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Socialist Voice #349, September 6, 2009

Will U.S. Health Reforms Harm Working People?

by Fred Feldman

LeftViews is Socialist Voice's forum for articles related to rebuilding the left in Canada and around the world, reflecting a wide variety of socialist opinion. In this article, a long-time Marxist activist in the United States argues that the left should not automatically dismiss the concerns of some opponents of proposed U.S. health care reforms.

I have to admit that the mere mention of the name of Obama is not enough to convince me to oppose the current health-care bill. My main problem is that I do not understand what is in this legislation. It appears to be a mixed bag, it is a thousand pages long, and God only knows how many gifts to big business or cuts in service may be hidden in nooks and crannies of that tinker-toy skyscraper.

While there has been a right-wing mobilization, partly financed directly and indirectly by the insurance industry, no one should be deluded that only organized gun-toting reactionaries are alarmed or worried about what is in or might be in the bill.

The U.S. health care system in the United States is probably the most complex and difficult for working people to navigate in any imperialist country today — certainly much more so than Canada, Britain, France, Germany, the Scandinavian countries and Italy. In the last forty years, powerful insurance companies have emerged as the dominant sector of this industry, extracting profit from various aspects of almost every medical transaction. The other giant capitalist sector is the pharmaceutical industry.

While the insurance industry spends an estimated *\$1.4 million a day* to lobby against key provisions of the bill, sections of the pharmaceutical industry have endorsed it (at least publicly in advertisements) because of promises from the administration that it will not interfere with their pricing policies, while subsidizing drugs for patients. They are quite happy with this, and why not?

About 50 million people are reported to have no health insurance of any kind.

Government health care provision is broken up in many different pieces. On the federal level, there is the Medicare program for people over 65, signed into law in 1961, which services millions and partially finances the deductions taken from elderly people's social security insurance. These deductions can be quite substantial, as I know from experience. There is Social Security Insurance, for people with disabilities. There are federal programs for military veterans that are highly regarded by many.

Part of the current debate is the claim that non-veterans should not receive as good medical care as veterans because they have not "sacrificed for their country." This is an aspect of the debate over how to care for medical needs of human beings that I suspect occurs only in the United States, but perhaps I have illusions.

Medicaid is the United States health program for eligible individuals and families with low incomes and resources. Since Medicaid is a program for the Undeserving Poor in the United States, it is never cited as a model and often hangs by a thread. It is a means-tested program that is jointly funded by the states and federal government, and is managed by the states. Despite the obnoxious means-testing, this is the closest form I can find in the U.S. to a universal right to medical care.

There are also forms of Medicaid that are linked to Health Management Organizations, another parasite that has inserted itself into the system to suck out cash. HMOs have also been buying up hospitals as cities and states close them down, and driving forward on an aggressively for-profit basis.

Doctors in the U.S. are trained to be businessmen, not people who serve humanity. They have to observe the bottom line. They are disproportionately wealthy on the average, even though they are not generally monsters and many are actually competent.

If your insurance doesn't guarantee lush enough paybacks, you are dead meat.

Got the picture? Okay, now we plunge into the current debate, such as it is.

I believe there are good things in the bill or set of bills that the U.S. president identifies with. In particular we should support the ban on insurance companies refusing to cover pre-existing conditions and barring them from canceling the policies of people who get sick. There is also more money for Medicaid.

The attempt to get everybody insured — even if by private companies — is not all bad.

But there seems to be no protection against premium increases, although the initial premiums are supposed to be federally subsidized. I don't like the idea that an insurance company can get the Feds on your tail if you can't pay your premiums which, of course, would rise annually at least. I don't know if the system would work that way or not, but I am suspicious and would like more information. This is certainly the situation thousands of working people face around obligatory auto insurance, where the soaring premiums force many to break the law to drive to their jobs.

I also believe that the public option, crippled though it is, would be a foot in the door for single payer, and that is why it is so fiercely opposed — even though Obama seems quite willing to turn it over to a major insurance giant for safe keeping.

What needs to be opposed in the legislation?

Above all, there is Obama's promise to cut \$500 billion from Medicare if this bill is adopted. He says this will not affect service, but how can we be sure since no one has seen the replacement system at work? This is the main cause of the concern and fear among medicare recipients. Without that, the organized corporate opposition at Town Hall meetings would have been much less effective and had less ability to spread confusion and misinformation.

When people say, "keep the government's hands off my Medicare!" liberals seem inclined to sagely reply that Medicare itself is a government program. This is a case of hearing but not listening. These people may or may not be ignorant of the fact that Medicare is a government program. But that is not what concerns them. They are concerned that Obama has promised to massively cut the program that covers them now.

How condescending the response to these people, who are probably the most mainstream opponents of the legislation at the town hall meetings.

How can they assume that they will not lose out? Especially keeping in mind the constant drum fire about cost-cutting as the need of the hour, in a country which does such a poor job of providing the people with medical care.

And this is the heart of the *question of principle for working people*, including Blacks, Latinos, and the mass of women. Is this bill about cutting costs or providing medical care? If it's about cutting costs, working people and the oppressed will come out losers, as we always do when the government "cuts costs" and we lose jobs, wages, education, hospitals and so on and so on.

We have no particular stake in cutting the costs of the ruling class or their government at all. It is true that a single payer system would in some respects cut costs in passing, but *our interest in it is guaranteeing medical care as a right, not reducing the deficit*. We support every extension and every improvement of the quality of medical care available to the people regardless of how

expensively the state ends up running it. This is why even liberal efforts to repeal the Bush prescription drug program should be opposed, unless it is replaced by something that meets the needs of the people better.

The \$500 billion cut in Medicare should be dropped and, if not dropped, the bill must be opposed.

I am convinced that major advances in health protection for human beings in the United States will require much broader mobilizations of working people and the oppressed than are taking place in the United States. But we should not simply counterpose the demand for socialized or single-payer universal medical care to whatever is being talked about now. We are for more and better medical care for working people right now, to the extent it can be achieved.

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Fidel: A Time to Unite and March Together

by **Fidel Castro Ruz**

“The establishment of seven U.S. military bases in Colombia poses a direct threat to the sovereignty and integrity of the other peoples of South and Central America with which our national heroes dreamed of creating the great Latin American homeland.”

This Reflection is addressed not to the governments but to the fraternal peoples of Latin America.

Tomorrow, August 28, the summit of UNASUR [Union of South American Nations] will convene in Argentina, and its significance cannot be overlooked. The conference must analyze the granting of seven military bases in Colombian territory to the U.S. superpower. The two governments kept their preparatory discussions a rigorous secret, so that the accord could be presented to the world as a fait accompli.

In the early morning hours of March 1, 2008, the Colombian Armed Forces – trained and equipped by the United States – attacked with precision bombs a guerrilla group which had entered a remote area of the Ecuadorian territory. At dawn, airborne elite Colombian troops occupied the small camp, killed the wounded and carried off with them the dead body of guerrilla leader Raul Reyes.

Apparently, he had been meeting with young visitors from other countries who were interested in the experience of the guerrillas engaged in armed struggle since the death of Liberal leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán more than 50 years ago. Among the victims were college students from Mexico and Ecuador; they were not carrying weapons. It was a brutal action in Yankee style. The government of Ecuador had not received any advance notice of the attack.

This event was a humiliating action against the small and heroic South American nation engaged in a democratic political process. Suspicion is strong that the U.S. air base of Manta [in Ecuador] had supplied information and cooperated with the aggressors. President Rafael Correa made the brave decision to demand the return of the territory occupied by the Manta military base, in strict compliance with the terms of the military agreement with the United States, and recalled his ambassador from Bogotá.

Seven U.S. bases in Colombia

The concession of territory for the establishment of seven U.S. military bases in Colombia poses a direct threat to the sovereignty and integrity of the other peoples of South and Central America with which our national heroes dreamed of creating the great Latin American homeland.

The Yankee imperialism is a hundred times more powerful than the colonial empires of Spain and Portugal, and a complete stranger to the origin, customs, and culture of our peoples.

It is not a matter of narrow chauvinism. “Homeland is humanity,” as Martí stated, but never under the domination of an empire which has imposed a bloody tyranny on the world. This is

demonstrated beyond question in our own hemisphere by the hundreds of thousands of Latin American compatriots who were killed, tortured, and secretly murdered in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Chile, Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, and other countries of Our America through the past five decades by coups d'état and other actions promoted or supported by the United States.

Cynical pretexts

As I analyze the arguments of the United States to try to justify the granting of military bases in Colombian territory, I can only characterize its pretexts as cynical. The U.S. claims that these bases are needed to aid the struggle against drug trafficking, terrorism, arms trafficking, illegal migration, the possession of weapons of mass destruction, nationalist outbursts, and natural disasters.

This powerful country is the largest drug purchaser and consumer on the planet. An analysis of the paper money circulating in the U.S. capital, Washington, has shown that 95 per cent of the bills have been in the hands of drug consumers. The U.S. is the largest market for and the main supplier of weapons to organized crime in Latin America, the same weapons that have killed tens of thousands of people every year south of its own borders.

It is the largest terrorist state that has ever existed. It dropped bombs on the civilian cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and caused the death of millions of people with such imperialist wars as those carried out against Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and other countries located thousands of miles away. What is more, it is also the largest producer and holder of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons of mass destruction.

The Colombian paramilitary, many of them former members of the Armed Forces, are part of their reserves and are the drug-traffickers' best allies and protectors.

The so-called civilian personnel that would accompany the troops in the Colombian bases are, as a rule, expertly trained former American soldiers hired by such private companies as Blackwater, widely known for its crimes in Iraq and elsewhere in the world.

A country with self-respect needs no U.S. mercenaries, troops, or military bases to fight drug trafficking, protect the people in case of natural disasters or to provide humanitarian cooperation to other peoples.

Cuba is a country that does not have a drug problem or high rates of violent deaths – in fact the rate of such deaths decreases every year.

Threat to all Latin America

The only purpose of these bases for the United States is to place Latin America within reach of its troops in a matter of hours. The top military commanders of Brazil were very upset by the unexpected news of the agreement to establish U.S. military bases in Colombia. The Palanquero base is very close to the Brazilian border.

These bases and those in the Islas Malvinas [Falkland Islands], Paraguay, Peru, Honduras, Aruba, Curacao and others leave not a single location in Brazil and the rest of South America

beyond reach of the U.S. Southern Command. Using its most advanced carrier aircraft, it can be on the spot within hours with troops and sophisticated combat equipment.

The best experts on the subject have provided all necessary data to prove the military scope of the Yankee-Colombian accord. This program, including the reactivation of the Fourth Fleet, was designed by Bush and inherited by the current U.S. administration. Some South American leaders are asking due clarification of U.S. military policy in Latin America. Nuclear aircraft-carriers are not required to combat drugs.

The most immediate objective of that plan is to eliminate the Bolivarian revolutionary process and to assure U.S. control over Venezuela's oil and other natural resources. Moreover, the empire does not accept the competition of new emerging economies in its backyard or the existence of truly independent countries in Latin America. And it counts on the reactionary oligarchy, the fascist Right, and its control over the most important media, both internally and externally. It will never grant support to anything resembling true equity and social justice.

The Latin American migration to the United States is the consequence of underdevelopment, the result of U.S. plundering of our countries and of unequal exchange with the industrialized countries.

Mexico was forcibly removed from Latin America through the Free Trade Agreement with the United States and Canada. Most of the 12 million illegal immigrants in the USA are Mexicans, as are most of the hundreds who perish every year along the fence separating these nations.

Amid the current international economic crisis, the rate of extreme poverty in Mexico – a country with a population of 107 million – has reached 18 per cent, while more than half of the population lives in poverty.

Martí's insight

During the life of Martí, the apostle of our independence, his major source of concern was annexation to the United States. After 1889 he became aware that this was the greatest danger for Latin America. He always dreamed of the Grand Homeland, from the Rio Bravo to Patagonia; and he died for it and for Cuba.

On January 10, 1891 he published an essay in the *New York Illustrated Review* under the title "Our America," in which he wrote the unforgettable words, "The trees must form ranks to hold back the giant with seven-league boots! It is the time to gather and to march together, as closely united as the veins of silver at the roots of the Andes."

Four years later, after his landing at Playitas in the eastern province of Cuba, territory held by the insurrectionists, he met on May 2, 1895, with the *Herald* journalist George E. Bryson, who told him that, in an interview with the celebrated General Arsenio Martínez Campos, the Spanish officer had said that he would rather surrender Cuba to the United States than accept its independence.

Martí was so impressed by the news that on May 18 he sent his Mexican friend Manuel Mercado the renowned posthumous letter where he wrote of "the road that is to be blocked off, and is

being blocked off by our blood – the road of annexing our American nations to the brutal and turbulent North, which despises them.”

The following day, heedless of the advice of General Máximo Gomez, who advised that he should stay with the rearguard, he asked his assistant for a revolver and charged on a well-positioned Spanish force. He died in combat.

“I have lived in the monster and I know its entrails,” he wrote in his last letter.

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Class Against Class? Real World Alignments for Revolution

by **Mike Ely**

LeftViews is Socialist Voice's forum for articles related to rebuilding the left in Canada and around the world, reflecting a wide variety of socialist opinion.

This article was published on August 19 on the website of the Kasama Project, which describes itself as a "communist project" that seeks "to find the forms of organization and action for the people most dispossessed by this system to free themselves and all humanity." It is reposted here with the author's permission.

Radical Eyes suggested that we make this its own post saying: "The issue of how to grasp revolutionary polarization ("revolutionary people" vs. "class vs. class" etc) seems to me a crucial one."

This piece focuses on what the 1960s tell us about the potential alignments and sources of revolutionary energy in the U.S.

I wrote:

"Revolutionary rumblings [in the 1960s] didn't take the form of 'class against class' in the U.S. – and never will.

Bryan writes:

"Revolutionary rumblings will take the form of 'class against class,' in this country and around the world... You don't claim to be Marxists still, do you?"

There is a great transition happening in human society – breaking out of the sharp contradiction between social production and private appropriation. But to think that takes the form of workers gathering over here, and capitalists gathering over there – and then a rumble.... well that is non-materialist and non-Marxist (if you will).

There was in the 1960s a great element of rebellion rising from below (in more ways than often appreciated) and it has much to do with the radicalization of the most oppressed and working class layers of Black people in the U.S. And I don't believe that great revolutions will arise in our epoch without a great ferment from below – without a driving force (a revolutionary people) arising from below and bringing with them into politics a spirit of "nothing to lose."

But that doesn't mean revolution has to take the form of "class against class." (And I don't think there is anything in Marxism that requires that it take that form.)

The polarizations that produce revolutions have never been that simple, and as the last century went on this became more and more obvious. The successful socialist revolutions happened in

countries where workers were a minority, and where the alliances that led to socialism were far more complex and dynamic than this mechanical notion of “class against class.”

To be clear: there was a belief among some Maoists in the 1970s that revolution would become possible when “the fundamental contradiction became the principal contradiction” – i.e. that working people would shatter the alignments emerging in the sixties by (somehow) adopting a workerist orientation and self-identification – and then, as a unified and self-conscious class, entering the field of political battle – and that this leap would be the signal that revolution had become possible. (And this conception, obviously, saw revolution in workerist terms – precisely as “class against class” and there for saw socialism requiring a particularly sharp and defining workerist identification among the poor and working people.)

I think that is unlikely and also unnecessary for socialist revolution. We need a conscious movement for socialist revolution (and all the radical changes of ideas, relations and structures that that implies) – but that does not require working people to embrace some overweening self-identification of “workers as workers.”

That has to do with the history of the U.S. – This has never been a society of class-as-caste – imposing those kinds of class identities on people (the way 19th century Germany or England did).

In the U.S., caste identities were imposed on Indians and Black people – (Black people as slaves and sharecroppers, confined by the “color line” – and Indians as hunted non-people.) Often, the structure and history of this place grouped and excluded people as nationalities – while social mobility among whites prevented the consolidation of a single “hereditary working class” that self-identified as such. And so there has never been (spontaneously in U.S. bourgeois society) that much self-identification as class – compared to the way even quite conservative workers self-identify as workers in England or Germany or France.

In the U.S., revolution will arise (if it arises) from the struggles against the historic oppression of minority nationalities, and from a sweeping new movement for socialist alternative society broadly among the (multiracial) poor and working people. It will arise from collisions that entwine with the liberation of women, revolt against brutal unending wars of empire and a disdain for the dominant culture of money and dog-eat-dog. And it will certainly be spurred by the growing consciousness *broadly* in society that uncontrolled capitalist development is creating an ecological disaster for humanity.

Socialist revolution does not require that conscious self-identification by sociological class be a defining feature.

“What force, if not the working class leading the oppressed, will change society then?”

Well there are many issues bound up here, including what does it mean for one class to lead the rest of the oppressed.

There has never been the case where a class simply united to lead anyone. In major revolutions, there were deep divisions in the working class (certainly that is true in Russia). And what led the oppressed in some cases were radical political forces (the communists generally) who saw

themselves as *representatives* of the working class (and its objective interests) – and who won the allegiance of important sections of that class (often minorities, but significant sections nonetheless).

But again, to say that revolutionary forces identifying with the working class lead broader alliances of the oppressed – is precisely to adopt a vision that is not simply “class against class.”

For example: It is not true that we need to somehow “unite the working class” (as a prerequisite for a socialist revolution). We should seek to unite working people (and other oppressed people) around a radical, socialist program. But there will be no simple class-wide unity in this process. Given the highly stratified nature of the U.S. working class, and the impacts of imperialism... it is quite possible that a revolutionary movement may serve to further polarize different sections of the working class *from each other* in the U.S.

And not only is this compatible with Marxism, but also Lenin’s experience. Lenin famously said that the revolution does not consist of workers lining up on one pole, and the capitalist lining up at the other, and pointed the historical fact that revolution commonly takes the form of a war between two sections of the people. And even if all this were not compatible with the texts or beliefs of Marx or Lenin, it would still be true.

In the 1960s, the actual alignments in the U.S. (the rise of Black liberation, the eruption of youth rebellion, the conservative expressions among some white “blue color” Democrats etc.) exploded the expectations of some rather crusty and conservative forms of Marxism who expected a repeat of their – romanticized – memory of the 1930s.

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Suffering and Struggle in Rural China

Will the Boat Sink the Water? The Life of Chinese Peasants.

By Chen Guidi and Wu Chuntao.

New York: PublicAffairs 2006

Reviewed by John Riddell

Is China killing the goose whose golden eggs have financed its economic upsurge? Chen Guidi and Wu Chuntao pose this question in their gripping portrayal of the suffering and struggles of Chinese peasants today.

Their book's title refers to a 1,400-year-old Chinese saying, attributed to Emperor Taizong: "Water holds up the boat; water may also sink the boat." That is, the peasantry that sustains the state may also rise up and overturn it. Chen and Wu argue that in China today, the weight of the state is suffocating the peasantry: the boat may sink the water.

A media and publishing sensation

First published in China in 2004, *Will the Boat Sink the Water* takes up what the authors call "fearsome 'forbidden areas' . . . about which the public has been kept in the dark." It sold 150,000 copies in three months and received massive media coverage – a publicity blitz that had the impact of a "clap of thunder." Although the book is supportive of China's government and social order, authorities soon removed it from bookstores. It then sold an estimated seven million copies in pirate editions.

Earlier, Chen had written a denunciation of the disastrous pollution of the Huai River, which helped spur the government into a clean-up effort. Unfortunately, the success was temporary; a few years later, the polluters were back in operation.

In *Will the Boat Sink the Water*, Chen and Wu describe peasant efforts to halt blatantly illegal extortions by local officials during the 1990s in the authors' native province of Anhui. In all the cases they describe, officials struck back violently, and several peasants were murdered by police or hired thugs.

The peasants organized protest marches and deputations, and in some cases won the sympathetic attention of high officials in Beijing. But orders from on high proved ineffective, and when relayed down to the local level, usually came to nothing. Even in rare cases where murderers were prosecuted, the victims' lot was no better.

Chen and Wu are master storytellers. Their accounts are vivid, poignant, and wise in their understanding of peasant life.

Extortion by local officials

All of these struggles turn on the issue of local taxation and what is done with the money. During the period discussed, township officials had unlimited power to tax the peasantry. With

remarkable ingenuity, they developed an array of 269 listed taxes, and many more that were unrecorded or were invented ad-hoc.

Do you own a pig? If so, there are five taxes to pay, often levied even if you don't own a pig.

Do you want to marry? Twelve taxes are due, including a "deposit for commitment to mutual devotion."

Does this spur you to complain? An "attitude tax" applies.

Officially, taxes are not supposed to exceed 5% of income so these impositions were in large measure illegal. Many stratagems hid the excess levies and the siphoning of revenue to enrich government officials. The peasant struggles described by Chen and Wu usually involved pressing for an audit of the local government's financial records.

But the peasants portrayed in this book suffer from a crucial weakness: lack of legal recourse. The best they can do is appeal to regional level Communist Party officials – a dangerous and usually futile procedure. One sneering local official puts his finger on the key point: "Do you really believe that crap you see on TV and read in the newspapers about the rule of law? Don't be daft. Maybe in America . . . but that is America, not China."

Bureaucratic excess

As a result, Chen and Wu write, China's state bureaucracy has jumped "from 2.2 million in 1979 to well over 10 million today," mostly in the countryside. Meanwhile, government services to the rural population – the vast majority – have fallen to eight per cent of the budget, less than half the previous proportion.

Rural officials enjoy the backwoods equivalent of conspicuous consumption. China's countryside is a "gourmand's paradise," Chen and Wu say. The funds spent on dining at public expense, China-wide, could pay for four Olympic Games, every year – or "wipe out the disgrace . . . of children being kept out of school" because of a shortfall in educational spending.

China's two economies

The concluding section of Chen and Wu's book situates this drama of rural extortion within the longer story of "Chinese peasants' burden."

Confronted in the 1950s with the Korean War and economic sanctions, both imposed by Western countries, China's revolutionary government had no choice but "to prioritize industrialization and accumulate capital at the cost of agricultural development," Chen and Wu tell us.

"It is impossible to do justice to the magnitude of the sacrifice that the peasants made."

Their brief account of rural collectivization parallels what I wrote in "50 Years After: The Tragedy of China's 'Great Leap Forward.'" They note that the vigorous peasant resistance to this process was crushed in the years just before the "Great Leap," and that the "Cultural Revolution" (1966-76) struck further blows at agriculture. In 1977 the average Anhui peasant was producing no more grain than his or her counterpart two thousand years earlier.

Residency requirements kept the peasants tied to the land, unable to move to the cities and locked in second-class legal and social status, lacking the economic and social benefits accorded to city dwellers.

The burden of ‘reform’

Following Mao Zedong’s death in 1976, Chen and Wu say, the introduction of a “household contract system” (making the family farm the basic agricultural unit) unleashed peasant initiative, and peasant income rose 15 per cent per year for six years after 1978.

But 1984 marked “a great historical turning point.” The government shifted its focus to urban development, and once again peasants paid the price. The crucial change, in Chen and Wu’s opinion, was endowing rural townships – successors to the people’s communes – with the power to impose and collect taxes.

Others tell the story somewhat differently. Mobo Gao, in his U.S.-published *Battle for China’s Past*, stresses government pricing policy – raising the price of agricultural produce after 1978, then lowering it after 1984. Whichever explanation applies, it seems clear that the peasantry’s post-Mao prosperity was short-lived.

The lure of migrant labour

By 2000, “agriculture had become a losing enterprise,” Chen and Wu state. “An army of peasants turned their backs on the soil and marched into the city.” In 2005, a quarter of Anhui’s population had become migrant workers.

Migrant remittances to Anhui province are as large as the income generated within the province itself. Migrants return with new skills and ideas. Many of the migrants have been successful and become small-scale capitalists. Anhui has become more prosperous: enterprises founded by successful migrants in the province employ 17,000 workers.

Yet Chen and Wu stress the negative side of migrant labour. In the cities, migrants retain second-class rural legal status. They are subjected to unpaid and unrestricted forced overtime, exposure to dangerous and unhealthy working conditions, delayed or denied pay, and arbitrary firing in case of sickness or accident.

Back at home, “as the rural labour force drained away, local agriculture shrivelled and declined, creating a vicious cycle of increasing poverty and decreasing investment.” No one wants to stay in the country; “the peasants do all they can to leave.” Able and energetic young people are the first to go. “The dwindling human resources soon usher in a decline in material resources” and a bleeding away of investment capital.

Continuity in governance

Judging by Chen and Wu’s account, the exploitation of China’s peasants today has much in common with what they experienced under Mao. It does not involve seizing the peasants’ land and driving them out of the villages and into the cities – instead, migrant workers retain their land rights and can return home. Oppression is largely extra-legal and enforced by ad-hoc violence, backed by the authority of the Communist Party.

That may explain the party's ambiguity regarding rural social conditions. Chen and Wu record six major national efforts to reduce burdens on peasants between 1993 and 2001, none of which, in their opinion, had significant impact. Local leaders routinely flout national directives with impunity.

Between 1990 and 2000, per capita taxes paid by peasants were, on average, six times as high as those paid by city dwellers, even though the peasants' average income was only one-sixth as great as urban levels.

A peasant advocate in the party leadership – leader of a county in Hubei province – told Chen and Wu, “The Party Central Committee knows perfectly well that although problems appear at the bottom, the root lies with the top leadership. Why not pursue it at the top?”

But party leaders are reluctant to undercut the power of local chieftains, the mainstay of government authority in the countryside.

Repeal of agricultural taxes

In 2003, in a major step to revive agriculture, China's government eliminated all agricultural taxes.

Chen and Wu, whose book was written immediately after that reform, are sceptical about its impact. They note the absence of any move to prune back the rural bureaucracy or to provide it with an alternate source of income. Taxes are being replaced by fees, they say, which are equally open to abuse. The underlying disparity in power and lack of legal remedies in the countryside is unchanged.

Chen and Wu's book was published too early to contain a balance sheet of the tax reform. But their subsequent personal fate is not encouraging.

Despite its moderate and fundamentally pro-government stance, their book was removed from bookstores. The authors were subjected to a harassment lawsuit, which won a favourable reception in the courts and dragged on interminably. Their names, ideas, and legal predicament were blacked out from the media. Ultimately, in self-defence, they reluctantly sought international publicity for their case.

Reformers' proposals

Chen and Wu's book concludes with a survey of the opinions of some reformers within the Communist Party who are concerned regarding the needs of peasants. Their comments are muted but insightful.

- Agricultural specialist Zhu Shouyin condemns the role of the township authorities as “independent entities with monopolistic power that tended strongly toward the pursuit of profits.”
- Li Changping, editor of the magazine *China's Reform*, states, “Let the peasants enjoy the status of a citizen; give the peasants their basic rights.”

- Yu Jianrong, an agricultural researcher, contends that “there is no such thing as citizens’ rights” in China, “only the capital and power and privileges of a ruling clique.” What’s needed is a network of peasant organizations, truly representing their interests, to “rally the peasants . . . to replace the current local bureaucracy by peasant self-rule.”
- Noted economist Wu Jinglian closes the book on an ambiguous note. Famous as a proponent of “market reform,” he now describes China today with words of Charles Dickens: “The best of times, the worst of times,” and says that a positive outcome is far from assured. “We of course hope for a good one, but the future of China can only depend on our convictions and our efforts of today.”

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A Model of Ecosocialist Collaboration

by Ian Angus

LeftViews is Socialist Voice's forum for articles related to rebuilding the left in Canada and around the world, reflecting a wide variety of socialist opinion. This article first appeared in *Climate and Capitalism*, September 19.

On September 12, about 100 people attended "Climate and Capitalism," a one-day conference in London, England, organized by Green Left and Socialist Resistance.

I was invited to participate as editor of this website, and as editor of *The Global Fight for Climate Justice*, published this summer by Resistance Books. (The meeting was in part a launch-event for the book.) I spoke at the opening plenary, and in a workshop on the Global South.

Often, meetings like this are actually organized by one group, with one or two others as passive sponsors, named on the poster but otherwise not very involved. That was decidedly NOT the case this time. In fact, from everything I could see, this was almost a perfect example of collaboration between two groups – **Green Left**, the organized ecosocialist tendency within the Green Party of England and Wales; and **Socialist Resistance**, the British section of the Trotskyist Fourth International.

In his talk to the final session, Liam Mac Uaid of Socialist Resistance explained the approach that both groups took to planning the event.

"We very deliberately set out to make it internationalist and pluralistic. As you will have seen it was a genuine collaboration between Socialist Resistance and the Green Left. Both of us brought something of our own approach. Neither side was interested in 'poaching' a couple of the other's members.

"I'm not privy to their inner secrets but I'm guessing that Green Left is not planning entry work in Respect anytime soon and we won't be joining the Green Party either. It has been a genuine example of two currents who agree on the importance of ecosocialism working together. Nothing more and nothing less.

"The result has been a better event than either of us could have pulled off left to our own devices. Being in separate organizations is a lot less important than agreeing on many aspects of the politics and the event today shows that it is possible to organize together around those parts of politics on which we have a shared understanding."

Such collaboration is an absolutely essential part of building a mass ecosocialist movement. Quoting Liam Mac Uaid again:

“If we are to are to build a mass movement to successfully challenge the climate change that capitalism is creating those of us on the traditional Marxist left have to admit that we have a great deal to learn from those individuals and organizations which have taken the issue much more seriously than we have for a great deal longer than we have. ...

“You don’t do that without listening to our guests from the Climate Camp, the Campaign Against Climate Change, Harcan Clearskies and the experiences of those for whom climate change is already a life or death in the global south.

“Marxism was greatly enriched by the women’s movement. It has as much to learn from the environmental movement if it is to retain its relevance as an instrument for changing the world in the coming decades. If you have not realized that today you can’t really have been paying attention.

“It also means that Marxists have to get away from the increasingly bizarre and unsustainable idea that integrating ecology in a meaningful way into political practice and programme is in some way a retreat from class politics motivated only by a desire to either recruit a tiny number of members of the Green Party or an abandonment of class struggle.”

Liam has posted the full text of his remarks on his blog.

Every session of the meeting – plenaries and workshops – included speakers and moderators from at least the two sponsoring groups, as well as others, including the Scottish Socialist Party, Permanent Revolution, the Campaign Against Climate Change Trade Union Group, and independent activists.

Even more significantly, every session I attended or heard about included full and comradely discussion and debate from the floor. There was an impressive and refreshing willingness to express and listen to different views on analysis, strategy and tactics. Those discussions spilled out of the formal sessions into the hallways during breaks, and they continued for several hours in a nearby pub.

I won’t try to summarize all the discussions — in any event, with four simultaneous sessions in the morning and afternoon, I couldn’t attend them all. Fortunately the organizers had the foresight to record all of them. Some are already posted on the Green Left blog – I recommend them highly.

Obviously 100 people don’t constitute a mass movement. But by organizing this event, and carrying it off in fine style, Green Left and Socialist Resistance have set an example that ecosocialists worldwide should learn from and emulate.

Socialist Voice #354, September 20, 2009

Britain's Conquest of Quebec: 250 years later

by **Richard Fidler**

Colonization. Conquest. Words that even today evoke widely varying historical memories. Just last year Quebec City staged an elaborate round of events to celebrate the 400th anniversary of its founding as the colonial capital of New France.

No expense was spared as federal and provincial governments alike poured money into the city's coffers. Capping the ceremonies were massively attended concerts by Québécoise singer Céline Dion and former Beatle Paul McCartney — apparently deemed emblematic descendants of the French and British “founding peoples” of present-day Canada. It seemed to be one great love-in of all those involved.

(Lost in all the self-congratulatory rhetoric, of course, was any recognition that the city's site had in fact been occupied by its Indigenous inhabitants for many centuries prior to the arrival of the Europeans.)

This year was the occasion for another anniversary. On September 13, 1759 — exactly 250 years ago — in a 20-minute battle on the same city's Plains of Abraham, the invading British defeated a French army, effectively putting an end to the French empire in North America. But plans to mark this anniversary, from the outset, sparked an acrimonious debate among politicians and the media. The dispute expressed the deep divide between those who are basically satisfied with Quebec's place in Canada and those who aren't. And to some degree it reflected the widespread recognition among the Québécois that the Conquest was the seminal event at the origin of their inequality of status as a people within Canada.

It all began in January, when the National Battlefields Commission, a federal government agency that administers the remains of the French fortress on the Plains of Abraham, announced plans to stage a re-enactment of the famous battle. Following a huge outcry of opposition, this was dropped. It seemed that many Québécois did not want to be reminded of an event that sealed their fate as an oppressed minority in the post-Conquest colony.

Then a coalition of Québécois nationalists announced that they would stage a different kind of re-enactment: a series of events to “Reclaim the Plains”, culminating in “Le Moulin à Paroles” (literally the word-mill, or chatterbox), a public reading on the weekend of September 12-13 of some 140 works by various protagonists in Quebec's troubled history from the time of the Conquest to the pro-Quebec sovereignty movement of today.

It would feature, for example, statements by Louis-Joseph Papineau, a leader of the 1837 Rebellion, and by Louis Riel, the martyred leader of the Northwest Rebellion of Métis and Indigenous peoples in the 1880s, as well as excerpts from the infamous 1840 report of Lord Durham proposing that British policy promote the assimilation of the French-speaking population of Canada, and from a letter by British General James Wolfe, commander of the

victorious army in 1759, written a few months before the battle. “It would give me pleasure to see the Canadian vermin sacked and pillaged” wrote Wolfe. And indeed, that is precisely what the British troops did in towns and villages along the St. Lawrence as they pursued their offensive.

But what most drew the ire of the big-business media and politicians in both Quebec and English Canada was the organizers’ plan to read from the “Manifesto” of the Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ), issued during the October Crisis of 1970. Recited on the federal government’s CBC/Radio Canada as a condition for the release of a British trade commissioner in Montréal kidnapped by an FLQ “cell”, the Manifesto’s popularly worded message had, to the authorities’ surprise at the time, struck a sympathetic note with many Québécois who nevertheless did not support the FLQ:

Workers in industry, in mines and in the forests! Workers in the service industries, teachers, students and unemployed! Take what belongs to you, your jobs, your determination and your freedom. And you, the workers at General Electric, you make your factories run; you are the only ones able to produce; without you, General Electric is nothing!

Workers of Quebec, begin from this day forward to take back what is yours; take yourselves what belongs to you. Only you know your factories, your machines, your hotels, your universities, your unions; do not wait for some organization to produce a miracle.

Make your revolution yourselves in your neighbourhoods, in your places of work. If you don’t do it yourselves, other usurpers, technocrats or someone else, will replace the handful of cigar-smokers we know today and everything will have to be done all over again. Only you are capable of building a free society.

We must struggle not individually but together, till victory is obtained, with every means at our disposal, like the Patriots of 1837-1838 (those whom Our Holy Mother Church hastened to excommunicate, the better to sell out to British interests).[1]

The “savage, sneering, race-supremacist... self-justification of a gang of terrorist murderers”, sniffed the editors of the Toronto daily *National Post*, overlooking the violence and terrorism of a Wolfe or a Durham. Quebec Premier Jean Charest spoke for many federalist politicians: “We are not going to be associated with an event that trivializes the FLQ, terrorism and violence.” No government funding for this event!

(Only last fall, by the way, the federal government’s National Arts Centre in Ottawa had performed in French a show entitled *Manifeste!*, featuring readings from such historical documents as the *Communist Manifesto*, the *Dada Manifesto*, Quebec’s *Refus Global* (1948) and ... the FLQ Manifesto! Apparently, time and place play some role in official responses to these things.)

Why the French lost

Besides the political flap over Le Moulin à Paroles, however, the 250th anniversary of the Conquest elicited a few attempts in more serious media to recount and explain the events that led to the defeat of the French regime in North America. For example, the Montréal daily newspaper *Le Devoir*, relatively sympathetic to Quebec nationalism and the sovereignty movement, ran a series of articles over the last month interviewing contemporary historians on their explanations of the British victory.

They pointed to a number of factors: the small size of Quebec's population in 1759 (60,000 inhabitants, compared with 1.5 million in the 13 English colonies to the south); the dispersion of the French over a vast territory, largely inhabited by the Indigenous peoples, and their decreasing ability to withstand the English colonies' pressure to expand west of the Ohio; France's setbacks in Europe in the Seven Years' War with Britain beginning in 1756, and its inability to supply its North American colony with the supplies and troops needed to defeat the British offense. Key to this, it was commonly noted, was the British navy's supremacy on the seas, a major impediment to French communication with its colonies. The military importance of the navy was like that of the air force today. Whoever controlled the seas would control America.[2]

Although the French, allied with some Indigenous peoples, won a few battles in the early stages of the war, by 1759 their situation was worsened. The battle of the Plains of Abraham was preceded by 63 days of bombardment of Québec by the British fleet assembled off the nearby Isle d'Orléans. The town lacked munitions and food; many people were ill. The September 13 defeat on the Plains was not the final skirmish — the French forces actually won a few more battles before the Empire's defeat was confirmed in the 1763 treaties. But it destroyed the morale of the colony's inhabitants, who were already becoming alienated from a royalist autocracy that was more interested in quick profits from the fur trade than it was in fostering and maintaining enduring settlements in the colony.

France's defeat signalled the end of its empire. The treaties ending the Seven Years' War, signed in 1763, left it with only a few colonies in the Western Hemisphere: Haiti, Martinique, Guadeloupe, St. Lucia and, offshore of Newfoundland, St-Pierre and Miquelon. The latter assured France's access to the fisheries of the Grand Banks — and gave it a pretext to revive its naval fleet, which later assisted the 13 British colonies in their war of independence. In fact, the Conquest helped open the door to the American Revolution, by removing a French colony to the north and west as a potential menace to American settlers' sovereigntist and expansionist tendencies.

Not least important, the Conquest was a catastrophe for the aboriginal inhabitants of America. As historian Denis Vaugeois notes, it ended an important system of alliances with Indigenous peoples that allowed the French to control an immense territory. The defeat of a revolt headed by the Outaouais chief Pontiac, who refused to ally with the British, marked the ultimate collapse of the Indigenous peoples' capacity to resist successfully the expansion of the Anglo-American colonists, U.S. historian Fred Anderson told *Le Devoir*.

Social and political implications of the Conquest

However, the recent media accounts — some of which focused on the thesis that France had “abandoned” its Canadian colonists out of disinterest — largely overlook the underlying explanation for the French defeat in these battles among the colonial empires, “the very first world war”. To understand what was involved, an inquisitive reader is well advised to begin his or her investigations with the work of the Marxist historian Stanley B. Ryerson. His book *French Canada*, first published in 1943 (a later, French version, *Le Canada français*, was published in 1945), still stands as a seminal analysis of the roots of Québécois inequality and oppression within the emerging Canadian social formation.[3]

Ryerson attributes France’s defeat in the Seven Years War to the relative backwardness of its class relationships, mode of production and political regime:

“That France in the long run was to meet defeat, was due primarily to the fact that her rival enjoyed a major advantage: the English bourgeoisie in the Great Rebellion of 1642-48 had broken the back of feudal-aristocratic obstruction, whereas the French bourgeoisie was to establish its Republic and sweep aside the feudal fetters on economic progress only in 1789-93 — thirty years after the loss of New France.”[4]

This had important implications for the post-Conquest colony. The new English rulers, initially a small minority, consciously enlisted the support and collaboration of some of the most retrograde elements of the old regime in their administration. At the same time, they maintained the semifeudal property relations of New France, leaving the *habitant* settlers largely restricted to small scale subsistence agriculture, while superimposing English hegemony on the commercial and industrial development of what was to become Lower Canada.

Through such legislation as the *Quebec Act, 1774*, they suspended the operation of the English *Test Act*, thus allowing Roman Catholics to hold public office, and maintained the special status of the Catholic church and clergy, including their control of schools. These measures laid the basis for the formation of a Francophone petty-bourgeois and religious elite that would collaborate with the new colonial rulers in maintaining political and ideological control over the population. Also, French civil and property law was preserved; and — most important — the system of seigniorial landholding, temporarily abolished in 1763, was restored together with the restitution of tithes and other feudal burdens on the French-Canadian *habitant* peasantry.

These semifeudal property relationships were to remain in effect for many decades following the Conquest, and lingered to some degree, despite their legislative “abolition”, to well into the 20th century, through the conversion of feudal-like obligations into a system of debt peonage. And they served to hold back the technological development of agriculture and retarded the development of capitalism in French Canada and among French Canadians.

Industrial capitalism was slow to develop in Quebec, and when it did it tended to be dominated by the English. And this, too, was a result of the Conquest, Ryerson explains:

The political fact of the British Conquest was at once the resultant and the initiator of economic developments. As we have seen, the superior economic strength of merchant-imperial Britain and her American colonies triumphed over absolutist France and her settlement on the St. Lawrence. From the time of the Conquest, the colonial economy of the Canadas was to become integrated with the most advanced industrial capitalism then in existence — that of England. Not only did English merchants take over from the French the main sources of capital-accumulation—the fur-trade and the land-monopoly; but, enjoying in addition the advantages of business connections with English capital, they were to thrive on the investment of large portions of that capital in the timber-trade, canals and railways of the colony.

Thus from the very start, while the mass of the French-Canadians remained tied to the primitive agrarian economy of the seigneuries, the English community was able to press forward on the path of trade and industry.[5]

Thus the conversion of the French colonizing population into a colonized subject people resulted in a new national question that in various transformations and permutations has persisted to this day.

More recent history, of course, has seen many important changes in Quebec. Ryerson himself was noting, in 1945, how the development of large-scale industry in the early 20th century, taking advantage of abundant cheap labour and natural resources, was creating a large Québécois proletariat. Since the Second World War, and particularly since the early 1960s, Quebec has transformed its society by secularization, the development of a welfare state, the modernization of education, and a new assertive approach to French-language rights, etc. By 1970 quite a few Québécois were prepared to listen sympathetically to the FLQ's denunciations of the bosses.

Politically, however, the Canadian state structures have failed to keep pace with the social and political reality of the new Quebec, nor has English Canada developed the necessary inclination to accommodate Quebec's ongoing concerns over the maintenance and survival of its character as a French-speaking nation. The debate over how or whether to mark the British Conquest reflects this unresolved issue. The Conquest as an historical event, and its impact on Quebec's subsequent evolution and status, still leave few indifferent.

An editorial in the September 12 edition of the conservative nationalist *Le Devoir* underscored the ambiguity of many in Quebec today about their relationship to Canada. Entitled, in translation, "The battle of the Plains of Abraham – A duty of memory", it noted that the small French community on the banks of the St. Lawrence had managed to survive and thrive in part thanks to "a series of accommodations" made initially by the British (as noted above). But the "battles of national affirmation" since then, it said, were too many to count, ranging from struggles for French schools, postage stamps and bilingual currency to the exercise of provincial autonomy and recognition of the distinct character of Quebec society. "And there still remains a reluctance within the other founding people to accept the existence of a 'difference'."

Quebec, the newspaper continued, seemed unable to resolve its conundrum. Those who sought to reform Canadian federalism had failed in the Meech Lake Accord, while the sovereigntists had narrowly lost the 1995 referendum. Neither course now seemed to offer a way out.

The maturity acquired by Quebec over these 250 years enables it to take refuge in itself. Its steadfast vote for the Bloc Québécois in federal elections for 16 years is nothing but a manifestation of passive resistance, serving to affirm its distinctiveness. That is a situation that cannot endure forever, however. The 250 years since this September 13, 1759 tell us that resignation, especially, is not an option. We must either resume the dialogue to find new accommodations that will give some sense to the recognition of Quebec as a nation, or we will have to conclude that Quebec must walk by itself.

Postscriptum

The alternative commemoration of the Conquest, *Le Moulin à Paroles*, was held throughout the weekend of September 12-13. It was a great success. The audience, at times more than 1,000 persons, descended on the Plains of Abraham armed with folding chairs, blankets and even hammocks, and listened attentively to a broad range of readings and songs that are important parts of Quebec's historical and literary heritage. The texts, authors and readers — the latter including prominent artists, politicians, Indigenous leaders, trade-union activists, and singers — are listed on the event's web site, at <http://tinyurl.com/q92jt2>. The site also includes media accounts, photos, videos and a reproduction of the entire event as broadcast live on the TVA television network.

*Richard Fidler writes the blog *Life on the Left*, where this article was first published.*

References

[1] The full text in English is at <http://english.republiquelibre.org/Manifesto-flq.html>.

[2] One of the best recent sources in English on the war for colonial supremacy between Britain and France is by Jonathan R Dull, *The French Navy and the Seven Years' War* (2005, University of Nebraska Press), much of which is available online at <http://tinyurl.com/r5sgnk>.

[3] The book suffers in places from attempts to square its generally sympathetic treatment of the Quebec national question with the Labour Progressive [Communist] Party's support in the 1940s of "total war", which put the party at odds with the prevailing antiwar and anti-conscription sentiment in Quebec. In his 1980 preface to the 3rd edition, Ryerson acknowledges his embarrassment over some of its more extreme attacks on Québécois nationalists, attributing this to "sectarian oversimplification" although he does not link this to its Stalinist inspiration. He is also critical of the book's sanguine interpretation of the terms of the 1867 Confederation as they affected Quebec, a weakness he corrected to some degree in a subsequent book, *Unequal Union* (1968).

[4] *French Canada*, p. 113.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 133.

Socialist Voice #356, September 20, 2009

Toronto Festival Commemorates Chilean Coup

Introduction. On September 11, the Salvador Allende Festival opened a two-week-long commemoration of the thirty-sixth anniversary of the military coup in Chile.

The activities were opened by a carnival parade that stepped off from St. Clair and Oakwood in Toronto at 7:30 pm., with dancers, drummers, masked figures, and Latin American banners, and made its way to Artscape Wychwood Barns on Christie St.

The march began with a statement from the festival organizing committee linking the military coup against Salvador Allende with the coup that ousted Honduran President Manuel Zelaya on June 28. The statement was drawn up by Toronto's Latin American Solidarity Network.

About 350 participants arrived at the Barns, where an artistic-cultural celebration took place. Information tables offered materials from the various participating organizations, as well as Latin American foods.

The event concluded with the reading of a second statement, also drawn up by the Latin American Solidarity Network, which reviewed the achievements of the democratic government led by Salvador Allende, the benefits provided to the Chilean people, and this government's anti-imperialist and internationalist character.

The two-week festival includes the painting of a mural, musical activities for children, and lessons on constructing masks. The festival will wind up with a popular fiesta on September 26 at 783 College St., 10 p.m.

With Salvador Allende in our Memory, We Stand with the Honduran People

By Carlos Torchia

Compañeras y compañeros; dear friends:

Our parade this evening, planned by the Festival Salvador Allende Organizing Committee, inaugurates our commemoration of the 36th anniversary of the terrorist military coup that overthrew President Allende's government on September 11, 1973. Our commemoration this year links with the military coup in Honduras, which on June 28 put an end to the democratic government of President Manuel Zelaya. On June 28, the same forces that plotted against Allende – the Empire and the oligarchy – now wearing different clothes, canceled the democratic process that had been developing in Honduras. We must whether this coup signals the return of dictatorships to Latin America, at a time when deep democratic changes are occurring in the region.

As progressive Chilean women and men, and like many Latin American sisters and brothers in Toronto, we know what dictatorships have meant for our people: human rights violations, torture, “desaprecidos” (abduction and secret killing), concentration camps, exile, and in many

cases the need to put down roots in new lands. And because we have lived through all this, we raise our voices to denounce the coup in Honduras with the same strength that we commemorate another anniversary of the coup in Chile.

Tonight we express our solidarity with the Honduran people and their organizations, which are resisting the coup in spite of ferocious repression. On average, 300 people are arrested every day. There are many dead, tortured and disappeared as happened in Chile 36 years ago, as happened in Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, El Salvador, Guatemala, and previously in Honduras itself. There are systematic attacks against the alternative media opposing the coup. The military brutality has been denounced by Amnesty International and Rights Action. It has been documented by the Toronto Latin American Solidarity Network's delegation, which recently visited Honduras.

Why did the Honduras military kidnap President Zelaya and send him into exile? He wanted to introduce reforms to enrich people's lives. Zelaya increased the minimum wage by 60% – bad news for the Chiquita Brand fruit company and Gildan of Montreal, the world's largest t-shirt producer. President Zelaya wanted to put the telecommunications business under public control. Such measures did not go down well among the ten wealthiest Honduran families, who control economic and political life.

Zelaya planned that the people should have an opportunity to approve a constitutional reform, introducing a Constituent Assembly to democratize the country's political life. Perhaps even more sensitive was President Zelaya's intention to reform the constitution in regard to mining and natural resources. These measures obviously could have affected foreign mining companies, among them companies like Canadian Goldcorps, Breakwater Resources and Yamana Gold. Zelaya's decision to join PetroCaribe meant that Esso and Shell lost US\$200 million a year in revenue.

The Empire did not like Zelaya's decision to join ALBA, proposed by Venezuela to promote Latin America integration free of the North's tutelage. History shows that Washington has never tolerated Latin American people showing autonomy and designing their own development projects.

Manuel Zelaya spoke of negotiations to close the infamous military base Soto Cano, from which the Empire intervened in Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador. The fact is that Honduras constitutes a key enclave for the Empire to abort any democratic reform process in the region. The intervention of the American ambassador in organizing the coup in Honduras has been proved. The Honduran military who deposed and kidnapped Zelaya were trained in the USA's military schools.

The Canadian government reacted ambiguously and slowly to the coup, in spite of almost unanimous condemnation by the international community. From the beginning the Minister for the Americas, Peter Kent, was reluctant to demand the unconditional restitution of Manuel Zelaya to his post. On the contrary, Kent has insinuated that President Zelaya is co-responsible for the coup and that his presence in Honduras might be conflictive.

Having in mind all these factors, the Festival Salvador Allende Organizing Committee asks the Canadian government to implement the following:

1. To clearly denounce the coup in Honduras.
2. To deny recognition to Roberto Michelletti's de facto government
3. To demand the immediate and unconditional restitution of Manuel Zelaya as the legitimate president of Honduras.
4. To suspend all aid programs to the illegal Honduran government, especially military aid.
5. To clearly demand an end to the military, paramilitary and police repression of the Honduran people.
6. To demand reparations for the Honduran victims of human rights violations.
7. To demand the application of the international law to those responsible for human right violations.

Dear friends:

With Salvador Allende in our memory, we stand with President Zelaya and the Honduran people

We say NO to military coups in Latin America!

Long live the Latin American people!

Festival Salvador Allende Organizing Committee.

Toronto, September, Friday 11, 2009

Salvador Allende's Legacy Opens Roads to a Free Society

By Carlos Ulloa

Dear friends, we are closing the first day of our commemoration – the 36th anniversary of the coup in Chile which put an end to the Popular Unity government and the life of President Salvador Allende. Today, when winds of change are again blowing through Latin America, it is necessary to remember Allende's legacy and consider whether his government's measures, taken to resolve major problems of Chile in the seventies, are valid today.

First, let us highlight the fact that Allende and the Popular Unity openly declared during the presidential campaign that their program proposed deep changes with a socialist orientation, and that these changes, given the specific characteristics of Chilean society, should be implemented by gaining the republic's presidency through an electoral process. The implementation of the program was to be done with full respect of democratic rights and individual freedom for all citizens.

The thousand days of Allende's government mirrored this commitment; there was an absolute respect of these constitutional guarantees. In Allende's Chile the opposition enjoyed broad

freedom, and there was no practice of torture whatsoever. There was absolute freedom of expression, association, public meetings, and – very importantly – freedom for all religious creeds. In sum, there were three years of democracy as participative as the country had ever seen.

Today we see the same democratic commitments in the Bolivarian revolution, in Evo's Bolivia, in Funes's government in El Salvador, in the Correa and Ortega administrations, and we also saw them in the short-lived government of Presidente Manuel Zelaya in Honduras.

A second element must be highlighted: Allende tried consistently realize the program that he had promised to his people:

- He nationalized natural resources, specifically the large copper mining industry which was, until 1971, in the hands of American companies. The copper revenue, the so-called “salary of Chile,” was to finance the national development for the benefit of all Chileans.
- In less than a year Allende implemented a radical agrarian reform, expropriating the latifundia from the landlord class and making a reality of Emiliano Zapata's demand that “the land is for those who work on it.”
- The Popular Unity created a socialized sector of the economy made up of state enterprises and industrial monopolies expropriated by law, with the goal of creating a strong nucleus for the future socialist economy.
- Allende nationalized private banking to democratize the access to credit.
- His government undertook a drastic reform of foreign trade in order to encourage Chilean trade with all countries, breaking away from its dependency on U.S. markets.
- As proof that Chile at last had an independent foreign policy, on the first day of his government Allende reestablished diplomatic relations with socialist Cuba.
- Salvador Allende implemented a national rent redistribution program in favor of the working class; he created a vast program of social housing and guaranteed free access to health care and public education. Very importantly the workers, for the first time in the country's history had access to university studies thanks to an agreement signed by the government and the Central Union of Workers.
- Allende's government initiated the devolution to the Mapuches of their ancestral land, process that was interrupted by the dictatorship and today is still pending.
- We should mention a measure that perhaps here in the North may not have relevance: in Allende's Chile every child had the right to a half-liter of milk daily, without cost.
- People's participation in national affairs deepened. New instances of participation were the administration councils of the socialized enterprises, communal peasant councils, neighborhood committees and mothers' centers. The unionization of peasant and urban workers drastically increased. The percentage of unionized workers reached 30% in 1973, the highest ever.

Salvador Allende led a democratic, anti-imperialist and internationalist government, which retook Bolivar's project. For the second time in Latin America after Cuba, a government to openly tried to build a socialist society. This task finds its continuity today in the Venezuelan socialist project.

However, history has taught us that when a popular government challenges or intends to challenge the interests of trans-national corporations and oligarchies, as the in the Honduran case, it does not matter if this government was generated by a popular armed rebellion or by elections. An anti-democratic plot is immediately on the move to overturn it.

It didn't matter that the Cuban revolution was a response to a corrupt tyranny. It didn't matter that Nicaragua Sandinistas defeated a dictator who had transformed the country into his personal property. It doesn't matter that Hugo Chavez has passed the test of 10 democratic elections and that his government drastically reduced Venezuelan people's poverty. Nor does matter that Evo Morales has restored the indigenous people's dignity. It doesn't matter that Manuel Zelaya did not want to be reelected.

The Empire and the oligarchies don't forgive, because the economic interests at play are immense. And if the people don't grow stronger, do not learn, do not resist and defeat interventions and conspiracy, they pay for it dearly. Allende paid with his life and the Chilean people through brutal human rights violations; Manuel Zelaya has paid with his exile and the Honduran people with a bloody repression.

However, the need for change is alive in Latin America. Its people can no longer continue to live in poverty, witnessing how their natural resources are sucked dry by the voracity of the trans-national corporations. Sooner rather than later our people will find ways to put an end to poverty, oppression and inequality. When this happens the legacy and memory of Salvador Allende will be with there, opening the wide avenues through which free women and men will march on toward a just society.

Long live Salvador Allende!

Long live the Latin American people!

Long live President Zelaya and the Honduran people!

No more coups in Latin America!

Socialist Voice #356, September 24, 2009

Honduras: Street battles rage as military attacks pro-democracy uprising

To counteract the capitalist media's silence about the struggle for democracy and justice in Honduras, the invaluable socialist paper Green Left Weekly has stepped up its coverage of this week's dramatic developments with frequent web updates. We encourage Socialist Voice readers to follow GLW's important reports on the Honduran struggle. The following article was posted on September 24.

by Federico Fuentes

September 24 — Street battles are continuing to rage late into the night of September 23 in the poor neighborhoods of the Honduran capital of Tegucigalpa, after a day marked by a brutal military and police attack on a massive demonstration in support of ousted Honduran President Manuel Zelaya.

Zelaya, whose pro-poor policies outraged the Honduran elite and US corporations, was overthrown in a June 28 military coup and exiled to Costa Rica. On September 21, Zelaya stunned the world by announcing he had re-entered Honduras and was inside the Brazilian embassy in Tegucigalpa.

This announcement — after 88 straight days of resistance to the coup with strikes, protests and road blockades by the poor majority — set off a renewed wave of mobilisations across the country to demand Zelaya's reinstatement as the legitimate president.

As battles between unarmed protesters and heavily armed security forces raged on Honduran streets, world leaders condemned the coup regime at the United Nations General Assembly meeting.

However, while governments from across the world called for the immediate restitution of Zelaya, US President Barack Obama managed to go through his entire speech without mentioning the word Honduras once.

This is despite the fact that all officers in the Honduran military, which carried out the coup and was shooting live rounds at unarmed protesters as Obama spoke, are trained by the US military. This military training has not ceased since the coup.

The presentation of the public position of his government — which is desperately seeking a way to end the anti-coup insurrection that has broken out in the impoverished Central American nation — was left to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and State Department spokesperson Ian Kelly.

Dirian Pereira, from the international commission of National Front of Resistance Against the Coup (FNRG), spoke to Green Left Weekly again over the phone from Tegucigalpa, sounding

clearly shaken by the brutality of the repression metered out earlier in the day. Her voice trembling, she said:

“In all honesty, the repression was extreme. There was no contemplation nor respect nor anything for human rights. The repression was extremely strong.

“We still do not know what the coup regime aims to do with the opposition, because as each day passes, the situation becomes more and more intense. Each day is more and more intense.”

Called by the FNRG, the massive protest that began at 8am on September 23 was a strong demonstration of the people’s will to see Zelaya, their elected president, return to the presidential palace.

Due to a spate of lootings caused by the coup regime imposing a total curfew that led to shortages of food and medicine, the regime temporarily lifted between 10am and 5pm today.

Pereira said:

“The mobilisation was extremely large, making use of the fact that the curfew had been lifted. The people spilled out onto the streets en masse The police tried to provoke the protestors in order to create chaos, but the resistance ignored them.”

The aim of the protest was to peacefully march to an area close by the Brazil embassy, where Zelaya remains despite the regime cutting off electricity, blocking food and firing tear gas into the compound.

Gilberto Rios, a leader of the FNRG, told GLW [*Green Left Weekly*] over the phone:

“When we got to the zone, the police, without any prior provocation on behalf of the protestors, began launching tear gas canister.

“The march was quickly dispersed. Many had to be taken to hospital and a number of young people were arrested.”

Despite this, the battle on the streets of Tegucigalpa continues.

“Right now, throughout the night, there have been a number of shoot outs in the different colonias [poor neighbourhoods] of the capital,” Pereira said.

“There are parts that are practically in insurrection, there are colonias that have declared themselves liberated zones.

“They are well organised, they have set up three, four layers of barricades to stop the police entering.”

Both explained that the repression by the regime, which has left an unknown number of people dead and hundreds arrested, had increased support for the resistance.

“Everything is possible”, Rios told GLW.

“There is a strong feeling of rejection towards the Honduran Armed Forces that have been attacking its own people, similarly with the police....

“Where I live, the police came to repress peaceful protests and that caused even more people, who although against the coup had not joined the resistance, to join the street battles.”

However, as the intensity of the situation mounts, “sectors of the population are beginning to feel that some kind of foreign intervention can prevent a bloodbath”.

Rios insisted, however, that “for us, the problem must be resolved internally”.

Pereira said the talk of possible foreign intervention was coming mostly from right-wing forces who are feeling desperate, as they are losing control of the situation.

Rios said the coup leader Robert Micheletti “has explained it in the following terms: they consider themselves to be a ‘little Berlin’, they feel like the Nazis when they were completely surrounded at the end of the war.”

The coup regime has shifted from arguing it was invincible to “now talking about how they are willing to die in the government palace before handing over power”.

Rios had earlier in the night told GLW that the FNRG had not been able to meet due to the confusion and pace of events. However, Pereira later confirmed they had meet.

However, for strategically purposes the resistance has not yet announced what its next steps will be.

When ready, information would be conveyed via Radio Globo, Pereira said. Radio Globo has acted as a voice for the resistance and its broadcasts are often disrupted and sabotaged has by the military.

Pereira called for people around the world to “remain alert to what is occurring, denounce it, hold solidarity actions and remain up to date on news coming out of Honduras, because here the news is changing from hour to hour, it is changing every little while”.

Rios said: “All of this [international solidarity] is important for saving lives.”

Pereira said: “I want to say to the whole world that we continue to stand firm resisting. We are not going to allow this to slip through our hands, because just now, we have the people with us.”

Socialist Voice #357, September 28, 2009

Palestine Solidarity Victories Alarm Pro-Israel Lobby

by Art Young

The movement to call Israel to account for its crimes against the Palestinian people is growing. It could eventually threaten the existence of the Zionist state by undermining support from its strongest backer, the US government.

That is the message from Howard Kohr, American Israel Public Affairs Committee executive director. AIPAC is one of the principal organisations lobbying publicly on behalf of Israel in the United States, where it is an important influence on foreign policy. In May Kohr told AIPAC's policy conference that the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement was "invading the mainstream discourse, becoming part of the constant and unrelenting drumbeat against Israel."

Kohr pointed to a series of recent actions and statements in a number of countries protesting Israel's onslaught on Palestinians in Gaza, including demonstrations in Spain and Germany. 'Incredibly', he added, 'there now is even an Israel Apartheid Week conducted in cities across the globe.' Most troubling for him was the progress of the Palestine solidarity movement in the United States, "where Israel stands accused of apartheid and genocide, where Zionism equals racism, where a former president of the United States can publicly accuse Israel of apartheid."

To win support for Israel from the rulers in the US, Kohr argued, friends of Israel must address the fact that Israel is a Western outpost in the Middle East, the only democratic country in the region that looked West, and with Western values and vision. If that foundation of shared values was shaken, the rationale for the policies pursued today would be stripped away.

Kohr stressed that "the reasons the United States would continue to invest nearly US\$3 billion [annually] in Israel's security, the willingness to stand with Israel, even alone if need be [and its] readiness to defend Israel's very existence" would all be "undermined and undone if Israel was seen to be unjust and unworthy."

The argument that Israel is a garrison state – the front line of the defence of imperialist interests in the region – is not often stated in such forthright terms. But it is quite accurate, and speaks to the source of the conflict in the region.

Palestine appeals – students respond

The unprecedented growth of the international solidarity movement is a grassroots response to the crimes committed by Israel during its murderous 22-day assault on Gaza mounted in December 2008, and the tight siege of the territory that it maintains to this day.

Solidarity with Palestine is being expressed in many different ways. One of these is the international campaign for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against Israel. Support for BDS has grown considerably in recent months, which is why the AIPAC leader highlighted it as a cause for particular concern.

The BDS movement responds to an appeal for solidarity issued by Palestinian civil society in July 2005. More than 170 bodies, including trade unions, political and social organisations, and women's and youth groups, issued the appeal. The signatories represent all three components of the divided Palestinian nation: refugees, Palestinians living under Israeli occupation, and Palestinian citizens of Israel.

Students have been in the forefront of the solidarity movement with Palestine. The attack on Gaza spurred student solidarity to new heights – with some notable results.

In what one newspaper described as “the biggest student revolt for 20 years,” students in the UK organised occupations at 34 universities. They held meetings and showed films promoting awareness of the oppression of the Palestinians.

Many occupations demanded that their universities provide practical aid to Palestinian universities and students. Others called for an end to all ties to arms manufacturers, the university-military connection being particularly strong in the UK. The universities promote research that benefits the merchants of death and invest in those companies.

Israeli Apartheid Week

In his speech to the AIPAC conference, Howard Kohr twice referred to Israeli Apartheid Week (IAW), an annual series of presentations and film showings that focus on the Israeli apartheid system and the need for boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel. Initiated at the University of Toronto in 2005, IAW events took place in March this year on five continents in more than 40 cities and towns, 11 of them in Israeli-occupied Palestine.

Organisers of IAW in Canada, one of the centres of the movement, were bombarded with attacks and threats from Zionist organisations backed up by the federal government. In February Jason Kenney, Canada's Minister of Citizenship, Immigration, and Multiculturalism, decried the “anti-Zionist version of anti-Semitism” which maintains that “the Jews alone have no right to a homeland.” A few weeks later Kenny took aim directly at IAW in a speech to the House of Commons saying: ‘We condemn these efforts to single out and attack the Jewish people and their homeland.’

University administrators on a number of campuses followed the government's lead, attempting to disrupt Israeli Apartheid Week. But IAW the daily events unfolded as planned, with audiences of up to 500 in Toronto and Ottawa and 400 in Montreal.

Company and consumer boycotts make their mark

Campus-based activities in solidarity with Palestine are one facet of a broader international campaign, which includes targeted boycotts of companies that profit from Israel's oppression of the Palestinians.

The US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation is urging consumers to “Hang up on Motorola” until the company stops selling communications and surveillance equipment to the Israeli

military and to Israeli settlements on occupied Palestinian land. The group organised a protest outside Motorola's annual shareholders' meeting in Chicago in May.

In Canada, the Committee Against Israeli Apartheid and other solidarity activists have organised a boycott of Indigo Books and Music. They demand that the majority shareholders of the bookstore chain, Heather Reisman and Gerry Schwartz, publicly end their support of Heseq, the Foundation for Lone Soldiers. Reisman and Schwartz created the foundation in 2005 to reward "lone soldiers," volunteers who travel to Israel to serve in the Israeli military. Every year, Heseq grants scholarships to a hundred or more of these zealots to help them remain in Israel after they complete their military service.

Solidarity campaigns in a number of countries have proven costly to French multinationals Veolia and Alstrom. The companies became targets of a major corporate boycott because of their involvement in building the railway link between occupied Jerusalem to Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

In Europe, consumer boycotts of Israeli products, particularly agricultural produce, are gaining momentum. The UK Guardian reported that "Israeli companies are feeling the impact of boycott moves in Europe ... amid growing concern within the Israeli business sector over organised campaigns following the recent attack on Gaza." The article also cited the Israeli financial daily, The Marker, which said that "the horrific images on TV and the statements of politicians in Europe and Turkey are changing the behavior of consumers, businessmen and potential investors. Many European consumers boycott Israeli products in practice."

Labour solidarity with Palestine

Israel's bloody assault on Gaza earlier this year has also led to new initiatives by organised labour in solidarity with Palestine.

Not surprisingly, support for Palestine and the boycott movement is particularly strong in South Africa. Many South Africans see Israel's oppression of Palestinians through the prism of their own experience under apartheid. Dock workers have led the way in labour solidarity.

Several major national labour federations have endorsed the call for boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel. COSATU in South Africa was the first to do so, followed by the labour federations in New Zealand and Ireland. On April 24 the convention of the Trade Union Congress of Scotland voted overwhelmingly in favour of BDS after an extensive debate. A few weeks later the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions, which represents more than a third of the country's work force, urged its government to lead an international boycott of Israel if it continued to violate Palestinian rights.

Individual unions and labour organizations in many countries have also taken a stand. To cite only two, in June 2007 the national conference of UNISON, the largest union of public sector workers in the UK, with more than 1.3 million members, called for "concerted and sustained pressure upon Israel including an economic, cultural, academic and sporting boycott." More

recently, in the wake of the assault on Gaza, the leadership of the largest teachers' union in France, the Fédération Syndicale Unitaire, endorsed the BDS campaign and called on the European Union to impose sanctions on Israel.

On the other side of the Atlantic, in April 2008, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers became the first country-wide union in North America to adopt a BDS policy.

The Ontario division of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, (CUPE) which represents more than 220,000 workers in the public sector, has played a key role in blazing the trail for labour solidarity in Canada. The decision of CUPE Ontario's May 2006 convention to endorse boycott, divestment and sanctions sparked massive controversy, thereby drawing international attention to the Palestinian appeal for BDS. Supporters of Israel in various quarters including government officials, editorialists, and even leaders of other unions, directed a torrent of abuse against the union, alleging that the decision was anti-Semitic, undemocratic, and outside the union's jurisdiction. Sid Ryan, the president of CUPE Ontario, received numerous death threats and his family was also threatened but Ryan and the union have stood firm against the pressure. Union activists organised an extensive grass-roots education campaign.

Quebec teachers, students support boycott

Various unions in Quebec have been active on the solidarity issue and have participated in delegations to Palestine.

A year after the CUPE Ontario convention, Quebec's largest union of teachers in higher education (the FNEEQ) joined the boycott, divestment, and sanctions movement.

Already in October 2004 the FNEEQ had sponsored a delegation of 20 Quebec teachers who attended an international conference on Education, Globalization and Social Change in Ramallah, Palestine. It also joined forces with the Association pour une Solidarité Syndicale Étudiante (ASSÉ), which represents 42,000 Quebec students, in organising campus workshops on the Palestine issue.

In May 2008 the ASSÉ endorsed the boycott, divestment, and sanctions campaign, the first major student union in Canada to do so.

Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia: no ties with Israel

One of the aims of the international boycott-Israel movement is to induce governments to break all economic and diplomatic relations with Israel, treating the Zionist state as an international pariah. This is starting to become a reality in Latin America.

In recent years a process of transformation has been unfolding across the region as radical, popular movements have emerged in many countries. One important result has been the creation of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA), an alliance of seven countries that promotes fair trade and mutual aid based on principles of solidarity rather than profit. ALBA also champions respect for national sovereignty and unity of the region against US domination.

The rising tide of struggles in Latin America has been accompanied by a rise in support for the Palestinian people, including by the governments of the region. ALBA has led the way on this.

In September 2008 the ALBA countries were instrumental in securing the election of Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann as president of the General Assembly of the United Nations. D'Escoto is a well-known supporter of Palestine. As foreign minister of the Sandinista government of Nicaragua during the 1980s, he played a prominent role in exposing Israel's role in the "dirty war" that Washington organized against his country.

D'Escoto told a 2008 meeting at the UN that 60 years after partition, "the failure to create a Palestinian state as promised is the single greatest failure in the history of the United Nations." He went on to say: 'Although different, what is being done against the Palestinian people seems to me to be a version of the hideous policy of apartheid.' Addressing the UN General Assembly later the same day, he repeated the apartheid characterization and urged the member states to consider implementing sanctions against Israel.

Soon after Israel began its attack on Gaza, Venezuelans took to the streets in protest. Speaking to a rally in Caracas on January 9, 2009, Foreign Minister Nicolas Maduro announced that his country would send 80 tons of medicine, water, and food aid to Gaza, as well as 30 doctors and a humanitarian work brigade.

On January 14, Venezuela and Bolivia, both members of ALBA, broke off diplomatic relations with Israel. When Israel retaliated by expelling Venezuelan diplomats, president Hugo Chavez responded that "it is an honour for this socialist government and this revolutionary people to have our representatives expelled by a genocidal government such as Israel." Bolivia's president, Evo Morales, announced that his country would formally indict Israel's leaders for war crimes in the International Criminal Court. 'They've made the world move backwards with crimes against humanity that we haven't seen since Rwanda and Yugoslavia,' he said.

On April 27 Venezuela and the Palestinian Authority established formal diplomatic relations and opened a Palestinian embassy in Caracas. Palestinian foreign minister Riyad al-Maliki said that the embassy would coordinate solidarity with Palestine across Latin America. A Palestinian embassy has functioned in Havana, Cuba for decades. (Cuba broke diplomatic relations with Israel in September 1973.)

Important struggles ahead

The BDS movement now includes its first national Jewish organization. At its first annual general meeting on June 14, the Independent Jewish Voices (Canada) overwhelmingly endorsed boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel. IJV has chapters in seven Canadian cities.

Initiatives promoting an academic and cultural boycott of Israel have also won increasing support in the recent period, even in the face of fierce opposition.

Israel's prestige and moral standing in the world has suffered a serious setback as a result of its barbaric attack on the besieged population of Gaza. The protests against Israel's actions in many

countries were unprecedented in their size and duration. New forces are joining the movement in solidarity with Palestine. As part of this process, the international campaign for boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel is emerging as one of the most important ways to demonstrate this solidarity.

Art Young is a member of the Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid in Toronto. This is an abridgement, previously published in the British magazine Socialist Resistance, of an essay that is available in full in The Bullet and on the Global BDS Movement website.

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How To Really Fight Anti-Semitism

by Suzanne Weiss

This article is adapted from a talk given to 90 participants in a “train the trainers workshop” organized by Palestine Freedom of Expression on August 26. Suzanne Weiss, a Holocaust survivor, is a member of Not In Our Name: Jewish Voices Opposing Zionism, Independent Jewish Voices, and the Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid (CAIA).

We often hear the charge that taking a firm stand for Palestinian rights is somehow anti-Semitic. What is anti-Semitism? Here are some common definitions:

- “Belief or behavior hostile toward Jews just because they are Jewish.” (Anti-Defamation League)
- “Anti-Jewish racism,” which emphasizes the “innate hostility of Jews to the interests of non-Jews.” (Political Dictionary)
- “Hostility toward or discrimination against Jews as a religious group or ‘race.’” (Britannica Concise Encyclopedia)

Seventy-five years ago, there was pervasive discrimination against Jews in Canada. It was difficult for Jews to get into university or get a job in the professions. It was difficult to get housing of our choice, or join private clubs.

Jews were refused entry into Canada, even as they faced Hitler’s death chambers. A high Canadian civil servant under the MacKenzie administration stated, “None is too many.”

Discrimination against Jewish people was less severe than that against Chinese or indigenous people, but it was similar in character. It was a form of the overall racism pervasive in Canadian society.

But since then many battles have been won. Hatred of Jews lingers on, but discrimination against Jews is no longer common in Canada.

The struggle against racism is indivisible

How did we carry out the battle against anti-Semitism? We exposed and combated individual expressions of such hatred. But we did not demand special laws protecting Jews. For instance, we didn’t say, “Don’t beat on the Jews, beat on the Chinese and Blacks instead.” No, we fought for equal rights for everyone.

Jewish people were in the forefront of these struggles. In the process, we engaged in many extended boycotts: on the battlegrounds with the Blacks in the U.S. in the boycotts of the Montgomery buses and the Wohlworth five and dime stores; in the grape boycott for Latino farm

workers; in the boycott against South African apartheid. Many laws have been changed through all these struggles for the rights of humankind.

Today, racist discrimination is banned by the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and the Canadian and Ontario human rights charters. These documents do not mention anti-Semitism. Instead, they protect all human beings. A violation of these principles committed against anyone undermines the rights of us all. The struggle against racism is indivisible. Discrimination against Palestinians, or Muslims, or Arabs reinforces racism as a whole and thus encourages anti-Semitism.

This is particularly evident in the Middle East, where there is no historic tradition of anti-Semitism. The Israeli government insists that its wars and its oppression of the Palestinians are actions of the Jewish people as a whole, defending their interests as Jews. The world media repeat this lie. It is not surprising that many victims of Israel's crimes blame the Jews. The Israeli government's actions create a hearing for anti-Semitism.

'Not In Our Name'

The most effective response for progressive Jews is to insist, loud and clear, "Not In Our Name" – and for all of us to work for an end to Israel's wars and oppression.

Today, the Canadian government condemns the campaign to defend Palestine. They say that Israeli Apartheid Week is about "efforts to single out and attack the Jewish people and their homeland," Israel.

This is a lie. There is nothing anti-Jewish in Israeli Apartheid Week: it is an educational event on political issues of concern to us all. They say my homeland is Israel. And here I thought it my homeland was Canada!

The Canadian government says that to criticize Israel is an attack on the Jewish people. This is absurd. Criticism of Israel is not prejudice. When we criticize the U.S. government, it's not an attack on the American people. When we criticize the Harper government, it's not because we hate conservatives — let alone all Canadians.

If political advocacy is considered discriminatory, that would be the end of free speech. As for singling out Israel, the Palestinian solidarity movement simply applies to Israel the same standards used for any other country. It is Israel that singles itself out, by carrying out crimes, like the siege of Gaza, with no parallel elsewhere in the world. It is the Canadian government that singles out Israel by declaring it exempt from challenge.

The policy of labeling criticism of Israel's government as anti-Semitism is an attempt to silence or marginalize dissenters. It is an attempt to stifle freedom of speech and expression.

Ending Israeli apartheid

It is argued that we in the Palestinian solidarity movement do not accept the existence of Israel. So let us be clear. Israel exists.

It is argued that we do not accept that Jews should have a country of their own. But obviously all Jews, like Palestinians, and like all human beings, have a right to their own country. That does not mean that this country must be ethnically exclusive.

What we do not accept is Israeli apartheid — that is, a state based on the oppression of a subject people.

We call for an end to Israeli apartheid through three measures:

1. Ending its occupation and colonization of all Arab lands, dismantling the Wall and freeing all Palestinian and Arab political prisoners;
2. Recognizing the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality;
3. Respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in U.N. General Assembly resolution 194.

None of these measures is in any way prejudicial to the rights of Jewish people in Israel or elsewhere. Indeed, these demands are in the best interests of Israeli Jews as well as Palestinians.

The struggle to liberate the Palestinians goes hand in hand with opposition to anti-Semitism. In a broader sense, the movement against Israeli apartheid is directed against the fountainhead of anti-Semitism: the racist ideology that still permeates our society.

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Fidel: Hands Off Honduras!

by **Fidel Castro**

Fidel Castro's reflections on current political developments are available at Reflexiones del compañero Fidel. This article was published on September 24. The translation is by Socialist Voice.

Last July 16, I said that the coup d'état in Honduras "was conceived and organized by unscrupulous characters on the far-right – officials who had been in the confidence of George W. Bush and were promoted by him."

I mentioned the names of Hugo Llorens, Robert Blau, Stephen McFarland and Robert Callahan, Yankee ambassadors to Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua appointed by Bush in July and August 2008. The four pursued the line of John Negroponte and Otto Reich, two characters with murky histories.

I then indicated that the Yankee base at Soto Cano [Honduras] had provided the main backup to the coup and that "the idea of a peace initiative from Costa Rica was transmitted to the president of that country [Oscar Arias] from the State Department when Obama was in Moscow and was declaring at a Russian university that the only president of Honduras was Manuel Zelaya." I added,

"With the Costa Rica meeting, the authority of the UN, the OAS and the other institutions that committed their support to the people of Honduras is being questioned. The only correct action at this moment is to demand that the government of the United States cease its intervention, stop giving military aid to the coup and pull out its Task Force from Honduras."

The U.S. response to the coup d'état in that Central American country has been to strike an agreement with the government of Colombia in order to set up seven military bases similar to that of Soto Cano in that sister nation, thus menacing Venezuela, Brazil and all other peoples in South America.

At a critical moment, when the tragedy of the climate change and the international economic crisis are under discussion at a UN summit conference of heads of states, the putschists in Honduras are threatening the immunity of the Brazilian Embassy where President Zelaya, his family and a group of followers were forced to seek sanctuary.

The fact is that the government of Brazil had absolutely nothing to do with the situation created there.

Consequently, it is inadmissible – actually inconceivable – that the Brazilian Embassy would be assaulted by the fascist government, unless it intends to commit suicide, dragging the country to a direct intervention of foreign forces – as was the case in Haiti – which would mean the

intervention of Yankee troops under the UN flag. Honduras is not a remote isolated country in the Caribbean. An intervention in Honduras with foreign forces would unleash a conflict in Central America and bring political chaos to the entire Latin American region.

The heroic struggle of the Honduran people during almost 90 days of ceaseless battle has placed the fascist pro-Yankee government, which is crushing unarmed men and women, in a critical situation.

We have seen the emergence of a new consciousness among the Honduran people. A host of social fighters have gained experience in that battle. Zelaya delivered on his promise to return. He is entitled to his position in the government and to preside over the elections. New and admirable cadres have emerged in the combative social movements. They are capable of leading that people through the hazardous journey that awaits the peoples of Our America. A revolution is in the making there.

The current session of the United Nations General Assembly can be a historic one depending on its achievements or wrongs.

The world leaders have expounded on very interesting and complex subjects, which reflect the enormity of the tasks facing humanity and the little time available.

[For continuing coverage of the struggle in Honduras, Socialist Voice recommends Green Left Weekly.]