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people's VOICE

**Folk Festivals,
people's music**

See page 10

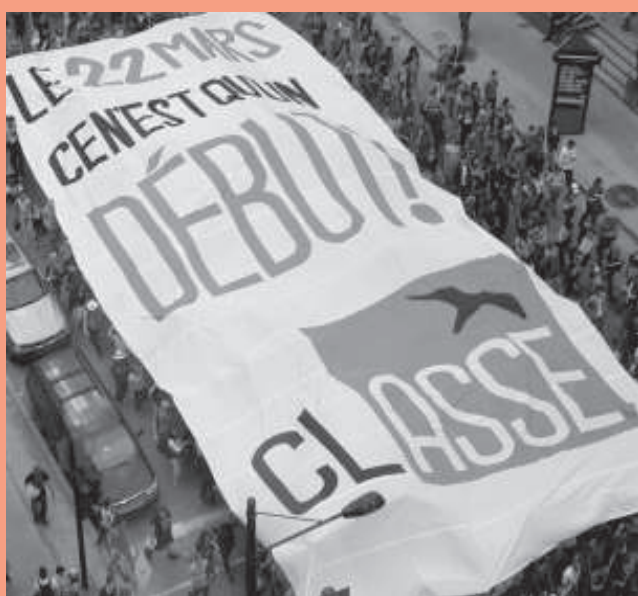
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Taking aim at Syria



Supplying arms and propoganda for the "rebels", the West and right-wing Arab regimes play with fire... Pages 9 & 11

Quebec's student movement speaks out for social change



Defying the corporate media's stereotypes and lies, Quebec student activists present a dramatic, pro-people alternative to neoliberal austerity policies imposed by the ruling class.

**CLASSE Manifesto -
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Solidarity Tour - Page 7



5 Secular martyrs

Fundamentalist forces are demanding to honour their violent "martyrs". It's time for secular and progressive movements to recognize those who have sacrificed for a better world.

INSIDE

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Why is the Pentagon shifting so much of the U.S. military's nuclear and conventional power into the east Asian region?

12 The left in South Africa

Despite outlandish attacks by the corporate media, the South African Communist Party is making impressive membership gains as debates over the country's future intensify.

Manitoba labour pledges solidarity with Quebec students

By Darrell Rankin

The highlight of the June 22-24 Manitoba Federation of Labour Convention was the near-unanimous support by over 300 delegates for the emergency resolution in solidarity with the Quebec student struggle against the Charest government's tuition hike.

Other aspects of the convention were less positive. Resolutions to oppose similar tuition hikes in

Manitoba and to support the campaign of boycott, divestment and sanction of Israel for its occupation of Palestinian territory were defeated or tabled.

Support for progressive policies and action was scattered among different union caucuses, underlining the need for better preparation and organization before the next MFL convention.

If there was a theme to the convention, it was inform delegates

about the need for NDP electoral support. Asked to stand if they had helped elect the NDP in Manitoba last fall, about one-third of delegates complied.

The MFL executive worked hard to defeat the Israel BDS motion, starting with asking the resolutions committee to reconsider its recommendation of concurrence. It said no to the circulation of BDS information to delegates inside the hall.

But MFL president Kevin Rebeck did attend the BDS workshop, participating in a frank and civil discussion about the executive's concerns, focusing on CLC jurisdiction over federal matters, existing CLC policy, and the division of powers in the British North America Act between provinces and the federal government.

Workshop participants ably addressed Rebeck's concerns, but

the next day a delegate was able to table the motion and it was never considered.

CUPW president Denis Lemelin, one of the keynote speakers, condemned the Harper government's anti-labour agenda, especially the requirement for final offer selection in five back-to-work bills over the last year. He pointed out that since nearly all the major unions have campaigns against the federal government, there is a need to bring them together.

"We need to develop a social project, our project," said Lemelin. "Otherwise we will lose." He also urged action against Harper's Bill C-377 which would force unions to disclose their strike funds.

In his keynote speech, Rebeck came out in support of the provincial NDP government, saying "I don't think the Manitoba NDP moves fast enough or far enough on many issues... The MFL

leads off every meeting with government reminding them of our three priorities, and one of them has been achieved now."

Fresh off the plane from the Rio+20 World Environmental Summit, where he signed an agreement to work with Quebec Premier Charest on the environment, Premier Greg Selinger received a round of applause for his speech. Selinger defended his government's policies, such as a new P3 law requiring publicity of details and the second-highest minimum wage in Canada.

The challenges facing workers in Manitoba are far greater than the MFL's immediate demands, and will not be cured by the NDP's mild reformist policies. The challenges are already escalating as capitalism's economic crisis continues its agonizing and dangerous course. ●



Seen, heard and "red": People's Voice builders in Toronto were out in Toronto recently, introducing the paper to people on Bathurst Street. (Photos by Ed Bil)



PV Fund Drive nears 3/4 mark

If one seeks further proof that working people in Canada desperately need more progressive media voices, look up the July 21 *Toronto Sun* article headlined "End the Norman Bethune Buffoonery." The author, perhaps not surprisingly, is Peter Worthington, anti-communist veteran of a thousand crusades against the working class.

Worthington mounts his high horse to smite his own friends, in this case the Harper Tories. Their dastardly act was to make a federal government contribution to Bethune House in Gravenhurst, and then to use the occasion to hold a ceremony with diplomats from the People's Republic of China.

But Worthington's wrath is mostly aimed at Dr. Norman Bethune, the famed Canadian surgeon and Communist who volunteered his services against fascism in Spain, and later died of blood poisoning during

the Japanese occupation of China.

Worthington's invective against Norman Bethune is the same old tired stuff hurled by right-wingers for decades. Bethune, he writes, was crusty, nasty-tempered, impatient, a heavy drinker, and "genuinely saw 'socialized' medicine as the way to go."

Speaking of "nasty", here's one of Worthington's putrid zingers: "Bethune was not in China to help humanity, but to help Mao's communist army. It was not sick people he tended, but wounded communist soldiers."

Not a word of criticism is directed towards the fascist regimes of Germany, Italy and Japan. The thrust of Worthington's article is that Norman Bethune should be regarded as an enemy of Canada, for opposing the private profit monopoly over medical care, and for giving his life in struggle against the fascists favoured by many in the Canadian ruling class during the Great Depression.

People's Voice and our predecessors, especially the *Canadian Tribune* which was published from 1945 to 1990 in Toronto, have clashed in print with Peter Worthington on many occasions. In this case, the website comments on Worthington's piece indicate that most *Sun* readers disagree with the ultra-right columnist.

We will continue to speak out against fascism and neoliberalism, and in defence of the "socialized" medical care and other programs which

Canada's political neanderthals aim to destroy.

But to keep publishing, we need your support. Right now, we are in the summer doldrums, but the 2012 PV Fund Drive continues. This month it's time for the annual People's Voice Walk-A-Thon organized by the Lower Fraser Club CPC. Join editor Kimball Cariou, circulation manager Sam Hammond and other PV contributors and supporters at the Walk-A-Thon, starting at 11 am, Sunday, August 12. Gather at the picnic area beside the parking lot near 88 Ave. and 140 Street in Surrey's Bear Creek Park. After the walk there will be a delicious South Asian buffet lunch and a cultural program.

The latest figures show us nearing the three-quarter mark in the Fund Drive. Quebec went over the top some time ago, turning in \$885, or 177% of their \$500 target, followed by Alberta, at 91% (\$3040 raised out of a goal of \$3400). Ontario is nearing the finish line, with \$18,931 raised, or 88% of their goal of \$21,600. Saskatchewan is next (77%, or \$570 out of \$800). This month will be critical for British Columbia - a successful Walk-A-Thon will bring B.C. much closer to its \$20,000 goal. Right now B.C. has raised \$11,166, or 56% of the target. Recent donations have brought Manitoba to \$875, or 37% of their \$2400 target. Another \$500 has arrived from the east coast provinces, and \$450 from friends outside Canada. Look for an update in our Labour Day issue! ●

Marking 90th anniversary of the working class press

People's Voice

VOLUME 1 / NUMBER 1 / MARCH 1993

Canadian Publications Mail Sales Product Agreement #809214

Back in Print!
The People's Voice

After much effort and planning, the communist press is back in print. For the first time in several years, Canadian working people have a revolutionary paper, a voice for a socialist Canada. The *People's Voice* was made possible by the determination and generosity of hundreds of supporters across the country. Over \$70,000 was raised in our New Labour Press fund drive, a remarkable achievement today when many left publications are being forced to cut back and retreat. The fund drive was a strong vote of confidence - once again, we thank all those who contributed!

The *People's Voice* will be published monthly at first, and bi-weekly when possible, from our editorial offices in Vancouver. Our paper follows a long tradition of the revolutionary working-class press in Canada: *The Worker* (which first appeared in March 1922), *The Clarion*, *The Westerner*, *The Farmer*, *The Canadian* and *Pacific Tribune*, *Combat*, not to mention the many socialist papers of the ethnic communities. For over seventy years, the communist press has made a major impact in Canada, central to all the battles for social and democratic reforms, the fight against fascism and for peace, and to the struggle for socialism.

Now we are able to return to a Canada-wide press, covering a broad range of topics from a Marxist perspective. It's true that other left publications cover some of the same territory, providing important coverage of issues facing working people. So why did Canada's communists decide it was necessary to launch the *People's Voice*?

The answer lies in our conviction that socialism is necessary to liberate working people from a corrupt and exploitative system, and our optimism that this can be achieved. A press that "educates, agitates, and organizes" working people is needed to make that dream a reality. That's why the *People's Voice* aims to link the most advanced theory of working-class science with the militant actions of our class.

Quebec Labour Fights UI Cuts

An estimated 50,000 demonstrators marched through Montreal streets Feb. 7 in a protest against the Tory government's UI cuts. The event was organized by Quebec's

Our series of front pages from 90 years of the communist press in Canada continues with the first issue of *People's Voice*, which renewed and celebrated the working class and revolutionary traditions of *The Worker*, *the Canadian* and *Pacific Tribunes*, and other newspapers since 1922. Printed on March 4, 1993, this issue was finished just in time to distribute at International Women's Day actions across the country. The front page of PV#1 featured an important article on the Quebec labour movement's mass demonstrations against the Chretien Liberal government's cuts to unemployment insurance.

Here's my contribution to the PV Fund Drive!

Enclosed please find my donation of \$_____ to the 2012 People's Voice Press Fund Drive.

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Send your contribution to:
People's Voice, 706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3J1

Quebec movements face election challenge

By Johan Boyden, Montreal

The community of Trois Pistoles along the northern banks of the St. Lawrence river is known for its picturesque beauty and historic links to Basque whalers, who travelled there hundreds of years ago from Spain. Now it has become a symbol of the pre-election polarization and fear-mongering going on in Québec.

An ecological festival in the town, put on by community activists including some who have been fighting high-risk shale gas development in the region, wanted to invite student leaders to speak at their event.

A storm of controversy erupted. Mayor Jean-Pierre Rioux met with organizers and threatened to withdraw all funding. "Around here, people think that [student leader] Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois is [...] like Maurice 'Mom' Boucher" one festival organizer said.

Mom Boucher is, of course, the convicted rapist, drug dealer and murderer who leads the Montreal Hells Angels.

Québec's governing Liberal Party is expected to announce a provincial election, likely on September 4th (just before the return of the anti-corruption commission that has implicated the party with Mafia kick-backs through the construction industry).

Despite the public outpouring of support for the students, particularly in working class Montreal communities, Québec

elections are not held on the basis of proportional representation.

Instead, the riding system, divided along regional, economic and national lines, can craftily distort public opinion. Not to mention that elections are a multi-million dollar horse race today. Even though they have a nationalist wing, the Liberals are the only clearly federalist party on the political map. Going into the race they are "guaranteed" almost all the ridings in Montreal's West Island, where the Anglo minority will not consider a party leaning towards independence (or any other new forms of sovereignty that could be guaranteed in a re-drafted Constitution).

Of course, the unexpected can happen - like the turn to the NDP by Québec voters in the last federal election. But that phenomenon was much more about a strategy to block the Harper Tories than a re-evaluation of the national question.

Many commentators say the outcome hangs on ten or maybe just six ridings where the Liberals won by a whisker - sometimes by a lead of one percent and less than a hundred votes. The Minister of Education has said she will not seek re-election, no doubt expecting she would lose.

Premier Charest's party is turning a blind eye to the ultra-right Coalition Avenir Québec, who pose little threat, instead taking aim at the pro-corporate Parti Québécois (PQ). Some compare this ballot choice to the

frying pan and the fire. The Communist Party of Québec is supporting the left-coalition party Québec Solidaire.

Low voter turnout will also help the Liberals, who are counting on their "law and order" or "strong leadership in a crisis" message.

Even the government's own arms-length Human Rights and Youth Rights Commission recently condemned the special law forcing the return of students to class this month, saying it was a violation of the fundamental freedoms safeguarded by the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms. But Law 78 was always an election strategy, and there is a real danger it may bear fruit.

Which brings us back to communities like Trois Pistoles, where the militant CLASSE student union is compared to organized crime.

The CLASSE has been running a tour across Québec promoting their manifesto for democracy (see page 6), and weaving together the struggles of the people within the framework of defeating the Liberals. On July 22, CLASSE organized another mass demonstration, estimated at between 30,000 and 80,000 in size. (That same day, police arrested the two spokespeople of a student mobilization in Ottawa, including a member of the Young Communist League.)

The Liberals have asked the Director General of elections to investigate the students in case they are making election expenses.

The other two student federations have targeted specific ridings, basically advocating for the PQ. The past-president of the college student federation will be a PQ candidate.

The election will be a challenge for the people's movements. There is a need to continue the mobilization in the streets while not falling into the "anti-politics" trap of pretending the vote does

not exist. Whatever the outcome, it should not be seen as a blank cheque for any party. This was the message delivered at a summer BBQ discussion organized by the Young Communist League of Québec (LJC-Q) in late July.

The meeting heard a report-back on a very successful ten campus tour in Ontario by Québec student activists including the leader of the LJC-Q, Marianne Breton Fontaine, organized by the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) Ontario. People chuckled when they learnt the *National Post* had labelled the tour a vector of the Québec protest "virus."

The tour was a concrete expression of solidarity by the CFS towards the Québec students.

About a thousand students came out in total between Ottawa and Windsor.

Breton Fontaine will also be a candidate for Québec Solidaire in the Montreal riding of Acadie.

In addition to its own platform (which includes the elimination of tuition fees, public pharmacare, nationalization of energy, pay equity, and other demands) Québec Solidaire has responded to a call for a united front against the Liberals with their own two-point proposal for an alliance: proportional representation and, basically, the abolition of the last austerity budget. Since this is also, on paper, the existing policy of the PQ, it could be the basis for a coalition or accord, but this is just speculation. ●

BCTF reaches bargaining deal

Members of the BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF) have voted by a margin of three to one to accept a new collective agreement. The vote came after a lengthy struggle, during which Premier Christy Clark's Liberals bitterly fought against any improvements for teachers or classroom conditions.

The agreement includes no salary improvements. But it does increase bereavement leave to up to eight weeks partially paid, and unpaid discretionary leave for up to three days and unpaid family leave for up to five days. The contract is retroactive to July 1, 2011, and expires on June 30, 2013, weeks after the next B.C. election set for May 14, 2013.

BCTF President Susan Lambert called the changes to leave a "modest improvement," but says the most important part was what government didn't include.

"The government was forced to take off the table the punitive legislations that Minister Abbott and the Premier consistently and constantly threatened to bring into being," Lambert told the media.

The threatened legislation included the elimination of seniority rights, lack of transparency in layoff and recall of teachers, and loss of autonomy in professional development.

The BCTF is taking the government to court over Bill 22, the so-called "Education Improvement Act", which required a collective agreement to meet the government's net-zero mandate. Lambert says the union wants the government to put back the \$3.3 billion cut from education over the last decade.

"This civil claim is aimed at getting our rights back," she says. "Yes, the public education system should get money back. We're asking for smaller class sizes, we're asking for full-time a library in every school, counselling services for kids."

(With files from The Tyee) ●



Niagara-region members of the Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association were at the Ft. Erie border crossing last month, in solidarity with Venceremos Brigade supporters challenging the U.S. embargo against Cuba. (see below)

NIAGARA NEWS BULLETIN

People's Voice Niagara Bureau

* The Six Nations delegation to the Bicentennial Celebrations of the War of 1812 at Fort George walked out after being relegated to the end of the event because of scheduling changes related to the Governor General. Local media tried to blame the walkout on the Six Nations, saying they cancelled for inter-Aboriginal reasons, ignoring the disrespect that has continued.

* Over 30 Americans challenging the Cuba travel ban as part of the Venceremos Brigade crossed back into the US from Ft. Erie.

* Eleven patients at St. Catharines and Welland hospitals have been reported infected with a new MRSA outbreak. Instead of restoring cuts to staff, bed, and services, the provincially-appointed hospital supervisor wants to replace four emergency room closures with a second regional hospital.

* While the federal and provincial governments gave \$20 million to Cytec to expand chemical production in Niagara Falls, the mayor demanded that they finish cleaning up the former American Cyanamid plant in the middle of the city.

* St. Catharines commemorated the 150th anniversary of the death of Anthony Burns, an escaped slave who was a community leader in Niagara, an important stop on the underground railroad to Canada. Burns was the last man tried in Massachusetts under the Fugitive Slave Act, which sparked widespread abolitionist demonstrations.

* Animal rights activists protested at the home of the owner of Marineland in Niagara Falls. His eviction of long-time mobile home park residents left many with nowhere else to go, one of them committing suicide.



LGBTQ Pride parades and celebrations are in full swing across Canada this summer. Above are some of the contingents at the huge July 1 parade in Toronto, including the Toronto & District School Board, Unite Here Local 75, Queers Against Israeli Apartheid, and the Communist Party of Canada. Photos by Ed Bil.

EDITORIALS

War clouds in the Persian Gulf

The corporate media in North America continues to heap blame on the Assad government for every tragedy in Syria. Little is mentioned about arms shipments and meddling by the western powers, Israel, and Saudi Arabia and other reactionary Gulf Arab states. The pattern is familiar: a government which refuses to kowtow to imperialism faces an intense propaganda attack, followed by sanctions and threats, and then outright military intervention. Countries which resist the stampede to war - in this case Russia and China - are accused of "blocking consensus" and "protecting their own interests." What blatant hypocrisy!

Meanwhile, the biggest build-up in the Persian Gulf since the 2003 invasion of Iraq is underway. The US military surge includes an influx of air and naval forces, ground troops, and even sea drones. The US already has two aircraft carriers and their striker groups in the region. The immediate target of this escalation is Iran, even though the US intelligence community finds no evidence that Teheran has decided to pursue a nuclear weapon - the ostensible reason behind Western sanctions. As an April Pentagon report states, Iran's military doctrine remains one of self-defence, committed to "slow an invasion" and "force a diplomatic solution to hostilities."

The media blitz against Syria and Iran is a propaganda cover for the wider aims of imperialism across the entire Middle East/Central Asia region, especially the drive by transnational monopolies to control energy supplies. Far from helping the people to address their urgent social issues, military interventions have the opposite effect, as seen in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya. War in Middle East will never bring liberation, only huge profits for Big Oil and the military-industrial complex. The shameful threats against Syria and Iran by the major parties in Parliament will be remembered as yet another example of Canadian complicity with U.S. imperialism.

Stopping Enbridge just a start

Despite a huge corporate propaganda blitz and 100% support from the Alberta and federal Tory governments, Enbridge Corp.'s Northern Gateway pipeline project is in serious jeopardy. The hearings into the project have shown powerful opposition from First Nations, environmental groups, local governments, scientists and concerned citizens. Revelations of the company's incompetent response to a huge oil leak in Michigan two years ago make it clear that this project simply cannot be built without endangering vast areas of wilderness and coastlines.

Yet the fight is far from over. This month, anti-pipeline activists are extending solidarity to indigenous people in northern British Columbia, where plans are underway to clear hundreds of kilometers of forests, streams, and wetlands along the proposed route.

The defeat of the Northern Gateway project would be a huge victory for Aboriginal peoples struggling to protect their traditional territories, for communities along the pipeline route facing ecological dangers, and for all Canadians who want an economy based on people's needs, not corporate greed.

But the drive for profits through extraction of energy resources by transnational capital and imperialist governments will continue. Even if Enbridge loses this round, other projects are on the drawing board, such as the expansion of Kinder Morgan's pipeline to Vancouver. This project would fill a tanker ship every day, with potentially disastrous consequences for the people and environment around Vancouver's harbour.

An immediate moratorium on expansion of pipelines and energy extraction projects would give Canadians time to engage in a real debate over the future of this industry. We must win the fight to block the Northern Gateway project, but that will only be the first step.

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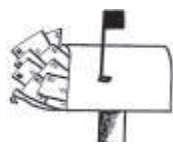
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706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3J1 or
pvoice@telus.net

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Pot P.M.



Letters to the Editor

What kind of armed forces?

Roy L. Piepenburg (People's Voice, 16-30 June 2012) writes that "the Harper government's motive of emulating and participating in the imperialist foreign policy of the U.S. must demand the attention of all Canadians who want to live in a peace-promoting nation that is determined to preserve its distinct sovereignty". Amen to that!

It is widely assumed that any

nation state must have traditional armed forces. This assumption is false. The kind of organized armed forces that Canada needs should be based on the real needs of the country. There is only one country in the world that is in a position to threaten Canada's sovereignty, and since we are their obedient satellite, they are not going to invade us.

Or, put another way, if Canada

were to be annexed by the United States, the political fallout in the US would be terrific. The present military establishment has just about given up on peace keeping, largely because the Empire does not want peace.

The Harper government wants to cut back on our important and highly efficient Coast Guard icebreakers and build armed naval icebreakers. This, in a word, is stupid. The Coast Guard icebreakers are unencumbered with such useless toys as cannon and depth charges.

Even peacekeeping missions do not need such toys as jet fighters, tanks, heavy artillery and the like. Their only real purpose - aside from our forces working to defend the US Empire rather than defending Canadian sovereignty - is to fatten the coffers of the famous Military Industrial Complex.

It would be possible to design organized forces - they might not have to be armed - to meet Canada's real needs.

Jordan Bishop, Ottawa, ON

Hiroshima and the U.S. "pivot to Asia"

By Darrell Rankin

Hiroshima Day, August 6, is humanity's chance to reflect on the danger of world nuclear war, and to recall what today would be a serious war crime - the obliteration of two cities in Japan by atomic bombs in 1945.

As the U.S. threatens Iran for its alleged intention to develop a nuclear weapon, another danger is the move of 60 per cent of U.S. naval power to the Asia-Pacific region by 2020. This is the "pivot to Asia", announced earlier this year as a result of a major military strategic review.

In atomic diplomacy, it is important to "follow the weapons" to gain a true understanding of the nuclear danger. The pivot signifies the transfer of much of the U.S. nuclear weapons arsenal half way around the world.

Essentially, the U.S. is shifting its military focus from the Middle East to Asia, from oil to people. The shift is seen by some U.S. strategists as "overdue" because of concern over China's emergence as a regional power.

This, of course, is nothing but a canard against China and an excuse to dominate Asia.

The pivot helps position U.S. military forces to attack both China and Russia. But the more important reason is augment U.S. influence and power in the region, especially the all-important U.S. corporate investments in China and other Asian countries, including by force if necessary.

In fact, the long history of U.S. nuclear policy in Asia is one of proliferating nuclear weapons, starting with Hiroshima and continuing with its anti-China nuclear threats during the Korean war. The nuclear arsenals of China, India and Pakistan are puny compared to the U.S. arsenal.

The pivot also needs to be placed in the context of capitalism's deepening global crises. U.S. ruling circles are counting on their war machine to save their overseas investments from revolutionary change. The pivot is a direct threat to an "Asian Spring".

How we see it....

see PIVOT, page 11

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A village about to be demolished - a glimpse into occupation

By Smadar Carmon,
Toronto

The small village of Susiya in the Israeli Occupied Territories is about to be demolished yet again. Most Canadians never even heard about the first, second, third and fourth times. But we should know, because Canada is heavily implicated in these human rights abuses as a result of our unconditional support for Israel.

A few years ago some fellow Israelis introduced me to Susiya and its determined and resolute residents. These Israelis have made it their business to work with and support the Palestinians living in the villages of the South Hebron hills.

The elements are harsh in these hills; the scorching heat envelopes you and all you can see is arid land dotted here and there with patches of green. The only lush areas are next to the illegal but fully water-supplied Israeli settlements; while the Palestinians must import and pay dearly for water arriving by truck. Energy is connected for the Jewish settlements, but Palestinian villages have nothing. Recently, my Israeli friends and the Palestinians came up with a way to get power by installing a few small wind turbines and some solar panels. Now at night the residents can read and even use a refrigerator - quite an achievement in the 21st century!

Susiya was razed in 1985, 1991,

1997, and twice in 2001. An adjacent Jewish West Bank settlement of Susiya was built in 1983. In 1986, the Palestinian Susiya was declared an archaeological site as it sits atop remnants of an early Jewish settlement. Its residents were forced to move onto their farmland, into tents and caves. In 2001, the Israeli army (IDF) and Civil Administration, part of the IDF, violently expelled them, destroying their homes, fields, livestock and water cisterns. This was all under the pretense of responding to the second intifada (Palestinian uprising). Following a campaign and legal battle by Palestinian residents and Israeli leftists, the Israeli High Court of Justice instructed authorities to stop the demolitions. But it did not instruct the Civil Administration to allow the Palestinians to build, giving them no other choice but to reconstruct the village without permits.

Throughout the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza, house demolitions are a constant reality for Palestinians. It is estimated that at least 24,813 houses have been demolished since 1967. The Civil Administration routinely discriminates against them by making it their acquisition of building permits almost impossible. Showing the strength and determination they are so recognized for, Susiya residents boldly erected some tents and



A woman holds documents showing Palestinian ownership of the lands of Susiya as Israeli soldiers block a solidarity demonstration on June 22, 2012. The village is under threat of being completely demolished by the Israeli authorities. (Photo by Oren Ziv, Activestills.org)

hovels, including a school.

In spite of the 2001 High Court ruling disallowing further demolitions and other acts of harassment, Jewish settlers and the IDF subjected Palestinian farmers to ongoing violence and blockades of their land. Finally help came from the organization Rabbis for Human Rights; it, along with the residents, filed a complaint regarding their inability to access their land, and the settlers increasing encroachment on it.

In 2011, something unusual occurred: the military commanding officer declared a

large part of the Palestinian residents' land closed to Israelis; this was an attempt to stop the violence and land encroachment by the settlers. To "remedy" this the settlers used the association Regavim to speed up the demolition orders for Susiya's few meagre structures. Regavim's petition painted a bizarre picture of the two sides. Palestinian residents became "illegal outpost settlers" (despite the fact that they have lived there for centuries), and Jewish settlers emerged as indigenous, oppressed and discriminated-against(!).

Outrageously, throughout the court challenges and the Regavim petition the illegal building of the Jewish Susiya continued. As well, the Civil Administration hurried to fly in the face of Israeli law and demolish as much of the Palestinian Susiya as they could before the High Court intervened. On June 13, 2012 they issued demolition orders for 52 buildings, including a preschool, a clinic and a solar panel system.

Susiya is a microcosm of life for Palestinians living under Israeli occupation. The authorities' obvious discrimination, especially regarding the provision of services, resembles ethnic cleansing. As of today, Palestinians living in the little village of Susiya and elsewhere are under constant threat of demolition, expulsion and forced relocation. It feels like it will never end.

As Canadians we should implore our government to hold Israel to international standards of human rights and not condone their abuses. Let us not leave it to others, such as the current Avaaz petition (www.avaaz.org/en/petition/Save_My_Village/?brfxdab&v=15503), to halt the pending Susiya demolitions. We must demand that our government state that this current state of affairs is unacceptable. We should also demand better coverage from our media so that we may learn what is happening in our name. ●

How about a memorial for secularist martyrs?

By Gurpreet Singh

Not only the political environment of Punjab has heated up since the ruling Akali Dal and Sikh hardliners started raising a demand for a monument in memory of those who died fighting against the Indian army during the controversial Operation Bluestar, it has also stirred a heated debate within the Indian Diaspora in Vancouver.

The army operation was launched in June 1984, to flush out religious militants who had fortified the Golden Temple Complex in Amritsar, the holiest shrine of the Sikhs. The operation left many dead and damaged the shrine, sparking angry protests across the world. The Indian Consulate office in Vancouver was vandalized. The assassination of Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards was followed by anti-Sikh pogroms in different parts of India by goons belonging to Gandhi's Congress party. These ugly events culminated in the Air India bombings in 1985. The terrorist attack was blamed on the Canada-based Sikh separatists.

A campaign in support of the militants who died during Operation Bluestar is gaining momentum both in India and Vancouver. The issue is being hotly debated on Punjabi radio stations these days. Ironically, the Sikh-dominated Akali Dal, which governs Punjab in alliance with the Hindu nationalist Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) supports the idea, whereas the BJP is advocating for a monument in memory of the Indian soldiers who lost their lives fighting against the militants.

Obviously, this has sent conflicting signals to everyone. Although the two parties claim to represent "Hindu-Sikh unity", practically speaking the Akali Dal-BJP combine is trying to please both the Hindu and Sikh fundamentalists, who have been feeding on each other since early 1980s when the hostilities grew, with Sikh militants threatening the Hindu minority in Punjab and Hindu extremists targeting the Sikh



The young Darshan Singh Canadian, gunned down by pro-Khalistan extremists in 1986 at the age of 68.

minority in other provinces of India.

Both the foreign powers, including the Pakistani spy agency ISI, and the opportunist Indian leadership, tried to gain advantage of the situation by resorting to "divide and rule" politics. Not to be left behind, the so-called secularist Congress party tried to give legitimacy to the Sikh fundamentalists to weaken the Akali

Dal, and at the same time tried to capitalize on anti-Sikh sentiments outside Punjab. The Hindus started migrating to other provinces, while Sikhs started migrating to Punjab. This suited the ISI, who want a theocratic Sikh state of Khalistan to be carved out of Punjab. Some believe a part of the ISI game plan is to create a buffer state between India and Pakistan for strategic reasons, to weaken India's position on Kashmir.

In the meantime, those representing civil society in Punjab came up with a much more progressive idea: to bring a dignified closure by building a monument in memory of all Punjabis killed during the bloody conflict for a theocratic Sikh homeland. But the mainstream media in Punjab and the Vancouver-based Punjabi radio stations largely ignored this idea. The debate mainly revolved around angry reactions from the Sikh and Hindu leaders. A polarization of Hindus and Sikhs has once again become visible.

Such a monument would be more acceptable to everyone if raised by the government of the day. Though this seems unrealistic with two theocratic parties in power, it can still be considered to ensure communal harmony and peace. There were many unsung humanists and secularist activists who opposed fundamentalists during the conflict. They tried to avert sectarian violence by offering protection to Hindus from the Sikh extremists, and to innocent Sikhs from the Hindu chauvinists outside Punjab.

Among them were nearly 300 communists killed by the Sikh separatists in Punjab. They

included Darshan Singh Canadian, who spent ten years in Canada and then returned to India to become a towering Communist leader. He was gunned down in 1986 by the pro-Khalistan extremists, who also assassinated Arjan Singh Mastana, whose sister lives in Greater Vancouver.

The communists not only tried to bring back the Hindus who had migrated to other provinces fearing terrorist violence, but also opposed Hindu and Sikh reactionaries alike. Deepak Dhawan, who had visited Hindu refugees outside Punjab to convince them to return, was mercilessly killed by the militants. Avtar Singh Chautala was even forced to raise slogans in support of Khalistan before he was murdered. He chose to die instead, raising revolutionary slogans before being shot.

It is pertinent to mention here that a Communist government in West Bengal state resolutely

protected the Sikhs from the mobs. Some of their slogans were, *Na Hindu Raaj, Na Khalistan, Jug Jug Jive Hindustan!* ("Neither Hindu state nor Khalistan, long live united India"), *Na Hindu Raaj, Na Khalistan, Raaj Karega Mazdoor Kisan!* ("Neither Hindu state, nor Khalistan, only the working class shall rule") and *Hindu Sikh Noon Larhan Nahin Dena, San Santali Banan Nahin Dena!* ("We won't let Hindu Sikh fight to repeat 1947", when India was divided on religious lines, resulting in the creation of Muslim Pakistan.)

Paash, a prominent communist poet, was assassinated by the militants in 1988 for launching Anti 47 Front, through which he opposed all the reactionary forces.

If Punjab needs a memorial, it needs to be dedicated to these true defenders of secularism and people's unity, not the forces inimical to peace and harmony. ●



Share our Future: the CLASSE Manifesto

Especially in English-speaking Canada, the corporate media has consistently presented a warped version of the Coalition large de l'Association pour une solidarité syndicale (CLASSE), the militant section of the Québec student movement. Here is the recent Manifesto issued by CLASSE - read it and judge for yourself!

For months now, all over Quebec, the streets have vibrated to the rhythm of hundreds of thousands of marching feet. What started out as a movement underground, still stiff with the winter consensus, gathered new strength in the spring and flowed freely, energizing students, parents, grandparents, children, and people with and without jobs. The initial student strike grew into a people's struggle, while the problem of tuition fees opened the door to a much deeper malaise - we now face a political problem that truly affects us all. To find its remedy and give substance to our vision, let us cast our minds back to the root of the problem.

The way we see it, direct democracy should be experienced, every moment of every day. Our own voices ought to be heard in assemblies in schools, at work, in our neighbourhoods. Our concept of democracy places the people in permanent charge of politics, and by "the people" we mean those of us at the base of the pyramid - the foundation of political legitimacy. This becomes an opportunity for all those who are never heard. It is a time for women to speak up as equals and to raise issues that are too often ignored or simply forgotten about. The democracy we see does not make promises: it goes into action. Our democracy banishes cynicism, instead of fuelling it. As we have shown many times over, our democracy brings people together. Each time we take to the streets and set up picket lines, it is this kind of democracy that at last breathes free. We are talking about shared, participatory democracy.

Democracy, as viewed by the other side, is tagged as "representative" - and we wonder just what it represents. This brand of "democracy" comes up for air once every four years, for a game of musical chairs. While elections come and go, decisions remain unchanged, serving the same interests: those of leaders who prefer the murmurs of lobbyists to the clanging of pots and pans. Each time the people raises its voice in discontent, on comes the answer: emergency laws, with riot sticks, pepper spray, tear gas. When the elite feels threatened, no principle is sacred, not even those principles they preach: for them, democracy works only when we, the people keep our mouths shut.

Our view is that truly democratic decisions arise from a shared space, where men and women are valued. As equals, in these spaces, women and men can work together to build a society that is dedicated

to the public good.

We now know that equal access to public services is vital to the common good. And access can only be equal if it is free. Free access does more than simply banish prices: it tears down the economic barriers to what we hold most dear. Free access removes the stumbling-blocks to the full flowering of our status as humans. Where there is free access, we

Our strike goes beyond the \$1625 tuition-fee hike. If, by throwing our educational institutions into the marketplace, our most basic rights are being taken from us, we can say the same for hospitals, Hydro-Québec, our forests, and the soil beneath our feet. We share so much more than public services: we share our living spaces, spaces that were here before we were born. We want

concerned, not only for those who will come after us, but also for the people with whom we now share these spaces - we want to think better thoughts: we want to think ahead.

This is the meaning of our vision, and the essence of our strike: it is a shared, collective action whose scope lies well beyond student interests. We are daring to call for a different world, one far removed from the blind submission our present commodity-based system requires. Individuals, nature, our public services, these are being seen as commodities: the same tiny elite is busy selling everything that belongs to us. And yet we know that public services are not useless expenditures, nor are they consumer goods.

Together we have realized that our underground wealth cannot be measured in tons of metal, and that a woman's body is not a selling point. In the same way, education cannot be sold; it ought to be provided to each and every one of us, without regard to our immigration status or our condition. Our aim is for an educational system that is for us, that we will share together.

Because education is a training ground for humanity, and because humanity does not bow to economic competitiveness, we refuse to allow our schools to bend under the weight of well-stocked portfolios. Together, we call for an egalitarian school system that will break down hierarchies, one that will pose a threat to all those men and women who still think they can rule over us with a free hand.

In providing everyone with the resources they need to develop their full capacities, we will succeed in creating a society where decision-making and the ways in which we organize our lives with one another are shared. This is the heart of our vision. Education is not a branch of the economy, nor is it a short-term training service. Our educational system, which is at the root of all knowledge, can allow us to pave the way towards freeing society as a whole; it can provide a liberating education that will lay the foundation for self-

determination.

We believe that if our educational system is to be seen as a space where universal knowledge is shared, it must banish all forms of gender-based discrimination and domination. And yet a woman in the current educational system walks a path just as difficult as the one she walks in today's society. It is futile to believe that unequal status is no longer reproduced in the halls of academe: we are disgusted to see that the professions traditionally associated with women are still undervalued, and that it is still mostly women who study for these professions. We women are numerous in Bachelor's-level classrooms, but how many of us climb to the highest rungs of the academic ladder?

We are against prolonging this discrimination against women as well as against people who are in any way shunted aside by society. Our aim is to make our educational system well and truly a space where equality reigns and differences are respected. Our fervent wish is for an educational system that allows each and every one of us to blossom.

In choosing to strike, we have chosen to fight for these ideas. We have chosen to create a power relationship, the only mechanism that will allow us to tip the scales. Sharing this responsibility together, we can accomplish a great deal: but in order to do this we have to speak up, and speak up forcefully.

History has shown us eloquently that if we do choose hope, solidarity and equality, we must not beg for them: we must take them. This is what we mean by combative syndicalism. Now, at a time when new democratic spaces are springing up all around us, we must make use of these to create a new world. Now is no time for mere declarations of intent: we must act. In calling for a social strike today, we will be marching alongside you, people of Quebec, in the street tomorrow. In calling for a social strike today, we hope that tomorrow, we will be marching, together, alongside the whole of Quebec society.

Together, we can rebuild. Share our future. ●



CLASSE banner at one of the huge rallies in Montreal (photo: M. Breton Fontaine)

share payment for shared services.

By contrast, the concept of price determination - the so-called "fair share" - is in truth no more than veiled discrimination. Under the supposedly consensual "user-pay" principle, a surtax is in fact charged to people whose needs are already at the bottom of the heap. Where is justice, when a hospital can charge the exact same fee from a lawyer as from a bag clerk? For the lawyer, the amount is minimal; for the bag clerk, it is a back-breaking burden.

This burden is one that we all shoulder, each and every one of us, whether we are students or not: this is one lesson our strike has taught us. For we, students, are also renters and employees; we are international students, pushed aside by discriminating public services. We come from many backgrounds, and, until the colour of our skin goes as unnoticed as our eye colour, we will keep on facing everyday racism, contempt and ignorance. We are women, and if we are feminists it is because we face daily sexism and roadblocks set for us by the patriarchal system; we constantly fight deep-rooted prejudice. We are gay, straight, bisexual, and proud to be. We have never been a separate level of society. Our strike is not directed against the people. We are the people.

them to survive us.

Yet a handful of greedy persons, answering to no one, is hard at work devastating these spaces - and they are getting away with it, with projects such as Plan Nord, shale gas, and more. For these few, who view the future in terms of the next quarter's profit, nature has value only when measured in economic spin-offs. Blind to the beauty of the common good, this clique is avid and unpredictable, with eyes only for its faraway stockholders. It caters to those stockholders' whims in colonial style, with no consultation. The primary victims of this wholesale sell-off are Native women, far from the media, poor and easily ignored.

Fortunately, though our Native peoples are displaced each and every time wealth is found under or on their land, they have kept up the fight. Some of these ruthless exploitation projects have been put on ice due to the women and men who have dared to defy them. These men and women have stood their ground against this plunder of resources, despite dire warnings that our economic survival depends on the speedy exploitation of our underground wealth, whatever the price.

Together, each and every one of us will be affected by the waste of our resources, because we are

Annual People's Voice Walk-A-Thon

**Bear Creek Park, Surrey, BC
Sunday, August 12**

Meet at the picnic area near the 140 St. parking lot, just south of 88 Ave.



11 am - Walk around beautiful Bear Creek Park
12 noon - Enjoy an international potluck lunch
1 pm - Relax and watch our speakers and performers

"Reach out and build the movement!"

We cannot see the Quebec student strike in a glass jar or, as we say in French *dans une bouteille de verre*.

But if you just look at the corporate media, you could think that we are a bunch of spoiled students who do not want to pay even \$1600 for our education - despite the fact that Quebec students pay less than in the rest of the country.

The front-page headline from *McLeans* magazine on June 4th presents that wrong understanding of the student strike very well: "How a group of entitled students went to war and shut down a province, over \$325."

The truth is that the student strike has arisen in a very inflamed social and political moment. We are at the crossroads of many struggles right now across Canada. Consider the Harper Conservative Budget, the Omnibus Bill C-38. All these attacks together are what is being called austerity.

We are told there is an economic crisis and we cannot afford social programmes that the people won, after struggle, in the past. We are told the state does not have any more money.

This is exactly the message of the Quebec Bachand Budget, named after the finance minister who himself called it a radical change. And it is also what people are hearing in Greece, Spain, Britain, and elsewhere.

But the economic crisis was not created by social programmes, or by the people.

To note one statistic, from the Montreal-based IRIS research group, in the last 40 years, Quebec corporations doubled their profits but paid four times less taxes.

Deeper than that there is a systemic problem. We need to openly state that this is an economic crisis of the capitalist system. We need to find an alternative!

The struggle of students is not just a question of having accessible education.

A few months ago, I interviewed Camilo Balesteros from the CONFECH, the Students Federation of Chile, where 300,000 gathered in the streets of Santiago, fighting directly for free education, and against one of the worst funded education systems in the world - even high school is not free.

Camilo explained that their struggle could not be reduced to the demand of free education. It could not finish there, and just let the government determine how to make free education happen.

So they struggled to change the Constitution to put the right of education into that document. They also called for nationalization of natural resources, to have the wealth to pay for free education.

The Chilean students said the means that are needed to achieve accessible education are also the means to achieve the demands of other popular struggles.

Consequently, the student struggle is directly confronting the austerity measures and the social vision that austerity

represents!

Internationally, young people have shown great courage and risen up, redoubling efforts to set aside their differences and fight together for a better world, often in more difficult situations than ours.

The rapid increase in involvement by the people *en masse* in politics - beyond elections every few years - has scared the ruling class.

During July, three prominent Quebec student activists toured southern Ontario, speaking at public forums about the historic student mobilizations in Quebec. For details, visit <http://rebelyouth-magazine.blogspot.ca>. We reprint here excerpts of the comments at these forums by one of the speakers, Marianne Breton Fontaine.

Take this statement from the president of the Employers Association in Quebec: "Eventual elections will provide citizens with the opportunity to have their say in regard to the current debate and to decide the responsibilities of everyone involved. That is how democratic societies solve their conflicts and make their decisions - at the polls instead of in the streets."

Stop mobilizing and just wait for the next election. This statement is completely anti-democratic!

In fact, in order to make gains, including at the polls, we have to go to the streets.

The anti-democratic Bill 78 was put together to discourage any kind of mobilisation, whatever it is the students, or other organised groups like labour that would like to protest in solidarity.

Bill 78 shows the fear of big business and the reactionary political parties, faced with a population defending its own social interests, because our struggle has opened the question of social transformation. So the student strike is also a fight for democracy.

To stop this amazing mobilisation, the Charest Liberals have tried to ignore the situation, hoping the movement will fall apart; to intimidate, through legal injunctions, police violence and repression, and now Bill 78; and to divide the student movement.

To their credit, the two other student Federations have refused

to negotiate without the CLASSE.

The Charest Liberal government, and its allies, have also tried to win the battle of ideas and convince the students and the rest of the population, by saying that a diploma is a personal investment. According to this neo-liberal logic, by paying more, the students simply invest in themselves. In other words, a student becomes a product, and

education becomes a commodity, a privilege. Instead of social solidarity, we have the atomisation of society. Can knowledge be a commodity? Knowledge is perhaps the only thing - together with love - that grows when it is shared. The social tool for transmission of knowledge cannot be reduced to an individual investment.

In fact, there are two ways of viewing education. The corporations need a functional worker with a certain amount of training. The people want education as a right.

Our public education system has developed out of this contradiction. Some people say education is good for the economy. I would ask: whose economy?

Let me illustrate this point with some examples. In 1966 the Parent Report fundamentally changed education in Quebec. For over a century the Québécoise people had been second-class citizens in their own land. We had higher unemployment, we lived in poorer conditions, we had poorer quality health care and higher rates of disease than the rest of Canada.

The majority of Quebecers did not know how to read or write. Except for some programmes in law and theology, we could not learn in French. Education was dominated by the Church, women were not allowed in the vast majority of colleges, and there were few science and technical programmes.

But as the economy developed, people began to demand a better life. The Quiet Revolution exploded in Quebec society. At the core was the question of being "masters of our own house" and French-language education.

An official commission was established and the resulting "Parent Report" secularized education and created the CEGEP system, which is distinct from the rest of Canada, merging college with the last years of high school. The Parent Report expressed diverging class interests at the same time. Business needed a more highly trained workforce.

The people needed to get out of the Dark Ages maintained by the ultra-right Duplessis government of the 1930s and 40s. The Parent report proposed free education as an ultimate goal, to be achieved by freezing tuition fees and reducing them when possible. The idea was to have the most accessible education system. Quebec is today totally different. And our education system played a big role in our emancipation.

Free education would require less than 1% of Quebec's budget and could be obtained by restoring the capital gains tax. But the corporations do not want to pay the bill for education. You can see this also with the report that just came out from the McGuinty Liberal government, proposing three-year degrees. Are students over-educated? Maybe even with "unnecessary" degrees like philosophy or women's studies? Or do they have

sufficient training to be employees - and the employers, through taxes, will not pay for more? I am reminded of another extreme example. About a year and a half ago, I attended a conference in South Africa and met with leaders of the National Union of South African Students, which was an illegal organization under the apartheid system. They told us that quality education was forbidden to the majority black population, and particularly for women. For them, access to education could not be separated from their struggle for emancipation. Education is freedom.

I personally think we have a lot to learn from the students of Cuba, who have won free education. There is an alternative direction, even for poor countries. Millions of people in Canada share our sentiment that education is a social good, it should be accessible, and it should be a right. A survey by the Canadian Federation of Students showed that 83% of Canadians are for a freeze, and 37% for a reduction of fees. Your support and your red squares are very important for us. We will continue to need your support - and your fightback. Two lessons from the Quebec struggle might be important for you. In Quebec the students have learnt a hard lesson in the power of unity. Over the past forty years,

students have collectively marched out classes eight times in a general strike. While not all students hit the streets, so many acted together that, despite fear mongering by university administrations, they were not academically penalized. All but one mobilization forced the government to back down.

But the one mobilization that did fail, in 1988, fractured the movement, killing the l'Association nationale des Etudiantes et des Etudiants du Québec (ANEEQ).

The lines of communication between the Quebec student movement and the Canadian student movement were also broken, a unity based on equality and the recognition that the Quebec people were a nation, not just residents of another province, but that we had a common struggle.

We are rebuilding that solidarity now, twenty years later, and this tour is one step.

Unity does not mean to adopt the lowest position to reach consensus, but to recognize our real opponents, to politically convince our potential allies, going beyond the campus. It means getting out of an economic discourse with demands that only speak to individual students.

By addressing the question of how to achieve free education, or even the freeze, we can reach out to other people's demands and struggles, and grow the movement. Even where the student leadership is reactionary, like the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations, students on campuses can move into action if they can connect with the mobilization.

Perhaps the biggest lesson of Quebec is to have a plan of escalating action. The strike is the most powerful moral weapon the students have. But to get there, one day of action should be followed by another, then by an occupation, and a week of local action, a one day strike, etc.

It is militancy that won our current level of accessibility, not charity from the government. Victory through struggle is possible.

The Quebec Student Strike is not over \$325, or \$1600. It is not about numbers. It is about what kind of future we have. Ignorance, debt and more poverty? Or a bold, different direction that says education is a social right? ●

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"Casserole" rallies in solidarity with the Quebec student struggle continue across Canada this summer.



Marianne Breton Fontaine is a former executive member of the student union at *Cégep du Vieux Montréal* and is currently studying at UQAM. Editor of *Jeunesse Militante* magazine and a correspondent for *Vancouver's Co-op Radio* morning news show, she has written about the student struggle from a feminist and class perspective in the context of the global economic crisis. Marianne is also a candidate for *Quebec Solidaire*, a left-wing party in the National Assembly which calls for free education.



GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE

Riot cops arrest Greek steelworkers

In the early morning of July 20, riot police forces, under the instructions of the three-party Greek government (New Democracy, PASOK, DHMAR) attempted to break the struggle of steelworkers, who have been on strike for nine months, by arresting the strikers on their picket line.

The executive of PAME, the All-Workers Militant Front of Greece, responded by calling the on workers and trade unions of the area to go immediately to the Halivourgia factory. In a short time, hundreds of workers from all over Athens gathered at the gates to support the strikers.

The board of the steelworkers' trade union met immediately to call for a rally at the factory the following day. A general assembly of steel industry workers will be held to decide how to respond to this new attack.

PAME urged all trade unions and workers to condemn the anti-labour practices of the Greek government, which responds with violence and suppression to the demands of the workers. The struggle of the steelworkers against wage cuts and lay offs is struggle of all workers, said PAME.

The struggle at the "Hellenic Halivourgia" (Greek Coal/Steel industry) plant at Aspropyrgos, a suburb of Athens, started last year. In October 2011, the bosses at the largest steel producer in Greece decided to slash costs in an effort to counter losses generated by the economic crisis. Taking advantage of anti-labour laws passed under the EU-IMF bailout agreement, the employer announced drastic cuts in wages, the layoffs of 36 workers, and plans to fire 180 from a total of around 400 workers. The action provoked a strike by the steelworkers union, supported by PAME.

The Greek steelworkers union notes that production at the plant increased from 194,600 tonnes in 2009 to 231,000 in 2010, and over 266,000 tonnes in 2011. These figures make it clear that the motives behind the layoffs and pay cuts is the maximization of profit - the essence of the capitalist system's function.

Thugs raid Iraqi union offices

On July 17, a group of thugs stormed the General Federation of Iraqi Workers (GFIW) Head Office in Baghdad, attacking and assaulting trade union activists and leaders of the GFIW. They smashed doors of the offices of three unions: Construction Workers, Mechanics and Printers, seizing the records and belongings of unions and forcibly removing trade union activists and staff from the building with a barrage of physical threats and abuses.

This latest attack is a continuation of violations committed by these thugs. A few days earlier, they illegally shut the GFIW headquarters, barring union members from access to their offices. The GFIW has condemned "these sinister proxy thugs and their masters, who are

seeking to impose their control and dominate the GFIW and its unions." Demanding an end to intimidation, the GFIW says it will use all legal means to bring the thugs to justice, and calls on the government and its agencies to intervene to put an end to these attacks.

New textile strikes in Mahalla

More than 23,000 workers angered by low wages at Egypt's



biggest textile company staged a strike on July 15, bringing production to a halt. The strike was followed by a rotating sit-in with shifts of 3,000 to 5,000 workers occupying the compound at a time.

The factory of state-owned Misr Spinning and Weaving, in the Nile Delta city of Mahalla, was the site of protests in 2008 that sparked a wave of strikes across the country, widely regarded as a catalyst for the revolt that ended the rule of Hosni Mubarak last year. The latest strike is a test for newly elected Islamist president Mohamed Mursi as he strives to form a cabinet to replace the army-backed administration.

Many Egyptian workers, emboldened by the uprising which ousted Mubarak, have gone on strike demanding better wages and conditions. Most of the strikes have died down, but sporadic outbursts continue.

The strikers are asking for a rise in their basic wages and bonuses, a purge of corrupt officials, and improvement of conditions at the firm's hospital.

"I am calling on President Mohamed Mursi to pay attention to the workers who elected him," said Wedad El-Demerdash, an employee and a labour activist, adding that the sit-in would continue until the workers' demands were met.

Similar, though smaller, protests have been staged in front of the presidential palace in Cairo since Mursi's election in June. Many of the protests are related to problems of unemployment and low wages.

Swazi cops attack peaceful demo

Police attacked a peaceful demonstration organized by the National Public Service and Allied Workers' Union, the Swaziland Transport and Allied Workers' Union and the Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT) on July 11.

While about 500 union members were peacefully gathering in Coronation Park in Mbabane, the police started to disperse the crowd using batons, tear gas canisters and rubber bullets. Eight people were shot, five were seriously beaten up, and twelve workers had to be hospitalised. The President of NAPSAWU, Quinton Dlamini, was arrested as he tried to join the striking SNAT teachers. All three unions are affiliated to the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA); their main demand was a 4.5% salary adjustment.

Although peaceful demonstrations are often met with police violence in Swaziland, the authorities appear to be proceeding in an ever more drastic way. The events on July 11 took place against the background of the banning of TUCOSWA after its de-registration on the basis of fickle legal arguments. A complaint has been filed with the International Labour Organization's Committee of Freedom of Association by the ITUC.

3,000 auto workers detained after riot

Indian police detained and questioned 3,000 workers at carmaker Maruti Suzuki's Manesar factory after a riot on July 18. The factory is located in the state of Haryana.

The company said staff rioted following a disciplinary incident in which a worker attacked a supervisor. But the Maruti Suzuki Workers Union said that the supervisor had "abused" and made "casteist comments" against a low-caste worker. Instead of taking action against the supervisor, bosses suspended the worker, the union said.

The union denied responsibility for the violence, saying that bosses had sent in hundreds of "bouncers" to attack the workers with "sharp weapons and arms" and set fire to part of the factory.

A body found charred nearly beyond recognition in a conference room was identified the next day as human resources manager Avnish Kumar Dev. The company says that 40 managers and executives had to be taken to hospital, and a portion of the factory's assembly line was burnt out.

The violence came just nine months after the end of bitter strikes at the factory that cost millions in lost production. The factory is now shuttered and a spokesperson wouldn't say when it would reopen. Haryana state officials may insist it stay shut for quite a while.

Spanish protests hit new austerity

Hundreds of thousands of angry Spaniards protested in 80 cities across Spain on the night of July 19 and into the next morning against the government's latest austerity measures. Protesters flooded Madrid's Puerta del Sol square and the streets in front of parliament long into the night, facing riot police at barricades.

Early the next morning, police fired rubber bullets and charged protesters in central Madrid in an

attempt to disperse them. Fifteen people were arrested and 39 hurt.

Large crowds also gathered in Barcelona and Bilbao. El Pais estimated that more than 100,000 had attended the rally in the capital alone.

Marchers in Madrid carried Spanish flags bearing black bows for mourning and banners saying: "No to the cuts" and "You have ruined us."

The country's parliament has just passed its latest round of harsh austerity measures. The ruling conservative Popular Party used its majority in Parliament to push through the measures, which include a rise in VAT and a wage cut for civil servants.

The government also published details of the loan of 100 billion euros from the eurozone countries to shore up its crisis-hit banks. The Economy Ministry said that the cash will be offered until December 2013 at a variable interest rate.

The latest round of spending cuts and tax increases will lop 65 billion euros off the government's budgets by 2015.

Eurozone countries have told the Spanish government that it must reduce its budget deficit to under 3 per cent of gross domestic product by 2014, despite one in four people being out of work.

Treasury Minister Cristobal Montoro parroted the EU mantra in parliament, insisting that Spain simply cannot go deeper into debt. "Financing public services with more deficit and more debt will doom us," he told MPs.

But Socialist opposition leader Alfredo Perez Rubalcaba accused the government of acting as a puppet to Brussels with too much cutting back at a time when so many people in Spain are out of work.

U.S. pensions underfunded

The *New York Times* reports that after years of poor investment returns, the pension funds of the largest companies are further behind than ever. The companies in the Standard & Poor's 500 collectively reported that at the end of their most recent fiscal years, their pension plans had obligations of \$1.68 trillion and assets of just \$1.32 trillion. The difference of \$355 billion was the largest ever, S. & P. said.

Of the 500 companies, 338 have defined-benefit pension plans, and only 18 are fully funded. Seven companies reported that their plans were underfunded by more than \$10 billion, with the largest negative figure, \$21.6 billion, reported by General Electric. The other companies with more than \$10 billion in underfunding were AT&T, Boeing, Exxon Mobil, Ford Motor, IBM and Lockheed Martin. JPMorgan Chase had the largest amount of overfunding, \$1.6 billion.

The main cause of the underfunding at many companies reflects the fact that investment markets have not performed well for a sustained period. The stock market's poor performance, says the Times, has convinced some companies that they no longer want to take the risk of guaranteeing pension payments.

Many have closed their pension plans to newer employees and stopped accruing benefits for workers already in them. Instead, they have pushed employees into defined-contribution plans, in which the worker, not the employer, bears the risk of poor investment performance.

Many items in our "Global Class Struggle" column are from the Labour Start website, www.labourstart.org

Send me information on the Communist Party of Canada



The Communist Party of Canada, formed in 1921, has a proud history of fighting for jobs, equality, peace, Canadian independence, and socialism. The CPC does much more than run candidates in elections. We think the fight against big business and its parties is a year-round job, so our members are active across the country, to build our party and to help strengthen people's movements on a wide range of issues. All our policies and leadership are set democratically by our members. To find out more about Canada's party of socialism, contact the nearest CPC office.

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Media minefields and the fog of war

By Felicity Arbuthnot,
Morning Star (UK)

As the sabre-rattling towards Iran and the ongoing tragedy in Syria become increasingly hard to unravel, media errors and obfuscation create their own navigational complexities.

On July 1, BBC news programmes repeatedly stated that Syrian troops had fired at mourners at a funeral in or near Damascus: "Meanwhile, activists said a funeral procession in a suburb of Damascus came under mortar attack and 30 people died. The British-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights released amateur video footage claiming to show the explosion in Zamalka, a town six miles east of the Syrian capital. There has been no independent confirmation of the incident."

However the *Los Angeles Times* had an entirely different take - a car bomb, not Syrian troops, had killed up to 85 mourners or members of the public. "The car bomb went off as the procession passed a mosque. Hazy video, clouded by dust in the first moments after the explosion, showed dozens of mangled bodies lying on the road and the stretcher carrying Halabi's body on the ground nearby. "I can't describe my feelings, because I am still numb right now given what I saw today," said Abu Omar, whose cousin was killed and father and uncle injured. "No-one can withstand what we saw."

While clearly in shock and not

citing facts, the witness also blamed the government. But at least he had a name, there was a first-hand description of events and the graphic picture shows this was no random shooting.

The BBC seems to rely almost entirely on unnamed "activists say" sources - or the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, allegedly a one-man satellite dish fitter from Coventry in the West Midlands.

Given the shocking recent picture of victims of a "massacre in Syria" shown by the BBC (presumably from their own archives) which turned out to be a massacre where responsibility lay far closer to home, one resulting from the illegal US-Britain invasion of Iraq in 2003, the BBC's scorecard for accurate reporting surely currently reads "must do better."

These are just two incidents of



"One of my pictures was used by the BBC web site claiming that those were the bodies of yesterday's massacre in Syria... Instead the picture was taken by me in Iraq..." - Marco Di Lauro, <http://www.marcodilauro.com/>

many which leave an impression of leading and biased coverage. The impression is often of the BBC more as cheerleader for a new invasion rather than an impartial news-gathering organisation.

Many scholarly articles have been written comparing the complexities in Syria with the Balkans conflict of the 1990s, including foreign interference and funding and media bias.

After the NATO assault on the Balkans, Mark Laity, the BBC's defence correspondent of 11 years who had covered the conflict, joined NATO at its Brussels headquarters as deputy to its chief spokesperson Jamie Shea. Laity rose to become chief of strategic communications at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers in Europe which commands all NATO military operations.

The BBC receives a large amount of funding from the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, supposedly the diplomatic arm of the government whose foreign secretaries, comprised of all political persuasions, have long favoured "war, war," over "jaw, jaw," to misquote another warmonger.

British Foreign Secretary William Hague has missed no opportunity to join US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in declaring that the sovereign government of President Assad of Syria "must go," and indeed advocating Britain's funding of the insurgents.

While the Foreign Office funds go to the BBC World Service, that arm of the organisation clearly and understandably plays a vital role: "Constitutionally, BBC World Service forms an integral part of the BBC Global News Division which also contains BBC World and the BBC's international-facing online news services."

It is interesting to note that the BBC also applied for funding from the US State Department in a deal to combat censorship: "The funding is also expected to be used to educate people in countries with state censorship in how to circumnavigate the blocking of

internet and TV services. Governments who have an interest in denying people information, particularly at times of tension and upheaval, are keen to do this and it is a particular problem now," said BBC controller of business and strategy Jim Egan.

The deal was expected to be formally announced on International Press Freedom Day on May 3. But it seems the funding of the British state broadcaster met with some hostility in the US and the arrangement seems to have foundered. It has certainly gone very quiet.

On June 30, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov's criticisms from the Geneva summit about the Western media's news coverage of the situation in Syria allegedly led the BBC to interrupt his speech with a weather forecast.

"Lavrov's press conference at the Geneva meeting on June 30 provided another chance for the BBC to show its bias against the Syrian government," stated Press TV, the media outlet of one of the countries the State Department funding was meant to "liberate" from censorship - Iran.

Certainly the BBC's mission statement - "creativity is the lifeblood of our organisation" - could be taken in more ways than one. ●

Georgetti urges Obama to release Cuban 5

The following letter has been sent to U.S. President Barack Obama, from Ken Georgetti, President of the Canadian Labour Congress.

Dear President Obama,

On behalf of 3.3 million members of the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), I am writing to protest the continued imprisonment of the Cuban 5 and to ask you to intervene so as to procure their release from prison and be allowed to return to their families in Cuba.

Gerardo Hernandez, Antonio Guerrero, Ramon Labanino, Fernando Gonzalez, and René Gonzalez have been imprisoned since 1998. René Gonzalez was released from prison last October but must carry out three years supervised probation in Miami. He was recently denied permission on humanitarian grounds to return to his country for at least two weeks to see his dying brother, Roberto.

These men were charged with multiple offences including conspiracy to commit espionage. In truth, they were in the United States unarmed and never posed a threat of any kind to U.S. national security. They were in the United States to monitor the activities of Cuban exiles who, operating from bases in Miami, were planning violent actions against innocent people in Cuba. In fact they were trying to prevent more brutal acts against their country and save innocent lives.

The continued incarceration of these Cuban patriots is morally indefensible. I urge you to exercise the power of your office and grant a pardon to the Cuban Five, allowing them to return to their families in Cuba.



The Fifth of the Month to Free the Five

Join in the worldwide action to Free the Cuban Five on the 5th day of each month! Write to President Obama and demand that he Free the Cuban Five:

E-mail: president@whitehouse.gov
On the web: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact>
Phone 1-202-456-1111
Fax 1-202-456-2461

Telegram: President Barack Obama, The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington, DC 2500, USA

For more information, see <http://thecuban5.org> or www.canadiannetworkoncuba.ca

Mass arrests in Sudan

In mid-June, mass protests erupted in Sudan against the regime of President Omar al-Bashir. The government's response has been an escalation of repression, including an estimated 3000 arrests. The following statement was issued in early July by the Sudanese Communist Party (SCP).

On July 4th, the major opposition political parties which include the Umma Party and the SCP, signed the political document entitled the "Democratic Alternative". The signing took place on the twentieth day of continuous mass demonstrations against the al-Bashir regime. These peaceful demonstrations, which engulfed the main cities and towns of the country, are being met with cruel repressive measures, widespread detention, torture, denial of medical treatment and beatings. Despite all this the demonstrators continue to fill the streets....

Members of the Journalist

Democratic Network demonstrated in their hundreds in front of the UN human rights building, demanding an end to security harassment, respect of freedom of expression, and release of detained journalists. The security forces have released two female Egyptian journalists and deported them back to Egypt.

Lawyers, in their hundreds, have picketed the Ministry of Justice demanding respect of the constitution, fair trials for the demonstrators, more humane conditions for those arrested, including the right to see doctors and defence lawyers, and release of all political prisoners and detainees.

The demonstrations, which started as protests against rising prices and austerity measures, are gradually taking a different shape. New forces are joining the protest movement and more political demands are coming to the fore. The overthrow of the regime is the main demand of the people.

The "Democratic Alternative" document calls for a transitional

period during which the country is ruled under a special Constitutional Declaration, beginning with the establishment of a national unity government and finishing with fair, free and honest elections. Furthermore the document calls for the separation of religion from the state, and prohibits the exploitation of religion for political purposes... The document defines the tactics to overthrow the regime through strikes, peaceful demonstrations, occupation, civil disobedience and popular revolution.

The different political forces have agreed to continue the struggle until final victory, stressing that there is no way for talks with the regime.

The main challenge now is to transform the document into a people's manifesto that can help to bring all opposition forces together in the final push against the regime. The Sudanese Communist Party stresses that adherence to the document by those who have signed, and support by other forces who are waging fierce struggles in Darfur, Southern Kordufan and the Blue Nile, as well as international solidarity, will all pave the way for an end to the present regime, the sufferings of our people and the establishment of a democratic Sudan.

Long live International Solidarity! Victory for the Sudanese people!

Secretariat of the CC of the SCP ●



Here are a few of the hundreds arrested by the Sudanese regime (from left): Amira Osman, Sudanese Communist Party member, arrested June 22, at her home in the Riyadh neighbourhood of Khartoum; Mohammed Abdullah Aldumh, lawyer and member of the National Umma Party, arrested July 1 in Khartoum; Anwar Awad al-Samani, journalist, arrested June 29, in Omdurman; Mohamed Salah Abdul Rahman, 5th year science student, University of Khartoum, arrested June 24, subjected to brutal torture.

Folk festival season: a look at Mariposa

By Wally Brooker

It is mid-way through the summer, and some of the season's largest folk festivals have taken place (Calgary, Vancouver, Winnipeg, Mariposa), but there is still time to partake if you enjoy the outdoor ambience of these largely non-profit and volunteer-driven cultural events.

According to organizers, 30,000 people attended the Mariposa Folk Festival in Orillia over the July 6-8 weekend. It is one of the oldest folk festivals, having begun in 1961 in this small town north of Toronto. In 1964 local residents drove the festival out after "disturbances" by crowds of young people. What followed was decades of Mariposa festivals in and around Toronto until 2000 when it moved back to Orillia.

The Mariposa Folk Festival is now very much an Orillia event. The town's early resentment is a distant memory if the enthusiastic participation of local community organizations is any indication. It's probably a safe bet that most of the 600 volunteers come from the Orillia area.

Like most arts organizations, folk festivals cannot survive on ticket sales alone. Before the era of arts cutbacks began, the portion of funding from government and arm's-length cultural agencies was higher than today. A glance at sponsors indicates that government and cultural agencies are still important funders, but also that private sponsorship has grown. Many sponsors are local small businesses, but there are also large corporations getting in on the act.

Keeping ticket prices affordable should be a key goal of any festival that celebrates grassroots culture and people's music. Mariposa this year charged \$155 for a single adult three-day pass (including camping). This is comparable to similar festivals across the country. It's not cheap and certainly not for the poor, but what else can organizers do? They're non-profit charities, and they need revenue to pay performers and meet all the other expenses.

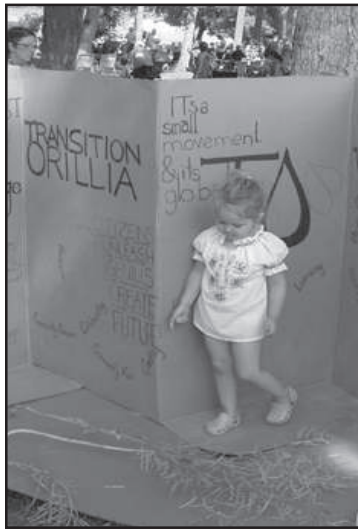
While it continues to present big evening stage concerts with headline artists, Mariposa has remained true to its commitment to music workshops, storytelling and poetry, traditional dance, arts and crafts, children's activities, and participatory events. We happened upon a harmonizing



The "musical petting zoo" at Mariposa (photos by Sara Barker)

sing-along that included a rousing version of Stan Rogers' "Mary-ellen Carter," a ukulele workshop that proceeded from instrument-building to an exciting first lesson, and a hands-on, all-ages interactive tent full of musical instruments called a "Musical Petting Zoo."

The general mood was typically



Sarah Calvert at one of the displays at Mariposa.

laid-back. Strolling from stage to stage, one might well forget that tremendous economic, political and social struggles are going on in the world. However, there were moments when artists alluded to these struggles and the sympathy of festivalgoers to their comments was apparent.

One such moment occurred on Sunday evening when acclaimed singer-songwriter James Keelaghan took aim at the banks with "A House of Cards," his song about the 2008 financial meltdown. Keelaghan hit home when he sang "we bought that dream and we sold it on/but it ain't worth nothin' now

the money's gone/and the only shelter that credit buys/is a house of cards and a pack of lies."

Another headliner, UK punk-folk activist Billy Bragg, dedicated his set to Woody Guthrie, (see "Music Notes" on this page). When he called for the defeat of Stephen Harper, the cancellation of the international debt, and declared himself a socialist, the enthusiastic response of the crowd suggested that artistic directors of Canadian folk festivals might well dare to book more politically engaged artists next year.

Canadian folk festivals deserve credit for their pioneering role in promoting green and sustainable alternatives. This year's Mariposa continued the tradition, banning plastic water bottles, and instead offering a free water refill station. Food plates, cups and utensils were compostable. A good part of the festival was powered by solar energy.

One aspect of the festival that could be improved is the representation of the contemporary Canadian mosaic. It seems to me that this Mariposa Folk Festival presented a less diverse array of performers from non-European cultures than in previous decades. Reversing this trend would certainly enrich the festival experience for both performers and the public. When considering next year's performers, Mariposa's artistic directors might start by looking at nominees in the world music categories of the Canadian Folk Music Awards.

Despite this complaint, the Mariposa Folk Festival, in my opinion, is a grassroots democratic cultural institution worthy of the support of progressive-minded people. Like its sister festivals, it brings folk artists from diverse regions, disciplines and backgrounds together, fosters creative exchanges, and becomes an example of how a co-operative society might work.

Summer folk festivals continue with the Filberg Folk Festival (Comox, BC Aug 4-6), the Canmore Folk Festival (Canmore, AB Aug 4-6), the Edmonton Folk Festival (Aug 9-12), the Red Rock Festival (Thunder Bay, ON Aug. 10-12), Summerfolk (Owen Sound, ON Aug 17-19), and the Shelter Valley Folk Festival (Eastern ON Aug 31-Sept 2). Check out Penguin Eggs magazine for a complete list: www.penguineggs.ab.ca/friends.php •



One of the "harmonizing voices" workshops.



MUSIC NOTES

By Wally Brooker

Happy Birthday Woody Guthrie!

Back in 1998 American singer-songwriter Steve Earle recorded a song called "Christmas in Washington." It had a heartfelt refrain: "Come back Woody Guthrie." Maybe Woody Guthrie, who died in 1967, never really left us, but certainly this year the great American balladeer's spirit has been omnipresent. Woody's centennial has been celebrated across North America and beyond, culminating with birthday festivities last month in Coney Island, a free Guthrie family picnic in Central Park, and a festival in his hometown of Okemah, Oklahoma. Virtually every folk festival this summer will have paid tribute in one way or another to the composer of "This Land is Your Land," whose words and lyrics gave voice to the struggles of the American working class and outlined a vision of a people's culture. In these times of crisis the relevancy of Woody Guthrie is greater than ever. Two excellent tributes were broadcast last month by Democracy Now, one with Guthrie biographer Will Kaufman, Pete Seeger and Billy Bragg (July 4) and the other with Steve Earle, Guthrie's daughter Nora and granddaughter Anna Canoni (July 12). View them at www.democracynow.org. For more info visit www.woody100.com.

David Rovics in Canada this fall

A latter-day Woody Guthrie, singer-songwriter David Rovics, will be visiting Canadian cities this fall. His hard-hitting and insightful songs about war, globalization and social justice have been inspiring activists across North America and Western Europe for two decades. Rovics has confirmed dates in Montreal (Oct. 12), Ottawa (Oct. 13), Toronto (Oct. 15) and London (Oct. 16). November dates are also in the works for Winnipeg, Vancouver and Victoria. More details will be published in a forthcoming column, but for now it is known that the focus will be on solidarity with Palestine, and at least two concerts will be benefits for the Gaza Ark project (<http://gazaark.org/>). Sponsors for all or part of the tour include the Canadian Boat to Gaza Committee, Independent Jewish Voices, Palestinian and Jewish Unity, the Rosa Luxembourg Club (CPC), the United Jewish People's Order and the Young Communist League. For updates write to this column at saxawoogie@yahoo.com.

New York musicians against fracking

Singers Natalie Merchant and Joan Osborne, popular jazz trio Medeski, Martin and Wood, and actor Mark Ruffalo joined environmental activists and scientists at a May 15 rally and teach-in against hydraulic fracturing ("fracking") in Albany, the state capital of New York. Fracking is a technique of extracting natural gas from deep within the earth by injecting water and chemicals underground. News leaks have revealed that Governor Andrew Cuomo plans to lift a moratorium on the dangerous practice and allow gas companies to operate in five impoverished counties near the Pennsylvania border. "It's a Pandora's Box we don't want to open," said Merchant, former lead singer of the popular band 10,000 Maniacs, who contacted Oscar-winning documentary director Alex Gibney to film the rally. Check out the video at <http://video.nytimes.com>. For info on fracking visit the Council of Canadians at <http://canadians.org>.

Artists & intellectuals vs Bill 78

Sébastien Ricard (a.k.a. "Batlam") of popular Quebec band Loco Locass joined folksinger-filmmaker Richard Desjardins, singer-composer Richard Séguin and 50 other artists, intellectuals and trade unionists on a June 21 march from Université du Québec a Montréal to the office of Premier Jean Charest, where they presented a letter signed by 1200 of their peers demanding the abrogation of Bill 78 as "abusive, anti-freedom and totalitarian." Authors of the open letter include writers Marie-Christine Bernard and Jean-Francois Caron, trade unionist Francis Legacé, researcher Eric Pineault and philosopher Michel Seymour. Search online using key words "Against Bill 78 (Voir)" for an English translation. Messages of solidarity from English Canada are urgently required. For the complete text in French visit <http://profscontrelahausse.org>.

Adrienne Cooper 1946-2011

The progressive Canadian Jewish magazine *Outlook* paid tribute in its May-June issue to Yiddish singer, teacher and activist Adrienne Cooper, who passed away on December 25, 2011. Cooper was one of the outstanding figures in the contemporary revival of Klezmer music - the popular Yiddish style that originated in Eastern Europe and spread to North America in the early 20th century. Her recordings include solo albums, compilations, and collaborations with bands like The Klezmatics and The Flying Bulgar Klezmer Band, as well as with her partner, Canadian pianist Marilyn Lerner. Cooper was an executive member of the Workman's Circle (Arbeiter Ring), and Jews for Racial and Economic Justice, an anti-racist, anti-poverty and feminist New York group that has been active in the struggle against Islamophobia. She was also co-founder of Klez Kamp, the annual Klezmer and Yiddish cultural festival in New York's Catskills region. For more info visit www.adriennecooper.com.

Canada and imperialism's strategy towards Syria

By Darrell Rankin

In the June 5 parliamentary debate on Syria, Tory, NDP and Liberal MPs proclaimed their common purpose, notably about the need to overthrow the Syrian government.

Earlier that day, MPs from these parties gave unanimous consent to a motion that condemned the Syrian government for allegedly massacring civilians, and that urged Russia and China to support a ceasefire that would save innocent lives.

Our parliamentarians are steeped in the legacy of imperialism's colonial attitude to the Arab world, which allows only "appropriate" rulers. They are infused with Western imperialism's latest aspiration to re-divide the world at the expense of China and Russia.

Not once in the debate did our parliamentarians refer to the generous support for armed groups in Syria by the despotic regimes in the Middle East such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

The prospect for Syria is the most intense sectarian war that the West can create, with the aim of blaming Russia and China for the violence. That said, imperialism is keeping all its options open towards Syria, including military occupation.

This includes using alleged Russian and Chinese "stubbornness" to bypass the U.N. Security Council and directly overthrow the Syrian government. Western imperialism only follows international laws such as the U.N. Charter when it is helpful.

Russia and China face being demonized and made into targets of plunder for the West. Yet both countries support a ceasefire; their goal is that Syrians alone decide their future, a policy distorted as alleged "support" for the Syrian government.

The latest escalation in the Middle East also targets Iran, and the ruling classes in the western imperialist countries alone stand to benefit from the death and division.

The pro-war countries in the Middle East are making serious miscalculations. Israel's ruling circles believe they will escape with impunity and gain from a weakened Syria. But a large war that may

involve nuclear weapons could wipe out millions of people and destroy cities throughout the region.

Backed by Canada and other imperialist countries, reactionary Arab states such as Saudi Arabia are feeding sophisticated arms, communications means, and intelligence to armed groups in Syria. They are leading the effort to spark a war of regime change in Syria and to create conditions for a war against Iran.

But behind this aggression is weakness, not strength. The prospects for democratic revolutionary change are growing in these societies, whose leaders



calculate that overthrowing the last secular state in the Arab world will help them in their growing domestic problems.

The feedback effect of such a war, however, will put their despotic regimes and social system to a supreme test. One has to wonder about the stability and permanence of the regimes that are launching a war against Syria.

Although the West aims to drown Syria in its own blood, the sharply polarized political conditions in the region and the world may tilt such a war into a far more serious conflagration.

Who benefits from trying to overthrow the government of Syria? A starting point in explaining the fuller picture is that wealthy Canadians have for decades made piles of money from selling weapons to Saudi Arabia and its allies, which in turn today are shipping piles of weapons into Syria.

Canada's policy actually has nothing to do with our MPs' proclaimed humanitarian concerns, which are a cover for being a partner in the U.S.-led re-division of the cake.

What importance do the MPs place on Syria for the kind of world they want? According to Paul Dewar (NDP, Ottawa Centre),

"The priority is not trade with Russia right now; it is about action when it comes to Syria."

According to Alexandrine Latendresse (NDP, Louis-St-Laurent), Syria's Assad government made "a few timid attempts...to liberalize the economy and encourage the growth of foreign investments...The results have been very disappointing... Assad tried to get a little closer to the west and seemed to want to play the game for a while. When the Arab Spring happened, it soon became very clear that we were dealing with an unscrupulous tyrant."

This comment explains Canada's aggression towards the Syrian government, which is a non-sectarian alliance of the working class and national bourgeoisie of that country, operating to limit foreign domination. This is a serious crime of the Syrian government, in the eyes of the neo-liberal imperialist West.

Latendresse omits to mention that Canada is the third largest foreign investor in Syria. Not mentioned by any parliamentarian is the use of the Arab and other peoples in the region as pawns in the imperialist re-division of the world.

On every question related to Syria, Canada's parliamentary anthill can see no farther than Washington, whose foreign policy they faithfully copy.

To sum up, Canada's three largest parties all support the overthrow of the Syrian government. In the debate, the NDP blamed the Syrian government for the massacre in Houla, an allegation made at the time without any evidence, and now contrary to clear evidence that the reactionary rebels committed the heinous crime.

Many other allegations made by MPs in the debate are without foundation, including that the UN Observer mission blamed the Syrian government for the massacre.

The debate showed a marked departure from reality by all parties in our parliament. Behind this departure is Canada's corporate ruling class, eager to impose Canadian investment in Syria.

The beautiful country of Syria, already partly occupied by Israel, will be the poorer for this, and many more may die. Canada's parliament represents the warmongers, not the people who want Canada to be a voice for peace in the world. ●

"Pivot towards Asia"...

continued from page 4

The pivot places U.S. naval forces closer to its new Africa Command and ready to assist its re-established Fourth Fleet, whose purpose is to dominate and frighten South America.

U.S. imperialism is re-positioning itself to crush social change anywhere it may occur.

The crime of Hiroshima, the history of atomic threats against China, and the present pivot underline the racist nature of U.S. imperialism. If an Asian nuclear war takes place, the expectation by U.S. ruling circles is that North America will avoid serious loss of life, or that they will escape political and legal responsibility.

This is both misguided and criminally dangerous.

Without a successful campaign to abolish nuclear weapons, the world will continue towards nuclear Armageddon, accidental or deliberate, triggered by doctrines that allow for "first use" of nuclear weapons, including by U.S. naval commanders who may use such weapons without the president's permission.

The U.S. openly proclaims the need for military force to protect its foreign investments, a doctrine that equally infuses its nuclear policy. Until overseas investment, the material basis for global domination, disappears it is unlikely we will rid the earth of nuclear weapons.

As Hitler found out, humanity will never permit doctrines that allow for the murder of tens of millions. Those controlling the U.S. nuclear arsenal have doctrines that could kill billions. After all, war is merely the continuation of foreign policy by violent means, and foreign policy in the age of capitalist imperialism aims at domination, not equality among nations.

The inhumanity of the capitalist social system cannot be erased from history. In 1945, U.S. leaders chose to use atomic bombs on cities, to display the overwhelming danger of such weapons on civilians. Imperialism's nuclear strategy is the most important reason why socialists say disarmament is our ideal. ●

What's Left

Vancouver, BC

La Pena Latinoamericana, 8 pm, July 27, August 31, and last Friday evening each month, 706 Clark Drive, \$10 admission, all welcome, organized by La Trova Nuestra.

Moncada Day Celebration, Sunday, July 29, Chilean Cop, 3390 School Ave., sponsored by Canada-Cuba Friendship Assoc., for details call Ray, 604-254-1350.

Surrey, BC

People's Voice Walk-A-Thon, Sunday, Aug. 12, Bear Creek Park (picnic area near parking at 140 St. & 88 Ave.). Gather 11 am for walk, delicious lunch 12 noon, program at 1 pm. For info or to make a pledge, call Harjit, 604-543-7179.

Winnipeg, MB

Marxism Course, to register or for info, contact Communist Party of Canada, 586-7824 or cpc-mb@changethe-worldmb.ca.

Hiroshima Day Lantern Ceremony, Mon., Aug. 6, 7-9:30 pm at Memorial Park. For

info: Project Peacemakers, 775-8178.

5th Annual Winnipeg Radical Bookfair, Sept. 21-23, on Albert St. and in the A-Zone Building at 91 Albert, with a Car-Free Day streetfest planned for Sep. 22. Info at winnipegbookfair.blogspot.com

Toronto, ON

Honouring the Moncada: July 26th Cuban Event and Celebrating the 35th Anniversary of the CCFA Toronto, Sunday, July 29, 11 am-3 pm, buffet brunch, salsa dance lessons, live band & more. Tickets \$26 advance, \$35 at door, Lula Lounge, 1585 Dundas St. West. For information call Liz 416-654-7105 or Sharon 905-951-8499. Sponsored by Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association Toronto, www.ccfatoronto.ca.

Montreal, QC

Palestinians And Jews United, boycott/disinvestment/sanctions picket, every Saturday, 1-3 pm, outside Israeli shoe store "NAOT", 3941 St-Denis Street.

New issue of Rebel Youth

Rebel Youth magazine has come out with a new issue - in colour with a major focus on the Quebec student strike.

"This is the first time we have produced a magazine with bright red, and as a double issue it is the longest ever," YCL-LJC leader Johan Boyden told *People's Voice*.

The magazine has a special feature section, looking at the Quebec student strike and the question of solidarity and the struggle of students in the rest of Canada.

Other articles tackle social, political and environmental questions. Mike Oosting, a youth columnist in *People's Voice*, writes about Queer youth in rural Canada. Micheline Carrier looks at the misogyny of the Harper Tories. Philip Ford examines post-war Libya and finds NATO has "recolonized" the country.

The issue also presents an interview by Newfoundland correspondent Richard Williams with young climate change activist Meghan McCarthy, an article by Tyson Leonard exposing the dangers of the US-Canada border deal to Canadian sovereignty, analysis of young workers and two tier contracts, as well as movie, music and DVD reviews.

The next issue of *People's Voice* will present some highlights of the new RY and its strategy and theory of student struggle.

"There has been quite a lot of expectation about this issue," Boyden said, noting that the YCL's convention plan is to look at increasing production to four issues a year. "We are committed as the YCL to tackle the big questions of action, struggle and unity in the youth and student movement, and that requires a regularly published magazine. We have to continue to collectively build a base of militant youth in the League, with the idea - write as you fight!"

The magazine has also re-vamped its internet presence, launching a new website design at www.rebelyouth-magazine.blogspot.ca with special attention to the many topics RY has addressed since it first went online over six years ago. Between five and ten stories are published on the blog each week, Boyden said, including original content.

Subscriptions of the print magazine are now in the mail.

People's Voice deadlines

Sept. 1-15 issue: Thursday, August 16

Sept. 16-30 issue: Thursday, Sept. 6

Send submissions to PV Editorial Office,
706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, V5L 3J1
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SACP charts future of the left in South Africa

By Robert Griffiths

South African Communist Party general secretary Blade Nzimande hit the news headlines on July 12, even before standing up to deliver his political report to the party's 13th congress in Empangeni, KwaZulu-Natal province.

"The president's right-hand man," proclaimed the *Mercury*, above a picture of South African President Jacob Zuma confiding in a conspiratorial-looking Nzimande.

The *Mercury* daily newspaper is owned by one of four monopolies that dominate the South African press. All four groups are hostile to the ANC, the SACP and the COSATU trade union federation and rarely miss an opportunity to invent or exaggerate any differences between these three partners in the "revolutionary alliance."

On this occasion it was claimed that Nzimande, the "son of an immigrant Mozambican," wielded great influence. Or not. Either way, the possibility provided the pretext for two long articles and one sustained attempt at a character assassination.

Someone who has championed access for the poor to banking facilities and post-school education was depicted as a "lover of expensive cognac and luxury cars." Indeed, his lust for top-of-the-range cognac was mentioned twice, although he does not drink the spirit and prefers a decent bottle

of house red wine.

On closer inspection the "luxury cars" turned out to be an "expensive BMW" - is there an inexpensive type? - that goes with his post as Minister of Higher Education and Training.

Older and potentially more damaging smears are repeated, even though it is admitted that they have no basis. Nzimande was never a member or supporter of the anti-ANC and tribalist Inkatha Freedom Party when a student, while the clumsy attempt to link him to a car boot full of cash in 2002 fooled nobody.

The SACP general secretary's address to the congress indicated why the mass media are growing more frantic.

He reported the trebling of party membership in five years, from 51,874 to 151,588 this year, with 42 per cent of them women.

More importantly, Nzimande pointed to growing communist influence across all six key "sites of struggle." These he identified as economic policy, workplaces and trade unions, local communities, the state apparatus, the battle of ideas and internationally.

"The task for communists now is to enhance our work on all these fronts," he told delegates.

In particular he emphasised the need for the SACP to take responsibility at every level of the country's unfolding "national democratic revolution."

"We must be active militant

participants, not left-wing opportunists standing on the sidelines and engaging in permanent lamentation," Nzimande declared.

Communists account for 62 of the 264 ANC members of parliament, and their ministers in the government include those responsible for finance, economic development, trade and industry, transport and public works.

They are playing a central role reorienting economic strategy away from market-obsessed neoliberalism and privatisation, towards greater state intervention in order to overcome mass unemployment - which currently stands at 25 per cent - poverty and class, race and gender inequality.

Arguing that this requires an extension and deepening of the national democratic revolution, Nzimande put forward three policies that grabbed the attention of South Africa's mass media.

First he wanted to see state-owned industries - notably electricity generation, water and the railways pursue initiatives that would enhance development to the benefit of workers and the poor.

Second, the state should compel the private sector to invest in infrastructure projects which create jobs.

And third, new legislation should be introduced to force the banks to invest in low-cost housing in the townships and rural areas.

"Pension and provident funds are, after all, the money of the working class," he pointed out.

However, he sounded a stark warning about the dangers that could derail the new phase of social and economic development and transformation. Among these were the "Americanisation" of politics through the domination of money and celebrity, and a demonisation of the state and the activities of some foreign-backed NGOs.

The biggest threat is what he called "tenderpreneurship," the corrupt practices surrounding private-sector tendering for lucrative contracts from the public sector. The drive against it means that, in Nzimande's words, "tenderpreneurs don't like the SACP and the SACP doesn't like them. It's mutual.

"Yes, corruption is endemic to



Tens of thousands have joined the South African Communist Party and the Young Communist League in recent years.

capitalism, but we cannot wait for socialism to end it," he continued. "We must fight it now as part of the struggle against capitalism."

He proposed that an example be made of some of the big fish. These and similar remarks were widely interpreted as a thinly veiled attack on expelled ANC Youth League leader Julius Malema. He combines a lavish lifestyle funded from invisible sources of wealth with anti-white sloganising about nationalising the dilapidated coalmines and enriching the poor.

The SACP programme, the South African Road to Socialism, refers to a "populist, bourgeois nationalist ideological tendency with deeply worrying demagogic, proto-fascist tendencies." As far as Nzimande is concerned, "tenderpreneurs who use tribalism are the enemies of our movement and our revolution."

At various points, Young Communist League contingents burst into song with such lyrics as "*Malema ungayijahi impi ngoba iyabulala*," - Malema, do not be in a hurry to fight in a war, because it kills.

The other major theme in Nzimande's political report was

the need to strengthen the role of the working class and the SACP in the tripartite alliance and the national democratic revolution.

The Communist Party had to earn its leading role not only in the trade unions, where relations with COSATU constitute the "socialist axis" of the alliance. Communists must come to the fore among all exploited, oppressed and disadvantaged sections of the working class.

Nzimande caused consternation in newspaper circles by also suggesting that the press monopolies be broken up in favour of more diverse media ownership.

"Mobilising the masses and waging the battles of ideas can ensure that the ANC continues to represent the people, as a revolutionary state is built," he insisted.

The SACP congress re-elected Nzimande unopposed to the post of general secretary, while National Union of Mineworkers president Senzeni Zokwana will become the party's new chairperson.

(Griffiths is the general secretary of the Communist Party of Britain.) ●



The newly elected SACP leadership, from left: Jeremy Cronin (deputy general secretary), Joyce Moloi-Moropa (national treasurer), Senzeni Zokwana (national chair) and Blade Nzimande (general secretary).

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13/12

Olympic Protest Torch Relay in East London

The iconic Vancouver Poverty Olympics Torch will make an historic appearance on July 28, when the East London Poverty Torch Relay will herald the "Whose Games? Whose City?" demonstration as the summer Games begins.

Counter Olympics Network spokesperson, Julian Cheyne, said "The Poverty Torch Relay highlights long-standing Olympic issues of eviction, land seizure and the exclusion of the poor. London 2012 is no different. The Olympics epitomises corporate power and growing social inequality."

The Poverty Torch was handed over to London at a ceremony at the Olympic Cauldron in Jack Poole Plaza, Vancouver in 2010. This marks the first time that a protest torch has been handed from one host city to another, an action which organizers hope to repeat for future Olympics.

On July 21, runners took the Torch to Wanstead Flats, where a new police centre for the Olympics enclosed part of Epping Forest, an area previously protected by a 135-year-old Act of Parliament. Then on July 27, the Torch was relayed from scenic Clissold Park to an unsightly basketball training facility at Leyton Marsh, where the "Save Leyton Marsh campaign" held a welcome party for the torch.

For more information, visit www.londontourguide2012.org/poverty-olympics-2012.