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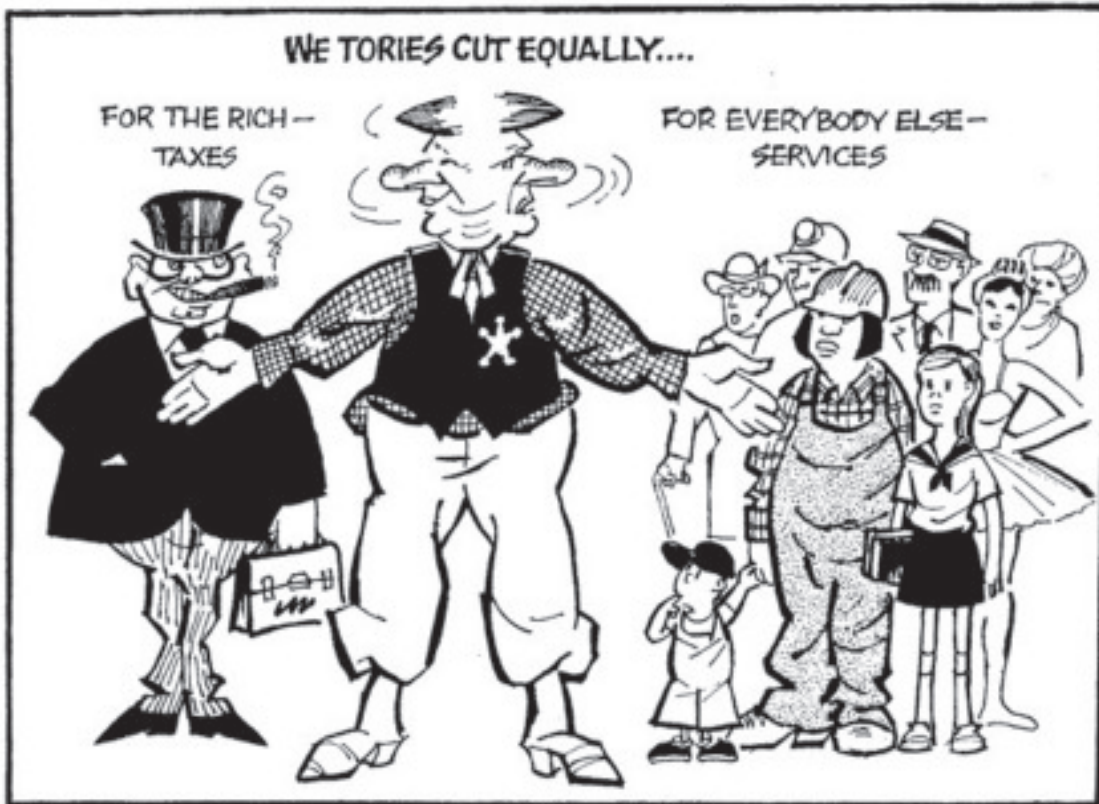
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# people's VOICE

**RCMP racism  
and Bill C-51**

Editorial on page 4

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**The Tory federal  
budget blues:  
Tax breaks for  
the rich,  
cutbacks for  
working people**  
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**1945 - 2015  
70 years  
later**

**Remember the  
historic victory  
over fascism!**  
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### **School of resistance**

Carrying forward a longtime neoliberal strategy, the Ontario Liberals are slashing education budgets and attacking the right to elect school boards, but Toronto residents are starting to push back.

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### **A very strange war...**

Canada has entered a very strange kind of war, one in which "our" side helped create the enemy, and our "allies" are as bad as ISIS.

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### **Bandung 60 years on**

Six decades ago, the Bandung Conference signalled that the world was witnessing a major shift away from colonial domination. But that change has not been accepted without resistance by imperialism.

# New Ontario Tory leader fuels campaign of ignorance

By Liz Rowley, leader, CPC (Ontario)

On May 4th and 5th, 35,000 elementary students – almost 90% – were kept out of school in Brampton and Toronto's Thorncliffe Park neighbourhood to protest the new sex education curriculum being introduced in health and physical classes in September by the provincial government.

As far as protest organizers are concerned, no sex education is the best education for their kids – and yours too.

The protests are the result of a massive disinformation campaign carried out by Campaign Life, the Christian fundamentalist Rev. Charles McVety, fundamentalists in the South Asian community who are the main targets of this campaign, and organizers for the new leader of the Ontario Conservatives and several of his Queen's Park caucus.

Patrick Brown, elected May 9th with a 61% plurality over Christine Elliott, swept the leadership contest after signing up 40,000 new members across the province, focussing in on new immigrants and racialized groups to build the kind of right-wing movement Jason Kenny built for the federal party. At the core is the Ontario Landowners' Association, a right-wing rural movement that has elected several MPPs to Queen's Park, knocking off at least one sitting Tory MPP to do it, pushing the party farther and farther to the right from inside and outside the caucus. This is where the proposal to slash 100,000 public sector jobs came from in the 2014 election, along with right-to-work laws that were eventually dropped from the platform, but not from the agenda.

A party of privilege and money, the new Tories represent a party

even father to the right than the Mike Harris government of 20 years ago.

Patrick Brown has no seat in the Legislature and is in the process of resigning his federal seat as an MP from Barrie in the Harper government. But he's in no hurry to get to Queen's Park, preferring to root around in the detritus of Campaign Life and Rev. McVety, President of Canada Christian College. Brown and his supporters not only support the fundamentalist campaign against sex education, they're fuelling it.

A massive disinformation campaign about the contents of the curriculum has convinced many parents that their children are being groomed for sexual exploitation, and the "proof" is a disgraced former Deputy Minister charged with possession of child pornography.

Adding to this, the Liberals have

decided not to try to educate communities about the real content of the curriculum, which is to protect children and youth against pregnancy, disease, and new dangers like sexting, internet luring and pornography which are easily accessible on any computer. The curriculum teaches consent, that is the right and the ability to say 'no' to unwanted sexual advances, and the right to choose when to say 'yes'. Students are also taught about changes under Human Rights legislation that recognize different types of families, including same-sex families, and single parent families, which are equally valuable, loving and important, especially to their children, and also legally equal.

The Ministry knew full well from previous experience in 2010 that McVety and Campaign Life were very likely to try to whip up fear, homophobia, and prejudice in order

to block the new curriculum. But instead of using its staff and resources, and the School Boards' community school liaison workers to educate communities and families about the benefits of the new curriculum, the Ministry opted to ignore the very large communities of new immigrants, and bull through.

On Steve Paikin's TV Ontario program on May 11, organizers of the school protests claimed that sex education leads to rape. The logic? According to Faras Marish, it's because boys get charged up talking about sex, cannot control themselves and cannot take no for an answer. That's just the way it is, so you better not tempt them with all that sex talk. Boys are beasts. And girls are powerless – that's the second shoe. Another lie.

But in fact the beasts are not children, they're the right wing politicians and religious funda-

mentalists that want to ride this issue into power, and never mind the consequences on youth and students, families and communities. They are PC leader Patrick Brown and Rev. Charles McVety who want to turn the clock back 100 years, to a time when equity didn't exist, where women and racialized communities 'knew their place', where LGBTQ people were invisible, and where unions had no rights.

Despite the government's inept performance, it's important that progressive people and organizations speak up in support of the new curriculum, for education, knowledge, and liberty, against the backward and reactionary ideas of McVety and Brown, Campaign Life and the PC caucus. Ontario must defeat these ideas and move forward, not backwards.

This is a sign of the dangerous times we are living in.

## Toronto's Campaign for Public Education hits back



On May 8, education workers demonstrated outside Premier Wynne's constituency office to demand fair negotiations.

Stephen Seaborn, Public Sector Workers Club

Finance ministers are up to their fiscal trickery in Ontario: cooking the numbers to balance their books while Toronto schools crumble.

After slashing education and health transfer payments back in the mid-80s, the feds further reduced revenues in their April 2015 budget by delivering \$5 billion in tax cuts (mostly benefiting the country's wealthiest 15%). They also snipped \$36 billion from healthcare over the coming ten years.

This is what they call neoliberal economics. Essentially we are the ones paying for it and our consolation prize (as one journalist put it) is to "watch all our social programs built over the past 60 years wash away with the winter snow". Neoliberal thinking (dating back, btw, to the NDP education projections of early '90s) is obviously quite firmly entrenched not just in Ottawa, but over at Queens Park.

Here in Ontario, where funding of public education has never recovered from the deep Harris cuts, the province is dealing with its \$10.9 billion deficit by selling off public infrastructure, cost-cutting on the backs of public servants and "consolidating" schools. The impact of 20 years of tax cuts in Ontario is that we are missing out on \$19 billion in revenue. No surprise that Ontario's corporate tax rate remains one of the lowest in North America.

No surprise either that the province is playing hardball in contract negotiations with teachers.

No surprise that there's still no job strategy beyond crappy jobs for kids leaving school.

In the coming years, spending just won't keep up either with inflation or with population growth. This despite public services needing people to deliver the services, and education needing education workers in schools and communities.

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, reports that after

For more info, check out CPE's new flyer to help combat school closures, which is seeing widespread school-community use through elementary teacher networks. Look over the CPE's paper promoting sample answers for public input to the Hall Governance panel, and its equity/access critique of these consultations. These and other materials are online at [campaignforpubliceducation.ca](http://campaignforpubliceducation.ca).

Ontario's May 7 budget, education will suffer even more than healthcare from under-funding.

Again, no surprise that Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne, who's looking more like Mike Harris by the day, told Toronto's Campaign for Public Education nine years ago: "There'll be no more money for education".

Meanwhile, in Toronto, to implement its cost-cutting plans, the province jumped on an apparent crisis in school board governance just two months following the election of eleven brand new Trustees, cunningly feeding a public and media perception of serious dysfunction and "infighting" at the TDSB.

Spring brought Torontonians simulated government consultations on both school board governance, and reconfiguring schools as hubs

Toronto residents now face a three-pronged attack by the provincial Liberals on Canada's largest school board:

1. The Education Minister's winter "directives" which dramatically reduced Trustee democracy;
2. The forced sale of publicly-purchased school board infrastructure;
3. A consultative panel aimed at sub-dividing the TDSB into four smaller boards, possibly elected at large, not by ward constituents.

On the plus side, community and parent groups in Toronto are not known for taking government attacks on community school facilities lightly. As they begin to pay attention, public awareness, concern and rage is gradually growing across the city. And after 13 years of activism, Toronto's Campaign for Public Education is still together, effective and busy with a coordinated fightback.

Is it enough? No. Not by a long shot.

But as spring morphs into summer, the CPE, an assembly of community and school based organizations representing a membership including families of over 100,000, has set its sights on Ontario's MPPs. ●

## \$50,000 Fund Drive nears the two-thirds mark

The latest two week stretch of our 2015 Fund Drive has seen another \$6622 raised towards our \$50,000 target, taking us to a grand total of \$31,747, or 63.5% percent.

Alberta remains in the lead at this point, with \$3021 (86% of their \$3500 quota), followed by Ontario at \$15,567, or 70.7% of their \$22,000 goal. Saskatchewan is still at \$385, or 65% of their provincial target of \$600, and then British Columbia has reached \$11,302, which is 56.5% of the \$20,000 quota for the west coast.

Next is Quebec with \$265 (53% of \$500), Nova Scotia with \$400 (40% of \$1000), and Manitoba (\$400, or 20% of the \$2000 target). We have also received a \$25 donation from Newfoundland and Labrador, and a very welcome \$382 from internationalist readers in the United States.

The latest two fundraisers in British Columbia were both highly successful. Our annual Banquet on May 2 in Vancouver had a great turnout of friends and subscribers to hear Micheal Vonn of the BC Civil Liberties

Association and a representative of the Venezuelan Consulate, and the event raised about \$600 in net revenue. We don't have the financial figures yet from the Burnaby Club's Pancake Breakfast, but the weather was sunny, the food was amazing, and everyone had a great time meeting old and new friends. Thanks from our Editorial Board to all who worked so hard on both these activities!

Events coming up include a "Jazz BBQ" hosted by the East Toronto Club, from 2-6 pm on Saturday, June 6, at 526 Main St., two blocks north of the Main TTC station. Tickets are just \$20 for an afternoon of great music, food and refreshments. The "rain day" is Sunday, June 7, but we are certain that won't be necessary!

Postponed from the initial date, the Sergio Montivero Club's press dinner will now be held on Saturday, June 20, starting 6 pm at the Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark Drive, Vancouver. Call 604-255-2041 for details.

We will be announcing other summer fundraisers, including our biggest, the annual PV Walk-A-Thon organized by the Lower Fraser Club in Surrey. Check our next issue for more information.

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# Critics slam 2015 Conservative federal budget

## PV Vancouver Bureau

Released on April 21, the latest federal budget from the Harper Conservatives has been slammed by the labour movement and progressive economists.

According to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA), the budget will do little to revitalize Canada's sluggish job market at a time when economic growth is slowing due to collapsing corporate investment in the tar sands.

"The federal government could be proactive mitigate Canada's fragile economy, but has chosen to create budget surpluses instead of jobs," said CCPA Senior Economist David Macdonald. "In order to boost the economy and create jobs, we need a real commitment to infrastructure today, not in five years time. The government delayed the budget, claiming it needed to assess the impact of the plunge in oil prices but there is little in the budget to suggest the wait made any difference. The government is clearly still crossing its fingers and hoping for an economic miracle."

The CCPA argues that the tax cuts in the budget overwhelmingly benefit the wealthy, not those living in poverty. The much-touted "family tax package" directs a large amount of taxpayer dollars towards higher income Canadians, not those with the greatest need.

"With the economy slowing and population aging staring us down, this government decided to deliver an Economic Distraction Plan - purporting tax cuts, trade and fighting terrorism as the best way to manage the challenges facing our economy," said Armine Yalnizyan, CCPA Senior Economist. "That's like putting lipstick on a pig."

Measures for seniors, including doubling the Tax Free Savings Account (TFSA) and lowering the mandatory withdrawals from the Registered Retirement Income Fund, will primarily benefit wealthier seniors. Only 13% of seniors maxed out their TFSA at the pre-doubling rate, and more than half don't even have a TFSA.

Sixty-five percent of seniors have less than \$50,000 in a RRIF or RRSP.

"Like so many other measures in this budget, the majority of the benefits from the TFSA and RRIF changes go to those who need it least. A better way to help seniors would be to cancel the increased age of eligibility in OAS or expand the Canada Pension Plan," said Yalnizyan. "Let's not kid ourselves into thinking that either of these measures will have any impact on senior poverty or the retirement savings crisis."

The federal government will spend \$7 billion on the Universal Child Care Benefit (UCCB) and income splitting this year. This untargeted spending could have been used to pay for a national \$7/day child care program, but instead, the budget does not create any child care spaces. Forty-nine percent of qualifying families will receive nothing from income splitting, with the greatest benefit going to families that earn over \$200,000 a year.

CUPE economist Toby Sanger argues that the 2015 federal budget offers nothing new to workers and the majority of Canadians.

"Once again it includes tax cuts for business and the wealthy, and nothing substantial to create decent jobs or to help Canadians struggling to make ends meet," says Sanger. "In fact, it takes money from workers contributed through the surpluses in the Employment Insurance fund to pay for these tax breaks for the wealthy and corporations."

He argues that Conservative spending cuts are destroying jobs, squeezing workers' wages, slowing down economic growth and making it harder for working families to get by.

Examining the "big ticket" new items in the budget, Sanger makes the following points:

- \* The tax cut for small business (down to 9% by 2019) will cost \$2.7 billion over the next four years and over \$1.2 billion annually when fully-phased in. This category includes corporations up to a size of \$10 million.
- \* Manufacturers get lower taxes

by allowing faster depreciation of investments, worth over \$300 million annually.

- \* Increasing the annual contribution limit for TFSAs to \$10,000 is "a multi-billion dollar tax break for the wealthiest Canadians", which together with the regressive income splitting measures will cost the federal

The federal share of health care spending is projected to plummet from 20 per cent to 12 per cent.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities had been seeking \$300 million annual to meet new federal wastewater regulations that will cost at least \$18 billion over the next decade. However, the budget has no funding to improve

fund, another \$900 million from cutting sick leave benefits in the federal public, and \$2.1 billion by selling their shares in GM.

"The EI surplus funds should have gone into improving the EI program, the \$900 million in sick leave benefits will be unfairly appropriated from workers, and the government could have fetched almost a billion more from the GM shares if they'd held onto them for just another year instead of selling them at a discount to Goldman Sachs. As befits Joe Oliver, the former Bay Street banker now Finance Minister, this really is a Robin Hood budget in reverse, taking from workers to give tax cuts to the wealthy and corporations."

There has also been considerable controversy around the "balanced budget" legislation which the Tories plan to introduce, requiring future federal governments to freeze operating spending after a recession.

"This is a sure recipe for continuing stagnation," argues Sanger. "The government's own figures show that public investment and spending creates far more jobs and provides a much stronger economic boost than tax cuts."

Among the few measures aimed at working Canadians are a plan to extend the "Employment Insurance Working While on Claim" project for another two years, and to extend compassionate care leave under the EI program to care for a gravely ill family member from six weeks to six months.

But unions have condemned the government for its plan to eliminate existing sick leave provisions for federal public service workers, whether or not an agreement on this is reached at the bargaining table. The government has also refused to improve the Employment Insurance system, which now only provides benefits for less than 40 per cent of the unemployed, by improving eligibility, benefits or services. And of course the budget simply ignores the growing demand by trade unions, students and other groups to increase the federal minimum wage to \$15/hour.

Sanger warns that the Tory agenda of "relying on tax cuts and gambling on the resource sector to create good jobs and stimulate growth while squeezing wages and cutting public services has failed, and will continue to fail. There's been little improvement in unemployment since the Conservatives gained a majority, job quality is now at its lowest level in more than a quarter century and the real wages of working Canadians are stagnant while their debt continues to escalate. Meanwhile CEO compensation has increased by 40 per cent since 2009 and corporate profits are up by more than 70 per cent. As a result, inequality is increasing and our economic prospects keep declining: our economic growth rate is now substantially lower than the U.S. while our unemployment rate is substantially higher."

"By continuing to reduce public spending to finance more tax cuts for business and the wealthy, this budget continues with their failed economic policies and will instead increase inequality, destroy jobs and further slow down the economy." ●



Despite the demand for action to tackle climate change, the 2015 federal budget instead provides new breaks for the big energy corporations. (PV photo from the Vancouver Earth Day Parade, by Roberto Moraga)

government over \$13.8 billion over six years.

- \* Spending on defence and security goes up, including \$12 billion more for the Department of National Defence, with much of that to come in future years.

- \* The budget includes additional funding for public transit, but not for another two years, and only to municipalities which use much more expensive Public-Private Partnerships (P3s).

At the same time, there is nothing in the budget to create jobs, reduce inequality, or to improve pensions or Employment Insurance. Nor is there anything to create affordable child care or to improve public health care.

Despite long waiting lists, five million Canadians without a family doctor, and skyrocketing prescription drug prices, the 2015 federal budget confirms previous cuts of more than \$36 billion from health care over the next ten years.

water quality.

Nor does the budget address the housing crisis. The federal government's annual investment of \$1.7 billion for social housing is maintained, but not increased, leaving Canada as the only major capitalist country without a housing strategy.

While there is not one mention of climate change in the entire budget plan, there are over a hundred mentions of oil over 500 pages. Instead of reducing the subsidies to fossil fuels, as the International Monetary Fund and the G20 have strongly urged, this budget increases those subsidies by providing a new tax subsidy for facilities that produce Liquid Natural Gas (LNGs). The budget also extends the mineral exploration tax credit and provides tax subsidies for resource companies required to conduct environmental assessments to get approval for resource projects such as pipelines and provides more funding for agencies to help speed up those approvals.

The budget's few environmental measures are limited to \$75 million over three years to help implement the Species at Risk Act, \$10 million a year for recreational fisheries and \$2 million for the Pacific Salmon Foundation - amounts that are far less than what environmental and conservation organizations had called for.

However, as Sanger points out (and as most people who watch the NHL playoffs have witnessed) the budget is being promoted by massive government spending, with \$7.5 million allocated for advertising in May alone. That amount is one-tenth of the federal government's entire advertising budget for 2013/14.

The CUPE economist also stresses that the Tory "balanced budget" is created by taking from workers to give tax cuts to the rich: "The Conservatives claim they've balanced the budget with a \$1.4 billion surplus this year - but the reality is it's a completely bogus balance. They've only been able to achieve a surplus on paper by taking \$1.8 billion out of the EI

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# EDITORIALS

## Victory for Omar Khadr!

Despite the depressing vote in Parliament to adopt Bill C-51, it would be dramatically premature to declare that Canada is now a fascist state. The battle to defend and expand civil and labour rights, and other democratic freedoms, is long and complicated. The War Measures Act was declared in 1914 to suppress criticism against a brutal and bloody imperialist war, and stayed on the books until 1989, an appalling three-quarters of a century. The infamous Padlock Law, adopted in Quebec in 1937 to ban communist activities, was finally struck down by the Supreme Court of Canada twenty years later. Working class, radical and revolutionary movements continued to function during these periods, and ultimately these draconian laws were overturned.

The release of Omar Khadr from his Alberta prison cell is another indication that it is still quite possible to win victories for freedom and democracy in Canada today. Thanks to the incredible strength and sacrifices by Khadr's lawyer over many years, this remarkable young man is finally allowed to walk the streets and openly express his views (within certain frustrating limits imposed by the courts), after defeating the attempts of the far-right Harper Tories to keep him in jail.

These examples show that there is never one simple, direct path to freedom. The working people of Canada face a lengthy period of intense struggles against the drive to silence opposition to the ruling class policies of austerity and war. Every victory by another Omar Khadr gives us hope and inspiration to carry these struggles forward, no matter how difficult each challenge seems!

## A glimpse into official racism

In the sanitized world of right-wing politicians trained in perfect sound bites, we rarely see the full extent of racism, misogyny and other forms of bigotry which permeate the ruling class. But occasionally a glimpse of their reactionary ideology becomes visible.

One such moment came in late 2012, during the courageous hunger strike by Attawapiskat Chief Theresa Spence and the emergence of the Idle No More movement. Desperate to shift attention away from their callous indifference to the deaths of Aboriginal peoples, Tory cabinet ministers spread cowardly lies about Chief Spence, blaming impoverished First Nations bands for the crisis caused by centuries of genocidal colonialist policies.

At the same time, an RCMP official was filing a report saying, "This Idle No More Movement is like bacteria, it has grown a life of its own all across this nation." RCMP Cpl. Wayne Russett also warned ominously about "flash mobs, round dances and blockades becom(ing) much less compliant to laws in an attempt to get their point across."

The true heroes of that winter were Chief Spence and her colleagues, trying to get clean drinking water and livable homes for their people, and the thousands of Idle No More supporters in the streets and shopping malls. But instead of being lauded for defending human rights, they were labelled "bacteria" and put under constant police surveillance.

This shows why Bill C-51 is so dangerous. This legislation openly encourages security forces to monitor opposition to government policies, supposedly because this might lead somebody, somewhere, to someday "undermine the security of Canada."

In fact, our security has already been badly undermined, by the very governments and police forces which claim to protect us. Five months from now, we can vote to drive the Harper Tories out of office, and then start to press any new government to repeal this vicious law, and to scrap the racist, anti-working class security forces which have suppressed the peoples of Canada for far too long.

## PEOPLE'S VOICE

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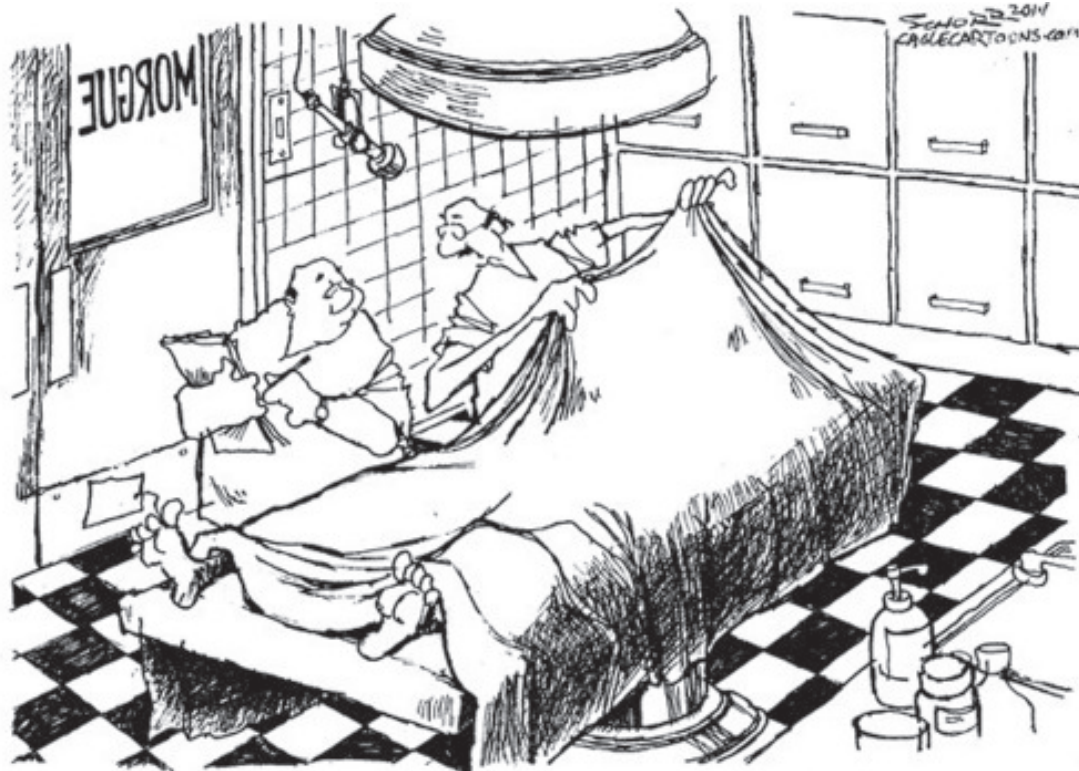
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## LETTERS

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"PUT IT DOWN AS ASSISTED SUICIDE...HE TALKED BACK TO A WHITE POLICEMAN"

## 'Brigadistas' return from Cuba

By Drew Garvie

Thirty-eight participants who travelled to Cuba as the 23rd Che Guevara Volunteer Work Brigade have just returned to Canada. The purpose of the annual Brigade, organized by the Canadian Network on Cuba, is to build Canada-Cuba friendship and solidarity by sending delegations on tours of the island. This was a special year for the Brigade, because of the freedom recently won for the Cuban Five heroes, and the groundbreaking negotiations taking place between the United States and Cuba.

The Brigade members were a diverse group of all ages with participation from Vancouver, Kamloops, Kelowna, Winnipeg, Hamilton, Toronto, Ottawa and Halifax. Eight members of the Communist Party of Canada and the Young Communist League attended the tour.

Because of the larger international presence in Cuba to attend May Day, this year's Brigade was joined by other participants from a variety of countries. A large delegation from Peru and smaller delegations from Chile, Costa Rica, New Zealand, Japan, Austria, El Salvador and Nicaragua, joined the group from Canada. This added to the internationalist flavour of the Brigade, and friendships were made with a shared respect of Cuba's revolution as the foundation.

As in past years, the Brigade highlights included meetings with youth and student organizations, local members of the women's federation (FMC), a local Committee for the Defense of the

Revolution (CDR), and specialists on the Cuban economy and agriculture. The Brigade was two weeks long, with the first week's lodging at the "Niceto Pérez camp" about an hour south of Havana, and the second week spent travelling around Matanzas province.

This year's volunteer work consisted of harvesting sweet potatoes, planting green onions and preparing seedling bags, to show solidarity with the Cuban revolution, and to work alongside Cuban farmers and workers and learn from them directly.

On May First, the Brigade joined over 1000 other international guests to witness over one million Cuban workers march in Havana under the slogan "united in the construction of socialism". The march was led by the five Cuban heroes, freed last December from US jails. Also leading the parade were hundreds of doctors who recently returned from a successful fight against Ebola in West Africa.

The leader of Cuba's national trade union federation (CTC), Ulises Guilarte, delivered a defiant and revolutionary address to the crowd of millions: "we are here sending to the world a message of unity of the Cuban people's massive support for their socialist revolution, for the Party, for Raul and for Fidel." Venezuelan worker-President Nicolas Maduro attended, next to Cuban President Raul Castro. Thousands of Venezuelan flags and signs demanding an end to US intervention and sanctions in Venezuela were present.

The following day, the CTC hosted an annual meeting of Cuba solidarity activists from around the world. Cuban officials stressed that there is a political struggle to lift the criminal US blockade and normalize relations, but Cubans refuse to achieve this by giving in to US corporate interests through dismantling socialism or abandoning anti-imperialist principles. Kenia Serrano of the Cuban Institute of Friendship of the Peoples asked the solidarity movements to keep up the momentum won by the successful international campaign for the release of the Cuban Five. She asked organizations to continue and deepen the struggle to lift the US blockade, which has cost the country over 1 trillion dollars since it was first imposed, and to push for removal of the illegal US military base in Guantanamo.

At a final meeting with leaders from ICAP on May 8, all Brigade participants expressed positive remarks in relation to this year's experiences. Having a chance to see first-hand the strength of Cubansocialism, the gains made by the revolution, and the unity of the Cuban people in the face of incredible odds, was an unforgettable experience. Brigadistas returned energized and ready to promote next year's Brigade, as part of the broader goal of building solidarity with Cuba across Canada. ●

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YCL members at the May Day celebration in Havana.

# Challenges face new NDP majority in Alberta

By Naomi Rankin

Despite journalistic cartoons of pigs flying and hell freezing over, the May 5 election of a new majority NDP government in Alberta is after all a political and not a magical event. As in Ontario under Bob Rae and BC under Dave Barrett, the NDP has been elected by voters more than thoroughly disenchanted with the economic devastation that comes from right wing governments' incapacity to respond to economic downturns.

And, as in Ontario and BC, the corporate sector and right wing skills are already ramping up the attempt to blame the NDP for the economic mess they have inherited. The mess is significant: an economy lop-sidedly dependent on volatile resource pricing, the potential nest egg of royalties completely frittered away, a \$7 billion deficit proposed by the last Tory budget, even with severe cuts in education and health care.

The NDP began this campaign not expecting to form the government. A fair number of their successful candidates are the kind of people who run for a party

that's not going to win. Several new MLAs are not just young, but obviously somewhat inconvenienced by finding themselves in a new job. The Tories tried and failed to spook the voters with the prospect of an inexperienced and bumbling new administration, but starting from scratch is not the biggest of the NDP's challenges.

The NDP's victory is not a sign of a sudden leap to the left by Alberta voters. It reflects the eventual tipping point of a gradual demo-graphic change in the cities - younger, more cosmopolitan with immigrants from the rest of Canada and elsewhere - and the switch to the Wildrose Party by rightwing, mostly rural voters angry at the arrogance and entitled attitude of the reigning Tories.

NDP leader Rachel Notley ran a relentlessly centrist campaign, emphasizing her intention to cooperate with the corporate sector, reiterating the conventional wisdom that oil and gas are the foundations of the Alberta economy, and claiming the mantle of Peter Lougheed. She said it again in her victory speech and again the next morning. Informed

political commentary, however, is pointing out that, as in Ontario and BC, the corporate sector is likely to gear up for ruthless obstruction, up to and including sabotaging economic development for the sake of expelling the NDP from office, no matter how moderate and limited their reforms: raising corporate taxes from 10 to 12%, raising the minimum wage, safeguarding health and education.

Can the NDP carry out this platform? That depends on another

unknown. Will the working class and its potential allies have the class consciousness to recognize and repudiate the self-interested corporate propaganda, and the militancy to demand that the reforms be carried out in spite of economic sabotage?

There are a lot of happy people in Alberta right now, including some who had dropped out of the NDP from discouragement and are now eager to get back into the political life of the province. The organized

labour movement, although weakened over decades by splits and loss of jobs, currently has progressive and activist leadership in the AFL and AUPE, the main provincial employees' union. Over the past two years in particular, they contributed to running the Tories out of office by their vigorous resistance to pension cuts and anti-labour legislation. They have a big job ahead of them too.

(Rankin is the leader of the Communist Party-Alberta, and was the party's candidate in Edmonton Mill Woods; also on the ballot for the CP-A was Bonnie Devine, in Calgary East.) •

**How we see it**



Despite Alberta's right-wing reputation, the province actually has a long tradition of working class radicalism and trade union militancy. Seen here, health care workers picketing at the University of Alberta hospital in March 2014. Conservative underfunding of health care and education was one of the key issues in the May 5 provincial election.

## 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Victory over nazi-fascism

Joint statement signed by a number of Communist and Workers' Parties, including the Communist Party of Canada

The liberation of Berlin by Soviet troops in May 1945, marks the victory of the peoples in World War II and the defeat of Nazi-fascism – the most violent form of class domination generated by capitalism and the direct cause of the war and of the death of tens of millions of human beings.

The decisive role in the victory of May 9, 1945 was played by the Soviet Union, its people and Red Army, under the leadership of its Communist Party. It was on the Eastern Front that the major battles which determined the outcome of World War II were fought. To mark the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Victory is to recall and celebrate the heroism, the courage and determination of millions of Soviet men and women who, at the cost of enormous sacrifice and of over 27 million dead, resisted and fought, giving a decisive contribution to the defeat of the Nazi-fascist barbarity. To celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Victory is to remember and praise the heroism, courage and determination of millions of other resistance fighters and anti-fascist strugglers from all over the world who dedicated and committed their lives to the struggle for Victory.

Nazi-fascism was a brutal instrument of big capital to impose its rule, when confronted with the profound crisis of capitalism which followed World War I, in particular after the big crisis of 1929 and the repercussions of the October Revolution. Anti-communism was always a defining trait of Nazi-fascism. Everywhere, the working-class and popular movements, and especially the Communists, were its first victims. Everywhere, the Communists were in the front ranks of the resistance to fascism and were at the vanguard of the mass and armed resistance which led to the liberation.

Today, the resurgence of the fascist threat and the danger of a new war of great proportions are real and growing. Again, in the context of an ever deeper crisis of capitalism – which results from its irreconcilable contradictions – big capital is attempting to emerge from the crisis by force, imposing brutal levels of exploitation and attacking the peoples' sovereignty and the independence of States on all continents. The big imperialist powers attempt to impose their world-wide hegemony by military means, multiplying their wars of aggression. Ukraine is living the consequences of fascist action, with the active support of the USA and the European Union – and of their military wing, NATO. In the name of "the struggle against Communism", revisionism and historical forgery, with the shameless equation between fascism and Communism, are leading to a rehabilitation of fascism.

It is therefore of crucial importance to recall the lessons of history, to remember the crimes of Nazi-fascism, its class nature and the complicities which gave rise to its ascent. The tragedy of World War II must not be forgotten, so that another catastrophe may be prevented.

The undersigned Communist and Workers' Parties call upon the workers and the peoples of the whole world to develop their liberating struggle, to make the celebrations of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Victory over Nazi-fascism into a powerful assertion of unity and struggle for peace, and against the threat of fascism and war, which is rooted in capitalism and which represents a danger to humanity, and for democracy, social progress and socialism. •

## Yussuff slams "vote to shred Charter"

The President of the Canadian Labour Congress vowed to keep up his and the labour movement's opposition to the government's flawed and dangerous anti-terror legislation, Bill C-51, as it moves to the Senate after passing in the House of Commons on May 6.

"It's very disappointing to see MPs voting to strip Canadians of their most fundamental rights as citizens for reasons that go beyond the security concerns posed by ISIS and its supporters. They have not stood up to defend our rights and freedoms, they have instead voted to put the Charter in a shredder," said Hassan Yussuff.

According to Yussuff, the new laws, now before the Senate, give CSIS and the RCMP far-reaching new powers to intervene and interfere with people's lives. The irresponsibly broad definition of what constitutes a threat exposes peaceful work stoppages, wildcat strikes and other forms of nonviolent civil disobedience to a very real risk of being wrongfully targeted for police action, including arrests and detentions. At the same time, new definitions of criminal activity for "advocating" or "promoting" the commission of anything deemed a threat could impact freedom of

speech and freedom of opinion, including freedom of the press and academic freedom.

"We will keep up our work to prevent this terribly flawed legislation from becoming terribly flawed laws that work against the very democratic rights and freedoms it claims to protect," said Yussuff.

"The strong opposition to this legislation that we've seen in Parliament is encouraging as are the promises that a change of government later this year will reverse the mistakes that are being allowed to happen today," he added. •

## NCCM welcomes court ruling freeing Omar Khadr

The National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM), a prominent civil liberties and advocacy organization, has welcomed the May 7 decision by the Alberta Court of Appeal to grant Canadian citizen Omar Khadr bail after almost 13 years of incarceration in both the United States and Canada.

Born in Toronto, Khadr was just 15 years old when he was captured by American soldiers in Afghanistan in July 2002. He went on to spend nearly 10 years in the notorious U.S. military prison in Guantanamo Bay.

"The NCCM welcomes the long-overdue release of Omar Khadr. Khadr was denied due process and his sentencing by a U.S. military commission contravened international human rights law," says NCCM Executive

Director Ihsaan Gardee.

"Today's decision is consistent with the rule of law. We hope that with his release Khadr can begin a new chapter in his life and reintegrate as a positive and contributing member of our society. Canadians should be deeply disturbed that the rights of a fellow citizen - even one whose family and name are unpopular - were so callously abused and ignored.

"This decision comes after a long and persistent campaign of numerous initiatives taken by concerned Canadians including legal action, demonstrations, open letters signed by respected organizations and public figures, and petitions to name a few," said Gardee.

"Finally, his lawyers Dennis Edney and Nate Whiting should be commended for vigorously

standing up and fighting for Khadr's human rights, and by extension, the rights of all Canadians to be treated fairly and according to principles of fundamental justice." •



# UK election: "Turning setback into advance"

**Commentary on the UK's May 7 election, by Communist Party of Britain General Secretary Robert Griffiths. The CPB fielded nine candidates in constituencies across the country, winning low vote totals but campaigning strongly on the issues raised in this article.**

The biggest factors in the Tory victory were political and ideological. Labour's response to the Tory ideological offensive has been feeble, confused and contradictory and its refusal to campaign for public ownership of gas, electricity, water and the railways cost it potentially wide support beyond the party's core base.

Why did the Tories win the general election, when their policies serve the interests of a wealthy and powerful minority rather than the mass of the people? First, it has to be remembered that Cameron & Co won only 37 per cent of the poll, 25 per cent of the electorate and little more than one in five of adults eligible to register and vote.

These figures should be of little comfort to Labour, whose percentages in each case are even lower. Nonetheless, it is significant that the groups least likely to register to vote - tenants, especially in private rented accommodation, foreign-born residents and young people and students - are also among the least likely to vote Tory when they do register. The failure to inspire these people to register and vote therefore helped the Tories to win a parliamentary majority.

So, too, did the first past the post electoral system, which

awarded the Tories just over half of the Westminster seats with little more than one-third of the votes.

But an effective and fairer system of proportional representation would still have given the Tories, UKIP and Ulster unionists around 50 per cent of the seats, with Labour, the Greens, the SNP and Plaid Cymru having only 40 per cent.

The biggest factors in the Tory victory were political and ideological.

With the assistance of the mass media, Cameron and Osborne were able to perpetuate the myths that a profligate Labour government had crashed the economy, that austerity is essential and that Britain's recovery is the spectacularly successful result.

Labour's response to this ideological offensive has been feeble, confused and contradictory, rendering it even more incapable of challenging media orthodoxy. The Labour leadership failed to point out on every possible occasion that bankers and speculators - not spending on welfare and public services - had plunged the whole international financial system into

chaos and crisis.

Eds Miliband and Balls could have reinforced this approach by arguing for the bailed-out banks to remain in public ownership and used to promote investment in productive industry, housing and green technology. Instead, they went along with privatisation.

Labour's refusal to campaign for public ownership of gas, electricity, water and the railways cost it potentially wide support beyond the party's core base. Instead, Miliband opted for an energy price freeze which sent big business and the right-wing press into a frenzy, with little to make the fight worthwhile for Labour.

Indeed, the Labour leadership utterly failed to make City of London fraud, tax-dodging and overseas tax havens a major election issue, having previously supported lower taxes for super-rich "non-domiciled" residents. Nor was enough said about

rebalancing the British economy away from financial services towards manufacturing and R&D. Rather than oppose more "quantitative easing" cash for the banks, Miliband and Balls spent

have made clear its willingness to co-operate with all anti-austerity MPs at Westminster, instead of appearing shifty and insincere when rejecting it. The party might even have won an outright majority. A genuine commitment to building a federal Britain, combined with anti-austerity measures to redistribute wealth from the super-rich to all its regions and nations, might have shored up Labour support in Scotland.

Support for an EU referendum and a more critical attitude towards EU anti-democratic institutions and neo-liberal policies

might have stopped at least some working-class voters defecting to UKIP. Labour's enthusiastic support for more nuclear weapons in Britain did not only haemorrhage votes in Scotland, it might have led to crucial votes going to the Greens in quite a few marginal seats.

These are the kinds of policies Labour must now consider if it is to recover many of the four million Labour votes lost since 1997 - an election won on a social democratic manifesto, not a Blairite New Labour one. This is what the trade unions should demand, together with a fresh Labour Party leadership that will carry them out.

Otherwise, the party is heading for oblivion as the parliamentary voice of organised labour and as a vehicle for far-reaching progressive change. Immediately, the workers and peoples of Britain face an escalation of Tory attacks on public services, the welfare state, democratic local government and trade union rights. The Tories will fan the flames of English nationalism and drive Scotland closer to independence. And, with the support of far too many Labour MPs, Cameron's government will dance to the NATO war drums and commission a new generation of nuclear weapons. We will need our trade unions, the People's Assembly, CND and the Communist Party as much as we ever have before. ●



CPB General Secretary Robert Griffiths

## Cuban medical team in Nepal

Twenty-two doctors, as well as other specialists and much needed medical equipment will be part of a 48-member Cuban health delegation sent to Nepal by the Cuban government in the aftermath of the earthquake that has claimed the lives of nearly 7,700 people and left at least 16,300 wounded.

Cuban officials said on May 6 that the team of medical specialists travelling to the disaster hit region would also take a field hospital that contains a surgical unit, sterilization equipment, an intensive care unit and diagnostic equipment including X-ray and ultrasound machines.

Cuba is well known for its medical internationalism, where medical specialists are sent abroad

to respond to natural disasters or other major health epidemics, and many more work permanently abroad to provide ongoing care. Last year, the socialist island nation sent 256 doctors to West Africa where the Ebola outbreak was the most severe. The doctors returned to Cuba in March, after spending six months treating patients affected by the deadly virus.

The severe 7.8 magnitude earthquake in Nepal on April 25 was the deadliest to hit the country in over 80 years. Thousands of people gathered across the country on May 7 to mark the last day of a 13-day mourning period for the victims of the quake. The main event was held in the ruins of the historic Kastamandap temple in

the capital of Kathmandu, where over 500 people gathered to honour the dead.

[www.telesurtv.net/english/news/Cuba-Sends-Medical-Team-to-Help-Nepal-Earthquake-Victims-20150507-0013.html](http://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/Cuba-Sends-Medical-Team-to-Help-Nepal-Earthquake-Victims-20150507-0013.html). ●



Cuban medical team loading supplies during last year's anti-Ebola mission in west Africa. (Photo from Telesur)

## Anti-Tory protesters met with police violence

By Joana Ramiro, May 11, 2015, Morning Star

Police violence and mass arrests marked the first weekend of Britain's new Tory government as thousands of young people took to the streets to voice their anger over further austerity measures.

Despite having been called just days before Thursday's elections, the Fuck the Tory Government protest saw over 2,000 people march on Downing Street. But the peaceful protest turned sour when, after three hours of causing havoc with central London's traffic, protesters and police clashed on Whitehall in scenes reminiscent of the 2010 student movement.

The Metropolitan Police confirmed that 15 people had been arrested, with several

protesters reporting excessive use of violence by the police.

LSE student Daphne Wikken said: "I have never experienced such extreme force of police violence. My legs are bruised everywhere and I cut my arm. For me what is particularly scary is the fact that the government is already cracking down on dissent so badly just days after the general election."

A man was picked up by his throat by a police officer in riot gear, moments before police lines closed in on protesters, kettling a few hundred near No 10.

One of those jailed during the day's clashes told the Star "arrests were made under arbitrary circumstances, after the demonstration had ended."

The student, who asked to remain anonymous after being released on bail, added he had been "brutally handcuffed" and searched "having

stopped to inquire on someone's else's arrest."

While the protest was called against the prospect of another five years of cuts to public services and the privatisation of the NHS, many of those present used the event to argue for a proportional electoral system. Asked why he decided to join the demonstration, Pascal Cameron said: "For me it was just the shock of it being a Tory majority when clearly there is no mandate for that when you look at the votes."

Speaking about the Conservatives coming to power on less than 40 per cent of the votes with a 66 per cent turnout, he said: "It really struck me this election that it's not actually democracy when it's a minority rule. It's the opposite of democracy." ●

# MAY DAY 2015: celebrations and struggles across the world

## Special to PV

May First, the international workers' day, was marked with protests, demonstrations and celebrations in dozens of countries around the world.

In Canada, thousands of demonstrators took to the streets of Montreal and other cities.

The protests began during the morning rush hour, targeting big banks and the Quebec Liberal government's austerity measures. One protest at a Montreal building that houses financial and trade institutions forced police to require employees to show their ID passes to get to work inside.

The demonstration brought together a coalition of trade unionists, students and social movements, for a march that ended at the Montreal Stock Exchange, with riot police along the route. Later in the evening, a similar-sized anti-capitalist protest drew a sharper response, including police tear gassing of demonstrators and onlookers, and reports of 84 arrests.

About 500 people took part in the annual May Day march organized on Commercial Drive by the Vancouver and District Labour Council. The event focused on the struggle for a \$15 minimum wage, which has been the key demand of BC trade unions and youth groups in recent months. The march was followed by a free evening public concert, during which youth organizers worked to mobilize participation in another street march. Starting close to midnight, this march drew hundreds into a lively protest against police brutality (especially around recent events in Baltimore), and to oppose the Harper government's anti-democratic Bill C-51.

Toronto's May Day march drew attention to the racist treatment of migrant workers in Canada, and raised a wide range of traditional working class demands. The following evening, the annual United May Day celebration held at the Steelworkers Hall on Cecil Street featured a powerful and diverse cultural program, and speakers including CLC President Hassan Yussuff and Communist Party leader Miguel Figueroa.

Other May Day events were held in cities including Victoria, Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg, Hamilton, and Brampton.

## Across USA

May Day was marked across the United States, the country where the annual workers' day



CLC President Hassan Yussuff, at the United May Day celebration in Toronto.



Youth were a big part of May Day events everywhere, including the Young Communist League contingents in Toronto (above, photo by Ed Bill), and Vancouver (photo by Murray Bush)



began with struggles for shorter working day back in the 1880s. In many U.S. cities, the issues raised in these actions included rights for workers and immigrants, and an end to police brutality in the wake of more killings of black men.

In Minneapolis, the group Black Lives Matter mobilized high school students to leave classes, and some staged a die-in that briefly stopped local traffic.

The May Day protest outside Oakland's City Hall has swelled to more than a thousand people, one of several demonstrations by labour, immigrant and civil rights activists in cities across California. The protesters condemned racism, police brutality and income inequality in a loud, sign-waving march from the port to downtown. Signs and banners said that "Racism is the Disease," and called for better wages and working conditions.

In Los Angeles, protesters rallied to support President Obama's proposals to protect millions of immigrants in the country illegally from deportation.

Hundreds of people joined in May Day marches in Seattle and Yakima, Washington, in support of the rights of workers and immigrants.

About 1,000 protesters against police brutality marched in downtown New York at a May Day rally that took on a new message amid outrage over the death of Freddie Gray while he was in the custody of police in Baltimore. Demonstrators streamed through blocked-off streets, bearing signs with such messages as "Disarm the NYPD" and "Justice for Freddie Gray."

About 400 people marched in

Chicago to protest police shootings and to recognize May Day's message of workers' rights.

## International

On a global scale, the largest May Day rallies took place in Havana and Caracas, where trade unions and progressive movements mobilized huge turnouts in support of the socialist policies of the Cuban and Venezuelan governments.

But big rallies were also organized across Europe, the Middle East and Asia. In some countries, the corporate media deliberately ignored huge demonstrations against the austerity policies of governments, preferring to focus narrowly on clashes with police.

In Berlin, several thousand people took part in anti-capitalist street parties in the north of the city, and

In Turkey, authorities stationed an army of 10,000 police with water cannons, rubber bullets and tear gas to keep May Day protesters out of Istanbul's Taksim Square. The square is symbolic as the centre of protests in which 34 people were killed in 1977, and as the focus of massive anti-government protests that rocked Turkey in 2013. Earlier this year, the government passed a security bill giving police expanded powers to crack down on protesters. But despite the police repression and over 200 arrests, many demonstrators managed to get into the square, raising red flags and banners. Large labour rallies were held at other nearby locations in Istanbul, and in many other Turkish cities.

In Taipei, thousands of people took to the streets to demand higher salaries, shorter work hours, and a ban on temporary hiring. Some threw smoke bombs near the Taiwanese presidential offices.

Malaysian activists protested in front of the Kuala Lumpur landmark Petronas Twin Towers during a May Day protest against the GST (goods and services tax) being imposed by the government.

In Manila, protesters set fire to an effigy of Philippine President Benigno Aquino III during a rally near the Presidential Palace. Thousands of workers converged near the palace to call for the resignation of Aquino, demand higher wages, better working conditions, fair export labour policies and a halt to contractualization.

Large crowds took part in the annual May Day march in Trafalgar Square in London, England. This year's rally focused on the proposed privatisation of the National Gallery, where the staff are on strike.

Migrant workers and protesters marched through Hong Kong calling for better wages and improved workers rights. The plight of maids in Hong Kong was highlighted by the case of Indonesian helper Erwiana

Sulistyaningsih, who was beaten and starved by her employer in a case that made world headlines. But the Hong Kong government has yet to address demands by foreign domestic workers for more humane working conditions.

Over 100,000 South Korean workers held two major May Day rallies in Seoul, vowing to wage an all-out general strike if the government pushes through with planned anti-labour "reforms". President Park Geun-Hye's conservative administration has tabled legislation making it easier to fire workers.

In Bahrain, the Interior Ministry prohibited the General Federation of Bahrain Trade Unions (GFBTU) from holding its annual May Day rally. Though these rallies have always been peaceful, the Ministry cited security concerns and worries that the rally would be used to criticise the government, which has cracked down on independent trade unions since 2011.

In Iran, the government engaged in a wave of arrests leading up to May Day, including Ebrahim Madadi, Vice-President, and Davoud Razavi, board member, of the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company, who were arrested and imprisoned on April 29. ●



Scenes from May Day actions, including Taksim Square in Istanbul (above), Hong Kong (centre) and London (at bottom)





# GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE

## Icelanders want higher minimum wage rate

The general public in Iceland not only supports union demands to raise the minimum wage – they would demand even more than unions are asking.

According to the results of a new poll from Gallup, 91.6% of those surveyed support the primary demand of the Federation of General and Special Workers in Iceland (SGS) to raise the minimum wage for their workers to 300,000 ISK (\$2754 Can.) per month over the next three years. Only 4.2% were against the demand.

In addition, respondents were asked what they believe the minimum wage for full time work on the Icelandic labour market should be. According to the results, the spectrum averaged out to 329,000 ISK (\$3020 Cdn.) per month, exceeding the demands SGS workers have put forward to management.

By a margin of 94.6%, SGS workers voted in favour of a series of work stoppages throughout April and May, culminating in a general strike on May 26. Shortly thereafter, more unions joined the fray. In all, some 56,000 workers could strike this month.

Currently, the base salary of an SGS worker is 201,317 ISK (\$1845). Most will not see more than 222,030 (\$2038) per month after seven years on the job.

## Arrests in Iran

Labour activists in Iran have again found themselves the target of persecution for exercising their legal and rightful trade union activities. On April 29, Davood Razavi and Ebrahim Madadi of the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company were reportedly arrested and incarcerated in Section 209 of Evin prison where political prisoners are detained. Earlier, on April 28, Mahmoud Salehi and Osman Ismaili, of the Coordinating Committee to Help Form Workers' Organizations were also arrested. The reasons for the arrests are not known. There have also been reports of other incidents against labour activists.

On May 7, a hunger strike of political prisoners of Karaj Gohardasht prison in support of imprisoned teachers and workers entered its fourth day. Up to 10 hunger strikers are protesting the transfer of imprisoned teacher Rasoul Bodaghi to solitary confinement.

They are also protesting the arrest of Ebrahim Madadi and Dawood Razavi, and the arrest of teachers and workers including Azadegan oil company employees for their protest against mass firings of workers and engineers.

## Sri Lanka pay increases

Unions in Sri Lanka have used collective actions to achieved a major wage increase for private sector workers, taking the

minimum national wage for the sector to around US\$74.

The new Sri Lankan Government has agreed to raise wages of private sector workers by around US\$18, equalling a raise of between 15 and 35 per cent. Meanwhile, state sector employees have seen their wages revised by US\$74, resulting in a minimum wage of around US\$223, including allowances and benefits.

Sri Lankan unions have been fighting for an increased minimum wage in the private sector for a few years, and played a major role in this latest success.

Leslie Devendra, president of Sri Lanka's largest trade union



SLNSS, called the wage hike a welcome step in reducing the huge gap between private and public sector employees, but stressed there is more work to be done.

## Pakistan electric workers strike

Employees of the Islamabad Electric Supply Company locked their offices and staged a protest demonstration on May 7 against privatisation of the company.

"The government wants to make a quick buck by selling a profitable company and depriving us of jobs. We will not let the privatisation happen and will observe strike till government takes its decision back," said Syed Wajid Ali Kazmi, addressing the employees.

It was hot and humid at 37 degrees but the protestors were passionate. They started their strike at the call of the All Pakistan Wapda Hydro Electric Workers Union (CBA) and blocked the Islamabad Highway.

But the process of privatisation has started, reminding the workers that similar selloffs of other public enterprises have meant huge layoffs. Some allege that on the instructions of the Ministry of Water and Power, the distribution company was over-billing customers just to show big profits and lure investors.

A union leader told the protestors that in 1998 there were only 1.2 million consumers and 16,000 employees were working in the company, but now in 2015, there are 2.4 million consumers in the region while the number of employees has been reduced to 13,000. IESCO's core function is to supply, distribute and sell power (electricity) in the area from Attock to Jhelum and from the river Indus to River Neelum in Kashmir. It services 2.1 million consumers directly but touches the lives of more than 25 million people living

in six districts. The speakers severely criticised the government for imposing imperialist austerity policies in the name of democracy and privatisation.

## Maldives minimum wage struggle

Maldivians in the tourism sector are campaigning for a minimum wage of US\$600 for resort workers. Over 5,300 out of 11,400 Maldivians employed in the multi-billion dollar industry have signed the petition launched in April by the Tourism Employees Association of the Maldives (TEAM). The petition was circulated in 77 of the Maldives' 108 operating resorts.

The Maldives does not have a policy on minimum wage. setting one will require an amendment to the Employment Act.

"Only three to seven percent of all tourism revenue is spent on employee wages. The average resort worker only earns US\$250 per month," said TEAM's vice president Ahmed Saleem.

The tourism worker's organization says that resorts earn enough revenue to pay off all wages in one night alone.

"We know how much resorts earn. We know how much taxes resorts pay to the government. We also know how much is paid in wages, and that is very little compared to the rest," said secretary general Mauroof Zakir.

The petition also asks the government to set an eighty percent quota for Maldivians in the tourism industry policy. Current laws require 50 percent of resort employees to be local, but the rule is not widely enforced. Preliminary figure from the 2014 census indicated that foreign employees amount to 59 percent of all tourism employees, with 16,342 expatriate workers.

"Over \$358 million is transferred out of the country as wages for migrant workers annually," said Mauroof, adding that such a quota would help achieve the government's pledge of creating 94,000 new employment opportunities within its five year term.

The petition also wants president Abdulla Yameen to honour a pledge to make shares in resorts available to their rank-and-file employees, a rarity in the country where resorts are owned by private companies controlled by a few individuals.

## German train strike ends

Germany's rail network began returning to normal on May 10 after train drivers ended a near one-week-long strike, the longest in the history of state-owned rail operator Deutsche Bahn.

However, aspects of the dispute over pay and negotiating rights remain unresolved and the train drivers' union has so far refused to heed a government call for mediation, raising the possibility of further stoppages.

The strike has caused major disruption in a country where about 5.5 million passengers use the train network each day and one-fifth of

freight - some 620,000 tonnes a day - is hauled by rail. Economists said the stoppage, which began on freight trains on May 4 and then spread to passenger trains, cost Europe's biggest economy up to 750 million euros.

The GDL union, which represents 20,000 train drivers, launched the walkout to back demands for a 5 percent pay rise and a reduction in the work week to 37 hours from 39 on behalf of other rail workers including train stewards.

Deutsche Bahn, which has 200,000 employees, has offered its drivers a 4.7 percent pay rise plus a one-off payment of 1,000 euros (\$1,120). But it has refused to let the GDL negotiate wage deals for non-drivers.

Coinciding with a series of strikes at airline Lufthansa, the transport stoppages have prompted the government to draft a law to limit the power of small unions like those representing train drivers and airline pilots.

## Mass expulsions of migrant workers

Saudi authorities have conducted a concerted campaign since 2013 to detain and deport hundreds of thousands of undocumented migrant workers, resulting in abuses against many of them, Human Rights Watch said in a report released May 10.

The 36-page report, "Detained, Beaten, Deported: Saudi Abuses against Migrants during Mass Expulsions," draws on interviews with 60 workers deported to Yemen and Somalia who experienced serious abuses during the expulsion campaign. They described beatings and detention

in poor conditions before they were deported. Many arrived back in their countries destitute, unable to buy food or pay for transportation to their home areas, in some cases because Saudi officials arbitrarily confiscated their personal property.

"Many of the hundreds of thousands of migrants Saudi Arabia has deported in the last year and a half have been sent back to places where their safety is threatened," said Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East and North Africa director. "Saudi Arabia should treat all migrants with respect and decency, regardless of their status, and provide a fair legal process, including the right to challenge their deportation."

On Nov. 4, 2013, the first day of the Islamic New Year, Saudi police and labour authorities began a campaign to locate, detain, and deport undocumented migrant workers. This followed an April 2013 amendment to the labour law that allowed police and labour authorities to enforce provisions against undocumented workers, including detaining and deporting anyone not working for a designated employer.

### This month in labour history...

**In Winnipeg on May 15, 1919, negotiations broke down between employers and the building and metal trades. The Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council called a general strike. Within hours almost 30,000 workers left their jobs in a historic display of class solidarity.**

Many items in our "Global Class Struggle" column are from the Labour Start website, [www.labourstart.org](http://www.labourstart.org)

## Join 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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# What's really behind the war against ISIS?

By T.J. Petrowski

The contradictions of imperialism are clear in the West's war against ISIS. Working people are bombarded with messages of the worldwide threat of ISIS, with the aim of convincing us to sacrifice our civil liberties and democratic freedoms and to support more military interventions in the Middle East. But are Barack Obama, David Cameron, Tony Abbot, and other Western leaders truly interested in countering the threat of ISIS?

The rise of ISIS has its origins in the illegal occupation of Iraq by the US, the UK, and other Western forces in 2003, which caused the deaths of an estimated 5% of the Iraqi population. The Bush and Blair administrations falsely accused the Iraqi regime of harboring weapons of mass destructions, of supporting al-Qaeda, and of having some connection with the 9/11 attacks. But the Bush administration had plans to attack Iraq long before 9/11. What's more, the US facilitated the rise of Saddam's regime, and supplied it with weapons in its war against Iran. Unlike Saudi Arabia and other allies of the US in the region, Iraq was a secular state that was violently opposed to the reactionary Islamist ideology of al-Qaeda. The war, if anything, was a boon for al-Qaeda, which was never active in Iraq before the occupation.

In 2011, the US, the UK, France, Canada, and other imperialist states, along with their allies in the region, which include Saudi

Arabia, Turkey, and Qatar, allied themselves with militant Islamist organizations in Libya and Syria to overthrow the secular governments of Muammar al-Gaddafi and Bashar al-Assad respectively.

Western imperialism invoked the 'responsibility to protect' (R2P) doctrine to justify NATO airstrikes on Libya, killing thousands of civilians. Libya was the wealthiest country in Africa, with the continent's highest standard of living and with universal healthcare and education. But in the aftermath of NATO's intervention, the country fell into a state of collapse as rival tribes and Islamist organizations battled to control its wealth. Militant Islamists captured, tortured, and murdered Gaddafi. The intervention in Libya directly facilitated the breakaway of the Azawad and the rise of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in Mali. Using the "war on terror"

ruse, the US, EU, Canada, and other imperialist states have been actively supporting the Malian regime in its war against Tuareg autonomy and AQIM, which they earlier supported in Libya along with the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group. Libya was virtually handed to al-Qaeda by NATO. With their success in Libya, al-Qaeda and other Sunni Islamic militants quickly mobilized to overthrow the secular government of Syria.

The US policy of supporting hostile Sunni insurgent groups laid the foundation for the rise of ISIS, the Taliban, al-Qaeda, and nearly every single Sunni extremist group that has appeared in the last 40-50 years. In Afghanistan, to undermine the country's 1978 socialist revolution and spread instability into Soviet Turkestan, US imperialism with its allies in the Persian Gulf and in Pakistan supported militant Islamist groups that would later form the nucleus of al-Qaeda and the Taliban. This

policy was given a further impetus following the 1979 Iranian Revolution, where an anti-US, theocratic Shiite regime was established.

Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Seymour Hersh wrote in 2007: "To undermine Iran, which is predominantly Shiite, the Bush Administration has decided, in effect, to reconfigure its priorities in the Middle East. In Lebanon, the Administration has cooperated with Saudi Arabia's government, which is Sunni, in clandestine operations that are intended to weaken Hezbollah, the Shiite organization that is backed by Iran. The US has also taken part in clandestine operations aimed at Iran and its ally Syria. A by-product of these activities has been the bolstering of Sunni extremist groups that espouse a militant vision of Islam and are hostile to America and sympathetic to Al Qaeda."

The "Islamic State" (a term widely rejected by Muslims), was formed in 2006 when al-Qaeda in Iraq merged with other Sunni insurgent organizations. The name was changed to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (or Levant) (ISIS) in April 2013 after a second merger, this time between the Islamic State and al-Qaeda's affiliate in Syria, the al-Nusra Front.

The US, Britain, Canada, and other imperialist states, through their allies Israel, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar, have been supporting the "moderate" Free Syrian Army (FSA) rebels with hundreds of millions of dollars in weapons, training camps, and free medical treatment to injured fighters. So how has SIS managed to defeat the FSA, despite aid from the West and its regional allies?

Only a lunatic would believe that Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf States, absolute monarchies run by a small clique of corrupt sheikhs, would support a moderate, democratic, and free Syrian organization. Even to the corporate media it is no secret that these allies of the West fund reactionary Islamist organizations whose interests are antithetical to democracy. The *Washington Post* reported that "Qatar's cultivation of African Islamists, principally Somalia's al-Shabab insurgents, has...troubled the United States," which is drone bombing Somalia in the name of the "war on terror." Israel, the region's "only democracy" we are told, itself supported Hamas to counter the influence of the secular Palestinian

Liberation Organization in the 1980s.

Many of these "moderate" FSA fighters have joined the ranks of ISIS. Dozens of outlets have detailed this fact. A Lebanese newspaper quoted an FSA commander as saying, "We are collaborating with the Islamic State and al-Nusra," and Al-Jazeera reported in 2013 that "hundreds of fighters under the command of the opposition Free Syrian Army (FSA) have reportedly switched allegiance to al-Qaeda-aligned groups." The *World Net Daily* quoted Jordanian officials as saying that the rebels trained by US instructors in Jordan have joined ISIS.

There is overwhelming evidence that the US and its allies are both directly and indirectly supporting ISIS. According to a source close to Iraqi intelligence, there is allegedly an ISIS training camp in Turkey, in the vicinity of Incirlik Air Base near Adana, where American personnel and equipment are located. NATO member Turkey is among the most staunch supporters of the rebels. As an ISIS fighter told the *Jerusalem Post*: "Turkey paved the way for us. Had Turkey not shown such understanding for us, the Islamic State would not be in its current place."

Former Iraqi Prime Minister and current Vice-President Nouri al-Maliki publicly accused Saudi Arabia and Qatar of bankrolling ISIS. Kuwait, in particular, due to its weak financial laws, has become a financial and organizational hub for Syrian rebel groups. The Brookings Institute in Washington, D.C. reported "evidence that Kuwaiti donors have backed rebels who have committed atrocities and who are either directly linked to al-Qa'ida or cooperate with its affiliated brigades on the ground."

Evidence exists of direct Israeli support for ISIS fighters. United Nations observers in the Golan Heights reported to the UN Security Council of direct contacts, including Israeli Defense Forces supplying ISIS with unmarked crates and offering medical treatment to wounded fighters. An Israeli officer spoke out in opposition to the war against ISIS, claiming that the US is strengthening what Israel perceives as the real threat, the Shiite alliance of Hezbollah and Iran.

Nearly all of the aid provided to the "moderate" rebels has been captured or sent to ISIS. Not long after the *Washington Post* reported

see ISIS, page 11



ISIS fighters in their convoy of Toyota pickup trucks

## US trains Ukrainian neo-Nazis

By Manlio Dinucci, II  
*Manifesto (Italy)*

This spring the United States will begin training and arming the Ukrainian National Guard: this was officially confirmed by the European Command of the United States that stated that the program is part of the initiative of the Department of State to assist Ukraine in implementing "internal defense."

The funding, already authorized by Congress, comes from a special fund from the Pentagon and the State Department to "provide training and equipment to foreign security forces," so that "the partner countries may confront important challenges to the national security of the United States."

The training mission in Ukraine serves to "demonstrate US commitment to the security of the Black Sea and the value of the US forces deployed in forward positions."

The units of the National Guard of Ukraine, according to rough estimates, number 45-50 thousand including volunteers, will be trained by US military instructors in Yavoriv near Lviv, about 50 km from the Polish border.

The National Guard, established by the government in Kiev in March 2014 with an initial funding of US\$19 million, has incorporated Neo-Nazi

military formations, already trained by NATO instructors for the putsch of Kiev (as shown in a photographic documentation of militant neo-Nazis trained in Estonia in 2006). The Donbass, Azov, Aidar, Dnepr1, Dnepr2 and other battalions, that are the shock forces of the National Guard, are made up of both Neo-Nazi Ukrainians, and neo-Nazis from other European countries.

The atrocities they have committed against civilians of Russian nationality are widely documented by video and eyewitness testimony (just type in Google "atrocities of neo-Nazis in Ukraine"). But, despite the fact that Amnesty International has accused the government of Kiev of being responsible for war crimes committed by these battalions, the US continues to support this regime, even giving it armored vehicles. The United States government now empowers Kiev with a training program and more armaments.

These actions fall within the "Operation Atlantic Resolve", launched by the European Command of the United States military to "reassure our allies, in face of the Russian intervention in Ukraine, and as a deterrent to prevent Russia gaining regional hegemony. In the framework of the growing deployment of US forces in Eastern Europe, the Pentagon sent "military experts to enhance the defensive capacity of

Ukraine" and pledged an additional \$46 million to provide "military equipment, including vehicles and night vision goggles."

Washington is therefore already arming the forces of Kiev, even though Kiev is not actually receiving heavy weapons from the US, it may obtain them in any case from the millions of dollars given to the Kiev regime. All this while Germany, France and Italy say they support a diplomatic solution and therefore are against the provision of arms to Kiev.

But at the same time at a summit in Brussels, these countries committed, along with Britain, Spain and Poland, to take on more responsibility in the formation of a NATO "Strike Force", in the framework of a "Response Force", made up of 13 to 30 thousand men and equipped by six centers of command and control in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria. While the US, in preparation for the summit in Minsk on Ukraine (which deliberately did not participate), stated, though the Secretary of State, that among the allies "there are no divisions, we all agree that there can be no military solution."

But at the same time, training and arming the Ukrainian neo-Nazis, the US fans the flames of war in the heart of Europe. ●

## US court: NSA records collection illegal

A US federal appeals court ruled yesterday that government snooping into private telephone records exceeded congressional authorisation. The case, brought by the American Civil Liberties Union, had previously been dismissed by a lower court. But the second circuit appeals court said that the judge in the first case was wrong to rule that the National Security Agency's collection of millions of innocent citizens' phone records was legal.

However, the court declined to block the program, saying it was now up to Congress to decide if it should continue. It said a debate in Congress could profoundly alter the legal landscape.

The US Congress authorised the NSA to collect such data on terrorist suspects following the September 11, 2001 attacks on New York and Virginia. But in 2013 NSA contractor Edward Snowden leaked documents that showed that the powers were being abused to spy on millions of non-suspect US citizens. ●

# Radical History

# Bandung at 60

By Norman (Otis) Richmond, aka Jalali

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's arrival in Canada is major news. Modi is being greeted like he is a musical star like Bob Marley or Bruce Springsteen. India has a long history of leaning left and not being a servant of Western interest. It is no surprise that this Asian nation is a foundation member of BRICS.

The new kid on the economic block is BRICS an association of five major emerging national economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. The grouping was originally known as "BRIC" before the inclusion of South Africa in 2010.

They are distinguished by their large, fast-growing economies and significant influence on regional and global affairs; all five are G-20 members. Since 2010, the BRICS nations have met annually at formal summits. Russia currently holds the chair of the BRICS group, and will host BRICS seventh the summit in July 2015.

BRICS countries represent almost 3 billion people, or approximately 40% of the world population. The five nations have a combined nominal GDP of US\$16.039 trillion, equivalent to approximately 20% of the gross world product, and an estimated US\$4 trillion in combined foreign reserves. Many feel that BRICS is a continuation of the Bandung Conference.

History will record two Bandung conferences. The first took place 60 years ago between April 18-24, 1955 at which 29 African and Asian nations met in Bandung, Indonesia to promote economic and cultural cooperation and to oppose colonialism.

The idea of the Bandung Conference came from Ahmed Sukarno of Indonesia. It was conceived in Colombo, Indonesia, where the Colombo powers – India, Pakistan, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), Burma (now Myanmar) and Indonesia, the host country – met in April 1954. The Bandung Conference led to the 1961 creation of the Non-Aligned Movement.

At that moment in history Josip Broz Tito was the president of Yugoslavia. The Non-Aligned Movement was founded in Belgrade. The idea for the group

was largely conceived by Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister. Other players were U Nu Burma's first prime minister, Sukarno Indonesia's first president, Gamal Abdel Nasser and Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first president.

The second Bandung Conference took place in 2005. The first head of state to arrive at the 2005 conference was South African President Thabo Mbeki. Ironically, South Africa along with Israel, Taiwan and North and South Korea were all barred from the 1955 conference. In light of recent tragic events, Mbeki visited the tsunami stricken province of Aceh before he proceeded to the conference.

I first heard about the Bandung Conference in the mid-1960s while listening to a speech by El-Hajj Malik Shabazz (Malcolm X) titled "Message to the Grassroots," first delivered at the King Solomon Baptist Church in Detroit on November 10, 1963. Malcolm talked about places and faces I had never heard of, however, he didn't get it completely correct. There were White people at the Bandung conference. Marshal Tito represented Yugoslavia, and there were American, Australian and numerous members of the European press. In fact, African American journalist Ethel Payne, who was at Bandung, pointed out, "The British had sent just hordes of correspondents, and the Dutch and the Germans and all the European countries."

Africans in North America paid close attention to this historic event. In Canada, Daniel Braithwaite's organization, which had a relationship with the U.S.-based Council on African Affairs (CAA), sent a message of support. Braithwaite was so impressed by CAA co-founder Paul Robeson that he not only started a CAA chapter in Toronto, he named his son Paul in tribute to Robeson. Other Africanists like W.E.B. DuBois, Alphaeus and Dorothy Hunton, along with Robeson, were members of the Council on African Affairs.

At the time of the first Bandung Conference, the North American left, in general, and the African liberation movement inside the United States, in particular were under attack. Senator Joseph McCarthy was looking for a "red under every bed." Robeson, "the Tallest Tree in the Forest," wanted

to attend the conference but couldn't because the U.S. government had taken his passport. Ditto for DuBois. However, several African American politicians and journalists found themselves in Indonesia from April 18-25, 1955. Adam Clayton Powell Jr., Carl T. Rowan, Dr. Marguerite Cartwright, journalist Payne Richard Wright and William Worthy all were there.

Worthy who joined the ancestors on May 4, 2014 at the age of 92 has almost been written out of history was in Bandung. He interviewed President Sukarno at the time.

Powell, the Congressman from Harlem, went to the Conference on a dare. He wanted to attend to represent the interests of U.S. imperialism by talking about the progress the Negro in America was making. "It will mark the first time in history that the world's non-White people have held such a gathering," he told reporters in Washington, D.C., "and it could be the most important of this century." Powell, no matter what we think of him, knew what time it was. His appeals to President Eisenhower and others in the State Department fell on deaf ears. The flamboyant Powell was told the U.S. government saw no need to send an official observer to Bandung. However, he got there compliment of the African American weekly newspaper, New York Age-Defender. Karl Evanzz pointed out in his brilliant book, "The Judas Factor", "There was at least one unofficial observer: at the request of John Foster Dulles' brother, CIA Director Allen Dulles, a young African American journalist named Carl T. Rowan covered the conference."

Rowan went on to become the Director of the US Information Agency. He also went on to alienate a generation of Africans in America after the February 21, 1965 assassination of Malcolm X. Rowan's statement after Malcolm's death was: "All this about an ex-convict, ex-dope peddler who became a racial fanatic."

Of the two female African American journalists at the conference, the well-connected Dr. Cartwright represented a chain of White dailies and the United Nations. The lesser-known Payne was the new kid on the block and represented the Chicago Defender, which was part of John Sengstacke's chain of Black weeklies.

Payne, who went on to be crowned "The First Lady of the Black Press" said she had little or no contact in Indonesia with Dr. Cartwright. Of Cartwright, Payne said, "She had a desk at the U.N. and so she had quite a lot of access that I didn't have." However, Payne did network with writer Richard Wright, a one-time member of the Communist Party USA who went on his own and wrote the book, "The Color Curtain", about the Bandung Conference. "The Color Curtain" was first published by University Press of Mississippi in 1956. Wright wrote about the faces and places in Indonesia in 1955, and one can feel him learning about what would come to be called "The Third World."

The first Bandung Conference was attended by 21 Asian, seven African and one Eastern European

country. The second was attended by 54 Asian and 52 African nations. The Asian-African Conference has been transformed into the Asia-Africa Summit. A recent re-reading of Robeson's "Here I Stand" made me realize how important these two conferences are to humanity. At both, questions of world peace, South-South cooperation, nuclear weapons and Palestine were discussed.

The great Paul Robeson wanted to attend the Bandung Conference. Robeson summed it up in these words. He said, "How I would love to see my brothers from Africa, India, China, Indonesia and from all the people represented at Bandung. In your midst are old friends I knew in London years ago, where I first became part of the movement for colonial freedom - the many friends from India and Africa and the West Indies with whom I shared hopes and dreams of a new day for the oppressed colored peoples of the world. And I might have come as an observer

had I been granted a passport by the State Department whose lawyers have argued that 'in view of the applicant's frank admission that he has argued that in view of the applicant's frank admission that he has been fighting for the freedom of the colonial people of Africa... the diplomatic embarrassment that could arise from the presence abroad of such a political meddler (sic!) travelling under the protection of an American passport, is easily imaginable!' So all the best to all of you. Together with all of progressive mankind, with lovers of peace and freedom everywhere, I salute your history-making conference."

Norman (Otis) Richmond, aka Jalali, was born in Louisiana, grew up in Los Angeles, and came to Canada after refusing to fight in Vietnam. Richmond works as a producer/host of *Diasporic Music on Uhuru Radio* ([uhuru-radio.com](http://uhuru-radio.com)). His column *Diasporic Music* appears monthly in *The Burning Spear newspaper*. ●



Seen here at the 1955 Bandung Conference, from left: Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, India; President Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana; President Gamal Abdel Nasser, Egypt; President Sukarno, Indonesia; President Josip Broz Tito, Yugoslavia.

## Florida man accused of laundering \$100M for Colombian paramilitaries

By Lucas Koerner, [venezuelanalysis.com](http://venezuelanalysis.com), May 5, 2015

A South Florida man was arrested by U.S. federal authorities on May 4 and charged with using his Bank of America accounts to launder over \$100 million on behalf of Colombian drug cartels and paramilitaries. According to federal prosecutors, Lustgarden Acherman "quarterbacked an international scheme to move U.S. dollars around on behalf of drug cartels and paramilitary organizations in Colombia."

The federal government alleges that Acherman channelled Colombian drug profits into Venezuela where he reportedly exchanged them for local currency at exorbitant black market rates.

"He takes advantage of the unique situation in Venezuela... has made a business of gathering U.S. dollars and making them available in places they are hard to come by such as Venezuela," stated prosecutors.


Limited access to dollars has fuelled a booming black market in Venezuela, where one dollar can be exchanged for close to 300 Bolivars.

Colombian drug cartels have actively exploited this economic crisis, carting off to Colombia tons of government-regulated products - from gasoline to imported medicines - where they can be exchanged for dollars and drugs, which are then sold in Venezuela to make obscene profits. This highly lucrative contraband has financed the emergence of new paramilitary groups, which now control significant swathes of territory along the border between Venezuela and Colombia. These retain close ties not only with the Colombian political establishment, which has nurtured their growth for decades as part of the war against leftist guerrillas, but also with the Venezuelan Right.

Last year, Loreh Gomez Saleh was extradited from Colombia and charged alongside four others with plotting terrorist attacks against the Bolivarian government in coordination with Colombian paramilitaries.

In a series of intercepted Skype conversations, Saleh named rightwing politician Antonio Ledezma as the chief backer of violent anti-government militants, prompting the ex-mayor's arrest and indictment.

Bolivarian authorities also allege that Colombian paramilitaries are behind last year's assassinations of chavista parliamentarian Robert Serra and the leftist president of the Caracas city council Eliezer Otaiza, both of whom were outspoken opponents of Venezuela's Right. ●



## La Trova Nuestra

**Friday, May 29, 8 pm**

### "La Peña Nuestra"

Centre For Socialist Education, Vancouver  
706 Clark Drive (Clark and Georgia st)  
\$10 Entry

**About Vancouver's "La Trova Nuestra"**  
La Trova Nuestra is composed of 20 individual trovadores who originate from across Latin America and now reside in Vancouver. These trovadores are the keepers of a musical tradition which began with pioneers of the vernacular song. La Trova Nuestra incorporates this tradition interplaying music and poetry. At its foundation is the essence of a popular culture interpreting daily expression... an expression with origins deep within La Raza Mestiza (mixed roots) of Latin America - an expression of the explosive changes within the continent of Latin America today. La Trova Nuestra could be defined as "The encounter between a man, a guitar and poetry - voices pledging for a better world."

# Victoria activists reject MLA intimidation tactics

Drivers along the Patricia Bay highway between Victoria and the Swartz Bay ferry terminal on Vancouver Island are familiar with a stretch of closely-packed billboards promoting a range of businesses, charities and social causes. Local supporters of Cuban friendship and solidarity often rented a billboard site at this location near Mt. Newton Cross Road, as part of the ultimately successful campaign to free the Five Cuban Heroes from U.S. jails.

Most recently, the Victoria Friends of Cuba joined with the Victoria Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid for a similar project. On May 3, the groups erected a billboard condemning the Israeli state's racist treatment of Palestinians, along the same stretch of highway owned by the nearby Tsawout First Nation. This band earns important revenue from these billboards, but the business side of the arrangement is contracted out to a few independent companies. As in the past, this deal was signed with the Direct Marketing Group operated by Robert Lynn, who has no role in the content of the billboards.

But on this occasion, "controversy" suddenly erupted. Just four days later, Robert Lynn contacted Randy Caravaggio of the Victoria Friends of Cuba, regarding a letter complaining that the billboard was offensive and hateful, and requesting its removal. The complaint was not from an ordinary citizen, but from Andrew Weaver, the Green Party MLA for the neighbouring constituency of Oak Bay-Gordon Head.

Considering the Green Party's reputation as defenders of free speech and civil liberties, members of the two organizations were surprised, but refused to meekly back down.

In a letter to supporters, Caravaggio says, "We have received incredible support with letters and phone calls for our action in putting up the billboard. We also received a great number of copies of the letters that many of us have sent to MLA Andrew Weaver. We hope that we continue to receive more of them. We believe that the billboard has given space for open debate on the issue for a wider audience as we had



The billboard that MLA Andrew Weaver considers "hateful"

originally intended before erecting the billboard."

Responding directly to Andrew Weaver (a climate scientist who became the first Green elected to the BC Legislature in 2013), Caravaggio and Edwin Daniel of the Victoria Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid said, "To use your office and position as an MLA to bully someone to silence debate and quash our freedom of speech is abusive to say the least. Why could you not simply have contacted us to discuss it? We are the ones fully responsible for the billboard and its content. Our name and contact are clearly visible on the billboard. We hid nothing. So why use this sneaky unprofessional manner to try to silence us?"

Weaver's letter also argues that "the accusation of apartheid... promotes the disdain and hatred towards those accused of supposedly practicing apartheid."

In response, Caravaggio and Daniel point to "ethnic cleansing of more than 700,000 Palestinians in 1948-9, a more than 400 mile long illegal separation wall, the oppression under military law of Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, the illegal imposition of 600,000 Israeli settlers on Palestinian land, the fact that all Palestinians - unlike Israelis - have to carry and show ID cards when they pass through endless check points, ongoing destruction of thousands of Palestinian homes and villages, Israeli only highways, the illegal blockade of Gaza starving nearly 2 million people, the repeated attacks on Gaza with massacres of

thousands including women and children, the breaking of over 70 UN resolutions, the racist plan to make Israel a state of the Jewish people..." Do these policies not constitute Apartheid?, they ask.

In conclusion, the two groups express the hope that Weaver will retract the statements in his letter, and extend apologies for his behaviour. •

## Quebec union backs BDS campaign

PV Montreal Bureau

A major Quebec trade union has come fully on board with the international Palestine solidarity campaign known as Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions or BDS. The decision took place in April at a delegate meeting of the Confederation of National Trade Unions (CSN) which represents some 325,000 workers in all sectors across Quebec.

The CSN noted the 2005 and 2014 calls of Palestinian unions to support the BDS campaign and pressure Israel to respect international law, end the military occupation of Gaza and the West Bank, respect the rights of Palestinian refugees, and stop racial discrimination against Palestinian citizens of Israel.

The CSN's decision brings the Quebec organizations of the Coalition BDS-Québec up to twenty-six. Frequent protests forced the Israeli consulate to relocate out of downtown Montreal and into neighbouring Westmount a few years ago. Likewise, consistent weekly picketing helped close the local NAOT store, exclusively selling Israeli shoes produced in a West Bank sweat-shop.

"For the CSN, the BDS campaign must be particularly active in Canada and Quebec because of the depth of the ties that weave the Harper government with that of Israel," their statement said.

BDS is calling for three main demands: stopping all imports of Israeli goods or export goods, cultural or academic activities or productions in Israel; removing investments in Israeli bonds and companies and banks; and a military embargo against Israel.

The first labour conference on BDS was held in Ramallah four years ago. The Canadian Union of Postal Workers, CUPE Ontario, as well as the British union Unite and the Congress of South African Trade Unions all support BDS. •

# What's Left

## Vancouver, BC

**Left Film Night**, Sat., May 23, 5 pm, screening of "History is Made One Step at a Time," the story of farmworkers leader Cesar Chavez. Ph. 604-255-2041 for info.

**La Trova Nuestra**, monthly social evening of Latin American music and food, 8 pm, Friday, May 29, admission \$10, at the CSE, 706 Clark Drive.

**Celebrate the 94<sup>th</sup> Birthday of the Communist Party of Canada**, 6 pm, Sat., June 20, dinner at the Centre for Socialist Education, sponsored by Montivero Club CPC, ph. 604-254-9836 for details.

**"Eyewitness report from the war zone of eastern Ukraine,"** Friday, June 12, 7 pm, SFU Harbour Center, with speaker Roger Annis (newcoldwar.org website), sponsored by Institute for the Humanities at SFU. (Roger Annis will also speak in Montreal on May 28, and Ottawa on June 5.)

## Toronto, ON

**Cuba Solidarity in Canada, Five Decades of People-to-People Foreign Relations**, with author & editor Nino Pagliccia, long-time activist and former organizer of the Che Guevara volunteer Work Brigade, Friday, May 29, 7:30

pm, OISE, 252 Bloor Street West. Peace Lounge—7th Floor. Also present will be some authors of the book's 12 chapters outlining solidarity across Canada. Free admission, light refreshments.

**Hear special Cuban guests**, Fernando González, one of the Cuban Five heroes, and now Vice-President of ICAP, and Dr. José Portilla Garcia, member of Cuba's medical mission fighting Ebola in West Africa, presented by Canadian Network on Cuba and CCFA Toronto, Sat., May 30, 7:30 pm, Steelworkers Hall, 25 Cecil St. (near College & Spadina).

**Jazz BBQ**, Sat., June 6, 2-6 pm (rain date Sunday), 526 Main St. (2 blocks north of Main subway). Great food and drinks, music and entertainment! Tickets \$20, proceeds to People's Voice, organized by East Toronto Club CPC.

**CCFA Toronto Annual General Meeting**, with guest speaker Jean Augustine, former Etobicoke-Lakeshore MP, and guests from Cuban Consulate. Saturday, June 13, 7:30 pm, 519 Church St., Grand Ballroom 2nd floor (N. of Wellesley, East of Yonge). Reports of the past year's work, plans for the next year, election of next Executive Committee, free admission.

## People's Voice deadlines

June 1-15 issue: Thursday, May 21

June 16-30 issue: Thursday, June 4

Send submissions to PV Editorial Office,  
706 Clark Drive, Vancouver, V5L 3J1  
<pvoice@telus.net>

## ISIS: what's behind the war?

(Continued from page 9) that aid from the CIA and the State Department, which included dozens of Toyota pickup trucks, were being delivered to rebels on the Turkish-Syria border, the iconic photo of ISIS militants in a convoy of Toyota trucks invading northern Iraq became public. Less than four months after Obama pledged \$500 million in weapons and aid to the FSA rebels, ISIS had acquired the same amount of weapons from the FSA. A Syrian fighter told *Al-Quds al-Arabi* that much of the aid was sold to unknown parties in Turkey and Iraq. And don't forget about the repeated "accidental" weapon drops by the US in ISIS-controlled territory!

The war against ISIS in the Middle East by Western imperialism is a farce. ISIS continues cause chaos in formerly staunch anti-imperialist states which had the strength to oppose Israel, and to create a force capable of countering Iranian influence.

ISIS is now a "threat" because Western imperialism, in failing to topple the Syrian government, requires a new pretext to continue its aggressive military interventions in the Middle East, in particular to weaken Syria and the Shiite leadership of Iraq, for an attack on Iran. If defeating ISIS was the real objective, the Western powers would form an alliance with Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah, which have relentlessly battled ISIS on the ground, not with Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey.



**Saturday, June 6, 2-6 pm (rain date Sunday)**  
**526 Main St., Toronto**

2 blocks north of Main subway. Great food and drinks, music and entertainment! Everyone welcome!  
Tickets \$20, proceeds to People's Voice  
Organized by East Toronto Club CPC.

## Victory won by the Red Army...

continued from page 12

fought largely alone for almost three years. American commentators would have you believe that the US was the mainstay of the Soviet war effort, but in fact supplies from the US and elsewhere accounted for only four percent of Soviet war supplies.

The factories created under socialism's five-year plans to industrialise the country produced the other 96 percent of Soviet war material. When winter came, it was the "efficient" German war machine that was unprepared, whose men froze, whose fuels froze, and whose planes could not get off the ground.

British and US supplies and the Russian winter are credited by anti-Soviet historians with defeating the Nazis, but both claims are false.

Winter is hardly a secret weapon, nor does it affect only one side of the front line. The German High Command failed to prepare for it, the Soviet Supreme Command - and the Soviet State - did.

Collective security and an anti-Nazi front was finally created in the crucible of the war but the failure to form such a front when it was first proposed cost the lives of millions of people.

The resistance and the victories of the Soviet Red Army inspired the struggles of the people in the occupied countries and made the Second World War a just, anti-fascist liberation struggle. The defeat of Nazism had long term consequences, a fact that is still influencing events in the world today. •

# Victory Day 70th Anniversary: the heroic defeat of fascism

*From The Guardian, weekly paper of the Communist Party of Australia*

The defeat of fascism required the most destructive and monstrous war in history and its consequences are still being felt around the world. The defeat of Nazi Germany, fascist Italy Japanese militarism – the decisive contribution from the Soviet Union – was, at the same time, a defeat for imperialism everywhere.

Immediately after the Nazis seized power in Germany in 1933 the Soviet Union and communist parties worldwide warned that Nazism and fascism meant war and the destruction of all working class and progressive organisations. The Nazis violently smashed trade unions and all liberal opinion. Virulent anti-communist and anti-Jewish propaganda flooded the German people. In the German cities blackshirts and brownshirts prowled the streets terrorising all who opposed the Hitler regime, ransacking homes, offices and places of worship, arresting and torturing dissidents, and destroying books in massive public bonfires.

Hitler denounced the treaties imposed on Germany following WW1 and commenced the rearmament of Germany. He intended to take his revenge for Germany's defeat in WW1 and for the seizure of German colonies by Britain and France.

Far from opposing Nazism, however, the political leaders of Britain and France and a number of other western countries believed that they could use Hitler to destroy what they saw as a far greater danger to their power and privileges – the Bolsheviks of the Soviet Union.

The socialist USSR was an example that a new social system bringing an end to capitalist exploitation was possible. It was a hindrance to the plans of the imperialist states to re-divide the world's markets and control the resources of the colonies to their own advantage.

While the governments of the US, Britain and France wanted to unite the capitalist world against the Soviet Union by forming a compact with Hitler's Germany, the capitalists of Germany sought

such a union through the subjugation of other capitalist countries.

Some imperialist politicians saw this contradiction clearly – Churchill in Britain, Barthou in France, Roosevelt in the US – but they were the minority. Most were so blinded by anti-communism that they were prepared to give the fascists a free hand.

Barthou brought the USSR into the League of Nations and, as Germany and Japan left it, the Soviet Foreign Minister Litvinov began the fight for the adoption of the principle of collective security.

However, influential leaders of the capitalist powers believed that German fascism was the only bulwark against Bolshevism. They confidently expected that a re-armed Germany would sweep to the East and destroy the centre of the Red contagion – the USSR.

Western leaders consistently rejected calls for collective security – it was intended to restrain aggressors, and could only be aimed at Hitler's Germany.

Instead, Germany was helped to rearm, to re-occupy the Rhineland, to force through an Anschluss with Austria (basically Germany was allowed to seize the country).

When Germany moved to occupy Czechoslovakia, which had a strong army and an advanced armament industry, the imperialists found themselves in a quandary. The British and French public demanded that their governments support the independence of Czechoslovakia while the strategic aims of the British and French rulers called

for Czechoslovakia to be given to Hitler.

A conference of the leaders of Britain, France, Germany and Italy held in Munich betrayed Czechoslovakia and handed that country to Nazi Germany. The Soviet Union was not invited to attend.

The Soviet Union offered to stand by Czechoslovakia without France if necessary. But while Czech Communist MPs demanded that President Benes request Soviet assistance, he refused.

The British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain returned to London from Munich following the conference with Hitler to make one of the great hypocritical utterances of all time. Waving Hitler's signature on the Munich agreement he declared "It means peace in our time". It was called appeasement.

For anyone with eyes, the aims of the imperialists were now clear. Nevertheless, the Soviet government tried once again to forge a collective security agreement with Britain against the Nazis.

A British delegation went to Moscow. The Prime Minister had flown to Munich to see Hitler and betray Czechoslovakia, but only a minor Foreign Office official was sent to Moscow. He did not fly but went by a steamer with a top speed of only 12 knots. When he finally arrived he revealed that he had no power to sign an agreement – he could only discuss one. His visit was merely a sop to British public opinion. The USSR was being left to face Germany alone.

At this juncture the contradictions between the Franco-



*Soviet army units present captured Nazi banners at the historic victory parade in Moscow's Red Square, June 24, 1945*

## Soviet army liberated most of Europe

*From RT News*

Only 13% of Europeans think the Soviet Army played the leading role in liberating Europe from Nazism during WW2, a recent poll targeting over 3,000 people in France, Germany and the UK reveals.

Forty-three percent of respondents said the US Army played the main role in liberating Europe. The survey was conducted from March 20 to April 9, by the British ICM Research agency for Sputnik News.

Over 50% of Germans and over 61% of French citizens believe their ancestors were liberated by the Americans. Nearly fifty percent of Britons think British forces actually played the key role in ending the Second World War. Only 8% of respondents in France and 13% in Germany credited the Soviet Army for the victory.

WW2 lasted from 1939 to 1945 and involved over 80 countries and regions. Up to 70 million people are believed to have lost their lives, including at least 27 million Soviet citizens.

The US had hoped to stay out of WW2. Vice-President Harry Truman was quoted by the New York Times on June 24, 1941: "If we see that Germany is winning, we ought to help Russia and if Russia is winning we ought to help Germany, and that way let them kill as many as possible, although I don't want to see Hitler victorious under any circumstances. Neither of them thinks anything of their pledged word."

Various estimates say the Soviet Red Army liberated nearly half of Europe's territory, which comprise 16 modern countries. Allied forces liberated nine countries, while six more were freed by the Soviets and the Allies together. The combined population of the territories, in which the Red Army beat back Hitler's forces, was about 120 million people.

The Red Army also had to face the lion's share of Nazi forces on the Eastern Front - about five million soldiers. The vast majority of Hitler's military hardware was also concentrated in the East: 5,400 artillery pieces, 54,600 mortars and over 3,000 warplanes. Combined, it amounted to three-fourths of the heavy weapons at Hitler's disposal. By the end of the war, the Soviets had destroyed over 70 percent of the enemy's forces. ●

British and German capitalists became crucial. Germany sent its Foreign Minister to Moscow to offer a non-aggression pact. The Soviet government, having failed in its efforts to forge a collective security agreement against the Nazis, agreed to sign a Soviet-German non-aggression pact.

The British and French imperialists were stupefied. The chickens of appeasement had come home to roost. Before long Germany invaded Poland and a distraught Chamberlain had to declare war and declared significantly at the time, "All our plans have fallen to the ground".

Except at sea, however, the declaration of war was accompanied by little military action. The reactionary leaders of Britain and France patiently waited for Germany to do as Hitler had indicated he would – attack the USSR. Instead, he invaded the Low Countries and France and commenced the bombing of Britain. He would not now invade the USSR until he had subjugated France and severely crippled Britain.

However, when Hitler did invade the Soviet Union, he discovered that it was not isolated as the German capitalists and those who aided and abetted Hitler had anticipated. Churchill had replaced Chamberlain as British Prime Minister.

The Soviet leadership had skilfully exploited the contradictions between the blocs of

capitalist states and, backed by the popular anti-fascist struggles of the people around the world, was able to forge a formidable anti-fascist coalition. And, to the horror of the capitalist class everywhere, the "Soviet rabble" fought tenaciously for their country and their socialist way of life.

The Red Army turned out to be technologically and industrially advanced – the Soviet T34 was the finest tank of the war. In the heavily armoured close ground-support Stormovik fighter-bomber the Soviet forces had a virtual flying tank that had no counterpart in any other army. Fearsome batteries of truck-mounted multiple rocket launchers ripped hell out of the German armies.

Before the year was out the Soviet Red Army had not only stopped the German advance but had inflicted the first major defeat of the war on the hitherto "invincible" Wehrmacht in the Battle of Moscow. Workers and democratically-minded people everywhere were inspired by their resistance and rejoiced in their victories. Guerrilla resistance to German occupation grew rapidly in the occupied countries of Europe.

In England, to the alarm of capitalists, the Red Army was viewed with something akin to awe. None-the-less, except for the ardent support of British and US factory workers, the Red Army

see VICTORY, page 11

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