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in Palestine**
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The world tells the USA: **"NO WAR AGAINST SYRIA"**

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"A union for everyone"

**Report from a Unifor
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"The excitement and the promise of the project was reflected by the fact that over 3,000 delegates and 1,000 observers and special guests descended on the Metro Toronto Convention Centre to witness the birth of Unifor."

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Taser roll-out?

In the wake of another police shooting of a young man in Toronto, Ontario Liberals give the go-ahead to provide Tasers for cops across the province. But is this really such a great idea?

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A Communist MP

A leading Communist member of India's parliament spoke at events in Surrey, BC, to mark the centenary of the revolutionary Ghadar Party and to defend secular values in India.

Unifor comes to life at founding convention

By Stuart Ryan, Ottawa

When the leaders of the Canadian Auto Workers and the Communications, Energy and Paper Workers announced Unifor as the name for their proposed new union on May 30, the response around the labour movement was, "What?". People googled the name and discovered, among other things, a uniform company in Italy. Some thought the new symbol was militaristic. Perhaps the leaders had lost sight of the hope and excitement generated from the initial document, "A Moment of Truth for Canadian Unions".

The leaders explained that the name reflected the purpose of the New Union Project, to reach out to organize the unorganized, to build an inclusive "union for everyone". They also said that the actions of the new union will define its effectiveness more than its name: come to Toronto and see Unifor come to life.

The excitement and the promise of the project was reflected by the fact that over 3,000 delegates and 1,000 observers and special guests descended on the Metro Toronto Convention Centre to witness the birth of Unifor on August 31 and September 1.

A day earlier, the two unions held special conventions to allow their National Executive Boards to approve the dissolution of the existing unions and the joining together to create Unifor.

At the CAW convention, there was a sense of nostalgia and pride in its history, from the breakaway from the American UAW, its growth by the mergers of other unions into the CAW, and the development of a culture of a social union with its own path in the labour movement. That pride was matched with eagerness to form a militant social union that will try to reverse the decline of the labour movement in the private sector in Canada.

Saturday morning, the delegates gathered with anticipation and excitement. Peter Kennedy apologized to the observers that because of the over 4,000 participants, it was necessary to place them in another hall, to watch the proceedings via television prompters.

After a video showing the range of workers and workplaces that will make up Unifor, the outgoing presidents spoke: David Coles from the CEP, and Ken Lewenza from the CAW. Lewenza brought delegates to their feet when he said the most important card in your wallet was your union card.

The first item of business was the adoption of the new Constitution, to be decided on a yes or no vote on its entirety. Amendments had already been made through the lengthy consultation process across the country. It passed by 94.54%.

The Constitution established three National Offices: President, Treasurer and Quebec Director; and three regional directors (Atlantic, Ontario, and Western). Five Regional Councils are established (BC, Prairies, Ontario,

Quebec and Atlantic) and eleven industry councils (Transportation, Forestry, Media, Retail, Energy, Auto, Communications, Manufacturing, Health Care, Resources and Service). The chairs of each council sit on the National Executive Board, as well as positions for Racialized Workers, Skilled Trades and Retirees.

During regional meetings across the country in April and May, the two co-chairs of the Proposal Committee, Peter Kennedy from the CAW and Gaeten Menard from the CEP, stated that for the founding convention only, there will be a proposed slate for all 25 positions on the NEB. The reason was that there needed to be a committed group of leaders who could bring the new union into a cohesive force. They reiterated the pledge that the NEB would reflect the gender composition of the new union, which has some 86,000 women



members out of a total 315,000.

A Unity Caucus met on Friday night to present the proposed leadership, a slate which included 11 women out of the 25 positions.

Members were entitled to stand for positions, and Lindsay Hirshellwood was nominated for president, against the Unity Slate's Jerry Dias. When Dave Coles moved to immediately start the elections, delegates demanded to hear from each candidate before voting. When Coles said there was no provision for that in the agenda, the crowd reacted.

Bowing to the demands of the floor, each candidate was given five minutes. Hirshellwood said that she would push for no concessions, and that she would not try to sell a concession in bargaining as a victory. Dias commented on his experience on negotiating with some of the most notorious and largest corporations in the world, as an Assistant to two CAW Presidents over the last seven years, and would have much more to say if indeed he was elected.



Jerry Dias, the new president of Unifor.



Unifor members and leaders at the Labour Day march in Toronto. (PV photos: Ed Bil)

An electronic voting system allowed each delegate to vote on behalf of a proportion of the local's membership. Dias received 214,694 votes, 82.55%, to Hirshellwood's 45,697 votes, 17.45% of the total. All the other positions were acclaimed. Peter Kennedy was elected Treasurer and Michel Arseneault, from CEP, was elected Quebec Director.

In his acceptance speech, Jerry Dias tried to explain the hope and determination expected of the new union. After introducing his parents, his wife and children, and how each influenced his union career and his support to stop violence against women, he outlined the political and economic challenges facing the Canadian labour movement. "Rampant capitalism" is tearing apart the economic and social fabric of Canada, he said. Jobs are disappearing in the manufacturing sector, jobs are getting worse, and two million people are unemployed.

The political decisions of the Harper government - "free trade", a "resource-based" currency that inflates the cost of living and leads to job losses, changes to Employment Insurance - are choices to advance the interests of business over the people, Dias said. "Unifor has to stop playing defensive," he said. "It is time to go on the offensive and set the agenda."

He paid tribute to two members of CEP Local 249 who were killed in the Lac-Mégantic disaster. The explosion was not an accident, he said, but a product of the lack of regulation by the federal government. The Montreal, Maine and Atlantic Railway, with a terrible record of health and safety, was allowed to cut staff and store dangerous material on side-tracks without any employees watching the cargo. We cannot let them get away with it, he said.

Unifor will never forget the accomplishments of its two founding unions, but will never be a captive of its collective past, said Dias, stressing that "we will build a new union, modern, accountable and democratic, fighting for good jobs and social equity in Canada."

He called for a "Good Jobs Summit", no more Free Trade Agreements like CETA and TPP, a Canadian Energy Strategy where raw materials would be processed in Canada, support for public health care, and an improved

Canada Pension Plan.

The first agenda item is to defend the Rand Formula, he argued, warning that the government will not succeed without a hell of a fight from Unifor and the labour movement. He eagerly endorsed the Together For Fairness Campaign of the CLC, while promoting the Union Advantage.

Organizing will become a key culture of the new union. Dias said it will look to organize young people in precarious employment. Youth are restless and frustrated, and will fight back, he said, citing the Occupy movement, the Quebec student strike and Idle No More. For the rest of the working class, he said, "Unifor is a union for U."

The day ended with both unions voting overwhelmingly to join Unifor. This move gave UNFOR successor rights for all the bargaining units previously organized by CAW and CEP.

Sunday was spent debating and adopting policies on the direction of the new union. A Policy Paper called, "A new Union for a Challenging World: Unifor's Vision and Plan" described how neo-liberalism had destroyed the dream of shared prosperity after the Second World War, and outlined six fundamental priorities for Unifor: Building the new union, organizing new members, staying tough at the bargaining table, defending labour rights, making its progressive voice heard in the communities and in politics, and building a stronger labour movement.

Another paper outlined how an "organizing culture" would be at the centre of the agendas of Unifor at every level, from the Local to union conferences to the NEB. A National Organizing department will combine with the CEP plan of member organizers getting 50% time off work to organize. Ten million dollars each year will be assigned to this task.

A third exciting aspect of organizing is Community Chapters. Workers in non-unionized workplaces, or in precarious employment, can approach either the National Union or a Local to become a Community Chapter. Each group would need to have a sufficient number of active potential members, a common interest in a particular workplace or a defined community, and a clear strategy of how the collective power of the union can enhance their working conditions or enhance their social

security.

Unifor staffer Roxanne Dubois introduced three groups who want to become Community Chapters: Canadian Freelancers, United Church Ministers, and bike couriers in Toronto. Other groups mentioned in debate are digital journalists in BC and Niagara Casino workers. The convention ended on a controversial issue that indicated Unifor will be a different kind of union. A motion was presented to take \$15 million from the combined strike funds of the two founding unions to pay for the transition costs of the creation of Unifor.

Delegates asked whether the money would be returned to the Strike Fund in the future. Treasurer Peter Kennedy stated that if the general fund was healthy at the time of the 2016 Convention he would be the first person to make such a motion.

A delegate proposed an amendment that the NEB come to the 2016 Convention with a plan to pay back that money over time. Kennedy declared the amendment out of order. When the floor raised objections, Jerry Dias took the chair and made a passionate plea for the motion. A delegate got up and informed Dias that as chair of the convention, he was not allowed to make a statement on the issue before the convention.

Dias declared that no one would silence him. Once the amendment was seconded, it was debated and defeated. The original motion then passed overwhelmingly.

Dias finished by saying that this union will have passionate debates, which is healthy, and once a decision is made, the union will unite and move forward. He said that unity will be the strength of the union.

The Policy Paper "A new Union for a Challenging World: Unifor's Vision and Plan" states the founding of Unifor is an act of hope. "But like all great projects the building of Unifor will succeed because Unifor will succeed because Unifor is larger than the sum of its parts. We are motivated and guided by shared ideals and principles that will strengthen us to meet the challenges ahead... And let's dedicate ourselves to building Unifor, building our movement and building a better Canada."

Lofty goals indeed, but based on the founding convention, it is off to a promising start. ●

(Stuart Ryan was a delegate to the founding Unifor convention.)

More information at:
www.newunionconvention.ca

Critics pan Premier Wynne's Taser roll-out

In the wake of highly-publicised cases involving police violence, the Ontario government says it will permit all officers to carry Tasers. The decision on Aug. 27, weeks after police fired nine bullets into Sammy Yatim and then tasered the dying teen. Just a day after Community Safety Minister Madeleine Meilleur's announcement, Peel Police tasered an 80 year woman in Mississauga, breaking her hip and hospitalizing her with other injuries.

As Toronto's NOW magazine reports, civil liberties groups, criminologists, and mental health advocates worry that "conducted energy weapons" (CEWs) may be over-used by police.

Restating its "long-standing concerns about the safety and appropriate uses of CEWs," the Canadian Civil Liberties Association investments in better de-escalation training and crisis intervention teams. The CCLA argues that the "lax" current guidelines in Ontario allow officers to fire a Taser when a subject exhibits "assaultive behaviour," which can include "aggressive body language".

B.C.'s Braidwood Inquiry, which followed the 2007 Taser

death of Robert Dziekanski, found that the "assaultive threshold" was too low. In the wake of the Braidwood recommendations, CEW use in B.C. has plummeted dramatically, with no corresponding rise in shootings, indicating that police may be using less violent strategies in difficult situations.

According to the Toronto Police Service, during 2012 officers used Tasers in 255 incidents, 43.6 per cent of which involved subjects deemed to be "emotionally disturbed"

The Communist Party of Canada (Ontario) is calling on the provincial government to rescind its decision, and instead train police to de-escalate crisis situations. The CPC(O) also demands that police should be put under strict control of civilian boards.

A statement from the CPC(O) says that Premier Wynne hopes to absolve the government of responsibility for the increasing number of police shootings. But arming officers with another lethal weapon, the statement says, has escalated the danger of even more police killings.

"The solution is not more force, but less force by police, and more

education and training to effectively de-escalate crises situations," says the CPC(O). "These are the recommendations of dozens of Coroner's Inquests into police killings of individuals in crisis situations - recommendations that have been consistently ignored by Liberal and Tory governments.

"Further, Police Services and Senior Staff must be held accountable to ensure that de-escalating crises situations is the

first response and that police guns are holstered. This accountability can only be ensured with public civilian control of police. The provincial government must give civilian boards the powers they need to make police accountable to the communities they police."

The CPC(O) also points out that at \$1,500 each, the Taser purchase will impact municipal services, at a time when the province is downloading costs onto over-burdened civic governments.

"The escalation of police shootings of individuals in crisis parallels the increased police violence against legal strikes, protests and demonstrations such as occurred at the G20 in 2010," warns the CPC(O). "In addition to putting police under public civilian control, the provincial government should act now to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, which enabled martial law and the largest mass arrest in Canadian history." ●

Employers using TFW program to cut wages

Wages are being undermined by employers who use the Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) program, warns the Alberta Federation of Labour.

A list obtained by the AFL shows that 243 employers in Alberta are accessing the Temporary Foreign Worker program rather than paying employees more than the province's minimum wage, which was raised by 20 cents to \$9.95/hour on Sept. 1.

"If employers were really using the TFW program as a last resort, rather than a first choice, they wouldn't be paying these workers the minimum wage," Alberta Federation of Labour president Gil McGowan said. "They can't say they've actually tried to hire Canadians if they're not offering more than minimum wage."

Of the 243 employers, the majority (58 per cent) are in the food service industry. The list includes Boston Pizza locations, Ricky's All-Day Grills and a variety of sushi restaurants and pubs. Most of these approved Labour Market Opinions

(LMOs) will permit the employer to hire multiple Temporary Foreign Workers.

"This list shows that the TFW program is being used to suppress wages and displace Canadian workers. Anyone claiming that there's a labour shortage is either deliberately lying, or deeply misinformed," McGowan said. "If there's a labour shortage, wages are supposed to be going up to attract workers to fill the vacancies."

Under the Temporary Foreign Worker program, employers applying to bring in workers must commit to paying the prevailing wages for the type of worker they are hiring. By paying the TFWs minimum wage, these employers are admitting that paying bottom dollar is their standard practice.

"It's an irony that the Harper Government claims to be a big defender of the free market, but it's clear that they're using the TFW program to undermine the Canadian labour market," McGowan said. "The Federal Conservatives are deliberately using their power to help service-sector employers keep wages low when economic conditions suggest

they should be going up."

The documents released by the AFL help explain why more teenagers and recently arrived landed immigrants are having a hard time getting entry-level jobs. According to Statistics Canada, the unemployment rate for youths aged 15-24 in Alberta was more than 11 per cent in May.

"For young people, low-wage jobs in the service sector have traditionally been the entry point into the labour market," McGowan said. "But now those bottom rungs on the ladder are increasingly being filled with exploitable TFWs."

Working 35 hours a week, 52 weeks a year, someone earning Alberta's minimum wage of \$9.95 an hour will earn \$18,109 a year before taxes. According to Statistics Canada, the Low-Income Cut-Off for a single wage earner with no dependents is \$23,298. The AFL has called for a minimum wage that would allow those working full-time to earn that amount, which works out to \$14.05/hour without benefits, or \$12.08 with benefits. ●



More Ontario cops will soon be getting "conducted energy weapons" but we may not feel any safer.

Canadian groups speak out on anti-LGBT law

PV Vancouver Bureau

World-wide protests continue against the homophobic legislation adopted in June by the Russian Duma (parliament). Hundreds of people gathered outside the Russian Consulate in Vancouver on Sept. 3, for a lively and dynamic demonstration. Such protests may escalate with the news of further legislation, including measures to remove children from LGBT parents in Russia.

In late August, over 100 Canadian organizations sent an "open letter against hate" to the governments of Russia and Canada, and to the International Olympic Committee. The letter was also sent to prominent corporate sponsors of the Sochi Winter Olympic Games, which will be hosted by Russia next February.

The letter says, in part, "We, the undersigned Canadian civil society organizations, call upon you to stand against the rising tide of hate against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in Russia. We are deeply troubled by the ongoing and intensifying attacks against LGBT, not least those led and encouraged

by President Vladimir Putin and the federal Parliament (Duma). These actions include, most recently, the unanimous adoption of a federal law banning the distribution of "propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations" (Federal Law 135-FZ of June 29, 2013).

The letter points out that LGBT people risk prosecution for exercising their freedom of expression and association, "as does anyone who defends the

human rights of LGBT people or even mentions the existence of LGBT people in an approving fashion." Individuals can be fined up to 100,000 rubles (\$3000) for breaking the law, and organizations can be fined up to 1 million rubles (\$30,000) and closed down for up to 90 days.

The letter lists a series of actions against LGBT people in Russia, from the banning of Pride parades, to violent street attacks: "LGBT

youth and adults are being assaulted and tortured by thugs who then broadcast video recordings of these attacks online. So far, Russian authorities have turned a blind eye to such hate crimes, even though some perpetrators are easily identifiable."

This climate of hatred, the letter notes, flies in the face of not just international human rights law but the ostensible spirit of the Olympic Games."

The signing organizations call on the government of Canada to continue to speak out against the anti-gay legislation, and to oppose the "traditional values" resolution being advanced by Russia at the UN, "which is a patent attempt to cloak bigotry and hate in the legitimacy of a Human Rights Council resolution."

Among other proposals, the letter urges the International Olympic Committee and International Paralympic Committee to host a Pride House in Sochi, and "to include explicit reference in their respective Charters to discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity as incompatible with the Olympic and Paralympic

Movements, as is already done with grounds such as race, gender and religion." (The Paralympic Movement already includes sexual orientation in its Charter.)

The letter calls upon the CBC, as the exclusive Canadian broadcaster of the Sochi Games, to "commit to reporting, before, during and after the Sochi Games, on human rights abuses in Russia, including against LGBT people, other minorities and political dissidents targeted by the Russian government."

Signing groups range from the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network and other health advocacy organizations, to Egale Canada, the BC Civil Liberties Association, the Canadian Anthropology Society, and the United Church of Canada.

Labour movement endorsers include the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), Canadian Labour Congress, Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), CAW Canada, Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL), OPSEU Rainbow Alliance, Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO), and the United Steelworkers. ●



Young Communist League and Communist Party supporters taking part in Toronto's 2013 Pride Parade. (Photo: Ed Bil)

EDITORIALS

Time for labour offensive

"Great minds think alike," as the old saying goes, or perhaps "necessity is the mother of invention." Difficult circumstances sometimes compel individuals or movements to take decisive action. The AFL-CIO is looking at new ways to help unorganized U.S. workers and community groups to join the "house of labour". This decision comes just after Canada's new Unifor union adopted a constitution and organizing strategies to establish "community chapters".

We recall another watershed moment in the annals of the North American labour movement. In 1935, in the depths of the worst economic crisis in capitalist history, embattled trade unions faced a choice: stick with traditional "craft union" tactics aimed at appeasing employers to protect a shrinking membership base, or launch militant struggles to organize millions of industrial workers. The latter option led to the emergence of the CIO in the U.S. and similar campaigns in Canada. Thanks in part to sweeping advances for socialism in Europe, this strategy led to major victories for working people within a generation.

There is no guarantee that similar gains will be achieved by Unifor and the AFL-CIO. It will take a massive fightback for workers to resist the corporate assault, including in Canada. But after a long period of primarily defensive and isolated struggles, the labour movement is trying out creative ways to turn the tables on big capital. Bringing new sections of working people into the labour movement will puncture the vicious corporate media lie that trade unionists are living the easy life at the expense of unorganized workers. This strategy will help unite all working people - organized and unorganized, public and private sector, employed and unemployed, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, young and old, from all national origins and genders - into a powerful coalition to fight for their common interests. This is an idea whose time has come - let's help make it happen!

Peace is still everyone's business

Way back in the scary 1980s, a decade of justified fears of imperialist war threats, the peace movement in Canada coined the slogan, "peace is everybody's business." Winding down massive spending on militarism, went the argument, would allow governments to tackle hunger, homelessness, poverty, and other devastating social problems.

More than twenty years later, the U.S. remains the undisputed global leader in the arms race, pouring hundreds of billions into new weapons of mass destruction and a global network of military bases. The only "winners" from the latest round of sabre-rattling by the Obama administration appear to be corporations like Raytheon, makers of the Cruise missiles which may soon be destroying Damascus, one of the historic centres of civilisation.

The world now spends about a trillion dollars a year on the insane pursuit of military domination. Even a fraction of that sum could go a long way towards providing billions of people with clean drinking water, decent homes, adequate schooling, good jobs, and protection from the impending climate change catastrophe.

By the time this newspaper is printed, the people of Syria may be the next victims of imperialism's revolting "responsibility to protect" mass murder doctrine. Or it may be that worldwide popular opposition is able to prevent this deadly attack. In either case, the fundamental problem will remain: how to wind down the arms race and dismantle all weapons of mass destruction, including the Pentagon's vast arsenal of killing machines. Under the shadow of the constant threat of war, humanity can never turn its full collective attention to the struggle for survival. Today, more than ever, peace must become the number one priority of all those who love this planet.



The world rejects war

Morning Star, Sept. 7, 2013

Washington's attempt to hijack the G20 summit in Moscow to build support for its illegal plan to bomb Syria has been an abject failure. Barack Obama has been able to count on the usual suspects - Britain, France, Australia, Turkey and Canada - to echo his bellicose comments and offer to hold his coat.

But the majority of participants, representing some of the most populous states in the world - China, India, Russia, Brazil and Indonesia - reject the US recourse to war that it deploys so freely.

"International responses should not lead to more and worse humanitarian problems," says Indonesian Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa. "The misery of the Syrian people has been too long and we need to ensure there is no military approach used, but instead peaceful diplomatic measures must be utilised to settle the problems."

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh made clear that India opposes any action outside the framework of the UN and rejects armed intervention aimed at regime change as this would violate international law.

Brazilian Foreign Minister Luiz Alberto Figueiredo said that any

military intervention against Syria would be a violation of international law unless the UN security council gives approval.

Argentinian President Cristina Kirchner declared: "No-one, no-one at all, wants war and we do not believe that solving the problem of those killed would be through more killing."

Despite the stance of Britain and France, the European Union, which has a collective voice at the G20, is also opposed to military action. "There is no military solution to the Syrian conflict," said European Council president Van Rompuy. "Only a political solution can end the terrible bloodshed, grave violations of human rights and the far-reaching destruction of Syria."

Yet pro-war politicians and media in the imperialist states obsess over the stance taken by Russia and its President Vladimir Putin. US ambassador to the UN Samantha Power went so far as to accuse Moscow of holding the security council hostage and shirking its international responsibilities. Power berated Russia for exploiting the system that gives a veto to the post-war big five - US, Soviet Union, China, France and Britain. She ought to know that since Russia superseded

the Soviet Union in 1991, taking up its veto power, it has deployed that power just twice.

In contrast, the US has wielded its veto 55 times to prevent the international community taking action over crimes committed by its client state Israel against the Palestinian people.

Washington and its cheerleaders in Paris and London must appreciate that the world has changed. The old colonial powers no longer hold sway. The UN set up after the second world war provides, for all its faults, a means of discussing and tackling problems that arise within a framework of international law.

UN weapons inspector Hans Blix has experience of having his work frustrated and terminated by the bloodlust of US and British leaders. His advice that "one should not be arrogant and take unilateral action but actually turn and use the security council" is sound. It's also in line with what people think in Britain, the US and the rest of the world.

The way to end the Syrian people's suffering is for all states to stop supplying weaponry and combatants and for the UN to facilitate a conference for political forces in Syria to negotiate an end to war and an agreed way forward.

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The Revolution is Ongoing! Anti-Imperialist Solidarity with the Egyptian People Must Continue!

Statement by the Central Executive Committee, Communist Party of Canada, Sept. 4, 2013

Since the overthrow of the brutal regime of Hosni Mubarak in February 2011 - the "first wave" of the Egyptian revolution - the Egyptian people have not ceased their mobilizations for democracy, social progress and peace. Their demonstrations and strike actions blossomed into the Tamarod movement during the presidency of Mohamed Morsi, as it became increasingly apparent that he and the Muslim Brotherhood were authoritarian, sectarian and corrupt. Clearly, it is this people's movement that has forced Morsi from power and set the stage for new elections.

The Communist Party of Canada expresses its continued support for the progressive people's movement in Egypt, and calls on all democratic and progressive forces in Canada to extend and deepen anti-imperialist solidarity with the Egyptian people.

During the past year, with over 30% unemployment and a poverty rate of 50%, with skyrocketing public debt, and with mass fury over Morsi's betrayal of the ideals of the first wave of the revolution, the Egyptian people organized a staggering 7400 protests and strikes. This ongoing and deepening organization of the mass of the Egyptian workers and people has been critically important for the purpose of maintaining and strengthening a progressive, democratic current within the

pluralistic people's movement. While the military and Muslim Brotherhood emerged in positions of power early on, the people have continued to be a force for social change and progress. Within this struggle, the people's movement continues to project a popular, democratic alternative for Egypt's development.

There has been much confusion over the characterization of Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood as democrats. The sources of this confusion are varied - pro-Brotherhood organizations, pro-imperialist "liberals", and sectarian leftists - but they all have the same dangerous potential to neutralize active anti-imperialist solidarity with the Egyptian people and their revolution. It is true that Morsi and the Brotherhood were elected, but it is far more significant that they quickly and decisively turned their backs to democracy - by imposing a constitution with their own, narrow, interpretation of Sharia law; by avoiding the people's "first wave" demands for economic, social and cultural rights, political freedom and secularism; by encouraging foreign intervention to overthrow the Syrian government; by continuing neoliberal privatization and austerity policies; and by leading murderous, sectarian attacks against minorities in Egypt.

What is truly democratic is the massive and broadly-based movement to oust Morsi. Over 22 million people - one quarter of the country's population - signed

petitions indicating non-confidence in Morsi and calling for early elections. The anti-Morsi demonstrations on June 30, 2013 involved 27 million people - one out of three Egyptians - on a single day. These demonstrations and mobilizations, reflecting secularism and unity, are the real expressions of the Egyptian people's revolution.

The uprising against Morsi in 2013, led by the Tamarod movement and the National Salvation Front, was stronger and deeper than that against Mubarak in 2011 and, as had occurred two years prior, the military was moved to intervene ahead of the people's movement. The military leadership's concern is similar to that of imperialist states and organizations - that the revolutionary movement was maturing and growing, and was becoming capable of achieving political and social change on a truly democratic and anti-imperialist basis.

The Egyptian people have now begun the "second wave" of their revolution. While the struggle against sectarianism and religious fundamentalism is not over, the people have overwhelmingly turned their backs to the authoritarianism and reaction of Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood. Many contradictions remain - the military has assumed power and control, and the people's revolution will need to confront that powerful apparatus and replace it with democratic, progressive institutions of governance.

One of the great dangers is that

imperialism will use the current situation, of confusion and violent conflict, as a pretext to once again interfere in Egypt's internal affairs. On July 5, less than a week after Morsi had been ousted, the Wall Street Journal opined that Egypt

The Communist Party of Canada expresses its unqualified solidarity with the Egyptian people and with the progressive movements of Egypt. In particular, the CPC declares its support for the Communist Party of Egypt, whose militants are continuing



Supporters of the Tamarod (Rebel) movement played a key role in the massive popular upsurge against the Morsi regime.

needs fascism, declaring, "Egyptians would be lucky if their new ruling generals turn out to be in the mold of Chile's Augusto Pinochet, who took over power amid chaos but hired free-market reformers and midwived a transition to democracy." This kind of "advice" needs to be roundly condemned. There must be no imperialist or foreign interference in Egypt, under any pretext. It is the sole right of the Egyptian people to determine the path of their social, economic and political development.

to organize among working people and projecting a democratic, secular and anti-imperialist alternative for Egypt.

The Communist Party of Canada is confident that the ongoing, unfinished Egyptian revolution will achieve a transformative victory. We call on all of our members and supporters, and all democratic-minded and anti-imperialist Canadians to support the Egyptian people and the revolutionary process unfolding in Egypt today.

On the so-called "Monument to Victims of Communism"

Issued by the Central Executive Committee, Communist Party of Canada, Sept. 3, 2013

The Communist Party of Canada is appalled that the federal Conservative government will provide a massive taxpayer donation of \$1.5 million under Citizenship and Immigration's Inter-Action program, to help build a so-called "monument to victims of communism" in Ottawa. Despite opposition, approval has previously been granted by the National Capital Commission for a site between Library and Archives Canada and the Supreme Court of Canada.

The monument project is a throwback to the sordid era of the Cold War, which resulted in a wave of anti-communist frenzy, RCMP spying, witch-hunts, blacklisting, social ostracism, imprisonment and deportations against many progressive-minded Canadians. Such policies had a terrible "chilling effect" on public discourse and sharply curtailed the freedom of expression and associated democratic and trade union rights of all Canadians. The sponsors of this monument are now attempting to revive this tragic McCarthyist era of red-baiting, which had been tossed into the dustbin of history.

The "Tribute to Liberty" group operates as a charitable foundation, despite the federal government's denial of charitable status to organizations which engage in political advocacy (a biased policy which exempts right-wing groups

linked to the Harper Conservatives, such as the Fraser Institute). The "Tribute to Liberty" organizers are well aware of the highly-charged political nature of said 'monument'. As they admitted several years ago, the proposal's "commemorative theme remains not entirely compatible with the NCC's policy for commemorations that mark national events or individuals. However, the international significance of the proposed subject is gaining considerable profile and support from various foreign governments..."

Indeed, they openly celebrate their "significant high-level political support", as confirmed by press reports indicating that Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism), and Prime Minister Stephen Harper have given active encouragement to this defamatory initiative. Having raised only a fraction of their \$4 million fundraising target, the organizers have now been given the bulk of the remaining funds by their Tory friends.

The political implications of this proposal go far beyond the National Capital Region, or Canada as a whole. In Europe, recent years have seen a concerted campaign to whip up a renewed atmosphere of anti-communism. A resolution adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) equates fascism and communism, a nauseating attempt to rewrite the history of the 20th century. Anti-communist attacks have been

launched by governments against Communist parties and affiliated organizations in several countries, including the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Ukraine, Estonia, Greece and elsewhere, without any legal or justifiable basis. The true

the estimated 25 million Soviet citizens who perished at the hands of the Nazi invaders during World War II, defending their homeland, fighting heroically as allies of Canada in the war against Hitlerism.

Announcing his government's



Red Army troops raising the victory flag in Berlin. Would this famous photo be considered "insulting" by the Harper Tories?

underlying goal of this campaign is intended to intimidate and isolate progressive parties and movements, and to limit the free expression of ideas.

The authors of the monument proposal go so far as to turn history on its head, claiming that the monument would "honour the 100 million lives lost under Communist regimes" - a figure which includes

support for the project, Jason Kenney stated that "it will also serve as a reminder to all Canadians that glorifying Communist symbols insults the memory of these victims..." We must ask: among those who are allegedly "insulted" by Communist symbols, does Mr. Kenney mean the supporters of Nazi aggression, which was decisively defeated on the eastern front by

Soviet troops under the banner of the Red Flag? And do the Conservatives intend to follow the example of other reactionary governments which have used similar arguments in their attempts to ban Communist symbols?

We must further note that the name for this monument also defames the many accomplishments of communist parties which have formed governments, in countries such as the People's Republic of China, Cuba, and Vietnam, or taken part in governments, including South Africa, India, Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, etc.

This proposal also represents a profoundly unjust attack on Canadian Communists, who have made many pioneering contributions since 1921, such as fighting against fascism, organizing industrial workers into unions, initiating movements to win Unemployment Insurance, public healthcare and other social programs, to campaign for peace and disarmament, fighting for the full national rights of Aboriginal peoples and Quebec, and to defend Canada's sovereignty.

It is deeply unfortunate that the NCC set aside its initial misgivings and violated its own guidelines to allow construction of this monument, and that Canadians are being compelled to pay for this red-baiting project which falsely blames Communists for the crimes of fascism. We demand that these decisions be reversed, before this celebration of anti-communism becomes a permanent shameful blot on the capital city of Canada.

How intelligence was twisted to support an attack on Syria

By Gareth Porter, *Truthout*, Sept. 3, 2013 (abridged)

Secretary of State John Kerry assured the public that the Obama administration's summary of the intelligence on which it is basing the case for military action to punish the Assad regime for an alleged use of chemical weapons was put together with an acute awareness of the fiasco of the 2002 Iraq WMD intelligence estimate.

Nevertheless, the unclassified summary of the intelligence assessment made public August 30, 2013, utilizes misleading language evocative of the infamous Iraq estimate's deceptive phrasing. The summary cites signals, geospatial and human source intelligence that purportedly show that the Syrian government prepared, carried out and "confirmed" a chemical weapons attack on August 21. And it claims visual evidence "consistent with" a nerve gas attack.

But a careful examination of those claims reveals a series of convolutedly worded characterizations of the intelligence that don't really mean what they appear to say at first glance. The document displays multiple indications that the integrity of the assessment process was seriously compromised by using language that distorted the intelligence in ways that would justify an attack on Syria.

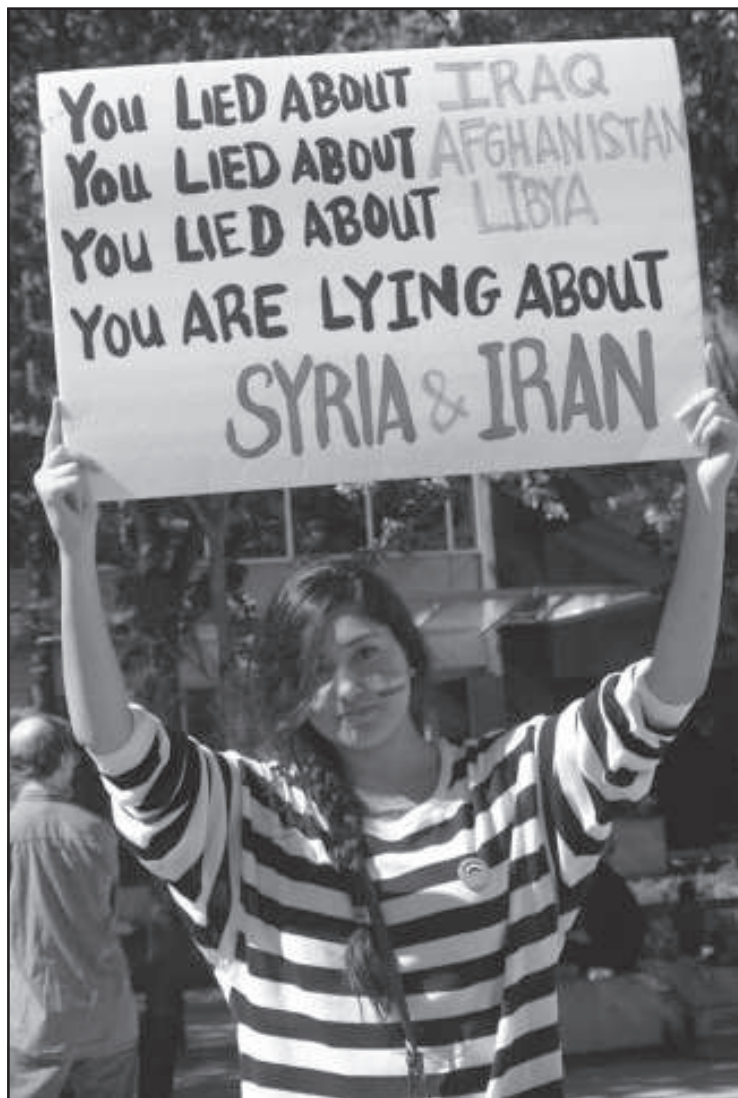
Spinning the secret intelligence

That pattern was particularly clear in the case of the intelligence gathered by covert means. The summary claims, "We intercepted communications involving a senior official intimately familiar with the offensive who confirmed that chemical weapons were used by the regime on August 21 and was concerned with the U.N. inspectors obtaining evidence."

That seems to indicate that U.S. intelligence intercepted such communications. But former British Ambassador Craig Murray pointed out on his blog August 31 that the Mount Troodos listening post in Cyprus is used by British and U.S. intelligence to monitor "all radio, satellite and microwave traffic across the Middle East ..." and that "almost all landline telephone communications in this region is routed through microwave links at some stage [and] picked up on Troodos."

All intelligence picked by the Troodos listening post is shared between the U.S. and British intelligence, Murray wrote, but no communications such as the ones described were shared with the British Joint Intelligence Organization. Murray said a personal contact in U.S. intelligence had told him the reason was that the purported intercept came from the Israelis. The Israeli origin of the intelligence was reported in the U.S. press as well, because an Israeli source apparently leaked it to a German magazine.

The clumsy attempt to pass off



Participant at anti-war protest organized by Vancouver's StopWar coalition. (photo: A. Bjarnason)

intelligence claimed dubiously by the Israelis as a U.S. intercept raises a major question about the integrity of the entire document. The Israelis have an interest in promoting a U.S. attack on Syria, and the authenticity of the alleged intercept cannot be assumed. Murray believes that it is fraudulent.

But even if the intercept is authentic, the description in the intelligence summary appears to be misleading. Another description leaked to *The Cable* by an administration official (described) those same communications as an exchange of "panicked phone calls" between a Syrian Defense Ministry official and someone in a chemical weapons unit in which the defence ministry official was "demanding answers for [about?] a nerve agent strike." That clearly suggests that the Syrian senior official's questions were prompted by the charges being made on August 21 by opposition sources in Ghouta.

The main problem with the description is that it doesn't answer the most obvious and important question about the conversation: Did the purported chemical weapons officer at the other end of the line say that the regime had used chemical weapons or not? If the officer said that such weapons had been used, that would obviously have been the primary point of the report of the intercept. But the summary assessment does not say that, so the reader can reasonably infer that the officer did not make any such admission. The significance of the intercept is, therefore, that an admission of chemicals weapons use was not made.

The carefully chosen wording

of the summary - the ministry official was "concerned with the U.N. inspectors obtaining evidence" - suggests that the official wanted to make sure that UN inspectors would not find evidence of a nerve gas attack. But it could also mean precisely the opposite - that the official wanted the inspectors to be able to ascertain that there was no use of chemical weapons by Syrian forces in eastern Ghouta. The latter possibility is bolstered by the fact that the regime agreed within 24 hours of the first formal request on August 24 from UN envoy Angela Kane for unimpeded access to eastern Ghouta. As late as August 23, the UN Department of Safety and Security had not yet decided to give permission to the UN investigators to go into the area because of uncertainties about their safety.

The intelligence summary makes no effort to explain why the regime promptly granted access to the investigators. Another anomaly: the UN investigators were already present in Damascus, having been initially requested by the Assad regime to look into a gas attack the regime had charged was carried out by the rebels on March 19. The two-page assessment by the British Joint Intelligence Organization released August 29, pointed to this question: "There is no obvious political or military trigger," it said, "for regime use of Chemical War on an apparently larger scale now, particularly given the current presence of the UN investigating team."

Another obvious case of a misleading description of intelligence in the summary involves information from US

geospatial and signals intelligence purporting to show that the Assad regime was preparing for a chemical attack in the three days prior to August 21. The summary describes the intelligence as follows: "Syrian chemical weapons personnel were operating in the Damascus suburb of Adra from August 18 until early in the morning on August 21 near an area that the regime uses to mix chemical weapons, including sarin."

That seems like damning evidence at first glance. However, despite the use of the term "operating," the US intelligence had no information about the actual activities being tracked through geospatial and signals intelligence. When administration officials leaked the information to CBS news last week, they conceded that the presence of the individual being tracked in the area in question had been viewed as "nothing out of the ordinary."

Yet, after the August 21 event, the same information was suddenly transformed into "evidence" that supports the official line. The summary refers to "streams of human signals and geospatial intelligence that revealed regime activities that we assessed were associated with preparations for a chemical attack." Thus the same information that provided no indication of "preparations" was now presented as though it included knowledge of some "activities" somehow related to getting ready for chemical warfare.

A third piece of intelligence cited in the summary - unsourced but presumably from an intelligence agent - might seem to denote the intent to carry out a chemical weapons attack. However, the wording is slippery. "On August 21," the document says, "a Syrian regime element prepared for a chemical weapons attack in the Damascus area, including through the utilization of gas masks." That intelligence, if accurate, doesn't establish an intent by the government to carry out an attack; it could conversely suggest the government's anticipation of a chemical attack by the rebels...

Behind uncertainty on "Nerve Gas"

The summary includes a notable indication that the intelligence community was far from convinced that nerve gas had been used August 21.

The summary said the intelligence community had "high confidence" that the government had carried out a "chemical weapons attack," and added, "We further assess that the regime used a nerve agent in the attack." The fact that a separate sentence was used to characterize the assessment of the nerve agent issue and that it did not indicate any level of confidence is a signal that the intelligence community does not have much confidence in the assessment that nerve gas was used, according to a former senior US intelligence official who insisted

on anonymity. The former official told *Truthout* that the choice of wording actually means the intelligence analysts "do not know" if nerve gas was used.

The summary includes yet another sign of the analysts' lack of confidence that nerve gas was used, which was equally well-disguised. "We have identified one hundred videos attributed to the attack," it said, "many of which show large numbers of bodies exhibiting physical signs consistent with, but not unique to, nerve agent exposure." Unless it is read carefully, the use of the word "bodies" - meaning corpses - instead of "victims" might be missed. But why would the intelligence community be focused on how many "bodies" exhibit particular "physical signs" when the far more relevant indicator of nerve gas would be the number of "victims" exhibiting certain symptoms?

That strange choice averts acknowledgement of a fundamental problem for the intelligence community: Most of the alleged victims being shown in the videos posted online do not show symptoms associated with exposure to nerve agent. Corpses without any sign of wounds, on the other hand, would be "consistent" with a nerve agent attack.

The symptoms of a nerve agent attack are clear-cut: Soon after initial symptoms of tightness of chest, pinpoint pupils and running nose, the victim begins to vomit and to defecate and urinate uncontrollably, followed by twitching and jerking. Ultimately, the victim becomes comatose and suffocates in a series of convulsive spasms. The symptoms shown in dozens of videos of victims being treated in medical centers in Ghouta, however, are quite different. In an interview with *Truthout*, Dan Kaszeta, a specialist on chemical, biological and radiological weapons who has advised the White House on those issues, pointed out that a nerve gas attack would have been accompanied by a pattern of symptoms that are not shown in the videos posted online.

"There should be more or less universal vomiting," Kaszeta said. But he did not see any vomiting or evidence of such vomiting on the clothing or on the floor in any of the videos he saw. Stephen G. Johnson, a chemical weapons forensics expert at Cranfield University in the United Kingdom, noticed the same thing. "Why aren't more people vomiting?" he asked *Truthout* in an interview.

A number of specialists, including Kaszeta and Johnson, also noticed that personnel were shown handling the victims without any special protective clothing but not exhibiting any symptoms themselves. Paula Vanninen, director of the Finnish Institute for Verification of Chemical Weapons, and Gwynn Winfield, the editor of *CBRN World*, a magazine specializing in chemical weapons, made the same

see INTELLIGENCE, page 11

Cuba warns US attack will “provoke death and destruction”

Without leaving any margin whatsoever for attempts underway to reach a political solution to the (Syrian) conflict, or presenting any kind of evidence, and with total disrespect for the opinions of many countries - including some of his principal allies - and the United Nations, the President of the United States has announced his intention to engage in actions in violation of international law and the UN Charter. These will inevitably provoke more death and destruction and will unavoidably lead to an intensification of the existing conflict in this Arab nation.

Cuba calls on members of the UN Security Council to fulfill their mandate to prevent any rupture of the peace and to stop a military intervention which threatens international security in this volatile region of the world.

In the view of Cuba, the General Assembly, the sole United Nations body in which all countries are represented, likewise has a responsibility to halt the aggression, and particularly so when it is foreseeable that the Security Council, given the

preeminence of the United States on this Council, will be unable to make a decision. In the exercise of its authority, the General Assembly must urgently meet and take essentially needed measures.

The UN Secretary General must directly involve himself in preventing actions which the President of the United States has presented as virtually inevitable. It is his responsibility to make diplomatic, urgent and vigorous gestures to the U.S. government in order to try and save the immense responsibility of his position in relation to peace and world stability.

The Group of 20 is to meet in Saint Petersburg, Russia, September 5-6. This meeting, in which many of the principal world leaders will be participating, cannot evade its obligation to discuss the situation created with the President of the United States and adopt concrete action in this context.

If the truth were not hidden from them and they were not constantly inundated with tendentious, manipulated and incomplete information, the American people who, in successive wars from

Vietnam to date, have had to suffer the death of tens and thousands of their young people, would not remain indifferent to a new conflagration which would produce more loss of life and, when the moment comes, would demand that corrupt politicians and the lying press act with responsibility.

The question arises as to what the United States Congress will do when it opens its sessions next

September 9 and must choose between the initiation of another war or the preservation of world peace, between life or death. If, as the British Parliament has done, members reject the attempts at aggression announced by the President, it will have made a surprising and valuable contribution to world peace and questioned the political system of the country. If it approves such

actions, it must assume the consequences before the implacable records of history.

Cuba also calls on leaders of world opinion in the United States and the world to prevent the law of the jungle prevailing over good sense, in relation to illegal and illegitimate attacks being launched against other countries and diplomacy being supplanted by war.

At the same time, Cuba urges peace and religious leaders, youth and students, workers, artists and academics, social movements, progressive forces and all those who reject war, to mobilize in opposition to the decision made by the President of the United States to attack the Arab nation.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also calls for the preservation of Syria's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity and the right to self-determination of its people, and the promotion of a solution to the conflict via diplomatic routes, without further bloodshed.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba, Havana, September 1, 2013 •



Rally organized by the StopWar coalition, at Vancouver Art Gallery, August 31, 2013

Hands off Syria! No to War!

Issued by the Central Executive Committee, Communist Party of Canada, August 30, 2013

The ‘drums of war’ are beating ever louder in the Middle East. For more than two and a half years, the devastating internal conflict in Syria has resulted in over 100,000 casualties, millions of civilians displaced from their homes and communities, and growing sectarian violence in Lebanon, Iraq and other neighbouring countries. Now the war faces a most dangerous escalation.

The United States and some of its NATO allies, along with Saudi Arabia and other reactionary Gulf states, are preparing to launch a coordinated attack in response to the alleged use of chemical weapons by the Syrian government against its own citizens in Eastern Ghouta, a suburb of Damascus, on August 21st.

Yet no credible or verifiable evidence has been forthcoming to confirm this dubious claim. It is far more likely that this is a classic “false flag” operation, and that Syrian rebel forces and mercenaries - no doubt with outside guidance and assistance from imperialist quarters - are responsible for this horrendous act to provide a pretext for foreign intervention by the imperialist powers to prevent a rebel defeat.

The launching of such unilateral US-led aggression, in the absence of any hard evidence of Syrian government involvement in the chemical attack and without any UN mandate, would be immoral, irresponsible, and a gross violation of international law.

A military attack on Syria would have dire consequences,

threatening even more civilian deaths and the destruction of the country's infrastructure. It would further inflame tensions throughout the Middle East and could engulf the entire region in war.

For all these reasons, it is vital that all conscientious people speak out now to demand the Canadian government oppose war on Syria. The Communist Party of Canada condemns

these war preparations and the pro-war propaganda whipped up to justify such an attack on Syria.

Background to the Syrian conflict

Protests against the Al-Assad government in Syria began in early 2011 in opposition to neoliberal “reforms” which increased unemployment and widened social and economic disparities. But legitimate opposition voices were quickly co-opted or shunted aside by hardcore, foreign-financed and armed gangs determined to make Syria ungovernable. Terrorist attacks to spur further government crackdowns, sectarian violence to incite distrust and enmity between the Sunni majority and the Shia, Alawite and other minorities, the smuggling of heavy weapons and even mercenaries from abroad, and open calls for direct foreign intervention in violation of Syria's national sovereignty - this has been the orchestrated game plan carried out by the “internal opposition”.

The extent of foreign covert intervention in the conflict proves that this is not a “civil war” but

rather a highly coordinated imperialist conspiracy against Syria.

But popular support for the rebel forces has since evaporated.

Significant sections of the former opposition, disillusioned by the sectarian violence and brutal atrocities committed by the rebel forces, are now supporting the Syrian government and defending

Syria's national sovereignty under threat from this orchestrated conspiracy. On the ‘war front’ the Syrian Armed Forces have made significant advances against the rebels in recent months, leading many observers to predict the imminent collapse of the armed rebellion. This is the real reason why the imperialist powers - under the code-name “Friends of Syria” - are now moving to intervene directly in the conflict.

Gross hypocrisy

U.S. President Obama's “disgust” at the alleged use of chemical weapons by Syria is utterly hypocritical, given that U.S. imperialism itself has been the main violator of international covenants banning the use of chemical and other weapons of mass destruction (WMD). In addition to its use of nuclear weapons against civilian populations in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan during the Second World War, there is credible evidence of its use of biological weapons during the Korean War [1], its widespread use of napalm and other chemical agents during the Vietnam War, and its use of

white phosphorus and depleted uranium weapons in Iraq. It also ‘looked the other way’ when Saddam used chemical weapons in 1988 during the Iraq-Iran conflict because it was anxious to weaken and defeat the Iranian regime for its own imperialist interests. The use of chemical or other WMDs is a heinous war crime.

The real aims of U.S. aggression

The threatened attack on Syria is part of a broader imperialist strategy to crush (and possibly dismember) the Syrian state. The ultimate objective is to fashion a “New Middle East” of weak and pliant Arab states under the domination of U.S. and European imperialist powers and their local gendarme, the state of Israel. This would guarantee unfettered access to the petroleum, mineral and other natural resources of the region, and extend imperialist geopolitical hegemony into the “underbelly” of Asia, further encircling both the Russian Federation and China.

Undermining the Syrian state is pivotal in achieving this imperialist ambition. Due to its central location in the Middle East, its secular character, and its firm solidarity with the just struggle of the Palestinian people and opposition to the expansionist policies of Zionist Israel, Syria has long been in the cross-hairs of U.S. imperialism. For their own reasons, reactionary Arab regimes - especially Saudi Arabia and Qatar - as well as Turkey are also anxious to weaken and crush Syria.

“Regime change” in Damascus and its replacement by a more pliant, pro-imperialist regime would compound the suffering of

the Syrian people. It would also dramatically alter the regional balance of forces, weakening the anti-imperialist forces, and serving as a prelude - and launching pad - for NATO/Israeli aggression against neighbouring Iran.

World opposition growing

Despite imperialism's hysterical campaign to whip up international support for this impending aggression, Washington's “coalition of the willing” is crumbling quickly. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has spoken out against any foreign aggression and called on all parties to “give peace a chance”, and for a return to the negotiating table in Geneva to reach a political settlement to the conflict. Russia, China, and most developing countries have condemned the call to attack Syria. Even the British Parliament has now voted against any British participation in such an attack.

In Canada, all concerned organizations - unions, peace and solidarity groups, and other mass democratic organizations - as well as conscientious and peace-loving individuals, need to speak out quickly and demand that the Harper government reverse its support for such aggression. In the days ahead, the Communist Party of Canada urges all-out support and participation in the anti-war campaign developing across the country to stave off the impending catastrophe! •

[1] Endicott, Stephen and Hagerman, Edward, “United States Biological Warfare during the Korean War: rhetoric and reality”, www.yorku.ca/sendicott/ReplytoColCrane.htm





GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE

SA gold strike ends

A South African gold miners' strike has ended after workers at Harmony Gold accepted a final wage offer on Sept. 7. Most of the 80,000 miners across the sector who struck on Sept. 3 had already accepted an 8% pay offer and returned to work. But workers at Harmony Gold's mines in the central Free State and Northern Cape provinces held out longer, seeking a better deal. The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) had been demanding a 60% rise, while employers had offered 6%.

South Africa's gold industry has been in decline in recent years, down to the fifth largest in world, with 6% of global production. The owners had threatened to close mines and eliminate thousands of jobs if the strike continued. Mining is still the most important sector in the economy, and the NUM represents about 64% of South Africa's 120,000 gold miners.

Producers still have to reach an agreement with the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU), which did not take part in the current strike. The AMCU, which represents less than 20% of gold miners, has been demanding increases of more than 100 per cent for some categories. It wants a minimum of R12,500 (\$1,250) a month for entry level underground workers, and R11,500 a month for all surface workers. A basic entry-level salary in the gold sector is on average about R5,000 a month, which can rise to about R10,000 with benefits.

The companies insist they will not do separate deals with different unions.

Repression in Swaziland

Police and government repression of trade union activists continues in Swaziland, one of the world's last absolute monarchies.

On Sept. 5, the General Secretary of the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA), Vincent Ncongwane, was followed by ten police officers in plain clothes. He was arrested and taken to a police station without explanation, and after three hours, he was put under house arrest. The government claims that Ncongwane had attempted to instigate an illegal protest. However, TUCOSWA says it fully complied with Swazi laws by announcing an August 15 protest march to both police and the Commissioner of Labour.

Police and military have threatened personnel at the Global Inquiry Panel which has been studying the situation in the southern African kingdom, following staff from the ITUC, COSATU, FES/DGB and IndustriALL around the clock. The August 15 march was part of a Global Week of solidarity with Swaziland.

Global economic survey

A global poll released on the eve of the G20 Summit in St. Petersburg found that more than

half of all respondents are no longer able to save any money. One in eight are struggling financially and can no longer pay for basic living expenses.

The survey of the general public in 13 countries, representing half the world population, including Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China,



France, Germany, India, Japan, Russia, Spain, South Africa, the UK and the USA, was conducted by global market research company TNS.

In emerging economies of the BRICS countries, 54 percent of people have directly experienced unemployment or the reduction of working hours. Over three-quarters (78%) report their income has stayed the same or fallen behind the cost of living in the last two years. The figures point to prolonged stagnation, amid a global economy which remains unstable following the financial crisis of 2007-08. While output has stopped falling in some economies, unemployment continues to rise. The poll found that 64 percent of people think future generations will be worse off than their own.

"A G20 jobs action plan that sets national employment targets and raises sustainable aggregate demand and reduces income inequality must be a centrepiece of the G20 response to rising unemployment and inequality," said John Evans, General Secretary, Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD. "Working people expect governments to make sure corporations pay their fair share of taxes and end the scourge of tax havens. G20 commitments appear not to be acted on as people feel abandoned by their governments with 80 percent of respondents saying their government has failed to tackle unemployment. Only 13 percent of people feel that governments are acting in the interests of working people."

Bangladesh factory agreement stalled

The President of the Bangladeshi National Garment Workers Federation (NGWF) has warned eight leading UK retailers that there could be a repeat of the Rana Plaza tragedy if they refuse to sign an international accord designed to protect Bangladeshi factory workers. Amirul Haque Amin, who was in Britain to speak at the TUC's annual conference,

says several companies refuse to commit to the agreement that will make building inspections compulsory at factories that supply fashion goods to UK stores.

The TUC is asking consumers to use social media to build pressure on clothing brands, including Matalan, River Island, Sports Direct/Republic, Jane Norman, Peacocks, Bench, Mexx and Bank Fashion. The agreement, signed by over 80 international companies including Zara, H&M and Next, commits firms to meeting the cost of making buildings safe, and to working with a monitoring group made up of companies and unions, chaired by the International Labour Organisation. In addition, an independent inspector will be appointed to oversee all inspections and to investigate complaints by workers.

In the days leading up to the Rana Plaza factory collapse in April, which claimed over 1,000 lives, staff complaints about large cracks were ignored by managers who ordered the factory stay open.

Amirul Haque Amin said: "I am very disappointed that several leading UK retailers are still refusing to commit to this accord. This historic agreement ensures that thousands of factories will have compulsory building inspections for the first time ever. Voluntary initiatives have failed to protect workers in the past and if companies in the UK refuse to sign we risk a repeat of the Rana Plaza tragedy. It is essential that companies take more responsibility for the way in which their suppliers treat their employees."

AFL-CIO debates new strategies

Richard Trumka, the president of the AFL-CIO, has presented a plan to bring millions of non-union workers into the federation. The plan was on the agenda for the AFL-CIO convention which began Sept. 8 in Los Angeles, a week after a similar move by the first convention of the new Unifor union in Canada.

In an interview with the *New York Times*, Trumka said that while unions are having a hard time increasing their ranks, they can at least restore their clout by building a broad coalition to advance a worker-friendly political and economic agenda. He called for inviting millions of workers into the labor movement even if their own workplaces are not unionized. He has proposed making progressive groups - like the NAACP; the Sierra Club; the National Council of La Raza, a Hispanic civil rights group; and MomsRising, an advocacy group for women's and family issues - either formal partners or affiliates of the AFL-CIO.

"The crisis for labor has deepened," Trumka said. "It's at a point where we really must do something differently. We really have to experiment."

Trumka notes a steady loss of union membership, frequent defeats in organizing drives, and unions being forced to accept multiyear wage freezes. Anti-union

legislation has been enacted in labour strongholds like Wisconsin and Michigan, he said, and the movement could not even win legislation making it easier to unionize when President Obama was elected and the Democrats controlled the House and Senate.

The AFL-CIO has set up a dozen committees - of historians, young workers, Web experts, pollsters - to propose ways to "reinvent" the labour movement. Our Walmart, a union-backed group of Walmart employees, has held repeated protests to pressure the giant retailer to improve pay and benefits. The Service Employees International Union helped organize a wave of one-day strikes at fast-food restaurants with the aim of pressuring McDonalds, Subway and other chains to raise wages.

Unions continue to look for new groups of workers to organize. The SEIU is seeking to organize adjunct professors - an often low-paid group - in the Boston area, and the United Automobile Workers has accelerated efforts to organize auto plants in the South, pushing hard at Nissan, Volkswagen and Mercedes-Benz. In Texas, a dozen unions are undertaking a decade-long organizing drive aimed at increasing unionization rates.

Unions and community groups have joined forces to try to create the nation's highest minimum wage through a referendum in SeaTac, a community south of Seattle. The proposal would establish a \$15/hour minimum wage - twice the \$7.25/hour federal minimum - for 6,500 workers at Sea-Tac International Airport and its nearby hotels and car rental agencies.

Labour's role in Tunisia crisis

Tunisia is gripped by its most serious political crisis since 2011, marked by rising public distrust of the Islamist government, growing violence, and a collapsing economy. On the Aug. 31-Sept. 1 weekend protestors filled the capital to demand the immediate resignation of the government.

The AllAfrica news service reports that "The Tunisian General Union of Labour (UGTT) has affected the character of Tunisia as a whole since the late 1940s. It impacted significantly the 2011 revolution and the transition period and is likely to impact the future. Its current role as mediator between the government and opposition must be seen in historical perspective, as, arguably, the role of Tunisia's labour movement is what sets it apart from the rest of the Arab World."

During a Sept. 3 meeting between Tunisia's ruling three-party "troika" coalition, the UGTT, and the UTICA federation of employers and self-employed workers, the coalition agreed to a one month timeline to finish the constitution and organize elections, after which the government would step down. This would be several weeks quicker than the government's previous proposal.

"There is not much change to the Troika's proposal, but it is better explained and reducing the current government's mandate to four weeks is more explicit," said UGTT leader Houcine Abbassi, adding that if the talks fail, the unions will "reveal details about the ongoing negotiations to the Tunisian people."

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

Send me information on the Communist Party of Canada



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

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Visiting Indian MP calls to uphold secular values

By Gurpreet Singh, Surrey, British Columbia

A visiting Communist Member of Parliament from India has called upon the South Asian Diaspora to uphold secular values of the Ghadar Party. Speaking in Surrey on Sept. 7 at a seminar held to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Ghadar Party, Sitaram Yechury, a member of the upper house of the Indian parliament, urged everyone to work together to defeat the “nefarious designs” of sectarian and fundamentalist forces bent upon dividing people on religious lines.

The Ghadar Party was established in 1913 by South Asian immigrants on the Pacific coast of North America, to launch an armed rebellion against the British occupation of India. The party was secular in character and vehemently denounced caste and religious prejudices.

A senior member of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), Yechury warned that India's unity and diversity are under threat from the Hindu nationalist Bhartiya Janata Party.



Sitharam Yechury speaking at the Sept. 7 seminar to celebrate the centenary of the Ghadar Party.

The BJP is indirectly projecting the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, as a future Prime Minister. Modi's government is widely blamed for the 2002 anti-Muslim pogrom in Gujarat. Yechury cautioned that any

attempt to turn a pluralist Indian society into a theocracy needs to be challenged.

Yechury recently received threats for questioning a condolence motion that was brought in the Indian parliament

following the death of Shiv Sena leader, Bal Thackeray. A staunch BJP ally, Shiv Sena is accused of bashing Muslims and non-Maharashtrians in Mumbai.

Interestingly, Yechury shared the platform at the Surrey event with an Akali Dal MP, Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa. Akali Dal is another ally of the BJP, and supports Modi.

The event was organized by the Indo-Canadian Workers' Association, a CPI(M) offshoot in Vancouver. The CPI(M) fought the last assembly election in Punjab in partnership with the People's Party of Punjab, formed by Akali Dal rebel Manpreet Singh Badal. The Indo-Canadian Workers' Association had expressed its support to Badal when he came here before the election.

Yechury was also critical of Sikh fundamentalists who are trying to appropriate the Ghadar history. “The Ghadar Party was not just a party of the Sikhs. It had supporters from other religious communities as well. How can one ignore the participation of the Hindus and Muslims in the Ghadar movement?”, he asked.

He noted that the Ghadarites

did not confine their struggle to the freedom of India from foreign rule, but continued it for a just society even after the country gained independence. According to Yechury, bigger challenges from imperial forces still prevail. He observed that the free market economy and liberalization have created a yawning gap between the rich and the poor.

“As a fitting tribute to the Ghadarites we must keep this struggle alive,” said Yechury, who also released a souvenir publication dedicated to the Ghadar history.

Others who spoke on the occasion were Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa, and local MPs Jinny Sims and Jasbir Sandhu. Former MLA Dave Hayer was also present. Among other notable speakers were the Counsel General of India, Ravi Shankar Aisola; prominent history researchers and scholars, Sohan Pooni, Dr. Raghbir Singh Sirjana and Naveen Girm; Indian Workers' Association leader from UK, Harsev Bains; and leaders of the Indo-Canadian Workers' Association, Surinder Sangha, Surinder Dhesi and Kulwant Dhesi. ●

“Extensive” US use of chemical weapons

While the Obama administration prepares to bomb Syria, the U.S. has used chemical weapons on a much grander scale than any other country in history. In a recent interview by John Robles on the Voice of Russia, Dr. Edward Herman discussed these matters. Dr. Herman is Professor Emeritus at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania. He is the author of several books, including “Manufacturing Consent”, which he wrote with Noam Chomsky, and the “Srebrenica Massacre: Evidence, Context, Politics.”

Robles: Regarding this situation in Syria, does the US in your opinion have the legal authority to launch military action or bomb Syria?

Herman: They certainly do not. The UN was organized to prevent war, aggression, cross-border attacks by individuals - it is very clear. And in fact, the Nuremberg Tribunal, you should actually read this: “war is essentially an evil thing. Its consequences are not confined to the belligerent states alone, but affect the whole world. To initiate a war of aggression therefore is not only an international crime, it is the supreme international crime, differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole”. That's from the Nuremberg Tribunal.

The whole UN system was built in order to prevent war, to make it illegal to cross borders without the vote of the Security Council. The only basis for crossing a border otherwise is immediate self-defense. There is no way that Syria is threatening the United States, and the U.S. doesn't even pretend that it has anything to do with self-defense.

So, the answer is absolutely no, the legal status is non-existent. And

if you read Secretary John Kerry's and Obama's statements, only the media picked up the fact, in past years they have both said that they will abide by International Law. International Law controls this great country's behaviour. But now that they are in power and want to go to war, they say that they are not constrained by this, they can just go across borders and bomb.

It is just amazing! And it is amazing how the mainstream media of the United States don't pick this subject up. Since the United States is regularly crossing borders and attacking other countries in violation of the UN Charter, the media play as if this is not an issue. It is only when somebody else, one of our targets crosses a border that we get excited.

Robles: Following that line of thought, I read recently - now this goes back to 2002 - a piece of U.S. legislation, some called it the Hague Invasion Act. It basically protects all US personnel and allies from being subjected to International Law or being tried for war crimes. It allows for, literally, a military action against the Hague which would require an invasion to physically remove, for example, if they've arrested somebody. Can you comment?

Herman: It was a brazen piece of legislation. In fact I think that was the time they were discussing the

**agent orange
white phosphorus
depleted uranium
cluster bombs
waterboarding
nuclear weapons**

International Criminal Court. And in the International Criminal Court it was theoretically going to be possible that the United States and

its soldiers and leaders could be brought before the Court. That got some of the members of the Congress and Senate very upset. So, they actually got through this incredible piece of legislation that if anybody tried to take one of our

been brought before a tribunal. And of course George Bush and these guys, they're all immune. Bush in his auto-biography openly acknowledges that he supported waterboarding, which is a well-known form of torture...



Photo: Ed Bil

soldiers and try them, we would be prepared to invade that country. It was a lunatic piece of legislation and I doubt if it ever would be applied, but it shows the spirit of this country - we are above the Law.

Our leaders have impunity. In fact, Harry Truman made this famous statement that “the buck stops with him”. This is not true! Impunity starts with him. Here is a man who dropped two atomic bombs on two cities and wiped out quickly 200,000 civilians. I mean, this was one of the great war crimes in human history. But nobody has ever suggested that Harry should have

Robles: Yes, since the Korean war.

Herman: ...which is internationally illegal, it is illegal in US law. Obama comes along having promised to enforce the law, but he won't bring George Bush to trial. So, all these guys are immune from the law, they have impunity. This is the superpower right to have impunity. Only lesser peoples can be brought before a court.

Robles: Back to Syria, does the US have the moral authority and the support of the American people to launch any kind of an operation against Syria?

Herman: I don't think they have the moral authority in the least.

And in fact this whole business of pursuing of Syria, first, it is not even proven that the Syrian Government used chemical weapons. But even apart from that, the hypocrisy involved in this is amazing.

As the United States Government committed aggression against Iraq, it has used chemical weapons itself during the Vietnam War, the United States used Agent Orange. In fact, its use of chemical weapons in the Vietnam War was the most extensive use of chemical weapons since World War I.

And we of course supported Iraq when it used chemical warfare against Iran. We even supplied Iraq with various kinds of arms, protected against being attacked in the United Nations, and were attacking our enemy - Iran. So, it was okay. And they recently sold I think 600 some million dollars' worth of cluster bombs to Saudi Arabia. And of course Israel famously used a huge number of cluster bombs in Lebanon in 2006, just before the truce. The cluster bomb is a vicious, essentially illegal weapon.

So, here is the United States doing all these horrible things, including chemical warfare, using white phosphorus in Fallujah, depleted uranium. It has dirty hands. The moral case falls because of this incredible hypocrisy. And the American people don't go on the offensive - this other part of your question - does it have support at home, and the answer is, in spite of the huge propaganda effort that the Government and the media are carrying out, I think it 60% of the polled public is against attacking Syria. The public doesn't want it. The moral case is badly compromised. So, it is really an outrage. ●

Depleted uranium contamination still blights Iraq

From Third World Resurgence

A decade may have elapsed since the US invasion of Iraq but the depleted uranium it left behind continues to take its toll.

To mark the 10th anniversary of the 2003 invasion, a new report has highlighted continuing uncertainties over the impact and legacy of the use of 400 tonnes of depleted uranium (DU) weapons in Iraq. The report reveals the extent of DU's use in civilian areas for the first time.

"In a State of Uncertainty" published by Dutch peace organisation IKV Pax Christi, has sought to do what the US has so far refused to do - reveal how widely the weapons were used in Iraq, and in what circumstances. It also analyses the costs and technical burdens associated with DU use, arguing that a decade on, many contamination problems remain unresolved - leaving civilians at risk of chronic DU exposure.

States argue that the use of controversial DU munitions is justified against armoured vehicles, yet "In a State of Uncertainty" documents their use against a wider range of targets in 2003, with attacks often taking place within civilian areas, leaving residents at risk from contamination. This resulted from both the US' use of DU in medium calibre ammunition for aircraft and armoured fighting vehicles, and the frequency of urban combat operations in 2003.

The report also finds that the Iraqi government has struggled with the cost and technical challenges posed by the legacy of contamination, a situation

compounded by the US' refusal to release targeting data. The Iraqi government acknowledges that there are more than 300 sites with known contamination, based on the limited data available, with new sites regularly discovered. Clean-up of sites typically costs around US\$150,000, but varies considerably depending on the setting, extent and level of contamination.

"The 300 or so known sites may be the tip of the iceberg," said a spokesperson for the International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons (ICBUW). "While it is obviously difficult to extrapolate directly from other conflicts, in the Balkans, where 1/60th of the quantity of DU was used, we saw somewhat over 100 contaminated sites; we would therefore expect

the total number of contaminated sites in Iraq to be far higher than the 300 identified by the Iraqi authorities."

Reports collected by the International Committee of the Red Cross reveal that tribal leaders in southern Iraq highlighted DU contamination as a primary health concern, with fear of DU exposure widespread in Iraq. Iraqis commonly associate increased incidence rates of cancers, congenital birth malformations and other diseases with DU, resulting in significant levels of anxiety. Prompted by numerous media reports of a health crisis in Fallujah, linked by researchers to the toxic legacy of military activities, a major review of birth defect rates in six Iraqi provinces by the World

Health Organisation and Iraqi Ministry of Health is to be published soon.

"In a State of Uncertainty" documents the enormous problem still posed by the poorly regulated storage and trade in military scrap metal. Deregulation of the scrap trade under the Coalition Provisional Authority resulted in casual scrap metal collectors being needlessly exposed to DU and in the export of contaminated scrap to neighbouring countries. Scrap metal collectors continue to remain at risk of exposure, as do those who live near dozens of uncontrolled scrap sites. The Iraqi government has requested international assistance in analysing and managing contaminated military scrap.

"Because states are under no obligation to share targeting data, even when deploying toxic and radioactive munitions, it is unclear exactly how many locations may still be contaminated, or the extent of the risks that civilians face," said the report's author Wim Zwijnenburg.

"DU's apparent use in built-up areas against a range of targets in 2003 increased these risks, running counter to efforts to increase protection for civilians during armed conflict and further undermining DU's legitimacy. This uncertainty means that fear of DU among Iraqi civilians is widespread yet effectively managing DU's legacy will require international assistance."

The United Nations General Assembly has twice called for greater transparency over DU weapons use, most recently in December 2012, where 155 states voted in favour. The US, the UK, France and Israel were the only four states which opposed the text, which also accepted the potential risks from DU use and called for a precautionary approach to their post-conflict management.

Throughout, it is clear that for states recovering from conflict, effectively managing DU contamination to standards even approaching those in the states that employ the weapons poses significant challenges. IKV Pax Christi argues that the implications for the wider acceptability of DU munitions are clear.

"Even now, 10 years after the 2003 conflict, the true extent of the risks posed to civilians from DU in Iraq is unclear," said an ICBUW spokesperson. "As the US seems reluctant to share targeting data and any records of any clean-up work it may have undertaken during the 2003-05 period, it is unclear how this situation might be resolved. Greater transparency on usage would of course be extremely helpful in determining the extent of DU's use in civilian areas." International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons (www.banded uranium.org)

The report "In a State of Uncertainty" can be downloaded from: www.ikvpaxchristi.nl •



Source of graphic: www.theguardian.com/world/2010/jan/22/iraq-nuclear-contaminated-sites

Unions weigh up "Quebec Charter of Values"

PV Vancouver Bureau

The "Charter of Quebec Values" was introduced by the Parti Quebecois minority government on Sept. 9, but one large group representing public sector workers has long been on record as supporting the general approach of "secularising" public services in Quebec.

A very different position was expressed in early September, however, by a union representing one-third of all teachers in Quebec. A report in the *Globe and Mail* says the *Fédération autonome de l'enseignement* will oppose measures that ban religious headgear in the classroom, characterizing any such crackdown as a "witch hunt."

The FAE says it supports the concept of secular state institutions, but not through targeting personal religious symbols.

"We won't go on a witch hunt to see who wears a hijab, kippa or cross," Sylvain Mallette, president of the union, said in an interview. "We will defend the right of our members to work."

If a teacher faced losing a job due to religious garb, the union

says it would be prepared to fight the case in court.

Mallette says the union believes there are real issues over religious accommodations in public schools, such as parents who want to withdraw their children from classes that teach evolution. But dress codes for teachers are beside the point, he argues.

"Preventing someone from wearing a hijab or kippa isn't a way to ensure the secular nature of the state and its institutions," Mallette told the *Globe and Mail*. "For us, respecting secularism has nothing to do with whether you wear religious symbols or accessories."

The FAE includes 32,000 teachers in the French-language school system in Montreal, home to most immigrants who settle in Quebec. These teachers live day-to-day with the realities of multicultural classrooms. Montreal city council has unanimously adopted a motion that calls for "inclusive secularism" which "unites Montrealers of all backgrounds and beliefs."

The FAE also disagrees with the PQ government about the crucifix hanging in the National Assembly, saying it would be "incoherent" for legislators to pass

a law in favour of state secularism while sitting beneath a religious symbol. The cross should be moved elsewhere in the building, it says.

Meanwhile, most other public-sector unions in Quebec, including the largest teachers' union, decided to wait for the Marois government to table its proposals before commenting.

However, the Syndicat de la fonction publique du Québec, which represents provincial civil servants, is already on record as saying it supports a ban on religious headgear for state employees.

The minority Marois government, which marked its one-year anniversary on Sept. 4, has made the Values Charter and other identity issues a centrepiece of its agenda, from dress codes to mandatory Quebec history courses.

Drainville told Radio-Canada that after Quebec rid itself of religion in its public institutions in the 1960s, public servants became "neutral" in appearance.

"If it was fine for Catholics in the 1960s, why wouldn't it be good for all religions 50 years later?" he asked. •

Migrant worker group responds to racist mayor

Justicia for Migrant Workers has issued an open letter to the mayor of Leamington, Ontario, after he accused migrant workers of lewd behaviour and asked the town's police to come up with measures to combat it. Justicia, an organization supporting migrant workers, said it the comments are the worst "anti-migrant sentiments" they've heard, adding to previous allegations that workers loiter in the downtown or misuse public facilities like libraries. Leamington has one of the country's largest populations of temporary foreign workers who perform a great deal of low-wage seasonal agricultural work. The open letter argues that such comments by the mayor disguise the hardship and experience of migrants workers, who face racism, are bound to their employers and denied labour mobility, cannot gain permanent residency or voting rights, and are separated from their families for long periods of time. (*Canadian Association of Labour Media*)



"No sale" for Eaton's workers

The 1948 drive to unionize the 15 thousand Eaton's workers faced unique obstacles. The paternalistic store played better-paid employees off against grossly underpaid workers fearful for their jobs and came up with higher wages and a pension plan. After four years the drive was over, defeated by entrenched white collar anti-union attitudes and a powerful employer.

1948: U.S. kicks up cold war tension with Russia.

Intelligence on Syria "twisted"...

continued from p. 6

point in interviews with AFP on August 21. The only evidence of such effects is secondhand at best: statements issued the following day by both the spokesman for the Supreme Military Council of the Free Syrian Army, Khaled Saleh, and the spokesman for its Washington, DC, arm, the Syrian Support Group, said that doctors and "first responders" had reported that they were suffering symptoms of neurotoxic poisoning. Saleh claimed that at least six doctors had died.

Experts noticed yet another anomaly: The number of those treated who survived far outnumbered the dead, contrary to what would be expected in a nerve gas attack. Dr. Ghazwan Bwidany told CBS news August 24 that his mobile medical unit had treated 900 people after the attack and that 70 had died. "Médecins Sans Frontières" reported that 3,600 patients had been treated at hospitals in the area of the attack and that 355 had died. Such ratios of survivors to dead were the opposite of what chemical weapons specialists would have expected from a nerve gas attack.

Kaszeta told Truthout that the "most nagging doubt" he had about the assumption that a nerve gas attack had taken place is the roughly 10-to-1 ratio of total number treated to the dead. "The proportions are all wrong," he said. "There should be more dead people." Johnson agreed. In an actual nerve gas attack, he said, "You'd get some survivors, but it would be very low. This [is] a very low level of lethality."

These multiple anomalies prompted some specialists to come up with the theory that the government had somehow diluted the nerve gas to make it less detectable and thus made it less lethal. Hamish de Bretton-Gordon, a former commander of the chemical biological and nuclear terrorism unit in the UK Ministry of Defense, told *USA Today* August 23 that the absence of symptoms associated with nerve gas attack might be explainable by a "low dose" chemical weapons attack.

Three days later, Winfield wrote in an article for CNN that the symptoms seen in the videos indicated "lower toxicity" than was associated with nerve agents. Winfield suggested that nerve agent might have been mixed with other substances that were likely to remain in the environment longer than a nerve agent such as sarin.

But Kaszeta cast doubt on the idea of a "low dose" nerve agent. In an interview with blogger Eliot Higgins, who specializes in weapons associated with the Syrian conflict under the name Brown Moses, he said, "There's not much leeway between the incapacitating doses and lethal doses with Sarin." The concentration causing any symptoms at all, he said, "would quickly lead to absorption of a lethal dose."

Case not closed

If it wasn't a nerve gas attack, then, what other chemical weapon could have produced the symptoms exhibited in the videos? In an

analysis on the Strongpoint Security website, Kaszeta considered each known type of chemical weapon in turn and concluded that the symptoms exhibited in the videos were not consistent with those associated with any of them. And as Kaszeta told the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz*, the fact that none of the people treating casualties were suffering obvious symptoms "would seem to rule out most types of military-grade chemical weapons..."

Instead of addressing the issue, the intelligence community opted to accept information about the numbers and the cause of death provided by sources that were presumably subject to the influence of opposition forces in the area. The intelligence summary cites a "preliminary U.S. government assessment" that 1,429 people were killed by chemical weapons, including "at least 426 children." It provides no indication of how the analysts arrived at such a precise estimate, which is highly unusual for an intelligence assessment. The normal practice in arriving at such an estimate is to give a range of figures reflecting different data sources as well as assumptions.

The main center for analyzing issues relating to weapons of mass destruction is the CIA's Office of Weapons Intelligence, Nonproliferation and Arms Control (WINPAC) Center. It is the same center that tilted the 2002 Iraq estimate toward conclusions that were not supported by technical facts. As the Robb-Silverman report on the Iraq WMD intelligence fiasco pointed out, intelligence analysts at WINPAC explained to the staff privately that they had reversed the normal intelligence analysis burden of proof and operated on the assumption that Iraq did have WMD programs.

That dynamic seems to have re-emerged in the case of Syrian chemical weapons, especially with the appearance of hundreds of videos containing highly emotive scenes of children suffering and, in many cases, already having died. The contradiction between the emotionally charged visual evidence and the technical analysis by chemical weapons specialists, however, poses an unresolved issue. The uncertainty about what actually happened on August 21 can be resolved only on the basis of actual blood samples from victims who have been gathered by the UN inspectors and are now being analyzed in European laboratories...

But the advocates of an attack on Syria within the Obama administration have not demonstrated a willingness to rely on the definitive evidence from the UN investigators. Instead, they have evinced a strong hostility toward the UN investigation ever

since the Syrian government agreed to allow it unimpeded access to the locations where chemical attacks were alleged. National Security Adviser Susan Rice sent an e-mail to key officials August 25 asserting that the UN investigation was pointless.

Since then, administration officials have dismissed the UN investigation as representing a Syrian political tactic. Kerry claimed in his statement Friday (Aug. 30) that when the UN inspections were "finally given access, that access - as we now know - was restricted and controlled."

But Farhan Haq, the associate spokesperson for Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, who has been getting regular reports from the UN team on its work in Syria, told Truthout that he was unaware of any restrictions on the team's work.

The Obama administration has made it clear it does not intend to rely on the UN investigation's findings. Kerry declared on Sept. 1 that samples of blood and hair from medical personnel in eastern Ghouta had been found to contain traces of sarin nerve gas.

However, those samples did not go through the UN investigators, but were smuggled out of Syria by opposition activists. The spokesman for the Free Syrian Army's Supreme National Council, Khaled Saleh, had announced August 22 that "activists" had collected their own hair, blood and soil samples and were smuggling them out of the country.

The Obama administration had obtained physiological samples related to previous alleged nerve gas attacks, which had tested positive for sarin, but administration officials had insisted that, without being certain of the chain of custody, "they couldn't be sure who had handled those samples," as one official put it.

Despite the knowledge that samples lacking a clear chain of custody could have been tampered with, however, the administration began to disregard that key factor in June. It adopted a policy of accepting such samples as evidence of government guilt, on the argument, as one official explained, "It's impossible that the opposition is faking the stuff in so many instances in so many locations."

That policy shift is part of the undeclared framework in which the intelligence assessment was carried out.

Regardless of what evidence emerges in coming weeks, we would do well to note the inconsistencies and misleading language contained in the assessment, bearing in mind the consequences of utilizing ambiguous intelligence to justify an act of war. ●

What's Left

Vancouver, BC

La Trova Nuestra, evening of Latin American music and socialising, admission \$10, 8 pm, Friday, Sept. 27, Centre for Socialist Education, 706 Clark Drive.

7th Annual Women's Housing March, Sat. Sept. 28, 1:30 pm, starts at Cordova and Columbia (east of Main). Organized by Downtown Eastside Women Centre Power of Women Group.

Left Film Night, 7 pm, Sunday, Sept. 29, call 604-255-2041 for details.

More Greek anti-cuts protests

Thousands of workers marched through Greece's second city Thessaloniki on Sept. 7 to protest against cutbacks and the sacking of public-sector workers.

Authorities cordoned off the grounds of a trade fair where Prime Minister Antonis Samaras was giving his annual speech on the economy, keeping protesters a mile away. Most of the city centre was cut off to traffic, and nearly 4,500 police officers patrolled the area. Police said 17,000 anti-austerity protesters took part in demonstrations called by the Greek trade unions, but organisers claimed at least double that number. Farmers drove a lorry to one of the trade fair gates and dumped large quantities of tomatoes and peaches in protest. At another rally by opponents of a Canadian gold mine near Thessaloniki, police responded with tear gas.

(With files from the UK Morning Star)

Brampton, ON

Public Auto Insurance Now, rally at constituency office of MPP Linda Jeffrey, 2250 Bovaird Drive East, Sunday, Sept. 22, 2-3 pm, organized by GTA West Club CPC.

Toronto, ON

Word On The Street, Sunday, Sept. 22, volunteers need for People's Voice booth and distribution, ph. 416-469-2446.

"Songs of Social Significance", David Rovics concert, Friday, October 11, 8 pm, Winchevsky Centre, 585 Cranbrooke Ave., tickets \$15 advance/\$20 door, contact UJPO Toronto.

Montreal, QC

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

News for people, not for profits!



People's Voice deadlines

October 1-15 issue: Thursday, Sept. 19

October 16-31 issue: Thursday, Oct. 3

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

Government keeps funding to Sun Media, not Our Times

The Department of Canadian heritage has cut funding to independent labour magazine *Our Times* by 65 per cent, claiming the magazine failed to meet eligible circulation requirements, though it offered no details. Heritage Canada subsidizes Canadian print media through grants from the Canadian Periodical fund, to help small circulation publications "overcome market disadvantages." After receiving \$29,790 in 2007, *Our Times* had its funding eliminated altogether in 2008, then partially restored in subsequent grant periods to \$10,505 last year. "They turned us down though we met all criteria," said *Our Times* business manager Liz Ukrainetz. "We've been told it was not in the best interest of Canadians." The fund gave Sun Media more than \$800,000 over the same period for a chain of its company weeklies.

Scaffold tragedy: Appeal court boosts fine to \$750,000

The Ontario Court of Appeal has nearly quadrupled a fine for criminal negligence causing death in the Christmas Eve death of four workers. The judge found that Metron Construction had workers using a scaffold with a defective design that couldn't stand their weight. There were also not enough lifelines on the scaffold for the workers. Owner Joel Swartz already faces an \$112,500 fine for other violations of the Occupations Health and Safety Act. Dilshod Marupov, a surviving crew member who was permanently disabled by the accident, has sued the Ministry of Labour and three companies implicated in the event.

REDS ON THE WEB

www.comunist-party.ca

www.peoplesvoice.ca

www.ycl-ljc.ca

rebelyouth-magazine.blogspot.com

<http://solidnet.org>

Human rights concerns over Israeli practices in Palestine

By Kanaga Raja, Third World Resurgence

Following its latest fact-finding visit to Amman and Cairo on June 22-27, the UN Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories has warned that "popular discontent could result in another round of violence" in the Occupied Territories. (The Committee was not allowed by Israel to visit the Occupied Territories.)

The Committee, established by the UN General Assembly in 1968, comprises three UN member states currently represented by Ambassador Palitha T.B. Kohona of Sri Lanka (Chairperson), Ambassador Dato Hussein Haniff of Malaysia and Ambassador Fode Seck of Senegal.

"Israel's continued detention of an estimated 5,000 Palestinians should be of deep concern to the world," said Ambassador Kohona, highlighting especially 20 prisoners "who are on hunger strikes to protest abuses such as arbitrary detention, poor prison conditions, denial of family visits, solitary confinement, lack of access to education and negligent medical treatment".

"Witnesses informed the Committee that Israeli prison doctors have betrayed their Oath - the fundamental premise of the medical profession that their patients' health comes first," he further said in the news release.

The Sri Lankan envoy pointed out that several witnesses had raised the case of Maysara Abu Hamdiyeh, who died earlier this year from cancer after being misdiagnosed and mistreated - having had to wait for over four months before being sent to hospital.

"Witnesses also discussed the death of Arafat Jaradat, citing clear evidence of torture while under Israeli interrogation," Ambassador Kohona said. "The most alarming testimony concerned the systematically abusive detention and interrogation by Israeli authorities of Palestinian children."

Witnesses reported that approximately 200 children are in

Israeli detention at any given time, and that children are often taken away in the middle of the night, blindfolded and hands tied, after being shocked awake by Israeli soldiers busting in with sound grenades, smashed glass and instructions screamed at the entire family.

"Witnesses stated that Palestinian children are denied requests to be accompanied by a parent, denied access to a lawyer, and put at serious risk of torture and ill-treatment at the hands of Israeli security officials," the Special Committee Chair said.

On Israel's blockade of Gaza, Ambassador Kohona said: "For over six years, the lives of Palestinians in Gaza have been profoundly disrupted by Israel's blockade."

According to the UN news release, under the Oslo Accords, Israel agreed to a 20-nautical-mile area for Palestinian fishermen in Gaza, but the Israeli government has militarily enforced a three-nautical-mile limit.

The Committee was informed that Israel has extended access for fishermen up to six nautical miles, but was also informed that Israel had again reduced it to three nautical miles during the prime fishing season.

"Gaza's 4,000 fishermen used to catch four tons of fish each year, now they bring in only 1.5 tons," the Committee noted, adding that

fishermen being subjected to arrest, confiscation of their equipment and abusive treatment by Israeli security forces."

"Gaza's farmers find themselves in similar circumstances," the Committee noted, stressing that "they aren't maximising the cultivation of their traditional crops of strawberries, carnations, herbs and sweet

peppers, due to Israel's near total restriction on exports and enforcement of a buffer zone inside of Gaza."

According to the UN news release, the Committee expressed regret that testimony concerning the buffer zone mirrored what they have been told during previous visits, namely, that a lack of clarity regarding the Israeli-enforced no-go area creates grave dangers for that six years of blockade is bifurcating Palestinian society. "We heard of many Palestinians in Gaza who haven't seen family members in the West Bank for years, owing to Israeli restrictions on movement between Gaza and the rest of Palestine," Ambassador Kohona said. "There is a sense that dividing the Palestinian population between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is an objective driving Israel's blockade. This should be an urgent concern to the UN Security Council."

The Committee also stressed zoning regime that effectively prohibits Palestinians from building or even renovating their homes.

According to the UN news release, witnesses told the Committee that even when Israel has, in the past, temporarily frozen settlement expansion, it has sped up the construction of its network of roads that link settlements and Israeli business interests in the occupied Palestinian territory.

"One witness explained that the expansion of the settlements combined with the unilateral establishment of closed military zones and so-called nature reserves jeopardise the contiguity of the West Bank. Another witness described how Israeli settlements and the continued construction of the Wall are isolating Palestinian communities and forcing displacement. In this regard, the Palestinian village of Al-Walaja was highlighted as a case requiring urgent intervention by the international community."

In the first five months of this year, the Committee heard, 42 Palestinian structures were demolished and 149 displaced in East Jerusalem. One witness reminded the Committee that not all demolitions are reported as some families are forced to demolish their own homes to avoid huge fees from the Israeli government.

Listening to reports of businesses, including multinational corporations, which profit from the Israeli settlement enterprise, the Committee stressed: "Businesses have a responsibility to not be complicit in Israel's policies and practices that openly violate Palestinian rights."

"It is inconceivable that any business could not be aware of the illegal nature of Israel's settlement activities in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem," Ambassador Kohona said. "There is a need for scrupulous due diligence and a clear awareness of the potential legal and reputational consequences for businesses associated with the Israeli settlement enterprise."

The Committee also highlighted the ongoing research mentioned by witnesses concerning non-profit groups in the United States and Canada, which collect donations and transfer funds to Israeli organisations supporting the expansion of settlements.

"If accurate, such organisations are perpetuating the occupation and likely aiding and abetting what is clearly a war crime," the Committee members said.

"The Special Committee joins many of the witnesses in hoping that current efforts to re-start meaningful negotiations are successful. We were repeatedly told that the only way to end Israeli violations of Palestinian rights is to end the occupation. While we are deeply hopeful that such efforts advance quickly, we also note that Palestine's new status as a non-Member Observer State opens the door to international mechanisms that can take up many of the Israeli policies and practices that have been violating Palestinian rights for so long," the Committee stressed. ●

such attacks, especially those that resulted in the death of journalists, wantonly reject the right to freedom of expression," the Committee underlined.

The Committee also heard extensive testimony on continuing settlement construction in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the widespread phenomenon of Israeli settler violence and Israel's discriminatory planning and



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today 80 percent of Palestinian fishermen live in poverty.

In turn, said the Committee members, Israel's severe punishment of Palestinian fishermen, including by confiscating their motors, reduces access to health care and educational opportunities for their families.

"Again this year, we received allegations of Palestinian

Palestinian farmers, since Israeli soldiers fire live ammunition at persons between 300 and 1,000 metres from the fence.

"Farmers in Gaza can't till all of their land and much of what they do produce can't be exported," Ambassador Kohona said. "The Committee was told that five persons have been killed and 92 injured near the buffer zone

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