen took part in a police raid on Tehran University dormitories on Sunday night after students hurled stones, bricks and firebombs at police -- one of the few violent episodes during this week's rallies. Basij members used axes, sticks and daggers to ransack student rooms and smash computers and furniture, wounding many students, according to witnesses.

A day later, *students attacked a compound used by the Basij and tried to set it on fire.* Gunmen on the roof fired on the crowd and killed seven people, according to state media. (emphasis added)

Remember, these aren't anonymous Twitter reports or photos from someone's cell phone. These descriptions come from some of the most establishment of U.S. corporate media, before their reporters were banned from covering the street clashes.



Post election rioting in Tehran, June 20, 2009

one person and wounding two. Iran's English-language satellite channel Press TV reported that the bomber was the sole fatality, but that three other people were wounded.

That day, Mousavi supporters staged an unpermitted demonstration in Tehran. This is from a CNN report on June 21: Thousands of defiant protesters swept again Saturday into the streets of the Iranian capital, where they clashed with police armed with batons, tear gas and water cannons. . . . At midnight, a stretch of a main avenue near Revolution Square was littered with rocks, street signs and burned tires and trash, witnesses said. Windows were shattered and hundreds of uniformed riot police lined the streets.

Official reports put the number of dead at 10, bringing the total number of protester

were confident of victory. Mousavi's wife, Zahra Rahnavard, a former university chancellor, publicly declared that the only way Ahmadinejad could win would be through fraud.

So when the Interior Ministry announced the next day that Ahmadinejad had won by a landslide, Mousavi's supporters poured out into the streets, outraged over what they charged was a stolen election.

While it's now unquestioned wisdom to talk about how the Iranian government ruthlessly repressed peaceful demonstrators, Western media at first reported that it actually was the protesters who initiated the violence. Lots of

at anti-riot units and mocked Ahmadinejad as an illegitimate leader. . . . Thousands of protesters -- mostly young men -- roamed through Tehran looking for a fight with police and setting trash bins and tires ablaze. Pillars of black smoke rose among the mustard-colored apartment blocks and office buildings in central Tehran. In one side road, an empty bus was engulfed in flames. Police fought back with clubs, including mobile squads on motorcycles swinging truncheons. (emphasis added)

The Iranian police's conduct has been criticized, as it should be. However, one may ask: would other governments have handled similar protests better? For instance, the U.S. government, whose police forces in recent years have killed Sean Bell and Oscar Grant, who were certainly not "looking for a fight with police"?

CNN, also on June 13, had this description of the street battles: *In the aftermath of the vote, street protesters and riot police engaged in running battles, with stones thrown, garbage cans set on fire and people shouting 'death to the dictatorship.' . . . Later in the evening, an agitated and angry crowd emerged in Tehran's Moseni Square, with people breaking into shops, starting fires and tearing down signs. (emphasis added)*

Then, on June 16, there were the first official confirmations of protest-related deaths. This is from the Associated Press: *Iran state radio reported Tuesday [June 16 - P.W.] that clashes in the Iranian capital the previous day left seven people dead during an 'unauthorized gathering' at a mass rally over alleged election fraud -- the first official confirmation of deaths linked to the wave of protests*

However, the media coverage changed noticeably after June 19, when the U.S. House of Representatives passed a resolution stating it supports all Iranian citizens who embrace the values of freedom, human rights, civil liberties, and rule of law; condemns the ongoing violence against demonstrators by the Government of Iran and pro-government militias, as well as the ongoing government suppression of independent electronic communication through interference with the Internet and cellphones; and affirms the universality of individual rights and the importance of democratic and fair elections.

The unusually contentious representatives passed the resolution by a vote of 405 to 1. The Senate quickly followed suit.

Neither resolution, of course, mentioned any violence by protesters.

Having been properly politically oriented to portray the protesters only as victims of government repression, the AP and other corporate media largely stopped reporting on protester violence. Also on June 19, Ayatollah Khamenei announced that unpermitted demonstrations would no longer be allowed, as they had been in the week following the elections.

Asked for his response, President Barack Obama told CBS News: *I'm very concerned, based on some of the tenor and tone of the statements that have been made, that the government of Iran recognize that the world is watching. And how they approach and deal with people who are, through peaceful means, trying to be heard will, I think, send a pretty clear signal to the international community about what Iran is -- and is not.*

The next day, June 20, somebody signaled again that not all the anti-government forces were committed to peaceful methods. Iran's semi-official Fars news agency reported that a bomb had been set off near the shrine of Iran's revolutionary icon, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, just south of Tehran, killing

deaths, according to the government, to 17 -- seven shot June 15 while storming the Basij office and 10 killed during the June 20 protests. (I'm not sure if this latter number includes 26-year-old Neda Agha-Soltan, whose death was videotaped and broadcast around the world. She was reportedly shot by an unknown assailant as she got out of her car, headed for a nearby protest.)

Many others were injured, a fact that the government wasn't trying to hide. Acting Police Chief Brigadier Gen. Ahmad-Reza Radan told Iran's semi-official Fars news agency that "Families of those killed or injured in the events since June 12 have filed 2,000 complaints so far." Also, Press TV quoted Iran's deputy police commander as asserting that 400 police personnel had been wounded in the opposition rallies. And "there were reports that members of the volunteer Basij were raiding homes in wealthy neighborhoods" (CNN, June 21, 2009).

Anyone who truly cares about Iran and its people has to feel sick at heart over these developments. But if the Iranian government were not so justifiably worried about a "velvet revolution" being fomented by outside forces, would it be responding in the way it is to the protests? We don't know -- but for sure, it hasn't been given much of a choice.

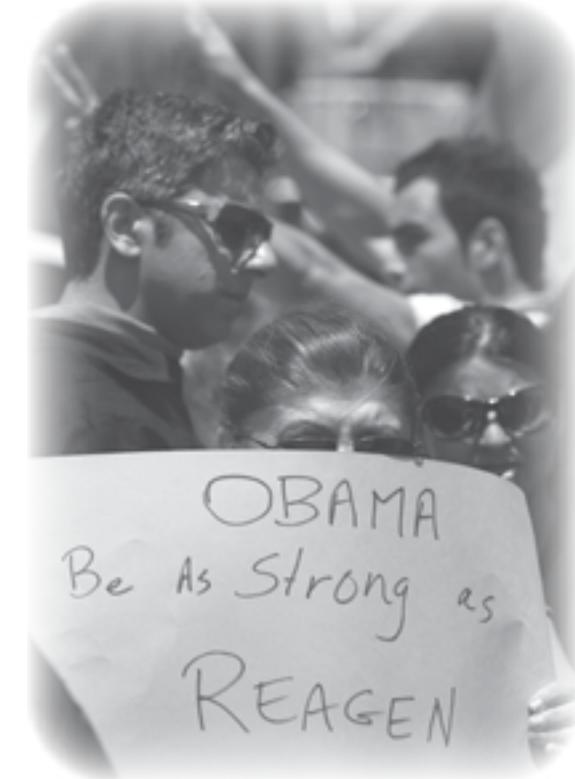
In Washington, President Obama issued a written statement saying, "The Iranian government must understand that the world is watching. . . . We call on the Iranian government to stop all violent and unjust actions against its own people."

Actually, some of the world has been doing much more than simply watching.

Who's Interfering?

On June 18, six days after the election, the British government froze \$1.6 billion of Iranian money in the UK, under the guise of international sanctions over Iran's nuclear program. France's President Nicolas Sarkozy

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Right-wing monarchist Iranians protest against the Iranian government, Los Angeles California. June 21, 2009.

OPEN LETTER TO THE ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT

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called the elections a fraud. German Chancellor Angela Merkel called for a recount of the votes under the international auspices.

But in terms of interference, it's the U.S. that's been way out in front.

This is from a June 25 story in USA Today: "The Obama administration is moving forward with plans to fund groups that support Iranian dissidents, records and interviews show, continuing a program that became controversial when it was expanded by President [George W.] Bush."

That story, published 13 days after the Iranian elections, explains that the U.S. Agency for International Development, which reports to the U.S. secretary of state, had for the last year been soliciting applications for \$20 million in grants to "promote democracy, human rights, and the rule of law in Iran."

Pretty clearly, that's internal interference. After all, imagine how Americans would have reacted if Iran had allocated millions of dollars to "promote democracy" in Florida after George W. Bush stole the 2000 presidential election?

But U.S. interference in Iran is nothing new. To his credit, President Obama admitted in his June 4 Cairo speech that the CIA was behind the 1953 overthrow of Iran's democratically elected prime minister, Dr. Mohammad Mossadegh. That coup, the agency's first, reinstalled Mohammad Reza Pahlavi Shah, the U.S. puppet who for the next 26 years ruled Iran with an iron hand, setting the stage for the 1979 Revolution.

Dr. Mossadegh's crime was that he led the nationalization of Iranian oil, which had been under British control since the early 20th century. What Obama didn't mention in his Cairo speech was that, as a result of the CIA coup, U.S. and British oil companies each received 40 percent control of Iran's oil, with the other 20 percent divided up among

In his New Yorker articles, Hersh reported that U.S. Special Operations military personnel are on the ground in Iran, attempting to foment armed anti-government rebellions among the Baluchi ethnic minority. Jundallah is one of the Baluchi groups to which Hersh was referring.

Then there's the MEK, an Iranian anti-government, politico-military organization that's classified by the U.S. State Department as a terrorist group, but which is allowed to conduct cross-border operations against Iran from bases in Iraq.

So, let's think. With large and violent anti-government protests following the June 12 election, is it possible that this vast array of U.S. government efforts -- all of which are dedicated to promoting the overthrow or at least the undermining of the Iranian government -- wouldn't have been cranked into high gear to try and influence events in some way? Wouldn't it try to steer street protests into violent uprisings? Wouldn't it be easy to promote "propaganda, disinformation" through anonymous means like blogs, Facebook, and Twitter?

pone the upgrade. "We highlighted to them that this was an important form of communication," said a State Department official. Twitter executives agreed to postpone the upgrade, noting the role of its service as an "important communication tool in Iran" (Reuters, June 16, 2009).

A few days later, Google, the world's largest search engine, also based in California, unveiled a Farsi translation service. "Google Translate is one more tool that Persian speakers can use to communicate directly to the world, and vice versa -- increasing everyone's access to information," said Google's principal scientist, Franz Och.

At the same time, Facebook, the world's largest Internet social networking service, also based in California, launched a Farsi version of its site. "Since the Iranian election last week, people around the world have increasingly been sharing news and information on Facebook about the results and its aftermath," said Facebook engineer Eric Kwan (AFP, June 20, 2009).

Speaking of interference, let's not overlook

tor. Now, in the Obama administration, he's special adviser to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton for the Persian Gulf and Southwest Asia, which includes Iran. (Goes to show that, when it comes to the Middle East, there's not much daylight between the Democrats and Republicans.)

On June 15, Obama officials announced that Ross would be moving to the White House "with what appears to be an expanded portfolio" (Washington Post, June 16, 2009).

What are Iranians outside Iran saying about the protests and the government's response?

I'm a board member of the Campaign Against Sanctions & Military Intervention in Iran (CASMI), an organization started in 2005 by Iranian expatriates with chapters in the U.S. and Europe. And I can tell you that there is a broad range of positions in that network, from fierce supporters of Mousavi to others much more suspicious about who might be behind the protests and where they might be leading. But in trying to keep up with the myriad of Iranian-American and Iranian-European commentators, it's clear that the media is overlooking Iranian voices attempting to offer a more critical view of the protest movement, in favor of those who offer unqualified support.

Take, for example, Roya Hakakian, a poet and the author of *Journey from the Land of No*, an account of growing up Jewish in post-revolutionary Iran. Hakakian was interviewed July 2 on National Public Radio's Fresh Air program to offer an "Iranian-American perspective" on the current crisis. She was introduced as a founding member of the Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (which, according to SourceWatch.org, is partially funded by the U.S. State Department Human Rights and Democracy Fund.)

The show's host, Terry Gross, neglected to point out that Hakakian also is a "term member" at the Council on Foreign Relations. Term members are "promising young leaders" recruited to "interact with seasoned foreign-policy experts."



Pro-Mousavi rally in Azahdi Square, Tehran. June 15, 2009.

other European companies. The 1979 revolution returned those Iranian resources back to the Iranian people -- a development that, in my opinion, is the real reason for official U.S. hostility toward Iran.

Then there were 30 years of U.S. sanctions; three sets of U.N. sanctions pushed by the U.S.; U.S. support for Saddam Hussein in his eight-year war with Iran; the 1988 downing by a U.S. warship of a civilian Iranian airbus, resulting in the deaths of nearly 300 men, women and children; and an ongoing and coordinated campaign of demonization of Iran and its government.

And much more.

On May 22, 2007, ABC News reported that the CIA has received secret presidential approval to mount a covert “black” operation to destabilize the Iranian government, [according to] current and former officials in the intelligence community. The sources, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitive nature of the subject, say President Bush has signed a “nonlethal presidential finding” that puts into motion a CIA plan that reportedly includes a coordinated campaign of propaganda, disinformation and manipulation of Iran’s currency and international financial transactions.

Seymour Hersh, the investigative reporter for the New Yorker magazine who first broke the story about the Abu Graib prison in Iraq, later reported that the Democrat-controlled Congress had approved up to \$400 million to fund this CIA destabilization campaign.

The “nonlethal” aspect of the presidential finding means that CIA agents aren’t authorized to use deadly force while carrying out secret operations against Iran. But they don’t have to. They use proxies. The ABC report quoted above states “the United States has supported and encouraged an Iranian militant group, Jundullah, that has conducted deadly raids inside Iran from bases on the rugged Iran-Pakistan-Afghanistan ‘tri-border region.’”



Victory celebration of Ahmadinejad supporters, Tehran. June 14, 2009.

That’s not to say that the protests were initiated by outside forces. In my opinion, they represent emerging divisions in Iranian society that are the result of long-standing internal grievances, some legitimate, some not, based largely on class differences that were never resolved by the 1979 Revolution.

But it would be incredibly naive to think that outside forces weren’t now involved in some way. Which is why it would be good not to put too much stock in anonymous bloggers, YouTube videos, or Tweets.

How else has the U.S. intervened?

It’s well known that, to coordinate their protests, Iranian organizers have been using the latest in electronic communication tools. One of these, the social networking Twitter service, had been planning a regular upgrade, just a few days after the protests began. When the U.S. State Department realized that that would have cut off at least a day’s service in Iran, it contacted the California-based company and urged it to post-

Dennis B. Ross, Obama’s point man on Iran. A fellow at the hawkish Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP), Ross supported the advocacy efforts of the Project for the New American Century, which played a key role advocating invading Iraq in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. He also has promoted aggressive Mideast policies in his writings and congressional testimony, and teamed up with scholars from organizations like the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) to craft policy approaches toward Tehran’s nuclear program and other issues in the region.

If nothing else, Ross has longevity. During the Carter administration, he worked at the Pentagon under Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense and noted neocon Paul Wolfowitz. Under Reagan, he served as director of Near East and South Asian affairs in the National Security Council. Under George H.W. Bush, he was the State Department’s Director of Policy Planning. During the Clinton years, he was special Middle East coordina-

Hakakian comes from a very narrow layer of Iranian society, one she attempts to present as representative of the country as a whole. In an interview on the Iranian-oriented Web site ParsTimes, she reflected on the Iran she knew before emigrating in 1984: “I left behind a modern society with a strong secular tradition: parties, miniskirts, jazz and blues bands, foreign film festivals. . . . We followed the West closely, especially America -- so closely that arriving here in 1985 was no shock to me.”

OK, that layer is part of Iran. It’s the part that Western journalists feel most comfortable interviewing. But while traveling around Iran with a group of peace activists in 2007, visiting five cities and touring 1,350 miles of countryside, I saw other layers of society: construction workers building homes in 100-degree heat along the highway to Yazd; goat herders who shared their tea with us high in the Zagros mountains; the city of Qom with its 100,000 theology students; a young college co-ed in Shiraz who preferred the traditional full-length chador; retail clerks, cab drivers, hotel staffers, restaurant waiters, street sweepers, nursing home attendants, street vendors.

Aren’t they all Iranians too? Or don’t they count? Educated, Western-oriented, middle-class youth protesting in the streets of Tehran are part of Iranian society, but they are not representative of that society as whole.

Moreover, some of these “pro-democracy” commentators making the talk show rounds are actually bought-and-paid intellectual mercenaries promoted by neo-conservative institutions in the U.S. For example, there’s Azar Nafisi, frequently interviewed about her views on the election and its aftermath.

Dr. Nafisi, a native Iranian, is the author of the best-selling book *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books*, which paints an entirely negative picture of post-revolution-

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US Supreme Court Rejects Appeal For Review by the Cuban 5

By Andrew Barry

On June 15, 2009, the United States Supreme Court unjustly rejected a request for review of the case of five political prisoners held in US jails. The five prisoners, Fernando Gonzalez, Rene Gonzalez, Antonio Guerrero, Gerardo Hernandez, and Ramon Labanino, known internationally as the Cuban Five, have been imprisoned unfairly in US jails for nearly eleven years for helping to prevent Miami-based terrorism against Cuba. This decision by the Supreme Court highlights the political nature of the case and the continuation of the anti-Cuba policy from Washington under the new Barack Obama administration.

Prior to their arrest, the Cuban Five were in Miami gathering information that they presented to the FBI on anti-Cuban terrorist groups in the US. These right-wing groups have been responsible for over 600 terrorist attacks against Cuba since the 1959 Cuban Revolution, murdering over 3400 Cubans. After the FBI looked over the information provided by the Cuban Five, the US government, instead of investigating the terrorist groups, decided to arrest and convict the Five anti-terrorists in Miami, Florida for conspiracy to commit espionage, among

other fabricated charges. Now, after years of court appeals for justice for the Five this latest decision by the Supreme Court to not review the case squashed one of the last opportunities for the Five to receive a fair trial.

The numerous pieces of evidence presented to the Court exposed the fact that the five Cuban men could not have attained a fair trial in Miami, the centre for anti-Cuban terrorism. Despite the international cry for justice from millions of people around the world, including 10 Nobel Laureates, National Parliaments and the former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the US Supreme Court rejected the request to hear the case of Cuban 5 political prisoners in US jails.

The President of the Cuban Parliament, Ricardo Alarcon, noted that “the judges chose to do what the Obama administration requested them to do: refusing to review the case of the Five. That is why it is a day of shame and anger.”

This decision is a continuation of the US justice system at work against Cuba. In May 2009, Barack Obama’s own handpicked Solicitor General, Elena Kagan, pressured the Supreme Court to reject the Cuban Five’s appeal. The Christian Science Monitor quoted Kagan as saying “the trial judge and appeals court reached the correct result,” referring to the original decision to convict the Five Heroes.

Throughout this decade-long injustice against these Five Heroes, the US justice system and the White House have added another element of inhumanity by denying visitation rights for the families of the Five. On July 15, 2009, exactly one month after the decision to reject the appeal of the case, the US State Department denied Adriana Perez, the wife of Gerardo Hernandez, one of the five, to travel to the US to visit Gerardo in jail. This was the 10th time the US justice system has denied Adriana the chance to see her husband. To add salt to the wound, July 15th was the 21st wedding anniversary of Adriana and Gerardo. After nearly 11 years without an embrace, the US Department of State said that Adriana “constitutes a threat to the stability and national security of the United States.” In doing so the US Government is effectively breaking its own law by failing to maintain family integrity and undermining the human rights of detainees.

Despite this ongoing immoral and unjust cruelty against these Five Heroes and their loved ones, human rights activists are looking at what can be done next. A Miami federal judge has set an October date for resentencing three of the five because a federal appeals court ruled in 2008 that their sentences were too long (all five were given the maximum sentences for their convictions). An attorney for the Five, Thomas Goldstein, stated that he is “optimistic that the judge will take into account the horrible effect that the long

terms of imprisonment have had on the Five and their families, the recognition from the international community of all the flaws in the case, and will impose a sentence that is substantially shorter. But this is a question that the judge will have to compare.”

Human rights activists in Cuba, the United States, Canada, and around the world are spreading the word to condemn this cruel and illegal violation of human rights by the US Government against the Five Cuban Heroes and their families. As the work of Cuban Five committees around the world expands, human rights activists must join this fight for their freedom and look for inspiration from none other than what Gerardo Hernandez said in response to the June 15 decision: “I repeat what I said one year ago, June 4, 2008, that as long as one person remains struggling outside, we will continue resisting until there is justice.”



Rally for the 5 in front of the US Interests Section in Havana, Cuba. June 18, 2009.

Vancouver Joins International Days of Action to Free the 5 Cuban Heroes

By Andrew Barry

June 6-8, 2009 were International Days of Action to Free the 5 Cuban Heroes who have been held in US prisons for over ten years. These days of action were called by participants in the recent Second International Youth Summit to free the Cuban 5 in Havana, Cuba. In Vancouver, Canada two events took place in an effort for supporters to learn more about the case as well as to inform the public of who the Cuban Five are. On June 7th, the Free the Cuban Five Committee-Vancouver (FC5C-Van) organized a report back from the International Youth Summit on the Cuban Five. This was followed by a passionate picket action outside the US Consulate on June 8th.

The report back and forum on the Youth Summit was MC'd by Sarah Alwell, coordinator of the FC5C-Van, who began the evening with a poetry reading from, "Volveran", the book of poems for the Five created and published by FC5C-Van. Local supporters of the Cuban 5 Payvand Pejvack, Luis Velasquez and Max Tennant expressed their solidarity and support for the Five through emotional poetry. Tamara Hansen and Aaron Mercredi traveled to Queen's University in Ontario for the conference "The Measure of a Revolution: Cuba 1959-2009" and then on to Havana for the Second International Youth Summit on the Case of the 5 Cuban Heroes. Aaron, who is an organizer with the FC5C-Van and the Indigenous Rights and Action Project, outlined the conference in Kingston and also spoke about the cultural aspects of the youth summit and its final declaration. Tamara, the coordinator of Vancouver Com-

munities in Solidarity with Cuba and a co-chair of the Canadian Network on Cuba, outlined the program of the youth summit and some other meetings they had in Cuba following the conference. Alison Bodine, a US citizen, was the third Vancouver Cuba solidarity organizer who attended the Youth Summit, but she was not at this report back as she is currently banned from Canada. Alison was politically targeted by the Canadian Border Services Agency in 2007 and was banned from Canada for two years. She currently lives in New York and has continued doing Cuba solidarity work with IFCO/Pastors for Peace. Alison met up with Aaron and Tamara in Cuba and attended the Cuban 5 Youth Summit as a delegate from FC5C-Van.

Both Aaron and Tamara's reports gave an important foundation for the multimedia slideshow which followed with photos of the fantastic trip. The talks sparked some interesting discussion about the future of the campaign to free the Cuban 5, which Sarah, the MC, wrapped up very poignantly by saying, "everything we have heard tonight makes it clear that the Cuban 5 are not relying on the US judicial system for their freedom. They are truly relying on us, the solidarity movement. There has been over 10 years of injustice committed against Rene, Antonio, Ramon, Gerardo and Fernando... the time to get involved in the struggle for their freedom is now!"

The following day the FC5C-Van organized their 42nd picket line in front of the US consulate as a continuation of the International Days of Action. The picket began with MC Nita Palmer, an organizer with the FC5C-Van, leading chants demand-

ing "Freedom for the 5 Now!", and "Justice for the 5 Now!" After the first round of picketing, Alison Bodine spoke to the picket via cell phone, telling Vancouver picketers about the importance of the recent Youth Summit in Cuba, and gave greetings from New York where actions to free the Five also took place. Tamara Hansen spoke next and highlighted the importance of continuing to have these International Days of Action to demand freedom and justice for the Cuban 5. She passionately spoke of the continuing injustice against two of the wives of the Cuban 5 who have been prevented from entering the United States to visit their husbands in prison for the last 10 years by the US State Department. Charles Boylan, a radio host on Cop Radio and member of the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist) highlighted other cases of political prisoners held by the US government in Guantánamo Bay and around the world. The picket came to a close as participants vowed to continue protesting in front of the US Consulate and taking part in organizing more international days of actions like these until the 5 Cuban Heroes are free. Nita encouraged all human rights activists and supporters to take up the case of the Cuban Five and get involved in winning their freedom.



Above: Protests to free the Five happened around the world from June 6-8. From top: Beirut, Lebanon; Vancouver, Canada; Caracas, Venezuela.

The Indian Nation

By Ray Bobb*

Introduction to 'The Indian Nation' By Aaron Mercredi

When discussing the dynamics of the struggle of Native people in Canada, there are many different factors. There is the land question. There is the question of who has rights to the resources over that land. There is the question of self-determination and how that can be achieved for Indigenous people in Canada 142 years after the establishment of a colonial settler state. All of these are important factors, but one that is often overlooked is the fact that as people living within a colonial society, many Native people are members of the working class, the same working class that needs to unite itself with Native people in order to effectively fight for its rights, as well as the

theoretical aspects of Native people's liberation, analyzing the dynamics of internal colonies and the strategic importance of supporting Indigenous people in their struggle for self-determination. His essay, 'The Indian Nation,' is an important contribution to the thoughts and actions that are coming out of the fight for justice on stolen land.

The Indian Nation

The purpose of this mini-essay is to present Canadian Indians as an internal colony and to indicate some aspects of a strategy for sovereignty.

An internal colony is a people subject to colonial rule within an imperialist settler-state. Possibly, six internal colonies exist: American Indians, Canadian Indians, Aborigines, Maoris and, by way of slavery and annexation, African-Americans and Mexican-Americans. These peoples are colonized within four imperialist settler-states: the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Geo-

tribe by tribe or band by band, to (1) renounce their nationality by agreeing to remove themselves from the jurisdiction of the Indian Act and (2) cede their right to self-determination by formally incorporating into Canada. These requirements of the treaty process contravene Article 15 of the UN Universal Declaration on Human Rights and Article 1 of the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights that state, respectively, "No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality" and "All peoples have the right of self-determination." Insofar as the treaty process is a bottle-neck for receiving government funds and having Indian rights recognized, it is coercive.

The federal government's present Indian policy was, for a short time, proposed as the Government White Paper Policy on Indians (1969). The White Paper proposed to, unilaterally, abolish the Indian Act, the Department of Indian Affairs, Indian reserve land, old treaty rights, and, aboriginal rights and title. This proposal was active opposed by all Native people. The federal government began, immediately, to

of their individual and allied power. Tribes were defeated at contact precisely because they were national entities on the level of tribes pitted, separately, against developing world empires. In the twentieth century, nations have demonstrated that, militarily, they can defeat imperialism in the global South.

The situation and condition of the internal colonies ally them to the two great social movements of modern history—the national liberation movements in the global South and the socialist movements in the imperialist countries. The national liberation movements are the principal and determining conflicts of our time. The victorious growth of these movements can only strengthen and help to define the internal colonies. In the early twentieth century, the revolutionary movements in the imperialist countries were subverted. They were subverted by reforms conceded to the domestic working classes based on imperialist superprofits derived from the colonies. The national liberation movements, inevitably, will weaken imperialism and preclude reformism in the imperialist countries. This will reawaken class struggles in the imperialist countries. The members of the internal colonies can be a part of these struggles,



Struggle for land rights against development of Sun Peaks ski resort on unceded Secwepemc territory near Kamloops, British Columbia.

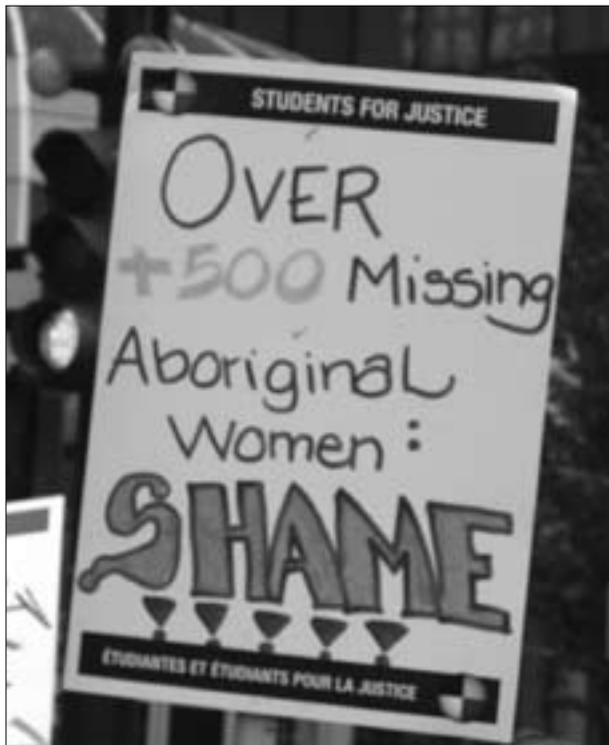


National Aboriginal Day protest in Montreal, Quebec. June 29, 2007.

rights of Native people.

There are important lessons to be drawn from some of the big struggles that Native people have engaged in within Canada. The most important lesson is that Native people, as a minority, need the support of non-Natives in order to effectively fight off the attacks from the government of Canada. In 2001, Burnt Church showed us this; In 1990, Oka showed this. In the 1800s, the Red River and Northwest resistance showed us this. This is why the ruling class in Canada has done such a good job at entrenching divisions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

Ray Bobb is a member of the Seabird Island Indian Band and long-time fighter for Native rights. His writing focuses on the



graphically, each internal colony is composed of many communities or territories that are distributed throughout an imperialist settler-state. Demographically, with the exception of the African-Americans and Mexican-Americans, internal colonies have small populations. Due to expropriation, the members of an internal colony are also members of the working class of an imperialist settler-state.

The concept of a native internal colony is diametrically opposed to the new Canadian concept of First Nations. The concept of First Nations is a product of Canada's ongoing effort to make circumscribed treaties with Indian tribes and bands that will, ultimately, de-legislate the existence of a colonized people and, formally, incorporate them into Canada. Treaties are, by definition, made between nations and for the purpose of piecemeal, treaty-making the federal government has designated Indian tribes and bands to be nations, i.e., First Nations. The federal government is intent upon treaties as opposed to other types of agreements because the matter on which Canada wants resolution concerns the relationship between two peoples and, therefore, two nations. The "new relationship" that Canada wants to establish is, simply, one in which Indians no longer exist. Canada's present Indian policy is tantamount to, bureaucratic, ethnic cleansing and forced annexation.

In the federal government's comprehensive treaty process Indians are required,

create a Native leadership that is dependent upon government funding and that can be depended upon to carry out government policy. In 1973, the federal government reaffirmed the objectives of the White Paper in its Comprehensive Land Claims Settlement Policy, and along with its captive Native leadership, proceeded to effect the objectives of the White Paper, bilaterally.

To date, Natives on 40 percent of Canada's land area (all of the North including Northern Quebec) have signed treaties and many tribes and bands in the South have entered the treaty process or have signed treaties.

Some Indian people accept the First Nations designation in that it appears to be a recognition of nationhood. It is true that the early treaties signed between the Indian tribes and Great Britain were made on a bona fide nation-to-nation basis. However, when the remaining British colonies in North America became the independent Dominion of Canada (1867) an imperialist settler-state came into being and within it was established an internal colony of Canadian Indians. The term "Canadian Indians" refers to the national entity created by internal colonialism, composed of formerly independent tribal peoples, and, subjected to direct-rule by Canada.

Furthermore, national entities exist in the contemporary world not only because of their moral entitlement but also because



National Aboriginal Day protest in Toronto, Ontario. June 29, 2007.

can demand support therein for the right of all oppressed nations to genuine self-determination, and, can negotiate therein the terms of Native self-determination.

The type of self-determination achieved by the internal colonies will be a product of national liberation in the majority world, choice in the internal colonies, and, negotiation with worker's power in the imperialist settler-states. It may be that the settler-states and the internal colonies are so closely interrelated that complete separation is not possible. Sovereignty for the internal colonies may require economies that are integrated with those of the former settler-states and dual citizenship for those resident on the land of the other. While sovereignty cannot be the answer to all the world's problems, unity and peace are unlikely to be achieved without the prior liberation of the oppressed nations.

**Ray Bobb is a Member of the Seabird Island Indian Band. He is a longtime fighter for social justice as well as writer and researcher on many topics related to the international struggle against injustice.*

Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) STATEMENT AGAINST THE COUP IN HONDURAS

July 8, 2009

After two decades, reactionary imperialist forces with the help of a bankrupt and corrupt military establishment once again conducted a coup d'etat against the will of the people of Latin-America. On June 28th, the democratically-elected President of Honduras, Manuel Zelaya, was forced to leave his office by special army units. He was taken to Costa Rica and then Nicaragua. Honduran people were completely caught by surprise and shocked by the course of this brutality and suppression. The armed forces took over all the important institutions including the radio and television stations, and rapidly cut off all lines of communication in order to suppress the population and potential news leaks to outside of Honduras. People soon began to protest, and the illegal military junta found itself at odds with the resistance of the population against the coup. On July 5th, almost 200,000

people gathered at the airport outside of Tegucigalpa, the country's capital, to welcome back their President who was unsuccessfully attempting to return to the country.

Zelaya was overthrown by military thugs because his line of progressive measures was helping people to improve their standard of living, and they were gaining confidence to fight for their rights - especially against imperialist domination. Since the military coup people have been resisting by strikes and all other forms of protest. Marches and rallies are happening every day all across Honduras, and fighting the coup d'etat regime has become the main agenda of hundreds of thousands of people. The coup d'etat will not succeed because the social movement for change in Honduras had already started before this coup. In fact, the military coup was the response of the oligarchy and pro-imperialist army to stop or at least to slow down this progressive movement.

The coup d'etat has provoked worldwide condemnation from Venezuela, Bolivia, Cuba and other Latin American countries, as well as the European Union. The Organization of American States (OAS) has condemned this illegal action and called for the reinstatement of President Zelaya. The coup d'etat regime



Hondurans protest the coup.



has been completely isolated and has no choice but to step down.

We strongly condemn this coup d'etat, as well as the brutal kidnapping and beating of the Cuban, Venezuelan and Nicaraguan ambassadors to Honduras. We demand the immediate release of Patricia Rodas, the Foreign Minister of Honduras.

We invite all peace loving people in Vancouver and Canada to join millions of protesters around the globe to condemn this coup and demand that President Zelaya be returned to office immediately.

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Post election rioting, Tehran. June 15, 2009.

OPEN LETTER TO THE ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT

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ary Iranian society. I won't go into a whole critique of the book here (the better part of a chapter is devoted to it in my book, *In Defense of Iran*), but it's important and illustrative to know who Dr. Nafisi is -- and who finances her efforts.

Dr. Nafisi is a professor at Johns Hopkins

University's School of Advanced International Studies. Founded in 1943, SAIS has long been a bastion of Cold War thinking. From 1994 to 2001, its dean was none other than Paul Wolfowitz, President George W. Bush's neocon deputy secretary of defense and a major architect of the second Gulf War.

In her acknowledgements for *Reading Lolita*, Nafisi credits the Smith Richardson Foundation for its "generous grant" that "provided me with the opportunity to work on this book as well as pursue my projects at SAIS."

Smith Richardson is one of the 15 or so major right-wing foundations in the U.S. and one that has a special focus of demonizing Iran. From 1998 to 2004, according to its annual reports, the foundation gave Nafisi six grants totalling \$675,500.

In 1996, Nafisi also received \$25,000 from the Lynde and Harry Bradley

Foundation "to support a series of workshops in Tehran, Iran, under the direction of Dr. Azar Nafisi" (Bradley annual report, 1996). That "series of workshops" was the private book discussion club that formed the basis of *Reading Lolita*.

Milwaukee-based Bradley is the premier right-wing foundation in the U.S. It's the outfit that funded the notoriously racist book *The Bell Curve*, by Charles Murray and

Richard Herrnstein, as well as the early welfare "reform" programs in Milwaukee, the pilot school voucher programs in Milwaukee and Cleveland, and the overturn of state affirmative action programs in Texas and California. What's interesting is that Dr. Nafisi, living in Tehran, even knew about Bradley.

In their interviews, both Nafisi and Hakakian misrepresent their own narrow layer as the real revolutionaries of 1979, who overthrew the Shah only to have their heroic victory hijacked by reactionary religious fanatics. And they insist that the anti-government protesters of today's Iran represent a resurgence of that same revolutionary movement.

Nonsense. The vast majority of the many millions of people who made the Iranian Revolution were working class, religious, and traditional -- and who saw the Western-oriented middle class as an offensive symbol of the Western oppression of their country, supportive of the hated, U.S.-installed Shah.

Iran-bashing organizations

Then there are the hard-line organizations, foremost of which is the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. Founded in 1953, AIPAC now claims 100,000 members and is, according to the *New York Times*, "the most important organization affecting America's relationship with Israel." On its Web site, the organization takes credit for "passing more than a dozen bills and resolutions condemning and imposing tough sanctions on Iran."

(A cautionary word here: AIPAC is often described as the richest and most powerful lobby in the U.S. That may be true, but it doesn't call the shots on US. policy in the Middle East. That function is reserved for the oil companies, whose most powerful executives are almost all white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants. The fact that AIPAC's goals happen to coincide with those of the oil companies only means that the companies can save a few dollars on lobbying costs. The day that Israel ceases to be useful to these corporate giants is the day the U.S. government aban-

dons Israel. The tail does not wag the dog.)

Another influential organization often quoted in the corporate media as an expert source is the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. According to its Web site, WINEP was founded in 1985 by "a small group of visionary Americans committed to advancing U.S. interests in the Middle East." Principal among those "visionaries" were Executive Director Martin Indyk, AIPAC's former deputy director of research, and President Barbi Weinberg, a former AIPAC vice president and founder of Citizens Organized PAC, a pro-Israel political action committee. Weinberg's husband, Lawrence Weinberg, is AIPAC's chairman of the board emeritus.

WINEP's board of advisors include former secretaries of state Henry Kissinger, Warren Christopher, Lawrence S. Eagleburger and, before he died, Alexander Haig, as well as former Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle -- all thoroughly right-wing politicians committed to U.S. domination of the Middle East (Washington Report on Middle East Affairs, July 1991).

Is the Iranian Government the Enemy?

We're not dealing here with Venezuela, Cuba, or Bolivia. The Iranian government doesn't empower the country's working class. But it doesn't ruthlessly exploit it either. It's not a fascist dictatorship. Rather, it's an authoritarian government that holds a paternalistic but sympathetic view toward the working class and the poor.

It administers a mixed economy in which important sectors, like oil and gas, are owned and controlled by the state. What would be profits in a purely capitalist economy are instead used to fund the majority of the state budget. This is the source of the government's ability to provide an array of social services for the poor. Not handouts, but a guarantee of medical care, regardless of ability to pay. Free education up to and including the university level. Rural elec-

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Where the Coup in Honduras Could Lead

By Manuel Yepe*

A CubaNews translation by Mercedes Rosa Diaz. Edited by Walter Lippmann.

The events unleashed by the coup ousting Honduran president José Manuel Zelaya have yet to produce a clear outcome; nevertheless, the event is teaching the people of Latin America some important lessons about how old issues will be handled in these new times.

Latin Americans and residents of the Caribbean listened in horror that last Sunday in June as they received news that signaled the real possibility of a return to a past of oppression and repression that they had intended to bury.

Their fear drew on the memories of those unfortunate times during which the armies of the continent were merely the custodians of the imperialist interests of the United States, watching as local governments played the game of “representative democracy,” and adjusting their political stances to conform with the norms and limitations imposed by the local oligarchies. If one of them surpassed his limits or broke the rules, the fig leaf would be ripped away and the military would rise to power.

Throughout the 20th century, the bloody (more or less) coup was the remedy of choice for toppling national governments which tried to get out from under the subordination of the oligarchies. It also helped bring to power some of the most repudiated dictators, who soiled the histories of practically every country in Latin America and the Caribbean. A common characteristic of all the coups

on the continent is that they had been ordered, organized and/or authorized by Washington.

What is novel about the coup in Honduras is that it has taken place during a period of new correlations of political forces in Latin America and the Caribbean that have been developing over the past half-century. In addition is the fact that there is a president in the White House with singular characteristics, who is embroiled in covert and overt activities with all camps.

Some political analysts are already describing Honduras as a dress rehearsal for a new type of coup, one designed to respond to the new forms of struggle in the region, where leftist leaders who are freely elected defy the status quo and resist complying with those limits allowed by their democracies.

Just as the coup in Honduras itself caused consternation, the Honduran peoples’ support for president Zelaya, and the massive resistance against the coup, with its integrated social organizations grounded in an enormous grass-roots campaign, has surprised many specialists.

From the first moment, in Honduras, the region and the world, speculation swirled about what attitude the government of the United States would assume, considering that it was the principal suspect of having



Honduran President Manuel Zelaya speaks at a rally in Las Manos, Nicaragua. July 25, 2009.

instigated the coup in the first place, given its past history of sponsoring criminal military coups on the continent.

Only this time, the hopes sown by brand-new president Barack Obama, who campaigned on a policy of change very different from his unfortunate predecessor, promised the possibility of a different proclamation from the United States. But as events have unfolded, contradictions have arisen regarding the actions of the U.S. government that lead more than a few scholars of international relations to believe that the intentions of the coup did not exclude neoconservative objectives hostile to Obama.

Those who maintained—in fairness to the presumption of innocence—that negotiations had to take place with coup leaders, seemed content that this time the United States did not force regional consensus or coerce its closest allies to distance themselves from the will of the majority, as was its usual custom. This attitude is what has allowed regional unity to flourish in the first place.

But before long, Washington’s act hinted at discordant manipulation that would leave its president in a sad place indeed.

Obama’s discourse seemed definitive when he announced that the coup was illegal and that democratically-elected José Manuel Zelaya would remain the only president. He also acknowledged that “it would be a terrible precedent if we start moving backwards into the era in which we are seeing military coups as a means of political transition, rather than democratic elections.”

Nevertheless, two weeks after that announcement, and even more forceful ones supporting the return of Zelaya to the presidency, the United States still has not even withdrawn its ambassador to Honduras, as all the other countries in the continent have done. Although the de facto government has made it clear that it only counts on the support and acknowledgement of Israel and Taiwan, it is clear that the military base in Palmerola, infamous for its role in the “dirty war” against Nicaragua during the first Sandinista government, and where there are hundreds of thousands of U.S. troops, is the command center for the coup. Along with the hundreds of military advisers who occupy official positions, Washington controls the situation in Honduras.

Fidel Castro, the most accredited revolutionary leader on the continent, has prophesied that if president Zelaya is not returned to his office, a wave of coups will be unleashed to sweep away many governments in Latin America. This would weaken the authority of many civil governments in Central and South America, and coup leaders would disregard the civil government of the United States.

If this were to happen, the unrestrained revolution that simmers in the bowels of the continent would not be able to be contained. Given the subjective and concrete conditions that shaped the region’s development, the option for peaceful change would go up in smoke. There would be no alternative but to follow the path of insurrection and armed conflict, like the one that liberated Cuba 50 years ago. Only this time, it would be on the scale of many unified, experienced countries that won’t relinquish the modest democratic gains of the recent past, and who refuse to return to the violence of tyrannical regimes and new operations like “Condor.”

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

A DÓNDE PODRÍA CONDUCIR EL GOLPE EN HONDURAS

*Por Manuel Yepe**

Aún sin claro desenlace los acontecimientos desencadenados por el golpe de estado en Honduras contra el presidente José Manuel Zelaya, ya saltan a la vista y la inteligencia algunas importantes lecciones para los pueblos de América Latina sobre viejos temas en los nuevos tiempos.

Con espanto recibieron los latinoamericanos y caribeños en el último domingo de junio la noticia que revelaba la posibilidad real del regreso a un reciente pasado de opresión y represión pretendidamente sepultado.

Cobraron actualidad en el recuerdo los infaustos tiempos en que los ejércitos del continente se desempeñaban apenas como custodios de los intereses imperiales de dominación estadounidenses vigilando que los gobiernos de turno ajustaran su actuación al juego político democrático representativo, con normas y límites dictados por las oligarquías locales dependientes. Si alguno sobrepasaba los límites o quebraba las reglas, la hoja de parra se quitaba y eran lanzados los militares a la toma del poder.

Durante todo el siglo XX, el golpe de Estado, más o menos cruento, fue el recurso que sirvió para derrocar a los gobiernos nacionales que se desmarcaron de la subordinación a los intereses de las oligarquías y, de paso, llevaron al poder a repudiados dictadores que manchan la historia de prácticamente todos los países de Latinoamérica y el Caribe. Es rasgo común de todos los golpes de Estado

en el continente el haber sido ordenados, organizados y/o autorizados por Washington.

Lo novedoso del golpe militar en Honduras es que ha tenido lugar en las condiciones de la nueva correlación de fuerzas políticas en América Latina y el Caribe que se ha ido estructurando a lo largo del último medio siglo, ahora con un presidente de características singulares en la Casa Blanca, envuelto en incógnitas o expectativas diversas para todos los bandos.

De ahí que algunos analistas políticos califiquen ya al de Honduras como un ensayo de golpe de nuevo tipo para responder a nuevas formas de lucha en la región, donde líderes izquierdistas libremente electos desafían el status-quo y se resisten a acatar los límites de la democracia permitida.

Así como el golpe de Estado en Honduras generó consternación, la masiva resistencia contra la asonada y el apoyo del pueblo hondureño al presidente Zelaya, con sus organizaciones sociales integradas en un pujante movimiento popular, han sorprendido a muchos especialistas.

Desde el primer momento, tanto en Honduras como en la región y el mundo, las especulaciones giraban en torno a la actitud que asumiría el gobierno de los Estados Unidos, principal sospechoso de haber instigado la asonada a causa de los antecedentes de su reiterado patrocinio de delitos de golpe militar en el continente.

Solo que en esta ocasión las esperanzas sembradas por el flamante

presidente Barack Obama al proyectarse en su campaña electoral por una política de cambios muy diferente a la de su infausto predecesor prometían la posibilidad de un pronunciamiento estadounidense diferente.

Pero con el desarrollo de los sucesos han aflorado contradicciones en la actuación del gobierno estadounidense que no pocos estudiosos de la política internacional han considerado indicativas de que las miras del golpe no excluían objetivos neconservadores hostiles a Obama.

Quienes mantenían, para no contrariar al presunto culpable, que había que negociar una solución con los golpistas, parecieron satisfechos de que, esta vez, el gobierno de Estados Unidos no violentó, como era antes su conducta habitual, el consenso regional ni obligó a sus más cercanos aliados a distanciarse de la voluntad de la mayoría, lo que permitió que prevaleciera la unidad regional.

Pero pronto se hicieron sentir en la actuación de Washington maniobras discordantes que dejaban en triste posición a su Presidente.

El discurso de Obama parecía definitivo cuando declaró que el golpe fue ilegal y que José Manuel Zelaya, democráticamente electo, seguía siendo el único presidente, al tiempo que reconoció que “sería un terrible precedente regresar a una era en que veíamos golpes militares como medios para transiciones políticas en vez de elecciones democráticas.”

Sin embargo, dos semanas después de formuladas estas declaraciones y otras aún más concretas en apoyo al



Manifestación en apoyo de Presidente Manuel Zelaya en frente de Aeropuerto Toncontin. Tegucigalpa, 5 julio 2009.

regreso de Zelaya a la presidencia, Estados Unidos ni siquiera ha retirado a su Embajador de Honduras como lo han hecho los demás países del continente. Aunque oficialmente el gobierno de facto ha hecho ver que solo cuenta con el reconocimiento y apoyo externo de Israel y Taiwan, es evidente que la base militar de Palmerola, célebre por su papel en la guerra sucia contra Nicaragua durante el primer gobierno sandinista, donde hay cientos de miles de soldados estadounidenses, es el centro de mando del golpe militar y, junto con otros cientos de asesores en otras dependencias oficiales, Washington controla la situación en Honduras.

Como presagiara Fidel Castro, el más acreditado líder revolucionario continental, si el presidente Zelaya no es reintegrado a su cargo, una ola de golpes de Estado se desataría para barrer a muchos gobiernos de América Latina y la autoridad de muchos gobiernos civiles en Centro y Suramérica quedaría debilitada sin

que los militares golpistas presten atención al poder civil de Estados Unidos.

Si ello ocurriera, la revolución incontenible que bulle en las entrañas del continente no se detendría. Con todas las condiciones subjetivas y concretas dadas para su desarrollo, la opción del cambio pacífico se habría esfumado y no quedaría más camino que el de la insurrección y la lucha armada, como la que libraron los cubanos hace 50 años, solo que ahora a escala de muchos países más experimentados y unidos, que no admitirán el despojo de sus modestos avances democráticos del pasado reciente ni el regreso a la violencia de los regímenes tiránicos y nuevas operaciones del tipo “Cóndor”.

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

OPEN LETTER TO THE ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT

continued from page 12

trification. Subsidies for food, housing, gas, public transportation, airline seats, movies, arts, books, fertilizers, vacations, and sex change operations. (That's right. Iran has the highest number of sex changes operations of any country except Thailand. Subsidized by the government.)

There are those, such as Azar Nafisi and Roya Hakakian, who maintain that the protests are driven by women fighting against the politics of a misogynist government.

Yes, there are restrictions on women in Iran. All women must adhere to the Islamic dress code, called the hejab. It's not the "veil," as Hakakian falsely described in her NPR interview. And it's not the full chador, or burka, like in Afghanistan. At a minimum, it's a scarf, jacket, and trousers or skirt, in any colors. Or, if a woman prefers -- and many do, especially outside the larger cities -- the full-length chador, in black or colors. (This I know firsthand from our journey through Iran.)

At the same time, it's also true that the social status and economic opportunities for Iranian women have much improved as a result of the Revolution and far surpass those in almost every other Middle Eastern society. In Saudi Arabia, the U.S.'s closest ally in the region after Israel, women can't run for public office or can't even vote. They're not allowed to drive or even leave their homes without their husband or a male relative. They're barred from many types of jobs.

But in Iran, women leave their homes, alone, any hour of the day or night. They're truck drivers and film directors, retail clerks and race car drivers, university professors, business executives, and star athletes. They make up 30 percent of doctors and 60 to 70 percent of all college students. And they belong to all classes, they are urban and rural, and no one woman or group of women can claim to speak for all of them.

Women in Iran enjoy access to all forms of contraception. Iran was the first country in the Middle East to have a state-run condom factory. It was the first Muslim country to promote male sterilization as a form of birth control. It's the only country in the region where couples have to go to family planning classes before they can marry. As a result, the average birth rate is now two children per woman, down from seven shortly after the Revolution. And the average age of marriage for women has risen from 18 in 1966 to 23.7 in 2007 (Country Profile, Library of Congress).

Want more? Unlike in the U.S., working women in Iran are entitled to 90 days maternity leave -- at two-thirds pay -- with the right to return to their previous jobs. All business enterprises above a certain size are required to have on-site day care. Working women with children under the age of two get a paid, half-hour nursing break every three hours.

So it's small wonder that working-class women tend to support the government, while it's the more secular and affluent middle class that is the major source of anti-government resentment.

What's at Stake in the Present Crisis?

A lot.

The Obama administration is still saying it wants to "engage" Iran in discussions over Iran's nuclear program. And President Obama told the BBC June 2 that Iran may have some right to develop nuclear power for peaceful energy purposes, so long as it isn't trying to develop nuclear weapons. A month earlier, in Prague, he said his administration would "support Iran's right to peaceful nuclear energy with rigorous inspections" if Iran can prove it isn't developing nuclear weapons (Associated Press, June 3, 2009).

As a signer of the U.N.'s principal non-proliferation treaty, Iran has every right to develop nuclear power for peaceful energy purposes, since it's pledged not to pursue nuclear weapons. And there's no evidence that it is trying to develop such weapons -- not

from U.S. intelligence agencies nor from the U.N.'s nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, a fact repeated July 3 by the IAEA's incoming director, Yukiya Amano (Reuters, July 3, 2009).

On the other hand, Obama also says he'll seek stiffer international sanctions against Iran if it doesn't respond positively -- and quickly -- to his offer to talk. "Although I don't want to put artificial time tables on that process," he said, "we do want to make sure that, by the end of this year, we've actually seen a serious process move forward" (Associated Press, June 3, 2009).

Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said that Israel will respect Obama's attempt to negotiate with Iran. During his May 18 meeting with President Obama, Netanyahu "made a commitment that Israel would not attack Iran at least until the end of the year. . . ." (Jerusalem Post, May 19, 2009).

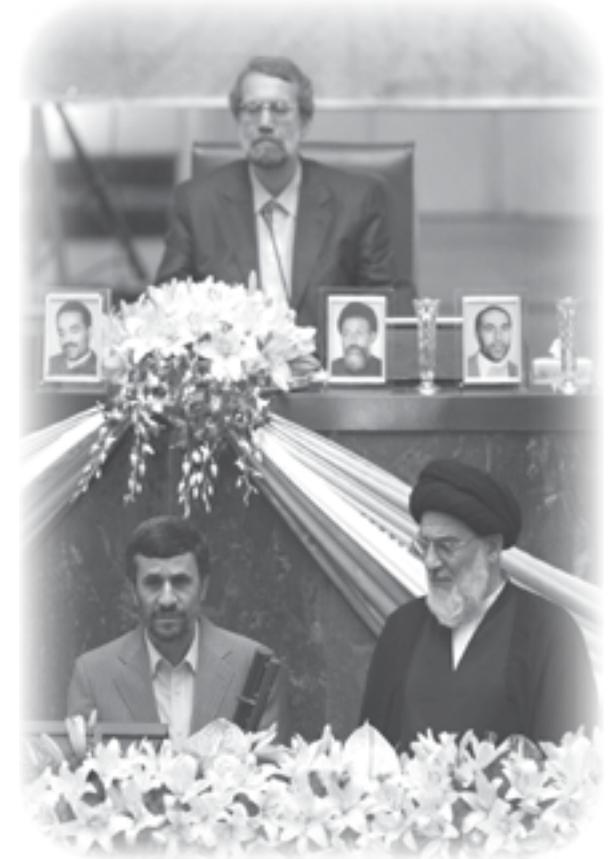
Very reassuring.

Then, on July 5, Vice President Joe Biden told ABC News that the U.S. wouldn't try and prevent Israel from attacking Iran. "Israel can determine for itself as a sovereign nation what is in its best interest," Biden said. "If the Netanyahu government decides to take a course of action different than the one being pursued now, that is their sovereign right to do that. That is not our choice."

Green light.

So this is an increasingly dangerous situation. On July 4, the Times of India reported that, in June, for the first time in four years, an Israeli submarine had crossed through the Suez Canal as a part of a military training exercise. "The move is be-

lieved to have been made as a warning to Iran of the Jewish state's capabilities and to show that Israel and Egypt are cooperating against a shared threat." The article stated that Israel has three submarines capable of carrying nuclear warheads. "By using the Suez, an Israeli submarine could reach the Persian Gulf off Iran in a matter of days," the article stated. On July 5, the (UK) Sunday Times reported that "The head of Mossad, Israel's overseas intelligence service, has assured Benjamin Netanyahu, its prime minister, that Saudi Arabia would turn a blind eye to Israeli jets flying over the kingdom during any future raid on Iran's nuclear sites. . . . The Israeli air force has been training for a possible at-



Ahmadinejad's Presidential inauguration ceremony in Iranian Parliament. Sitting above: Ali Larijani, House Speaker. August 3, 2009.

tack on Iran's nuclear site at Natanz in the centre of the country and other locations for four years."

The same day, the Jerusalem Post reported that the Israeli Air Force "plans to participate in aerial exercises in the US and Europe in the coming months with the aim of training its pilots for long-range flights." The newspaper's online version reported that F-16C fighter jets would be sent to participate in exercises at the Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada, while "several of the IAF's C-130 Hercules transport aircraft will participate in the Rodeo 2009 competition at the McChord Air Force Base in Washington state." The paper noted that, last summer, "more than 100 IAF jets flew over Greece in what was viewed as a test-run for a potential strike on Iranian nuclear facilities."

Aside from war, what else is at stake? Iran could descend into civil war. It could, under outside pressure, be dismembered, like the West did to the former Yugoslavia.

So yes, this is a dangerous situation. And a bad time to be adding to the tensions by attempting to further isolate Iran's government, which happens to be the only entity capable of defending the Iranian people -- all Iranian people -- from a military attack.

But there's even more at stake in Iran's internal struggle -- the very future of Iran itself.

Which Way for Iran?

The current division in Iranian society isn't just about elections or demands to loosen social restrictions. It's also about the economy -- who owns it, who controls it, who benefits from it.

A big issue in Iran -- virtually never discussed in the U.S. media -- is how to interpret Article 44 of the country's constitution. That article states that the economy must consist of three sectors: state-owned, cooperative, and private and that "all large-scale and mother industries" are to be entirely owned by the state.

This includes the oil and gas industries, which provide the government with the majority of its revenue. This is what enables the government, in partnership with the large charity foundations, to fund the vast social safety net that allows the country's poor to live much better lives than they did under the U.S.-installed Shah. It's why overall poverty has been slashed to one-eighth today of what it was under the Shah (see Djavad Salehi-Isfahani, "Revolution and Redistribution in Iran: Poverty and Inequality 25 Years Later").

In 2004, Article 44 was amended to allow for some privatization. Just how much, and how swiftly that process should proceed, is a fundamental dividing line in Iranian politics. Mousavi, a tea merchant's son who became an architect and prime minister, had promised to speed up the privatization process. When he first announced he would run for the presidency, he called for moving away from an "alms-based" economy (Press TV, March 19, 2009), an obvious reference to Ahmadinejad's policies of providing services and benefits to the poor.

Then there's Mousavi's powerful backer, Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

"One of Iran's wealthiest and most powerful men, a former right-hand man to the father of the revolution, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Mr. Rafsanjani was an outspoken critic of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad during the campaign and a supporter of the opposition candidate, Mir Hussein Mousavi" (New York Times, June 21, 2009).

Rafsanjani is a businessman who, according to the Times article quoted above, supports "privatizing parts of the economy." Forbes magazine includes him in its list of the world's richest people. He's also an outspoken critic of the social programs associated with Ahmadinejad, deriding them in terms very similar to U.S. neocons. And he's a former president who lost his bid to regain that office in the 2005 election, which was won by Ahmadinejad.

Does Rafsanjani identify with or seek to speak for the poor? Does Mousavi?

What kind of Iran are the Mousavi forces really hoping to create? And why is Washington -- whose preference for "democracy" is trumped every time by its insatiable appetite for raw materials, cheap labor, new markets, and endless profits -- so sympathetic to the "reform" movements in Iran and in every other country whose people have nationalized their own resources?

In addition to their different class bases and approaches to the economy, Ahmadinejad presents an uncompromising front against the West, and especially against the U.S. government. This is a source of great national pride, and has won Ahmadinejad the admiration of both Shia and Sunni Muslims across the Middle East -- as well as the enmity of their pro-U.S., internally repressive governments.

How Should the U.S. Anti-war Movement React?

First of all, it's interesting that U.S. peace activists feel they have to react -- to events in Iran. On July 5, there were bloody clashes in the capital city between government forces and anti-government protesters. The next day, "soldiers opened fire on a crowd marching towards the airport, killing at least two. . . . Hospitals admitted many more people with gunshot wounds and staff told reporters there was an increasing number of victims shot by the military during the nightly curfew" (Guardian, July 6, 2009).

No, that wasn't in Tehran -- it was in Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras, in Central America. On June 28, the military staged a coup against populist President Manuel Zelaya, shooting up his house and carrying him off into exile.

By the way, class was also the issue there -- but this time, it was the workers who were protesting: "The impoverished coffee-exporter of 7 million people has become

dangerously polarised between the poor and working class, who tend to support Zelaya for his social programmes, and the middle class and institutions such as congress, the Catholic church and the military who consider him a dangerous radical who wanted to perpetuate himself in power" (Guardian, July 6, 2009).

This May, the government of Sri Lanka brutally crushed a 25-year-old insurgency by guerrilla organizations fighting on behalf of the minority Tamils, who charge discrimination and ill treatment at the hands of the island's Sinhalese majority. The International Committee of the Red Cross called the scene of the final fighting "an unimaginable humanitarian catastrophe." Some 7,000 civilians were reported to have died since late January (Christian Science Monitor, May 17, 2009).

In Somalia, thousands of people have died in fighting between insurgents and a government that only survives because of the millions of dollars being pumped in by the U.N. and Western governments. U.S. warships off the coast have actually bombed Somali villages, under the pretext of fighting "Islamic extremists."

Speaking of Africa, the U.S. is rapidly extending its military presence across the continent, setting up an African Command -- AFRICOM -- structure to train militaries so it can later influence them, just as it has in Latin America, through Fort Benning's School of the Americas.

But these aren't the burning issues facing the U.S. anti-war movement, are they? No, the overriding issue now is Iran.

Why? Of course, we're more aware of it, since we've been getting nothing but a 24/7 barrage about an allegedly rigged election, brave and peaceful protesters, and brutal repression.

I find this interesting, because I've spent the

continued on page 18

Reflections of Fidel

A NOBEL PRIZE FOR MRS. CLINTON

The never-ending document read yesterday by the Nobel Laureate Oscar Arias is much worse than the 7 points of the surrender paper he had proposed on July 18th.

He wasn't communicating with international opinion in Morse Code. He was speaking in front of the TV cameras that were transmitting his image and all the details of the human face that tends to have as many variables as a person's fingerprints. Any intent to lie can be easily discovered. I was observing him carefully.

Among those watching the television, the great majority knew that Honduras had had a coup d'état. That medium gave information about the speeches made at the OAS, the UN, the SICA (Central American Integration System), the NAM Summit and other forums; they had seen the violations, the assaults and the repression inflicted on the people engaged in activities that brought together hundreds of thousands of people protesting against the coup.

The strangest thing was that when Arias was laying out his new peace proposal, he wasn't delusional; he believed what he was saying.

Even though very few in Honduras were able to see the images, in the rest of the world many did see them and they also saw when he proposed the famous 7 points on July 18th. They knew that the first of them said, verbatim: "The legitimate restitution of José Manuel Zelaya Rosales to the presidency of the Republic of Hondu-

ras until the end of the constitutional term for which he was elected..."

Everyone wanted to know what the mediator would be saying yesterday afternoon. The acknowledgement of the rights of the constitutional president of Honduras, with the powers reduced almost to zero in the first proposal, was relegated to sixth place in the second Arias plan, where the phrase "to legitimate the restitution" is not even being used.

Many honest people are amazed and they perhaps attribute what he said yesterday to some dark manoeuvres of his. Perhaps I am one of the few in the world that understands that there was an auto-suggestive element rather than a deliberate intent in the words of the Nobel Peace Laureate. I noticed that especially when Arias, using special emphasis and laboured phrasing on account of the emotion, spoke about the multitude of messages that presidents and world leaders, moved by his initiative, had sent him. It's what was going through his mind; he doesn't even realize that other Nobel Peace Laureates, honest and modest individuals such as Rigoberta Menchú and Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, are outraged by what has happened in Honduras.

Without any shadow of a doubt, a large part of the civilian governments of Latin America, the ones who knew that Zelaya had approved the first Arias plan and were confident in the good sense of the perpetrators of the coup and their Yankee allies, breathed in relief; that lasted only 72 hours.

Seen from a different angle, and returning to the things that prevail in the real world, where the dominant empire exists and almost 200 sovereign states have to wrestle with all kinds of conflicts and political, economic, environmental, religious and other interests, the only thing missing is to award the brilliant Yankee way of thinking of Oscar Arias, trying to gain some time, strengthen the coup, and dishearten the international bodies that supported Zelaya.

On the 30th anniversary of the triumph of the Sandinista Revolution, Daniel Ortega, bitterly remembering Arias' role in the first Esquipulas Treaty, declared before a huge crowd of Nicaraguan patriots: "The Yankees know him well, that's why they chose him to be the mediator in Honduras". At that same event, Rigoberta Menchú, of indigenous descent, condemned the coup.

If the measures agreed to at the foreign ministers meeting in Washington would be merely fulfilled, the coup d'état would not have been able to survive the non-violent resistance of the Honduran people.

Now the perpetrators of the coup are already moving around in the oligarchic



Cuban Commander-in-Chief Fidel Castro and President Raul Castro meet Honduran President Manuel Zelaya. March 4, 2009.

spheres of Latin America, some of which, from high state positions, no longer blush when they speak of their sympathies for the coup and imperialism goes fishing in the choppy waters of the river that is Latin America. Exactly what the United States wanted with the peace initiative, while it accelerated negotiations to surround Bolívar's homeland with military bases.

We must be fair, and while we await the last word of the people of Honduras, we should demand a Nobel Prize for Mrs. Clinton.

Fidel Castro Ruz
July 23, 2009
2:30 p.m.

UN PREMIO NOBEL PARA MRS. CLINTON

El interminable documento leído ayer por el Nobel Oscar Arias es mucho peor que los 7 puntos del acta de rendición que había propuesto el 18 de julio.

No se comunicaba con la opinión internacional a través de una clave Morse. Hablaba delante de las cámaras de televisión que transmitían su imagen y todos los detalles del rostro humano, que suele tener tantas variables como las huellas digitales de una persona. Cualquier intención mentirosa se puede descubrir con facilidad. Yo lo observaba cuidadosamente.

Entre los televidentes, la inmensa mayoría conocía que en Honduras tuvo lugar un golpe de Estado. A través de ese medio se informaron de los discursos pronunciados en la OEA, la ONU, el SICA, la Cumbre de los No Alineados y otros foros; habían visto los atropellos, los abusos y la represión al pueblo en actividades que llegaron a reunir cientos de miles de personas protestando contra el golpe de Estado.

Lo más extraño es que, cuando Arias exponía su nueva propuesta de paz, no deliberaba; creía lo que estaba diciendo.

Aunque muy pocos en Honduras podían ver las imágenes, en el resto del mundo muchas personas lo vieron y también lo habían visto cuando él propuso los famosos 7 puntos el 18 de julio. Sabían que el primero de ellos decía textualmente: “La legítima restitución de José Manuel Zelaya Rosales en la Presidencia de la República hasta el fin del período constitucional por el cual fue electo...”



El Comandante en Jefe Fidel Castro se reunió el Presidente Hondureño Manuel Zelaya. 4 marzo 2009.

Todos deseaban saber qué diría ayer por la tarde el mediador. El reconocimiento de los derechos del Presidente Constitucional de Honduras, con las facultades reducidas casi a cero en la primera propuesta, fue relegado a un sexto lugar en el segundo proyecto de Arias, donde ni siquiera se emplea la frase “legítimar la restitución.”

Muchas personas honestas están asombradas y tal vez atribuyen a oscuras maniobras suyas lo que dijo ayer. Quizás yo sea uno de los pocos en el mundo que comprenda que había una autosugestión, más que una intención deliberada en las palabras del Nobel de la Paz. Me percaté de eso especialmente cuando Arias, con especial énfasis y palabras entrecortadas por la emoción, habló de la multitud de mensajes que Presidentes

y líderes mundiales, conmovidos por su iniciativa, le habían enviado. Es lo que le pasa por la cabeza; ni siquiera se da cuenta de que otros Premios Nobel de la Paz, honestos y modestos, como Rigoberta Menchú y Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, están indignados por lo ocurrido en Honduras.

Sin duda alguna que gran parte de los gobiernos civiles de América Latina, los cuales conocían que Zelaya había aprobado el primer proyecto de Arias y confiaban en la cordura de los golpistas y sus aliados yanquis, respiraron con alivio, el cual duró solo 72 horas.

Visto desde otro ángulo, y volviendo a las cosas que prevalecen en el mundo real, donde el imperio dominante existe y casi 200 estados soberanos tienen que lidiar con todo tipo de conflictos e intereses políticos, económicos, medioambientales, religiosos y otros, solo falta algo para premiar la genial idea yanqui de pensar en Oscar Arias, para tratar de ganar tiempo, consolidar el golpe, y desmoralizar a los organismos internacionales que apoyaron a Zelaya.

En el 30 Aniversario del Triunfo de la Revolución Sandinista, Daniel Ortega recordando con amargura el papel de Arias en el primer

Acuerdo de Esquipulas, declaró ante una enorme multitud de patriotas nicaragüenses: “Los yanquis lo conocen bien, por eso lo escogieron como mediador en Honduras”. En ese mismo acto, Rigoberta Menchú, de ascendencia indígena, condenó el golpe.

Si se cumplían simplemente las medidas acordadas en la reunión de Cancilleres en Washington el golpe de Estado no habría podido sobrevivir a la resistencia pacífica del pueblo hondureño.

Ahora los golpistas se están moviendo ya en las esferas oligárquicas de América Latina, algunas de las cuales, desde altas posiciones estatales, ya no se ruborizan al hablar de sus simpatías por el golpe y el imperialismo pesca en el río revuelto de América Latina. Exactamente lo que Estados Unidos deseaba con la iniciativa de paz, mientras aceleraba las negociaciones para rodear de bases militares la patria de Bolívar.

Hay que ser justos, y mientras esperamos la última palabra del pueblo de Honduras, debemos demandar un Premio Nobel para Mrs. Clinton.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fidel Castro'.

Fidel Castro Ruz
Julio 23 de 2009
2 y 30 p.m.

The Struggle Against War and Occupation is Gaining New Supporters



Canada Out of Afghanistan Picket. June 11, 2009.

By Payvand Pejvack

For over 5 years, Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) has been at the forefront of organizing and educating people in Vancouver and the BC Lower Mainland in an effort to reach anyone who is interested in being part of building a movement in Canada against war and occupation. This broad arena of educational, cultural and informative events attracts people from all walks of life: working people, young people, retired people, and people of different ethnicities.

This June was a busy, jam-packed month of consistent organizing of and participation in a picket, forums and organizing meetings in the movement against war and occupation.

The first of two forums and discus-

sions took place on June 3rd, titled "Palestine After the Israeli Siege on Gaza: Roots of the Conflict and Prospects for Change". This forum was an educational event which discussed the occupation of Palestine for over 60 years by the Israeli Zionist regime. Participants heard about the roots and history of the conflict and possible ways to get involved in the ongoing anti-occupation and anti-war movement.

MAWO organized a second important forum on June 17th, entitled, "US War and Occupation

sions took place in Cuba: Guantanamo Military Base, Blockade, Sabotage and the Case of the Cuban 5 Heroes - Why the Antiwar Movement Needs to Make This Issue an Important Campaign". Speakers and partici-

the occupation of Afghanistan. MAWO held its 55th monthly picket action in front of the Canadian Armed Forces Recruitment Center in New Westminster. Picketers who came to join the loud crowd in front of the recruitment center were joined by the participation of dozens of regular people driving by, taking advantage of their loud car horns to honk in response to the large sign that said, "Honk for Canada out of Afghanistan!", making the picket loud and boisterous enough for people blocks away to hear.

Not only are direct actions such as pickets and rallies, or educational events such as forums and discussions very important, but so too are the general organizing meet-

ings that MAWO holds bi-weekly, open to any and all who would like to participate. These organizing meetings are the perfect venue for anyone who wants to learn the workings of an organizing meeting, but is also a very advantageous venue for those who want to share their ideas on antiwar organizing. It is the consistency and reliability of these events that is gaining and bringing attention to the struggle against war and occupation. For there to be a steady move forward in the antiwar movement, there must be steady and consistent actions - there must be movement for the wheels to turn. This June's educational, cultural and informative events were part of the glue in maintaining the momentum that the antiwar and anti-occupa-

tion movement has started to build in Canada and around the world, and must continue to be part of this glue in the months and years to come until there is an end to this new era of war and occupation!



Shawkat Hassan speaking at "Palestine After the Israeli Siege on Gaza" forum. June 3, 2009.

pants discussed the importance of taking on the issue of US war and occupation of Cuba as an on-going campaign in the antiwar movement.

June 11th was also another successful action in the fight to end



Forum: 'US War and Occupation in Cuba'. June 17, 2009.

Cuban Five Visitation Rights for Adriana Pérez: Obama and Clinton Must Change their Position



Olga Salenueva, wife of René Gonzalez, and Adriana Pérez, wife of Gerardo Hernandez, have both been repeatedly denied visas to visit their husbands in US prisons.

*By Arnold August**

July 15, 2009

Today we have been informed that the US State Department has once again refused a visa for Adriana Pérez to visit her husband Gerardo Hernández. He is one of the Cuban Five, unjustly condemned to two perpetual life terms plus fifteen years. Gerardo, like the other four Cubans, has been in US penitentiaries for close to eleven years under the most difficult conditions. Their sole “crime” was to peacefully infiltrate South Florida ant-Cuban terrorist organizations in order to inform the US authorities about the terrorist activities with the unique purpose of stopping these attacks against the Cuban people. Their trials and arbitrary treatment

have been condemned by all those justice-loving people in the world, from all walks of life, as they slowly became aware of the facts. The reality exposed the case as fraudulent and constituting a travesty of justice not only according to the US laws, but also international norms. The refusal to allow visitation rights all this time to Adriana constitutes a violation of

US and international norms which prohibit double punishment such as the cruel, unnecessary, inhuman and unjustified repeated refusal of a visa to Adriana who has not seen her husband since he was arrested close to 11 years ago. She has been consistently refused by the State Department under the pretext that she is a “threat to the stability and security of the US”! This is the same excuse used by the State Department whether under the Bush or the Obama administrations.

This is a political case. The Cuban Five are political prisoners. If the case was open and transparent, why did the recent June 15 Supreme Court decision to refuse the review of the case (despite the record number of friends of the Court petitions) not go public and openly state to the world the

reason for this denial? In the same way, why did the State Department not tell the truth today about the refusal of the visa to Adriana instead of hiding behind the Bush-era rhetoric of “threat to security and stability”?

President Obama has made so much political capital on the slogan of “change”. Hillary Clinton, amongst other characteristics, recently made her trade-mark as a woman candidate and thus was hoping to become the first female president of the US. How can she, as a woman, be instrumental in such a cruel punishment against Adriana and Gerardo? However, the Cuban Five case, like other situations nationally and internationally, are all merging together these days into a series of litmus tests for the Obama Administration. The fall from the height of “popularity” riding on the winds of change can be easily converted into a stunning tumble as quick as his rise to fame as the apostil of change.

The ball is now in the camp of the Obama Administration. Change or status quo? He must immediately release the Cuban Five as the US Constitution allows the president to do. Hillary

Clinton, perhaps with the assistance and understanding of First Lady Michelle Obama, must grant a visa to Adriana. This is one way to prove to the world that change was indeed the real goal.

This note is being sent to President Barack Obama, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

* *Arnold August, Montreal, is an author/journalist/lecturer specializing on Cuban democracy, a member of the International Committee for the Freedom of the Cuban Five and the Comité Fabio Di Celmo pour les 5 of the Table de Concertation de Solidarité Québec-Cuba.*



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50 Years of Revolutionary Cuba Discussed in Vancouver Conference

Second International Che Guevara Conference was a Huge Success!

By Andrew Barry

On June 26th, 27th and 28th, 2009, the 2nd International Che Guevara Conference took place for the second consecutive year in Vancouver, Canada, hosted by Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC). Guest speakers attended from Canada, the US and Cuba taking the over 250 participants through presentations and discussions which spanned the historic, international, and current aspects of the Cuban revolution.

On Friday, June 26th the conference began with an Indigenous welcoming from Kelly White, a Coast Salish elder and activist, who spoke about the common struggle of Cuba and Indigenous nations. The keynote speaker of opening night was Isaac Saney, a professor at Dalhousie University as well as author of the acclaimed book "Cuba: A Revolution in Motion" and the co-chair of the Canadian Network on Cuba (CNC). He gave a presentation on the theme "Cuba: A Revolution in Motion and What We Need to Learn from the Cuban Revolution."

"Roots and Causes of the Cuban Revolution", the first workshop of the second day, was presented by Walter Lippmann, Editor-in-chief of the CubaNews. The next workshop picked up from where the last one left off, and went into "The Early Years of the Cuban Revolution: Guerrilla Warfare, Socialist Revolution, Challenges and Progress". This workshop was presented by Jorge Soberon, the newly appointed Cuban Consul General in Toronto.

In the afternoon, the workshop "The Cuban Revolution and Women's Liberation: A Revolution Within a Revolution" was presented via video link from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania by Lisa Valanti, National President of the US-Cuba Sister Cities Association and a participant in all 20 Pastors for Peace Caravans to Cuba. The next workshop, "US Imperialism and the Cuban Revolution: Socialism, the Blockade, and the Five Cuban Heroes" was presented by Gloria La Riva, Coordinator of the National Committee to Free the Cuban Five in the US.

The first workshop on the third and final day, "Cuba and Human Rights: Achievements and Fundamental Progress in Social Equality" was presented by Tamara Hansen, Coordinator of VCSC and co-chair of the Canadian Network on Cuba, and Alison Bodine, a project coordinator for IFCO/Pastors for Peace in New York. Due to political targeting from the government of Canada and the Canada Border Services Agency, Alison is banned from Canada for two years, and therefore was only able to be present via video link.

The next workshop "The Cuban Revolution and Homosexual Rights: Revolutionary Leadership Rectifies Itself" showed the progresses and leadership that Cuba has taken in advancing homosexual rights. A film clip from the 2008 events in Havana for the International Day Against Homophobia opened the workshop before a presentation by Nita Palmer, who is an organizer with the Free the Cuban 5 Committee - Vancouver and a member of the editorial board of Fire This Time newspaper.

In the afternoon, the next workshop "Cuba: Participatory Democracy and Elections in the 21st Century" was presented by Arnold August, an acclaimed journalist and author of the popular book on Cuba "Democracy in Cuba and the 1997-98 Elections" and the upcoming book "Cuba: Participatory Democracy and Elections in the 21st Century." The final workshop of the conference was "Revolutionary Resistance and Recovery: The Collapse of the Soviet Union, the Special Period and the Tourist Industry" by Jorge Soberon.

The conference closed with a cultural celebration, which highlighted the 50th anniversary of the Cuban Revolution, as well as the 5th anniversary of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba with the beautiful music of local musicians and poets.

This conference took the historic 50th anniversary of the Cuban Revolution as an opportunity to discuss the many challenges Cuba has faced and the achievements they have made within these 50 years. Through all of the topics discussed in this conference, from the roots of the Cuban Revolution to the continuing progression of their revolutionary progress, Cuba remains a beacon of hope for humanity in the struggle for a better world.



From top: Arnold August speaks on democracy in Cuba; Cuban Consul General Jorge Soberon addresses conference; Isaac Saney speaks to crowd on opening night of conference.

HONDURAS: U.S. COUNTER REVOLUTION STRIKES BACK

continued from page 5

wealthy Honduran with business interests in Honduras.

However, defending the democratic and constitutional rights of the Honduran people and their elected President is important, as the success of the coup would be a brutal step backwards against the rights of the majority of Hondurans. Success in this struggle will also put the working and oppressed masses in Honduras in a better and more confident position to fight for further rights and further gains.

Our demand for Zelaya's return should also come from the understanding of the huge stakes a play for US imperialism and oppressed people in all of Latin-America. The US is trying to open up the new era or war and occupation in Latin-America,

trying to turn back its political and social clock to past decades of violence and foreign domination. As the US economy continues to spiral downwards, it will look increasingly to third world countries to occupy and exploit. We cannot allow them a foothold in Honduras, and any step backward for the huge social movements who have said, "Enough!" and have begun to move forward.

Honduras has become the latest battlefield in the new era of war and occupation. Honduran people are in motion in defence of their self-determination against US imperialism, and it is our duty to organize in solidarity with their demands for the return of President Manuel Zelaya unconditionally. This is ultimately a struggle for a better world.

**REINSTATE ZELAYA NOW!
U.S. HANDS OFF HONDURAS!
U.S. HANDS OF LATIN-AMERICA!**

Comunidades de Vancouver en Solidaridad con Cuba (VCSC por sus siglas en ingles) es una organización que trabaja para crear apoyo y solidaridad para Cuba en Vancouver, Canadá e internacionalmente. Para cumplir con esta labor nosotros organizamos frecuentes eventos educativos y culturales, conferencias, movilizaciones y acciones en defensa de la soberanía de Cuba contra los ataques imperialistas y en defensa de las victorias de la Revolución Cubana.

Además apoyamos 3 campañas de peticiones:

- 1- Contra el Bloqueo de los EE.UU. contra Cuba
- 2- Por Libertad de los Cinco Cubanos Encarcelados en los EE.UU.
- 3- Por la Extradición del Terrorista Anticubano Luis Posada Carriles

A través de las campañas de peticiones en toda la lower mainland, en eventos, festivales, secundarias, y universidades, podemos conversar con miles de personas sobre Cuba. El objetivo de este trabajo es llevar a Cuba, un país haciendo importantes avances sociales, a jóvenes, estudiantes, mujeres, personas de América Latina, personas del tercer mundo y a otras personas trabajadoras y oprimidas en Canadá, como un ejemplo de la construcción de un mundo mejor.

Cualquier miembro nuevo es bienvenido y animamos a todos a que se involucren con VCSC para construir un movimiento de solidaridad con Cuba más fuerte y más grande en Canadá.

Para conseguir mas información contacta:
cubacommunities@yahoo.ca | 778-882-5223 | www.vancubasolidarity.com

¿Quiénes son VCSC?

Who is VCSC?

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

against Imperialist attacks and in defence of the gains of the Cuban revolution.

We also support 3 petition campaigns:

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

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

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

For more information contact:

cubacommunities@yahoo.ca

778-882-5223

vancubasolidarity.com



Five Heroes Freedom Fund

Since the imprisonment of the 5 Cuban Heroes in 1998, the biggest roadblock for the case has been a complete media blackout. The National Committee to Free the Cuban Five in the U.S. has launched a \$250,000 fund for a mass national media campaign. They are asking all individuals and organizations to do whatever possible in the raising of this urgently needed money.

To make a donation or to find out more about the "Five Heroes Freedom Fund" please check out

www.freethefive.org or

www.canadiannetworkoncuba.ca

Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) Statement on the Situation in Iran

HANDS OFF IRAN!

June 23, 2009

Since the June 12th 2009 Iranian election results, there has been constant coverage of opposition protests in Iran on every major Western news source, with all sorts of “experts” on the situation in Iran and statements from the leaders of imperialist countries, as well as countless cell phone videos replayed despite their origin and authenticity being unconfirmed. As the internal issues of the Iranian people are suddenly the prime concern of media outlets and imperialist governments, this begs the question, where is the coverage of the US atrocities in Iraq, or the Canada/US/NATO crimes in Afghanistan? Why do protests of civil dispute warrant a media frenzy, but there is barely any reporting on the US drone attack on Northwest Pakistan which on Tuesday June 22nd killed at least 80 Pakistani people? As was done with the May 4th US air strikes in Afghanistan which killed over 140 Afghan people, will this be excused by the US government with another claim of “mistakes”?

One only needs to look at the progression (or regression) of US, EU and UN policy towards Iran in the last few years. While crocodile tears are being wept for the Iranian opposition protesters now, the US government and their EU allies and UN lackey have no problem imposing four sets of crippling sanctions against the people of Iran. Remember the impact of the US/UK/UN sanctions on Iraq, and the over 1.5 Million Iraqis, mainly women and children, who suffered and died

under these sanctions? This does not sound like they really have the interests of the Iranian people at heart. Furthermore, the bloody occupation of surrounding countries of Iran’s neighbours Iraq and Afghanistan, military bases in every surrounding country and a massive build up of military in the Persian Gulf, show more and more that the US is acting upon their agenda of having complete hegemony in the Middle East, a goal that is only possible with the control of Iran.

The hypocrisy of the heads of imperialist countries is staggering, as they condemn the actions of the Iranian government while sweeping their own crimes under the rug. On Tuesday June 23rd, US President Obama said to the press that the Iranian government “must govern through consent, and not coercion,” and that “We mourn each and every innocent life that is lost.” Where is the consent of the American people, who have seen over 5000 American soldiers killed in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, wars carried out without the consent of the American people and despite not only protests in the US but protests worldwide. While Obama claims to mourn the reported 17 lives lost in Iran, where is his conscience for the 1.2 million Iraqi lives cut short by US war and occupation?

The government of Canada is also participating in this increased campaign to demonize the Iranian government. Foreign Affairs Minister Lawrence Cannon issued a statement saying Canada “will continue

to call for a fully transparent investigation into electoral discrepancies,” and “The Iranian people deserve to have their voices heard.” Yet the government of Canada upholds an illegitimate puppet government in Afghanistan, whose election under the barrel of the gun of foreign occupation was wrought with fraud and discrepancies. Not to mention that the illegal occupation of Afghanistan itself undermines any legal and fair election. Where is the voice of the majority of people in Canada, who for over three years, according to many independent and official polls, oppose Canada’s war in Afghanistan?

Perhaps most directly interfering of all was the statement on Sunday from German chancellor Angela Merkel, who was the first leader of a major Western power to publicly demand a recount. There are claims that there were election discrepancies, and there are claims that there were not – it isn’t the job of the German chancellor to judge which claim is correct, and it is not her job to demand a recount. Not only does the German chancellor have no clear evidence to claim a recount is in order, this is a direct interference into the internal matters of a sovereign country! If Ms. Merkel is suddenly so concerned about the votes of Iranians, why does she not care about the racist and vicious attacks on Turks and Muslims in Germany, and the 2.5 million out of 4 million Turks who cannot vote because of Germany’s undemocratic and reactionary laws?

While imperialist countries are playing out the situation in Iran on an international stage, the rights of Iran as a UN nation-state member

and sovereign nation are being violated according to the UN’s own charters and resolutions. According to resolution 52/119 adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 1997, the UN resolved “Recognizing that the principles of national sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of any State should be respected in the holding of elections.”

Iran’s elections and disputes are an internal matter, to be resolved by the Iranian people and not the governments of imperialist countries with agendas of dominating Iran and a track record of using internal issues to justify military invasion. The Iranian people and government do not need “Big Brother” to tell them what to do. Throughout history, the Iranian people have constantly been in movement for change. Since the Tobacco Movement against the British empire in 1891 to the present day, the great Iranian people have managed three revolutions and ten mass movements or national movements in Iran. With such a track record for Iran, what credibili-

ty does any imperialist country have to lecture the Iranian people on how to fight for their rights and how to achieve change? One truly wonders what arrogance, trickery and racism these imperialist countries display.

In this current time, the Iranian people will determine for themselves what they will do for the future of themselves and their nation. As peace loving people, let us turn our attention to these civilized criminals sitting in Washington and Ottawa, whose crimes in this new era of war and occupation are committed every day against the people of Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, Haiti, Pakistan, Cuba, Indigenous nations, and yes, also Iran. This is where our human obligation lies, in pointing the finger at the governments of the imperialist countries we live in, rather than countries under imperialist attack.

**HANDS OFF IRAN!
NO TO IMPERIALIST
INTERVENTION IN IRAN!
SELF-DETERMINATION FOR
IRANIAN PEOPLE!**



*MAWO rally against war on Iran. Vancouver, Canada.
September 27, 2008.*

OPEN LETTER TO THE ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT

continued from page 14

last three years trying to get U.S. peace activists interested in Iran.

In July 2007, I organized a five-person People's Peace Delegation to Iran, which toured the country for 11 days. Combined with two years of research, that project was the basis for the book *In Defense of Iran*. Since the trip, I've made more than 30 presentations to peace, community, religious, and university audiences, trying to put the various charges against Iran into a historical, political, and cultural context. Is Iran trying to develop the Bomb? Does it support terrorism? Do its leaders really want to destroy Israel? What's the real status of Iranian women?

After doing all this outreach -- and working with many dedicated activists on the same issue -- I was deeply disappointed this spring to see that, of the four major coalitions organizing Iraq War anniversary protests, only the smallest, the National Assembly, raised Iran in its general outreach leaflet.

But here we are today, and Iran is front and center on the movement's crowded agenda.

OK, so we're concerned. Now, what should we do?

There's at least been some discussion of how respect for the principle of self-determination applies to the situation in Iran.

Of course, it's not true that progressives never interfere in the internal affairs of other countries -- even progressives who live in the United States. We protested

against the apartheid regime of South Africa. We defend the governments of Cuba, Venezuela, and Bolivia against pro-U.S. reactionaries masquerading as pro-democracy movements.

But the situation in Iran isn't the same thing. It's far more complex. The split in the electorate wasn't a simple clash between good guys and bad guys.

The protesters represent a sizable minority of the population -- overwhelmingly young, urban, educated and somewhat oriented to Western culture. They seem idealistic, the women wear make-up, their protest signs are lettered in English, they're using Twitter and Facebook, demanding more Western-style civil and social freedoms. It's easy to see why Western activists relate to them -- especially white, middle-class activists.

On another level, with or without its consent or even knowledge, this movement is being promoted by pro-privatization forces, particularly those associated with billionaire and free-market advocate Rafsanjani.

Meanwhile, the "pro-democracy" movement as a whole is being looked at by Western powers as the potential start of a "velvet revolution" that could overthrow or at least severely undermine the government led by President Ahmadinejad and backed by the Ayatollah Khamenei, who are seen as obstacles to U.S. domination of the region because of their opposition to U.S. expansionist aims, their support for the Palestinian and Lebanese peoples and the anti-occupation Hamas and Hezbollah forces, and their increasingly close

ties with leftist governments in Latin America.

Of course, this doesn't mean that the protesters are all reactionaries or dupes, or that they don't have any legitimate grievances, or that we need to offer a blanket endorsement for everything the Iranian government is now doing internally.

But it does mean that those who are calling for support for the pro-Mousavi protesters aren't even doing favor to young urban Iranians who want more democratic rights if they obscure the pro-privatization goals of Mousavi's powerful backers -- the antithesis of democracy.

And they aren't just opposing the government of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad -- they're also opposing millions of working-class Iranians who are trying to defend the social programs that have greatly improved their standard of living, programs that depend on the state ownership of the oil and gas industries.

You can't divorce a "human rights" issue from its political context. The pro-protest resolutions and open letters to the Iranian government now circulating in the U.S. and UK peace movements can become a factor in further isolating Iran, which will lead to more sanctions and the increased possibility of a military attack by the U.S. or Israel.

The political struggle taking place in Iran today is not like the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, in which outside progressives correctly intervened. It's unfolding within a country whose govern-

ment is opposed to U.S. imperialism and so is targeted by it. The protesters represent one important section of the Iranian people -- but it's one section, not the whole country, and certainly not the majority. It's a largely middle-class movement backed by the richest pro-"free market" forces in Iran, who themselves are far less concerned about "democracy" than promoting the full privatization of the economy.

At the same time, there is widespread support, even among Ahmadinejad supporters, for greater personal freedoms. So these are complex issues -- ones that only the Iranian people have the right to decide.

Given all these contradictions, it's not correct for non-Iranians to pick sides -- particularly those of us who live in the very country that is both targeting the Iranian government and cheering on the anti-government movement.

Our responsibility is to strongly reiterate and demonstrate our opposition to any military attacks, sanctions, or any outside interference in the internal affairs of Iran -- including by the peace movement. If we are successful in reaching that goal, the Iranian people will prove

perfectly capable of working out their own destiny for themselves.

1 This information is from Rostam Pourzal, former president of the U.S. chapter of the Campaign Against Sanctions & Military Intervention in Iran (CASMI), who was in Tehran before, during and just after the election. 2 In Farsi, "Death to . . ." is closer to "Down with. . ." than an actual call for someone's death -- something to remember when you hear the slogans "Death to America" or "Death to Israel."

**Phil Wilayto is an activist based in Richmond, Va. A civilian organizer in the Vietnam-era GI Movement, he is a co-founder of the Richmond-based Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality, the Virginia Anti-War Network and the Virginia People's Assembly; a board member of the Campaign Against Sanctions & Military Intervention in Iran (CASMI); editor of The Virginia Defender newspaper; and author of In Defense of Iran: Notes from a U.S. Peace Delegation's Journey through the Islamic Republic (available from Defenders Publications, Inc. at www.DefendersFJE.org/dpi).*

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EVENTS AND ACTIONS



VANCOUVER

» WEDNESDAY AUGUST 12

Public Forum:
Unite! Against U.S.
Intervention in Latin-America:
How the U.S. is Opening
a New Era of War and
Occupation in Latin-America
Joe's Cafe ~ large North Hall
1150 Commercial Drive at
William Street
6:30pm
Org'd by Mobilization Against
War & Occupation (MAWO)
www.mawovancouver.org

» THURSDAY AUGUST 13

Free the 5 Cuban Heroes Held
in US Jails!
Monthly Protest Action
US Consulate (1075 W Pender)
4:00pm
Org'd by the Free the Cuban
Five Committee - Vancouver
www.vancouverbasolidarity.com/
freethefivevan.html

» THURSDAY AUGUST 13

Life Long Struggle for a Better
World: Celebrate the 83rd

Birthday of Compañero Fidel
Castro
Britannia Community Centre
1661 Napier St (at Commercial Dr)
6:30pm
Org'd by Vancouver
Communities in Solidarity with
Cuba (VCSC)
www.vancouverbasolidarity.com

» THURSDAY AUGUST 20

Canada Out of Afghanistan
Picket Action
Canadian Armed Forces
Recruitment Centre
620 Royal Ave
New Westminster, BC
4:00pm
Org'd by Mobilization Against
War & Occupation (MAWO)
www.mawovancouver.org

» THURSDAY AUGUST 20

Public Forum:
Declaration on the Rights of
Indigenous Peoples
Unitarian Church
949 W.49th Ave. at Oak St
7:30pm

Org'd by World Federalist
Movement
www.vcn.bc.ca/wfcvb

» WEDNESDAY AUGUST 26

What's Next for Iran?
Unite Against Imperialist
Intervention!
Hands Off Iran!
Public Forum
Joe's Cafe ~ large North Hall
1150 Commercial Drive at
William Street
6:30pm
Org'd by Mobilization Against
War & Occupation (MAWO)
www.mawovancouver.org

» SATURDAY AUGUST 29

OUT NOW! Antiwar Rally
End the Occupations of Iraq,
Afghanistan, Palestine, Haiti,
and Tamil Eelam!
US Hands Off Iran and Pakistan!
US Hands Off Honduras!
Self Determination for
Indigenous Nations and All
Oppressed Nations!
Vancouver Art Gallery
750 Hornby St. (at Howe St.)
2:00pm
Org'd by Mobilization Against
War & Occupation (MAWO)
www.mawovancouver.org

WINNIPEG

» SUNDAY AUGUST 9

When Desertion is a Duty: in
support of Iraq war resisters
Film Screening of "Sir! No Sir!"
and Panel discussion
Crescentwood Fort Rouge

United Church (Nassau at
Wardlaw)
7:00pm
Sponsored by: The Winnipeg
branch of War Resisters Canada
& Crescent Fort Rouge United
Church
www.resisters.ca
www.crescentfortrouge.ca

TORONTO

» FRIDAY AUGUST 7

Demo for Iraq war resister
Rodney Watson who has been
Ordered to leave Canada
Northwest corner of University
Avenue and Queen Street West
4:30pm
Org'd by War Resisters Support
Campaign
www.resisters.ca

» SATURDAY AUGUST 8

Rally Against Human Rights
Violations in Honduras by de
facto Micheletti Government
Across from U.S. Consulate
360 University Ave
(south of Dundas St. West)
12:00pm
Org'd by The Latin American
Solidarity Network
granados.ceja@gmail.com

» SATURDAY AUGUST 8

In the Day of the Salvadorian:
We support our Brothers of
Honduras
United Steelworkers Hall
(25 Cecil St.)
6:00pm
Org'd by: Coordinadora de

Asociaciones Salvadoreño-
Canadiense de Ontario,
CELSAN
info@celsan.org

» SATURDAY AUGUST 22

Salsa in the City Square
The 14th Annual Toronto-
Cuba Friendship Day
Nathan Phillips Square,
Toronto City Hall
(100 Queen St W at Bay)
(Queen St subway station at
Eatons Centre)
Org'd by: CCFA Toronto
www.ccfatoronto.ca

MONTREAL

» FRIDAY AUGUST 7

Solidarity with Bil'in
Demonstration for release of
activist Mohammad Khatib
corner of St. Catherine &
McGill college
(metro McGill)
12:00pm
Org'd by Tadamon Montreal
www.tadamon.ca

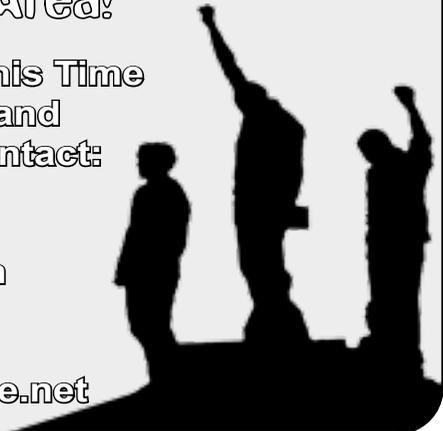
» THURSDAY AUGUST 13

Picket for the Cuban Five
Political Prisoners in United
States Prisons
St. James United Church at
463 W Catherine. St.
(near Alexandre St.)
5:30pm
Org'd by: Table de
Concertation de Solidarité
Québec-Cuba and the Fabio di
Celmo Committee to Free the
Five

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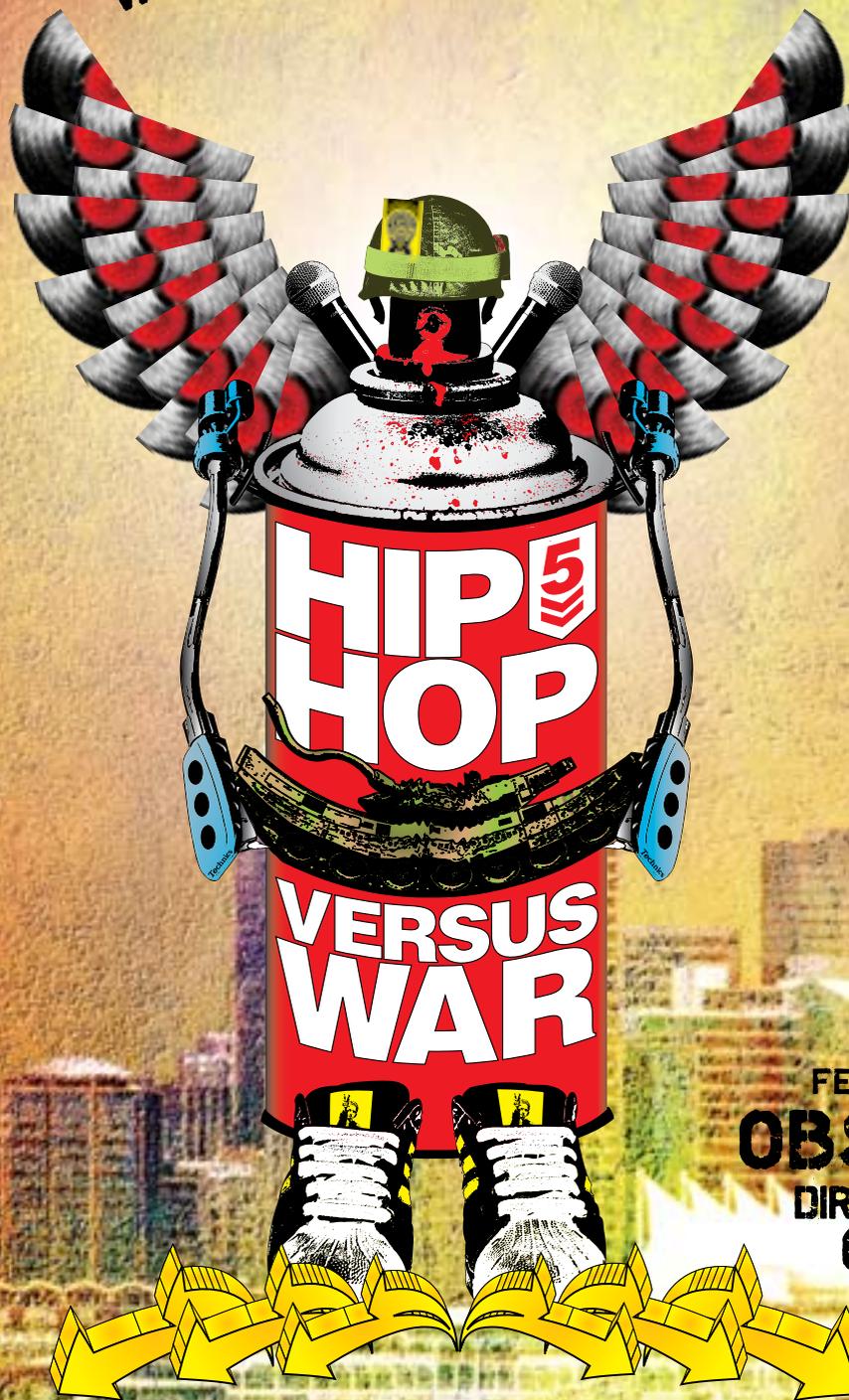


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