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VOICE OF REVOLUTION

Publication of the U.S. Marxist-Leninist Organization

November 6, 2015

USMLO 3942 N. Central Ave, Chicago, IL 60634



BUDGET BILL

Stop Funding War and Fund Our Rights

The recently passed budget deal serves to continue increasing funding for the Pentagon while not providing the funding needed for the rights of the people. It calls for an additional \$80 billion over the next two years, to be divided equally between the Pentagon, on the one hand, and all other

non-defense discretionary spending on the other. This is in no way sufficient to provide for the growing needs of the people in a situation where poverty, unemployment and inequality are growing social problems.

U.S. military funding is
Stop Funding War • 3

OBAMA REJECTS KEYSTONE XL OIL PIPELINE

Ban Fracking Everywhere and Support Sustainable Energy

President Obama on November 6 announced that he had rejected the request from Canadian monopoly TransCanada to build the Keystone XL (KXL) oil pipeline. This ended a seven-year State Department review as to whether the pipeline served the “national interest.” The issue for people

in both countries was whether it served their desire for a clean and safe environment and development of energy resources that are sustainable, for humans and Mother Earth.

The proposed 1,179-mile pipeline would have carried 800,000 barrels a day of
Ban Fracking Everywhere • 21

NETANYAHU TO VISIT WHITE HOUSE

Defend Palestine and Reject U.S./Israeli Crimes of Occupation and Collective Punishment

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu will be visiting the White House for talks with President Obama November 9. According to the White House, the visit “Continues the very close and regular consultations that President Obama has had

with the Prime Minister of Israel, and our government has had with the government of Israel over the last six and a half years. Even as there have been occasional differences on particular issues, we are
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CUBA AT UNITED NATIONS

World’s Peoples Demand: U.S. End the Blockade Now

The General Assembly of the United Nations voted for the 24th consecutive year to support Cuba’s resolution calling for the U.S. to immediately lift its blockade. The October 27 vote was historic

and unprecedented, with 191 countries voting in favor of the resolution, while only two, the U.S. and Israel, opposed it. For the first time, there were no abstentions.

End the Blockade Now • 15

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Publication of the U.S. Marxist-Leninist Organization
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I • Stop Funding War

already more than that of China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, France, Great Britain, India, and Germany combined — the next seven largest military budgets. As just one example, \$27 billion per year is spent to sustain eleven Carrier Task Groups for the Navy. China and Russia each have one such group. The U.S. battle fleet is larger than the next 13 navies combined. What is the aim of such tremendous military funding other than plans for world war and guaranteed public dollars for the military monopolies?!

The U.S. effort to secure world empire is inflicting massive damage abroad and at home and is unsustainable. Wars, including drone warfare and that by Special Operations, are solving no problem and worsening conditions for millions. This budget, which serves the aim of empire, is undemocratic, trampling on the rights of the people abroad and at home.

The budget also provides a big score for the Wall Street financiers. They have been using the possibility of a shutdown over the debt ceiling to now secure unlimited debt financing, at higher interest rates. The bill did not simply raise the debt ceiling, as usually occurs. It suspended it altogether until March of 2017, and likely beyond. The financiers secure a big score twice, from fees to sell bonds and from the high interest rates. Indeed, debt increased more than \$339 billion in one day after the bill passed and interest rates on Treasury bonds shot up to a five-year high.

Public funds should not be used to borrow from private interests like these financiers. A modern arrangement would

provide for public financial enterprises to provide the government financing needed. A public bank that is organized to serve the public and meet its needs is required and would do far more to assist the economy.

A modern arrangement would also take such decisions out of the hands of a few and put it in the hands of the people themselves. In various demonstrations, forums, as well as surveys, the people consistently call for greatly cutting Pentagon funding and increasing funding for social programs. This represents the drive of the

people for a budget and decision making process that meets their needs. The tremendous wealth produced by the workers themselves needs to be used to defend rights, at home and abroad. Put simply, it is necessary to *Stop Funding War and Fund our Rights*. For a budget that does so it is necessary to organize for political empowerment of the people at all levels.



FINANCIERS ENSURE DEBT CEILING SUSPENDED

Budget Deal Reached, Funding Bills Remain

Congress recently approved a budget deal that provides spending caps for both the Pentagon and all other non-defense discretionary programs, like education, housing, etc. for 2016 and 2017. Obama signed it into law November 2, a day before it was said that the government would run out of funds to pay its bills, most notably debts to the Wall Street financiers. The threat of defaulting was used to limit public debate and discussion and push through the agreement. However, Congress still needs to pass specific funding measures — appropriations bills — for the various federal programs by December 11.

One major change involved the debt ceiling, which has now been suspended until March 2017. Commonly Congress votes to raise the ceiling. Now they have suspended it altogether, meaning the government can incur unlimited levels of debt. The ceiling is the amount of bonds the federal government can have outstanding. The bonds, commonly held by the big financiers, as well as foreign countries, like China, represent outstanding debts.

The change enables the government to finance more wars and pay the rich schemes, using public dollars. Indeed the debt payments themselves are a main pay the rich scheme, as interest must also be paid. Indeed, rates for 10-year Treasury bonds

increased to a five-year high shortly after the deal became law. Then there are also all the fees the financiers get for selling the bonds. All at public expense.

Obama applauded the measure saying it would serve to avoid government shutdowns, including over the debt ceiling, for the next two years — which includes the 2016 presidential elections. He said it would “Strengthen the middle class by investing in critical areas like education and job training and basic research. It keeps us safe by investing in our national security and making sure that our troops get what they need in order to keep us safe and perform all the outstanding duties that they do around the world. It protects our seniors by avoiding harmful cuts to Medicare and Social Security.”

The measure sets caps for federal spending through the 2016 and 2017 fiscal years. It provides an additional \$80 billion over the two years, split evenly between military and domestic programs. This even split in itself is criminal, given the Pentagon already secures about half the total budget, more than \$600 billion, while funding for all the other non-defense discretionary (NDD) programs is much smaller. To provide equal increases does not provide equal funding. It also in no way provides the

levels of funding needed to guarantee the rights of the people.

The human needs people are contending with, such as for the right to housing, healthcare, education, daycare, transportation, have increased tremendously. Yet funding for these areas, even with the increase, puts NDD funding are at historic lows. NDD funding for 2016 would be 12 percent *below* the 2010 level, adjusted for inflation. By 2017, NDD spending would fall to its *lowest level on record* as a share of the economy (with data back to 1962).

The Pentagon also gets an additional \$59 billion slush fund, something not provided for social programs.

Cuts were also made to Social Security and Medicare, though they were not as deep as originally called for. Social Security recipients get no Cost of Living Increase (COLA), as would usually be the case. As well, the ability for married couples on Social Security to delay benefits (see p.5) was eliminated, as was ability for



widows and their dependents. This is a significant cut that will disproportionately harm people impoverished.

For Medicare there was to be a 52 percent increase in Part B (medical) premiums for about 30 percent of beneficiaries. The increase will still occur, but over a period of time instead of all at once. Premiums will be raised by an extra \$3 a month for about six years for the 30 percent of beneficiaries who would otherwise face steep premium hikes in 2016.

The bill was mainly secured through secret negotiations between the president and Congressional leaders, rather the public debate and hearings. This reflects the increasingly undemocratic character of governance, where power is concentrated in fewer hands. Various polls and surveys indicate that if the people themselves were deciding the budget, they would greatly cut Pentagon funding while increasing that for education, housing and other social programs.

Lifting Debt Ceiling A Signal For Spending Spree To Begin

Investor's Business Daily

The national debt late November 5 was **\$18,532,338,091,711.00**. The feds could not wait to start bingeing once Congress lifted the debt ceiling and canceled spending caps. A week earlier, the debt stood at roughly \$18.1 trillion. What happened?

Economist David Malpass of Encima Global was the first to alert us to the sudden surge in borrowing. On Tuesday, the national debt skyrocketed by \$339.1 billion. In one day! It is the most borrowing in one day for all of American history, according to *USA Today*.

It came just 24 hours after President Obama signed into law the suspension of the debt limit. No wonder Wall Street celebrated the budget-busting deal — \$339 billion is a lot of money in fees for selling government bonds.

The borrowing blitz may also help explain why the interest rate on the 10-year Treasury hit a five-year high on Friday. That, of course, means that the cost of financing our debt just got more expensive. Interest on the debt is becoming one of the most expensive line items in our federal budget.

Most of this one-day borrowing came from the delay in issuing new debt in order to stay under the old debt ceiling. So once the cork was popped off, the pent-up borrowing shot up.

It is also important to understand that Congress did not just raise the debt ceiling, which is bad enough. The new law allows unlimited Treasury borrowing for the next 18 months “as necessary to fund a government commitment.” In other words, a credit card without limits.

This means that we are operating for the next 18 months or so with no debt ceiling at all. A Republican Congress has given Obama unlimited borrowing authority. [...]

Federal spending is now expected to rise by \$500 billion in two years — 2015 and 2016. It now looks as though Obama policies will have caused the debt to nearly double to just under \$20 trillion in his eight years in office. The average family's share of this debt bomb is closing in on \$225,000.

And to think Obama once called George W. Bush America's most fiscally irresponsible president.

The Indefensible Budget for Defense

Richard W. Behan, Counterpunch

“...The U.S. battle fleet is larger than the next 13 navies combined, 11 of which belong to allies or partners...” – Robert Gates, Secretary of Defense, May 10, 2010

The extravagance of military spending today cannot be defended, and it reflects a corrupted political system. Great wealth is taxed away from the American people and transferred unjustly to a tiny cohort of wealthy and influential oligarchs — in the so-called military/industrial complex — while civil programs of much public benefit languish, starved for funds.

The excess is decoupled from any credible need. We spend more on defense than China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, France, Great Britain, India, and Germany combined—the next seven largest defense budgets. We account for 39 percent of all the military spending in the world. Our defense budget is almost three times larger than China’s and greater than Russia’s by a factor of seven.

What are some facts? What have we bought with the excessive military budgets?

A Carrier Strike Group in the American Navy is composed of about 7,500 officers and enlisted persons manning a dozen ships or so: an aircraft carrier with 60-75 aircraft aboard, one or more guided missile cruisers, two anti-submarine ships, two or more destroyers or frigates, and a varying number of submarines and supply ships.

The acquisition cost of the newest carrier, the USS Gerald R. Ford CVN 78, topped \$13.5 billion, and the ongoing cost of operating a Carrier Strike Group — the ships, aircraft, and personnel — is about \$6.5 million per day.

The United States Navy has *eleven* Carrier Strike Groups.

Each day we spend about \$71.5 million to sustain them. **\$27 billion per year.**

Great Britain has two carrier strike groups. India has two. France has one. Spain has one. Italy has one. Brazil has one. Thailand has one. Russia has one. China has one. Could we keep America safe with, say, just five or six Carrier Groups? [...]

On August 22, 2015, in Newport News, Virginia the keel was laid for the next Ford-class carrier, the USS John F. Kennedy CVN 79.

The carrier groups of the Navy are deployed all over the world. So are the other armed forces, with permanent Army posts and Air Force bases located in 63 countries. We maintain 737 overseas bases housing 255,000 men and women in uniform: 65,000 stationed in Europe, 80,000 in East Asia and Japan, 5,000 in North Africa, the rest scattered elsewhere. The recurring annual fixed cost of each base ranges from \$50 million to \$200 million, according to a RAND Corporation study; at bottom \$36.85 billion per year. And stationing military personnel overseas is far more costly than it is at home: RAND says from \$10,000 to \$40,000 more per year, per person. Another \$2.55 billion.

We spend at least \$39.4 billion per year for a permanent showing of the flag around the world. That is close to the entire defense budget of Germany, and \$5 billion more than Italy’s. No other country finds a global military presence necessary for keeping its people safe. [...]

History is littered with nation-states that sought military supremacy, spent beyond their means to achieve it, and collapsed in consequence. (The most recent example, arguably, is Russia.) Does our country fit this template? [...]

Budget Deal Fine Print Axes Benefit for Married Social Security Beneficiaries

Dave Lindorff

In what might be an opening salvo in the undermining of Social Security benefits by a coalition of Republicans in Congress, President Obama, and many corporatist Congressional Democrats, the new “Bipartisan Budget Agreement of 2015” has eliminated a provision in the Social Security Act which, since 2000, has allowed older American married couples who have both reached age 66 to have one spouse receive spousal benefits on the other’s account, helping both to hold off until 70 before claiming their own maximum monthly benefit.

Let me explain. In 2000, Congress amended the Social Security Act of 1936 to allow one spouse in a married couple to file for their Social Security at the so-called Full Retirement Age of 66, and then suspend any payment of benefits out until they reached the maximum benefit age of 70. By doing this, the act, as amended, allowed the other spouse, if also age 66 or

older, to begin collecting spousal benefits on the first spouse’s suspended account. Spousal benefits at age 66 are 50% of whatever the suspending spouse would be receiving if benefits had been started at that age.

For example, if a wife who, at age 66, could retire and begin receiving \$2000 a month on her account, chose to file and then suspend benefits, her husband, if also age 66, under the 2000 amendment, immediately begin receiving \$1000 a month in spousal benefits without having to file for his own benefits. What this meant was that for the next four years this couple, often by that time both retired, could count on receiving (in constant dollars, not counting for upward inflation adjustments) about \$12,000 a year in Social Security benefits, which could help many such people hang on until age 70 before having to file for Social Security benefits on their own accounts. Since waiting

four years past 66 increases those monthly benefit checks by 32%, the strategy was enabling such couples to boost their combined benefits from 70 until death by a substantial sum.

Taking the above example, and assuming that both husband and wife were eligible to receive benefits of \$2000 a month if they filed for benefits at age 66, and \$2640 if they waited until age 70, and assuming they both could expect to live to age 80, the difference in their income in retirement between just taking benefits at 66, and using the file-and-suspend option and taking benefits at 70 (again in constant dollars) would be \$672,000 and \$681,600. That is almost \$10,000 in extra income in retirement for an average lifespan.

The difference, of course, grows significantly if the couple or one member of the couple, lives much longer. For example, if one spouse died at 80, and the other lived to 90, the difference in income that surviving spouse would receive between the options of both filing at 64, and using file-and-suspend and both starting benefits at 70 would be \$76,800. Double that for a couple living to age ninety to an extra \$153,600 in total benefits over their retired lives.

This was all taken away by the budget agreement's sleight of hand. And incidentally, it is not just married couples that have been hurt. The ending of the file-and-suspend strategy also applied to filing-and-suspending by a widowed spouse to allow his or her dependent children to receive benefits while holding off on collecting benefits for his or herself until age 70.

Note that there was never any analysis done by the Office of Management and Budget or the Social Security Administration of the workings of this so-called "loophole" in the Social



Security law — no examination into who was making use of its provision and how much they receive. [...]

Because of this give-away by the White House, as many as \$9 billion a year in benefits may have been taken away from retired couples going forward. But it is worse than that: to the extent that lower income couples are forced by financial circumstances to take their retirement benefits earlier, at 66, 67, 68 or 69, instead of waiting until they are 70, it will mean lower benefit checks for countless more millions. [...]

There are several threats inherent in this latest rule change. The first is that it sets a precedent of taking away a long-standing benefit that is significantly helping many Social Security recipients right now to get by, and even more important, to hold off on pulling the trigger on collecting their own Social Security benefits.

Secondly, it sets a precedent of Democrats, who claim to want to support the majority public desire for expanded, not reduced Social Security benefits, instead caving in and supporting cuts in benefits... The silence from supposedly progressive Democrats is deafening. Even Democratic presidential aspirant Sen. Bernie Sanders, who has been hammering the podium in the Senate and on the stump calling for expanding of Social Security benefits, not cuts in the program, has uttered not a word of criticism of this deceptive rule change, though it is a clear cut in program benefits. [...] I would say that the deafening silence from the founder of the Senate's supposed "Defend Social Security Caucus," says it all.

So much for progressives defending Social Security from the corporatist horde in Congress (and the White House) seeking to weaken and ultimately destroy the program.

Visit our website: usmlo.org

I • Defend Palestine

proud that we've been able to sustain an unprecedented level of security cooperation and we're always looking for ways to continue to enhance our cooperation in support of Israel's security." This includes billions in yearly aid to Israel and her military.

The agenda for the meeting will focus on several issues. According to Ben Rhodes, the Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communications, the meeting "Will certainly include a discussion about our security cooperation going forward. There will be a discussion of Iran both in terms of the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, as well as our shared concerns about Iran's destabilizing activities in the region. There certainly will be discussion of Israel's relations with the Palestinians, including the situation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. And there will, of course, be a discussion of other issues in the region, including the situation in Syria." The talks between Obama and Netanyahu follow the visit of the Israeli Minister of Defense to Washington, as well as the visit of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Dunford to Israel. These visits were mainly to "come to a common understanding of the threat picture Israel faces." Increased funding and military armaments, including jet bombers, are to be discussed.

The visit is taking place at a time that Israel is once again mounting attacks against the Palestinians. Israeli armed forces have killed dozens of protesters and wounded thousands, many of them teenagers. Israel has also attempted to humiliate the Palestinians by restricting their ability to use the al-Aqsa Mosque. More recently Israel has now declared it will not return the bodies of Palestinians, many of them youth, killed by Israeli soldiers. The justification is that funerals are used as a means to protest.

Further, whole areas of East Jerusalem, where Palestinians live, are being closed off with barricades and checkpoints. This includes those at hospitals and blocking ambulances and Red Crescent efforts to assist those injured. Such collective punishment is a crime and designed to humiliate and silence resistance. That Netanyahu is being welcomed at such a time underlines U.S. backing for these attacks. It is likely that, as in the past, Israel is seeking a green light from the U.S. for further intensification of collective punishment and other crimes against the Palestinians. But as in the past, the U.S./Israeli occupation and crimes cannot stop the drive of the Palestinians for their national and social rights.

The Palestinians continue to resist under the difficult conditions of occupation and genocide. They continue to demand their rights, the right of refugees to return to their homes and land; the right to self-determination; the right to resist occupation.



Many youth in the U.S., especially African Americans, readily understand the difficulties the Palestinian youth contend with, facing an armed and violent occupation force. They know what it means to contend with a militarized police force and the terrorism they impose, all in the name of "self-defense." They know the impunity of these forces, and the targeting of protesters as the ones who are violent. Use of force, police occupations, and collective punishment are justly opposed here and in Palestine. Demonstrations taking place in the U.S. in support of the current resistance in Palestine have opposed the false claim of self-defense, by Israeli soldiers and U.S. police and emphasized the need to strengthen and unite the struggles for rights. As signs bring out, *It is Not Muslim vs. Jew, It is Not Black vs. white, it is Humanity vs. Injustice!*

Voice of Revolution salutes the resistance in Palestine and condemns continued U.S. arming and backing of Israel. Without this, Israel would not be able to continue the occupation and impunity to collectively punish and terrorize the Palestinians. These are U.S./Israeli crimes and both governments must be held accountable.

We firmly defend the right of the youth, here and abroad, to resist and we join in defending their rights. Palestine has the right to be and her whole proud history makes clear she will not be eliminated, she will be free!

*End Collective Punishment of Palestinians!
Defend Palestine's Right to Be!
Obama, Netanyahu You Can't Hide,
We Charge You with Genocide!*

CONTENDING WITH ISRAELI AGENTS DISGUISED AS PROTESTERS

Palestinian Youth Continue Protests

Anne Paq, The Electronic Intifada, November 6, 2015

The road leading to a military checkpoint at Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem has become a place of regular confrontation with Israeli forces as Palestinian youths have protested on a daily basis throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip since the beginning of October.

Those protests have been met with brutal force by the military.

Twenty-six Palestinians were killed during demonstrations last month, including 28-year-old Mutaz Zawahreh, who was shot dead by an Israeli soldier during a protest near Rachel's Tomb.

A place of pilgrimage for Muslim, Christian and Jewish worshippers, but currently only accessible to the latter, Rachel's Tomb is located in northern Bethlehem. Once a thriving commercial area, the area has been completely walled off by Israel and fortified with military checkpoints, cutting off the main artery between Bethlehem and Jerusalem.

On Friday, dozens of Palestinian youths gathered there to throw stones at Israeli soldiers who positioned themselves in front of the wall that towers over the area. Israeli agents disguised

as Palestinians drew their guns after they infiltrated the group of youth. They jumped on one protester, beating and arresting him. Noxious clouds of tear gas fired by the military blanketed the area and nearby al-Azzeh refugee camp. Uniformed Israeli soldiers shot rubber-coated steel bullets and tear gas canisters.

Medics and journalists were also targeted with rubber-coated steel bullets but none were injured. At least three Palestinians were injured after being shot by live fire. One of them was shot in the neck and underwent surgery.

A week earlier, an Israeli soldier warned residents of another refugee camp in the area that "People of Aida, we are the occupation army. If you keep throwing stones, we will hit you with gas until you die. The children, the adults, the elderly."

One day later, an 8-month-old baby died after inhaling tear gas fired by Israeli soldiers in the Bethlehem-area village of Beit Fajjar.

Israel's violence against Palestinian protesters — and its use of undercover agents disguised as civilians — is routine. More than 7,000 Palestinians suffered injuries requiring medical treatment last month alone.

JERUSALEM

Palestinian Doctors and Medical Employees Protest Outside Al-Makassed Hospital

Charlotte Silver, East Jerusalem, November 2, 2015

A dozen soldiers charged down the halls of al-Makassed hospital to the office of its director, Dr. Rafiq al-Husseini, and demanded the medical records of a 16-year-old boy in Israeli custody. Al-Husseini complied, handing over the records of the boy who had been treated only a few days earlier for a bullet wound to the foot.

The next day, more soldiers returned. This time they demanded the hospital's surveillance videos for specific dates. For three straight days, Israeli soldiers rampaged through East Jerusalem's only emergency hospital, located on the Mount of Olives. Staff held a sit-in at the entrance of the hospital on October 29 to protest the raids.

Medical and human rights groups say the raids are part of a pattern of Israeli obstruction to medical care in the occupied city. Two Palestinians died in October after delays at recently installed checkpoints in East Jerusalem.

Over the last month, Israeli occupation forces have seriously hindered medical care to Palestinians by blocking ambulances at checkpoints, harassing medics and violating patient privacy. As the only emergency facility accessible to Palestinians in the city, al-Makassed has treated most of the 370 demonstrators injured

in East Jerusalem over the last month.

In October, 72 Palestinians were killed by Israeli forces and Palestinian medical services say they have treated 8,262 injured Palestinians throughout the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. Almost 800 were shot with live ammunition.

Doctors interrogated

The raids at al-Makassed last month interrupted the treatment of patients. Staff were prevented from doing their work and their sense of security and safety was severely compromised, hospital director al-Husseini said. "After 30 minutes, the Israeli forces entered the hospital and began shooting tear gas and rubber bullets inside the hospital," al-Husseini said.

Two patients were hit with rubber-coated steel bullets and one staff member was hit with a tear gas canister, he added. Physicians for Human Rights-Israel released a video showing tear gas being fired in the hospital grounds.

Israeli forces summoned two doctors for interrogation, al-Husseini said. One was held for nearly two days. The army questioned the doctors about who had accompanied the boy whose medical records were seized. In addition, at least four nurses

have been summoned for interrogation. Al-Husseini said he believes Israel is intimidating medical staff so that they will be reluctant to treat wounded protesters in the future.

Robert Piper, the UN's humanitarian coordinator for the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, said, "Actions that undermine the ability of health workers to provide care to those in need are violations of international law. The conduct by the Israeli security forces during several entries into al-Makassed hospital this past week is unacceptable and must not be repeated."

An occupying force

Under an Israeli law held over from British colonial rule, hospitals are required to hand over information on patients deemed by authorities to be criminal suspects.

Israel occupied East Jerusalem in 1967 and annexed it, a decision unanimously rejected by world governments and the United Nations.

"Al-Makassed receives all the demonstrators in East Jerusalem; you cannot say that a protester is a suspect of a violent crime," Hadas Ziv, director of public outreach and ethics for Physicians for Human Rights-Israel said. Ziv said that the raids "Sends a signal that Israel doesn't see it as a hospital, but as a shelter of so-called terrorists. This is very dangerous."

Israel has previously used the colonial law against protesters. In October 2000, Palestinian towns in present-day Israel witnessed large demonstrations in response to Israel's violence against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza. Israeli police responded to unarmed protesters with brutal force, killing 13 and injuring hundreds.

Israeli authorities demanded that hospitals provide names of all the protesters they treated. appealed the demand at the time and the government backed down, but the law remains on the books.

Following the raids on al-Makassed, Physicians for Human Rights-Israel wrote to Israel's ministries of health and security, asking for more information.

"It requires very extreme circumstances to attack the neutrality of hospitals," Ziv said.



Elsewhere in the West Bank, Israeli forces disguised as Palestinians raided a hospital in Nablus last month and abducted a patient from his bed.

The checkpoint is a killer

The obstruction of medical work in East Jerusalem is not confined to hospital raids. Erab al-Fuqaha, a spokesperson for the Palestine Red Crescent Society, said that her organization's ambulances have been severely hindered by new checkpoints erected by Israeli forces.

Last week, 52-year-old Nadim Shqeirat died in Jerusalem's Jabal al-Mukabir neighborhood after suffering a heart attack. Palestinian medics said that Israeli obstacles cost them valuable minutes reaching him.

A week earlier, 65-year-old Huda Darwish died after her family was held up at a checkpoint in the Issawiyeh neighborhood as they tried to get her to hospital. She had respiratory difficulties after breathing tear gas fired by Israeli forces.

According to the UN monitoring group OCHA, Israel has placed 38 obstacles on East Jerusalem roads, including 16 checkpoints, directly affecting nine neighborhoods with a combined population of 138,000. Two of the new checkpoints are near the Red Crescent station on the Mount of Olives.

Red Crescent workers in medical uniforms have also been physically assaulted in Jerusalem and elsewhere in the West Bank, and prevented from attending to injured Palestinians. Al-Fuqaha cited occasions that Israeli forces prevented medics from treating Palestinians who were shot during alleged attacks in Jerusalem. "International law requires that occupation forces allow medical workers to perform medical treatment," al-Fuqaha said.

Dr. Walid al-Hummar, director of East Jerusalem's Augusta Victoria hospital, which specializes in cancer treatment, said that he has seen a marked decline in the number of patients this month. "The checkpoint is a killer to us," he said. Augusta Victoria is only a block from al-Makassed but is now separated by a checkpoint directly outside the hospital's entrance.

(Charlotte Silver is a journalist from San Francisco)

STRENGTHEN UNITED RESISTANCE

Many Black Organizations Say Palestine Liberation a “Key Matter of Our Time”

Over the past year, strengthened resilience and joint struggle have emerged between African American and Palestinian liberation movements. More than 1,100 Black activists, artists, scholars, students and organizations released the statement below reaffirming the significance of uniting struggles in the U.S. and Palestine and standing with the “Palestinian struggle and commitment to the liberation of Palestine’s land and people.” The statement recognizes the fact that Israel could not impose its occupation without the funding and protection of the U.S. Police and military forces from both countries also train together and discuss how best to repress resistance. It is the result of many years of common work by various organizations in the U.S. and Palestine.

The list of signatories to the statement include scholar-activists Angela Davis and Cornel West, political prisoners Mumia Abu-Jamal and Sundiata Acoli, rappers Talib Kweli, Boots Riley and Jasiri X and many more. Forty-nine organizations have signed, including the Florida-based Dream Defenders and St. Louis-based Hands Up United and Tribe X, which were founded after the killings of Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown, respectively, as well as the 35-year-old Organization for Black Struggle in St. Louis, Malcolm X Grassroots Movement and many Black student clubs from campuses across the country.

The statement was originally published by blackforpalestine.com, where it has also been translated into Arabic. It also appeared in Ebony magazine.

* * *

The past year has been one of high-profile growth for Black-Palestinian solidarity. Out of the terror directed against us – from numerous attacks on Black life to Israel’s brutal war on Gaza and chokehold on the West Bank – strengthened resilience and joint struggle have emerged between our movements. Palestinians on Twitter were among the first to provide international support for protesters in Ferguson, Missouri, where St. Louis-based Palestinians also gave support on the ground.

Last November, a delegation of Palestinian students visited Black organizers in St. Louis, Atlanta, Detroit and more, just months before the Dream Defenders took representatives of Black Lives Matter, Ferguson, and other racial justice groups to Palestine. Throughout the year, Palestinians sent multiple letters of solidarity to us throughout protests in Ferguson, New York and Baltimore. We offer this statement to continue the conversation between our movements:

On the anniversary of last summer’s Gaza massacre, in the 48th year of Israeli occupation, the 67th year of Palestinians’ ongoing Nakba (the Arabic word for Israel’s ethnic cleansing) – and in the fourth century of Black oppression in the present-day United States – we, the undersigned Black activists, artists, scholars, writers, and political prisoners offer this letter of reaffirmed solidarity with the Palestinian struggle and commitment to the liberation of Palestine’s land and people.

We can neither forgive nor forget last summer’s violence. We remain outraged at the brutality Israel unleashed on Gaza through its siege by land, sea and air, and three military of-



Palestine Delegation joins resistance in Ferguson

fensives in six years.

We remain sickened by Israel's targeting of homes, schools, UN shelters, mosques, ambulances, and hospitals.

We remain heartbroken and repulsed by the number of children Israel killed in an operation it called "defensive."

We reject Israel's framing of itself as a victim. Anyone who takes an honest look at the destruction to life and property in Gaza can see Israel committed a one-sided slaughter. With 100,000 people still homeless in Gaza, the massacre's effects continue to devastate Gaza today and will for years to come.

Israel's injustice and cruelty toward Palestinians is not limited to Gaza and its problem is not with any particular Palestinian party. The oppression of Palestinians extends throughout the occupied territories, within Israel's 1948 borders, and into neighboring countries. The Israeli occupation forces continue to kill protesters – including children – conduct night raids on civilians, hold hundreds of people under indefinite detention and demolish homes while expanding illegal Jewish-only settlements.

Israeli politicians, including Benjamin Netanyahu, incite against Palestinian citizens within Israel's recognized borders, where over 50 laws discriminate against non-Jewish people.

Our support extends to those living under occupation and siege, Palestinian citizens of Israel and the 7 million Palestinian refugees exiled in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Palestine. The refugees' right to return to their homeland in present-day Israel is the most important aspect of justice for Palestinians.

Palestinian liberation represents an inherent threat to Israeli settler colonialism and apartheid, an apparatus built and sustained on ethnic cleansing, land theft, and the denial of Palestinian humanity and sovereignty. While we acknowledge that the apartheid configuration in Israel/Palestine is unique from the United States (and South Africa), we continue to see connections between the situation of Palestinians and Black people.

Israel's widespread use of detention and imprisonment against Palestinians evokes the mass incarceration of Black people in the US, including the political imprisonment of our own revolutionaries.

Soldiers, police, and courts justify lethal force against us and our children who pose no imminent threat. And while the U.S. and Israel would continue to oppress us without collaborating with each other, we have witnessed police and soldiers from the two countries train side-by-side.

U.S. and Israeli officials and media criminalize our existence, portray violence against us as "isolated incidents," and call our resistance "illegitimate" or "terrorism." These narratives ignore decades and centuries of anti-Palestinian and anti-Black violence that have always been at the core of Israel and the U.S.

We recognize the racism that characterizes Israel's treatment of Palestinians is also directed against others in the region, including intolerance, police brutality and violence against Israel's African population. Israeli officials call asylum seekers

from Sudan and Eritrea "infiltrators" and detain them in the desert, while the state has sterilized Ethiopian Israelis without their knowledge or consent. These issues call for unified action against anti-Blackness, white supremacy and Zionism.

We know Israel's violence toward Palestinians would be impossible without the U.S. defending Israel on the world stage and funding its violence with over \$3 billion annually. We call on the U.S. government to end economic and diplomatic aid to Israel. We wholeheartedly endorse Palestinian civil society's 2005 call for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against Israel and call on Black and U.S. institutions and organizations to do the same. We urge people of conscience to recognize the struggle for Palestinian liberation as a key matter of our time.

As the BDS movement grows, we offer G4S, the world's largest private security company, as a target for further joint struggle.

G4S harms thousands of Palestinian political prisoners illegally held in Israel and hundreds of Black and brown youth held in its privatized juvenile prisons in the U.S. The corporation profits from incarceration and deportation from the U.S. and Palestine, to Britain, South Africa and Australia. We reject notions of "security" that make any of our groups unsafe and insist no one is free until all of us are.

We offer this statement first and foremost to Palestinians, whose suffering does not go unnoticed and whose resistance and resilience under racism and colonialism inspires us.

It is to Palestinians, as well as the Israeli and U.S. governments, that we declare our commitment to working through cultural, economic and political means to ensure Palestinian liberation at the same time as we work towards our own.

We encourage activists to use this statement to advance solidarity with Palestine and we also pressure our own Black political figures to finally take action on this issue.

As we continue these transnational conversations and interactions, we aim to sharpen our practice of joint struggle against capitalism, colonialism, imperialism and the various racisms embedded in and around our societies.

Towards liberation.



Of Course, It is an Intifada: This is What You Must Know

Ramzy Baroud

When my book ‘Searching Jenin’ was published soon after the Israeli massacre in the Jenin refugee camp in 2002, I was quizzed repeatedly by the media and many readers for conferring the word ‘massacre’ on what Israel has depicted as a legitimate battle against camp-based ‘terrorists.’

The interrogative questions were aimed at relocating the narrative from a discussion regarding possible war crimes into a technical dispute over the application of language. For them, the evidence of Israel’s violations of human rights mattered little.

This kind of reductionism has often served as the prelude to any discussion concerning the so-called Arab-Israeli conflict: events are depicted and defined using polarizing terminology that pay little heed to facts and contexts, and focus primarily on perceptions and interpretations.

Hence, it should also matter little to those same individuals whether or not Palestinian youth such as Isra’ Abed, 28, shot repeatedly on October 9 in Affula - and Fadi Samir, 19, killed by Israeli police a few days earlier, were, in fact, knife-wielding Palestinians who were in a state of self-defense and shot by the police. Even when video evidence emerges countering the official Israeli narrative and revealing, as in most other cases, that the murdered youth posed no threat, the official Israeli narrative will always be accepted as facts, by some. Isra’, Fadi, and all the rest are ‘terrorists’ who endangered the safety of Israeli citizens and, alas, had to be eliminated as a result.

The same logic has been used throughout the last century, when the current so-called Israeli Defense Forces were still operating as armed militias and organized gangs in Palestine, before it was ethnically cleansed to become Israel. Since then, this logic has applied in every possible context in which Israel has found itself, allegedly: compelled to use force against Palestinian and Arab ‘terrorists’, potential ‘terrorists’ along with their ‘terror infrastructure.’

It is not at all about the type of weapons that Palestinians use, if any at all. Israeli violence largely pertains to Israel’s own perception of its self-tailored reality: that of Israel being a beleaguered country, whose very existence is under constant threat by Palestinians, whether they are resisting by use of arms, or children playing at the beach in Gaza. There has never been a deviation from the norm in the historiography of the official Israeli discourse which explains, justifies or celebrates the death of tens of thousands of Palestinians throughout the years: the Israelis are never at fault, and no context for Palestinian ‘violence’ is ever required.

Much of our current discussion regarding the protests in Jerusalem, the West Bank, and as of late at the Gaza border is centered on Israeli priorities, not Palestinian rights, which is clearly prejudiced. Once more, Israel is speaking of ‘unrest’ and ‘attacks’ originating from the ‘territories,’ as if the priority is guaranteeing the safety of the armed occupiers – soldiers and extremist settlers, alike.

Rationally, it follows that the opposite state of ‘unrest’, that of ‘quiet’ and ‘lull’, are when millions of Palestinians agree to being

subdued, humiliated, occupied, besieged and habitually killed or, in some cases, lynched by Israeli mobs or burned alive, while embracing their miserable fate and carrying on with life as usual.

The return to ‘normalcy’ is thus achieved; obviously, at the high price of blood and violence, which Israel has a monopoly on, while its actions are rarely questioned, Palestinians can then assume the role of the perpetual victim, and their Israeli masters can continue manning military checkpoints, robbing land and building yet more illegal settlements in violation of international law.

The question, now, ought not to be basic queries about whether some of the murdered Palestinians wielded knives or not, or truly posed a threat to the safety of the soldiers and armed settlers. Rather, it should be centered principally on the very violent act of military occupation and illegal settlements in Palestinian land in the first place.

From this perspective then, wielding a knife is, in fact, an act of self-defense; arguing about the disproportionate, or otherwise, Israeli response to the Palestinian ‘violence’ is, altogether moot.

Cornering oneself with technical definitions is dehumanizing to the collective Palestinian experience.

“How many Palestinians would have to be killed to make a case for using the term ‘massacre’?” was my answer to those who questioned my use of the term. Similarly, how many would have to be killed, how many protests would have to be mobilized and for how long before the current ‘unrest’, ‘upheaval’ or ‘clashes’ between Palestinian protesters and the Israeli army become an ‘Intifada’?

And why should it even be called a ‘Third Intifada’?

Mazin Qumsiyeh describes what is happening in Palestine as the ‘14th Intifada.’ He should know best, for he authored the outstanding book, *Popular Resistance in Palestine: A History of Hope and Empowerment*. However, I would go even further and suggest that there have been many more intifadas, if one is to use definitions that are relevant to the popular discourse of the Palestinians themselves. Intifadas – shaking off — become such when Palestinian communities mobilize across Palestine, unifying beyond factional and political agendas and carry out a sustained campaign of protests, civil disobedience and other forms of grassroots resistance.

They do so when they have reached a breaking point, the process of which is not declared through press releases or televised conferences, but is unspoken, yet everlasting.

Some, although well intentioned, argue that Palestinians are not yet ready for a third intifada, as if Palestinian uprisings are a calculated process, carried out after much deliberation and strategic haggling. Nothing can be further from the truth.

An example is the 1936 Intifada against British and Zionist colonialism in Palestine. It was initially organized by Palestinian Arab parties, which were mostly sanctioned by the British Mandate government itself. But when the fellahin, the poor and largely uneducated peasants, began sensing that their leadership was being co-opted – as is the case today – they operated outside the confines

of politics, launching and sustaining a rebellion that lasted for three years.

The fellahin then, as has always been the case, carried the brunt of the British and Zionist violence, as they fell in droves. Those unlucky enough to be caught, were tortured and executed: Farhan al-Sadi, Izz al-Din al-Qassam, Mohammed Jamjoom, Fuad Hijazi are among the many leaders of that generation.

These scenarios have been in constant replay since, and with each intifada, the price paid in blood seems to be constantly increasing. Yet more intifadas are inevitable, whether they last a week, three or seven years, since the collective injustices experienced by Palestinians remain the common denominator among the successive generations of fellahin and their descendants of refugees.

What is happening today is an Intifada, but it is unnecessary to assign a number to it, since popular mobilization does not always follow a neat rationale required by some of us. Most of those leading the current Intifada were either children, or not even born when the Intifada al-Aqsa started in 2000; they were certainly not living when the Stone Intifada exploded in 1987. In fact, many might



be oblivious of the details of the original Intifada of 1936.

This generation grew up oppressed, confined and subjugated, at complete odds with the misleading ‘peace process’ lexicon that has prolonged a strange paradox between fantasy and reality. They are protesting because they experience daily humiliation and have to endure the unrelenting violence of occupation.

Moreover, they feel a total sense of betrayal by their leadership, which is corrupt and co-opted. So they rebel, and attempt to mobilize and sustain their rebellion for as long as they can,

because they have no horizon of hope outside their own action.

Let us not get bogged down by details, self-imposed definitions and numbers. This is a Palestinian Intifada, even if it ends today. What truly matters is how we respond to the pleas of this oppressed generation; will we continue to assign greater importance to the safety of the armed occupier than to the rights of a burdened and oppressed nation?

(Ramzy Baroud is an internationally syndicated columnist, author and the founder of PalestineChronicle.com. His latest book is My Father Was a Freedom Fighter: Gaza's Untold Story.)

Why is Israel's Netanyahu Trying to Whitewash Hitler?

Ali Abunimah

Benjamin Netanyahu has publicly asserted that Adolf Hitler had no intention of exterminating Europe's Jews until a Palestinian persuaded him to do it.

The Israeli prime minister's attempt to whitewash Hitler and lay the blame for the Holocaust at the door of Palestinians signals a major escalation of his incitement against and demonization of the people living under his country's military and settler-colonial rule.

It also involves a good deal of Holocaust denial.

In a speech to the World Zionist Congress in Jerusalem on Tuesday, Netanyahu asserted that Haj Amin al-Husseini convinced Hitler to carry out the killings of 6 million Jews.

Al-Husseini was the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, the highest clerical authority dealing with religious issues pertaining to the Muslim community and holy sites during the 1920s and '30s, when Palestine was under British rule.

He was appointed to the role by Herbert Samuel, the avowed Zionist who was the first British High Commissioner of Palestine.

In the video above, Netanyahu claims that al-Husseini “had a central role in fomenting the final solution. He flew to Berlin.

Hitler did not want to exterminate the Jews at the time, he wanted to expel the Jews. And Haj Amin al-Husseini went to Hitler and said, ‘If you expel them, they'll all come here.’ ‘So what should I do with them?’ he asked. ‘Burn them!’”

There is no record of such a conversation whatsoever, and Netanyahu provides no evidence that it ever took place.

The Mufti did meet Hitler, once, but their 95-minute conversation took place on 28 November 1941. Husseini used it to try to secure the Führer's support for Arab independence, as historian Philip Mattar explains in his book *The Mufti of Jerusalem*.

By then, Hitler's plans to exterminate the Jews were already well under way.

Hitler's orders

In her classic history *The War Against the Jews*, Lucy Davidowicz writes about the preparations among Hitler's top lieutenants to carry out the genocide: “Sometime during that eventful summer of 1941, perhaps even as early as May, Himmler summoned Höss to Berlin and, in privacy, told him ‘that the Führer had given the order for a Final Solution of the Jewish Question,’ and that ‘we,

the SS, must carry out the order.”

She adds: “In the late summer of 1941, addressing the assembled men of the Einsatzkommandos at Nikolayev, he [Himmler] ‘repeated to them the liquidation order, and pointed out that the leaders and men who were taking part in the liquidation bore no personal responsibility for the execution of this order. The responsibility was his alone, and the Führer’s.’”

Davidowicz also explains that “In the summer of 1941, a new enterprise was launched – the construction of the Vernichtungslager – the annihilation camp. Two civilians from Hamburg came to Auschwitz that summer to teach the staff how to handle Zyklon B, and in September, in the notorious Block 11, the first gassings were carried out on 250 patients from the hospital and on 600 Russian prisoners of war, probably ‘Communists’ and Jews ...”

According to Netanyahu’s fabricated – and Holocaust denialist – version of history, none of this could have happened. It was all the Mufti’s idea!

The Mufti in Zionist propaganda

Why would Netanyahu bring up the Mufti now and in the process whitewash Hitler?

The bogus claim that the Mufti had to persuade reluctant Nazis to kill Jews has been pushed by other anti-Palestinian propagandists, notably retired Harvard Law professor Alan Dershowitz.

As Columbia University professor Joseph Massad notes in his 2006 book *The Persistence of the Palestinian Question*, Haj Amin al-Husseini has long been a favorite theme of Zionist and Israeli propaganda.

Husseini “provided the Israelis with their best propaganda linking the Palestinians with the Nazis and European anti-Semitism,” Massad observes.

The Mufti fled British persecution and went to Germany during the war years.

Massad writes that al-Husseini “attempted to obtain promises from the Germans that they would not support the establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine. Documents that the Jewish Agency produced in 1946 purporting to show that the Mufti had a role in the extermination of Jews did no such thing; the only thing these unsigned letters by the Mufti showed was his opposition to Nazi Germany’s and Romania’s allowing Jews to emigrate to Palestine.”

Yet, he adds, “the Mufti continues to be represented by Israeli propagandists as having participated in the extermination of European Jews.”

Citing Peter Novick, the University of Chicago history professor who authored *The Holocaust in American Life*, Massad notes that in the four-volume *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, sponsored by Israel’s official memorial Yad Vashem, “the article on the Mufti is twice as long as the articles on [top Nazi officials] Goebbels and Göring and longer than the articles on Himmler and Heydrich combined.”

The entry on Hitler himself is only slightly longer than the one on Husseini. (*Electronic Intifada*)

In a 2012 article for *Al Jazeera*, Massad explains that “Zionism would begin to rewrite the Palestinian struggle against Jewish

colonization not as an anti-colonial struggle but as an anti-Semitic project.”

Keystone of Zionist mythology

The story of the Mufti has thus become a keystone for the Zionist version of Palestinian history, which leaves out a basic fact: the Zionist movement’s infamous agreement with Hitler’s regime as early as 1933.

The so-called Transfer Agreement facilitated the emigration of German Jews to Palestine and broke the international boycott of German goods launched by American Jews.

Massad explains: “Despairing from convincing Britain to stop its support of the Zionist colonial project and horrified by the Zionist-Nazi collaboration that strengthened the Zionist theft of Palestine further, the Palestinian elitist and conservative leader Haj Amin al-Husseini (who initially opposed the Palestinian peasant revolt of 1936 against Zionist colonization) sought relations with the Nazis to convince them to halt their support for Jewish immigration to Palestine, which they had promoted through the Transfer Agreement with the Zionists in 1933.”

Indeed, the Mufti would begin diplomatic contacts with the Nazis in the middle of 1937, four years after the Nazi-Zionist co-operation had started.

Ironically, Massad adds, “It was the very same Zionist collaborators with the Nazis who would later vilify al-Husseini, beginning in the 1950s to the present, as a Hitlerite of genocidal proportions, even though his limited role ended up being one of propagandizing on behalf of the Nazis to East European and Soviet Muslims on the radio.”

It should be kept in mind that many Third World nationalist movements colonized by the British were also sympathetic to the Nazis, including Indian nationalists. This was primarily based on the Nazis’ enmity toward their British colonizers, and not based on any affinity with the Nazis’ racist ideology. It was certainly on this basis that India’s Congress Party opposed the British declaration of war on Germany, as Perry Anderson notes in *The Indian Ideology*.

Indeed, the Mufti made it clear to the Germans as well as to the fascist government of Benito Mussolini in Italy, as Mattar states, that he sought “full independence for all parts of the Arab world and the rescue of Palestine from British imperialism and Zionism. He stressed that the struggle against the Jews was not of a religious nature, but for Palestinian existence and for an independent Palestine.”

That Husseini met Hitler and had relations with the Nazis is no secret. But the fabrications of Netanyahu and other Zionists should be seen for what they are: an attempt to falsely blame Palestinians for Europe’s genocide of Jews and in the process erase from memory Zionism’s own collaborationist history with Hitler’s genocidal regime.

This vile propaganda can have no other purpose than to further dehumanize Palestinians and justify Israel’s ongoing ethnic cleansing and murder.

Netanyahu’s attempt to blame Palestinians for the Holocaust is itself a form of genocidal incitement.

I • End the Blockade of Cuba Now

The blockade has inflicted grave human rights violations on Cubans. It has impacted their economy and social life, as it was designed to starve Cuba into submission. It has been used not only to block U.S. and Cuban trade and travel, it also is used against other countries. It inflicts severe penalties on companies and banks outside Cuba that conduct business with Cuba. It blocks Cuba from securing needed medicines and technology from the U.S. and other countries.

The blockade is recognized as a flagrant violation of the UN Charter and international law. For many years, more and more countries have voted with Cuba. Last year the vote was 188 in favor of lifting the blockade: the U.S. and Israel opposed the resolution and three small countries under U.S. control — the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia and Palau — abstained. This year, it is 191-2!

Speech to UN General Assembly by Cuban Foreign Minister

Speaking to the UN General Assembly before the vote, Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez Parilla reiterated that despite recent efforts to realize improved Cuba-U.S. relations, including U.S. measures ostensibly aimed at mitigating the blockade, the blockade effectively remains in place.

He pointed out many of these measures “could not be implemented unless others are adopted that would finally allow Cuba to freely export and import products and services to and from the United States; use American dollars in its international financial transactions and operate accounts in that currency in third countries’ banks and have access to credits and financing from private entities and international financial institutions.

“The problem is not that Cuba’s political system hampers the implementation of these measures and therefore it needs to be modified in order to facilitate this process, as has been stated by some U.S. officials. The problem is the implacable and systematic existence of the blockade.

“We should not mix up reality with wishful thinking or expressions of good-will. In these circumstances, one can only judge the facts.

“And the facts show, crystal-clear, that the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed against Cuba is being fully and completely implemented.

“Ten months after the announcements made on December 17, no tangible, substantial modification has been introduced in the implementation of the blockade.”

To underscore this point, Rodriguez provided numerous examples from recent weeks in which Cuba’s attempts to carry out normal activities such as the purchase of medicine, foods and industrial goods have been blocked, while financial institutions through which it conducts transactions have been subjected to exorbitant fines.

He emphasized that the blockade “is a flagrant, massive and

While the U.S. voted no, reflecting imperialist interests, the people of the U.S. stand with Cuba in demanding: *End the Blockade Now!* This is necessary to fully normalize relations with Cuba and open the way for far more people-to-people relations, something much desired by the peoples. And along with ending the blockade, the U.S. should also take responsibility for the decades-long history of severe damages to the Cuban people the blockade has caused — by paying reparations. This too would put relations on a better footing.

Voice of Revolution salutes the Cuban people and their leadership whose steadfast defense of their homeland and their right to decide their own affairs has once again been vindicated on the world stage. We join all those worldwide in demanding that Cuba’s sovereignty be respected and the U.S. end all interference and efforts at regime change, including ending the blockade.

systematic violation of the human rights of all Cubans; it is contrary to International Law; it has been described as a crime of genocide by the Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of 1948 and is the main obstacle to the economic and social development of our people.

He pointed out that 77 per cent of Cubans have been born under the blockade. In terms of quantifying the scale of damage and hardship the blockade has inflicted, Rodriguez informed:

“According to rigorous and conservative calculations, the economic damage it has caused after more than half a century amounts to \$833.755 billion, based on the price of gold. At current prices, it amounts to \$121.192 billion, a figure of enormous proportions for a small economy like ours.”

Rodriguez called on U.S. President Barack Obama to use his executive powers to substantially mitigate the blockade and for Congress to also do its part to fully lift the blockade. To do so would be in keeping with the will of U.S. citizens, he pointed out.

While Cuba is very much interested in improving and normalizing relations with the U.S., the Foreign Minister unequivocally qualified that Cuba “will never negotiate its socialist system or [permit interference in] its internal affairs, nor will it allow any blemish on its independence, which was won at the cost of the blood of its best sons and daughters and after the huge sacrifices made by many generations since the beginning of our independence wars in 1868.

“As has been reiterated by President Raúl Castro Ruz, both governments must find a way to coexist in a civilized manner, despite their profound differences, and advance as much as possible for the benefit of the peoples of the United States and Cuba, through dialogue and cooperation based on mutual respect and sovereign equality.

“There is no enmity between the peoples of the United States and Cuba. The Cuban people expressed their solidarity at the time

of the terrible terrorist actions of September 11, 2001, and the devastating impact of hurricane Katrina.

“We appreciate and recognize the progress achieved recently with the re-opening of embassies, the visits paid by the Secretaries of State and Commerce and the exchange of delegations; the functioning of a Steering Committee; the expansion of the areas of dialogue and cooperation, particularly in the field of air and aviation safety; the combat of drug-trafficking, illegal migration and human trafficking; law enforcement, environmental protection and health, among others.

“We are really interested in developing fruitful relations; offering our hospitality to the U.S. citizens who enjoy the freedom of traveling to Cuba; expanding and enriching cultural, sports, scientific and academic exchanges; promoting multifaceted cooperation in areas of common interest, trade and investments.

“We have initiated a human rights dialogue with a strict reciprocal character and despite our huge differences.

“For all that we have been guided by the principles contained in the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace, signed by the Heads of State and Government of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States in January of 2014 in Havana, as well as the principles and purposes enshrined in the UN Charter.”

Rodriguez concluded by extending Cuba's warm appreciation for defense of principle and international law at the General Assembly and acknowledged the grand collective effort required for

each year's vote:

“Twenty three years after this resolution was first adopted, we have achieved remarkable progress in 2015.

“It has been a reward for the indefatigable resistance, selfless efforts, the firm convictions of our people and the leadership of the historical generation of the Revolution headed by Commander-in-Chief Fidel Castro and President Raúl Castro.

“We are deeply grateful to all the governments and peoples, parliaments, political forces and social movements, representatives of the civil society, international and regional organizations that, particularly in this United Nations General Assembly, have contributed their voice and vote, year after year, to support the fairness and urgency of the elimination of the blockade.

“We have made it all the way here thanks also to the majority and ever-growing support given by the U.S. people to this lofty purpose, to whom we also convey our gratitude.

“We know that the way ahead is long and difficult. We will continue to present this draft resolution for as long as the blockade persists in this General Assembly.

“The Cuban people will never renounce their sovereignty nor the path that they have freely chosen to build a more just, efficient, prosperous and sustainable socialism. Neither will they give up in their quest for a more equitable and democratic international order.”

(Quotations taken from Granma International, slightly edited for grammar)

President Obama's Executive Measures Concerning Cuba and Their Limitations

Excerpted from Cuba's 2015 report on the effects of the blockade:

In his announcement on December 17, 2014, President Barack Obama acknowledged the failure of the policy towards Cuba and he promised to engage in a debate in Congress in order to lift the blockade. Corresponding to this approach, the President announced several measures directed at modifying the application of several aspects of the blockade. On January 16, the amendments to the regulations of the Departments of the Treasury and Commerce entered into effect to implement the President's decision. Although they are a positive step, these measures are limited.

On the subject of travel, the 12 categories of US citizens authorized to visit Cuba may do so under a general license, and travelers are no longer subject to limits on their spending in the country and they may use their credit and debit cards. Nevertheless, the prohibition on trips for tourism purposes remains as well as the continued restrictions on people-to-people educational exchanges which maintain the obligation of traveling in groups with a strictly followed schedule of activities.

In the area of telecommunications, the export of products and services to Cuba has been authorized as well as funding for the creation of infrastructure facilities. Its principal limitation is the requirement of paying in cash and in advance, even when foreign or US banks based outside of the United States are now able to

provide financing for these purchases. This is incongruous with international trade practices where this type of payment is not used and companies provide loans to the buyer in order to ensure the sale of their products and services. The possibility of carrying out these operations becomes more complicated because of the banks being worried about making transactions related to Cuba due to the policy of financial harassment applied under the government of President Obama.

In terms of commerce, the list of U.S. products that may be exported to Cuba as of the new measures, without needing to request the authorization of the U.S. Department of Commerce, is reduced to telecommunications products and services, construction materials and equipment and tools used in the non-State sector of the economy, including agricultural activity. The sale to Cuba of other US products and services is forbidden unless they should be authorized by the Department of Commerce via the approval of specific licenses, which expire in a certain length of time. Payment terms continue being discriminatory if they are compared to international commercial practices, since it is forbidden to use the dollar as the currency for payment and credits cannot be received in order to buy the authorized products and services. Both of these limitations could be eliminated via executive measures without the necessity of going to Congress.

Furthermore, authorizations to import Cuban goods and services

produced by the non-State sector exclude key items in the Cuban economy such as tobacco. By not taking into account the State sector of the economy, other Cuban goods and services of known international prestige such as rum, nickel, biotechnological products and medical and educational services are also left off the list. Along with that, tariffs that would be applicable to Cuban products, in the event that they would be able to enter US territory, would be the highest on the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the Department of the Treasury due to the fact that only Cuba and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea are at the most restrictive level of importation levies to the U.S. and they do not possess most-favored-nation treatment.

Likewise, the modifications to the regulations on maritime transportation that allow ships involved in humanitarian trade with Cuba to enter U.S. ports sooner than the 180 days are impracticable. It is very unlikely that ships carrying commercial cargo to a country would limit themselves to just transporting foods, medicines, medical equipment and other exports authorized by the U.S. International practice indicates that shipping contracts do not limit themselves to shipping only one kind of product.

Similarly, the changes in the financial sphere are limited to facilitating the processing of authorized transactions in the area of travel, exports and remittances. Even though the new regulations would allow the opening of correspondent U.S. bank accounts in Cuban financial institutions, there would be no reciprocity for Cuban banks by establishing for them the obligation of obtaining a license in order to open accounts in U.S. banks.

President Barack Obama's decision to exclude Cuba from the list of State sponsors of international terrorism constituted an act of historical justice for the Cuban people. However, the presidential

decision does not involve a respite from the economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba. Most of the laws and regulations that established the policy of economic asphyxiation were issued before 1982 when Cuba was designated as a State sponsor of terrorism and therefore the sanctions and restrictions imposed by that classification were already a part of the blockade against the Island. This has been acknowledged, even by officials of the U.S. government itself, as in the case of Jeff Rathke, Director of the Office of Press Relations of the Department of State who said, "So the lifting of the state sponsor of terrorism designation does not lift the embargo, just to put that kind of bluntly." [1]

All this reaffirms that the U.S. President possesses broad executive powers to substantially modify the application of the blockade regulations, even further than what has been done so far.

Even though the measures adopted by the U.S. government in January of 2015 are a step forward in the modification of the application of some aspects of the blockade, so that they may be implemented and give results it is essential to adjust the regulations to Cuba's real conditions and to the practices of international commerce. Unless other aspects of the blockade are modified, such as access to credit, the possibility of importing and exporting under normal conditions from and to the US, authorization of the use of the dollar, and the end to the financial persecution of Cuba's international transactions, the economic siege to which Cuba continues to be submitted by the blockade laws and regulations will not substantially change.

Note

1. Rathke, Jeff, Director of the Office of Press Relations of the Department of State, "Daily State Department Briefing", May 29, 2015, Washington D.C., US.

Paying the Debt to Africa: On the 40th Anniversary of Cuba's Operación Carlota

Isaac Saney

"The Cuban people hold a special place in the hearts of the peoples of Africa. The Cuban internationalists have made a contribution to African independence, freedom and justice, unparalleled for its principled and selfless character... Cubans came to our region as doctors, teachers, soldiers, agricultural experts, but never as colonizers. They have shared the same trenches with us in the struggle against colonialism, underdevelopment, and apartheid."—Nelson Mandela

November 5, 2015 marks the 40th anniversary of Operación Carlota, Cuba's 15-year mission to defend Angola's independence, which played a decisive role in southern African national and anti-colonial liberation struggles. Cuba's extensive and decisive role in the struggle against the apartheid regime in South Africa is marginalized in the dominant western discourse and narratives. Cuba's critical contribution is not only, frequently ignored, it is treated almost as if it had never occurred. However, the overarching significance of Cuba's role cannot be erased.

Havana initiated Operación Carlota on November 5th, 1975,

in response to a direct and urgent request from the government of Angola. Having just achieved independence after a long and brutal anti-colonial struggle, Angola confronted an invasion by racist South Africa. South Africa was determined to destroy the Black government of the newly independent Angola. Operación Carlota was decisive in not only stopping the South African drive to Luanda (the capital) but also in pushing the South Africans out of Angola. The defeat of the South African forces was a major development in the southern African anti-colonial and national liberation struggle. [...]

Named after the leader of a revolt against slavery that took place in Cuba on November 5, 1843, Operación Carlota lasted more than 15-years. During that time, more than 330,000 Cubans served in Angola. More than 2, 000 Cubans died defending Angolan independence and the freedom and right of self-determination of the peoples of southern Africa.

Africa's Children Return!

AFRICA'S CHILDREN RETURN

Cuba's solidarity with Angola was not simply one country coming to the aid of another, but a part of the African diaspora – the Black world – rising to the defense of Africa.

Since the triumph of the Cuban Revolution on January 1, 1959, Cuba has engaged in ongoing solidarity with the peoples and the continent of Africa. In tribute to Cuba's assistance to African liberation struggles, Amilcar Cabral (celebrated leader of the anti-colonial and national liberation struggle in Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde) stated: "I don't believe in life after death, but if there is, we can be sure that the souls of our forefathers who were taken away to America to be slaves are rejoicing today to see their children reunited and working together to help us be independent and free."

The Cuban Revolution's involvement with Angola began in the 1960s when relations were established with the Movement for the Popular Liberation of Angola (MPLA). The MPLA was the principal organization in the struggle to liberate Angola from Portuguese colonialism. In 1975, the Portuguese withdrew from Angola. However, in order to stop the MPLA from coming to power, the U.S. government had already been funding various groups, in particular the Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) led by the notorious Jonas Savimbi. In October 1975, South Africa, with the support of Washington, invaded Angola. On November 5, 1975, the Cuban revolutionary leadership met to discuss the situation in Angola and the Angolan government's request for military assistance to repel the South African invasion force. The decision to deploy combat troops thwarted apartheid South Africa's goal of turning Angola into its protectorate.

The Cuban leadership justified the military intervention as both defending an independent country from foreign invasion and repaying a historical debt owed by Cuba to Africa. Fidel Castro frequently invoked Cuba's historical links to Africa. On the fifteenth anniversary of the Cuban victory at Playa Girón (Bay of Pigs), he declared that Cubans "are a Latin-African people."

Jorge Risquet, Havana's principal diplomat in Africa from the 1970s to 1990s, was also unambiguous in explaining Cuba's military intervention in terms of Cuba's obligations to Africa, and this linkage resonated especially with black Cubans, who were able to make a symbolic connection with their African roots. As scholar Terrence Cannon said, for many blacks, fighting in Angola was akin to defending Cuba except that the fight was "this time in Africa. And they were aware that Africa was, in some sense, their homeland." Reverend Abbuno Gonzalez underscored this connection: "My grandfather came from Angola. So it is my duty to go and help Angola. I owe it to my ancestors."

General Rafael Moracen echoed this sentiment and the words of Amilcar Cabral: "When we arrived in Angola, I heard an Angolan say that our grandparents, whose children were taken away from Africa to be slaves, would be happy to see their grandchildren return to Africa to help free it. I will always remember those words."

Cuban involvement in Southern Africa has been repeatedly dismissed as surrogate activity for the Soviet Union. This insidious myth has been unequivocally refuted. John Stockwell was the director of CIA operations in Angola during, and in the immediate aftermath of the 1975 South African invasion. In his memoir,

In Search of Enemies: A CIA Story, he stated "we learned that Cuba had not been ordered into action by the Soviet Union. To the contrary, the Cuban leaders felt compelled to intervene for their own ideological reasons." In his acclaimed book, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington and Africa, 1959-76*, Piero Gleijeses demonstrated that the Cuban government – as it had repeatedly asserted – decided to dispatch combat troops to Angola only after the Angolan government had requested Cuba's military assistance to repel the South Africans, refuting Washington's assertion that South African forces intervened in Angola only after the arrival of the Cuban forces and; the Soviet Union had no role in Cuba's decision and were not even informed prior to deployment. In short, Cuba was not the puppet of the USSR. Even *The Economist* magazine (no friend of Cuba) in a 2002 article, acknowledged that the Cuban government acted on its "own initiative."

That Cuba could act on its own initiative, independent of the will of the great powers, was not only an anathema to Washington but also inconceivable. In 1969 Henry Kissinger, a National Security Advisor who then became U.S. Secretary of State, unambiguously and uncategorically declared: "Nothing important can come from the South. History has never been produced in the South. The axis of history starts in Moscow, goes to Bonn, crosses over to Washington, and then goes to Tokyo. What happens in the South is of no importance." That Cuba – a poor "Third World" country, a Latin-African nation – could act on its own, and through that independent action shape history, enraged Kissinger. At his behest, a number of extensive military plans were drawn up by the Pentagon in 1975 and 1976 to specifically punish the island for daring to defy the imperial order, with its racist global hierarchy. These detailed plans encompassed naval blockades to aerial bombardments to outright invasion. While they were never carried out,...[they] poignantly illustrating the dangers that Cuba faced and accepted during its internationalist defense of Angola.



Cuban and Angolan forces in Angola

South Africa's War of Terror

The survival of the racist South Africa state depended on establishing its domination of all of southern Africa. Towards this end, Pretoria had militarized the South Africa state... From 1975 to 1988, the South Africa armed forces embarked on a campaign of massive destabilization of the region. The war of destabilization wrought a terrible toll. The financial and human cost can not only be measured

CUBA'S CONTRIBUTION TO ENDING APARTHEID

in direct damage and deaths but also in the premature deaths and projected economic loss caused by destruction of infrastructure, agriculture and power networks. While it is very difficult to estimate the economic cost and damage, it was undoubtedly enormous. One study calculates that up to 1988, the total economic cost for the Frontline States was calculated to be in excess of \$45 billion: for example, Angola: \$22 billion; Mozambique: \$12 billion; Zambia: \$7 billion; Zimbabwe: \$3 billion.

The human toll was immense. The South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission underscored that: "The number of people killed inside the borders of the country in the course of the liberation struggle was considerably lower than those who died outside...the majority of the victims of the South African's government attempts to maintain itself in power were outside South Africa. Tens of thousands of people died as a direct or indirect result of the South African government's aggressive intent towards its neighbors. The lives and livelihoods of hundreds of thousands others were disrupted by the systematic targeting of infrastructure in some of the poorest nations in Africa."

Between 1981 and 1988, an estimated 1.5 million people were (directly or indirectly) killed, including 825,000 children. This was the result of Pretoria sponsored insurgencies (namely, UNITA in Angola and Renamo in Mozambique) and direct military actions by the South African armed forces. South Africa launched numerous bombing raids, armed incursions and assassinations against surrounding countries. [...]

Perhaps, the late Julius Nyerere, summed up the situation best when in 1986, as President of Tanzania, he observed: "When is war not war? Apparently when it is waged by the stronger against the weaker as a 'pre-emptive strike.' When is terrorism not terrorism? Apparently when it is committed by a more powerful government against those at home and abroad who are weaker than itself and whom it regards as a potential threat or even as insufficiently supportive of its own objectives. Those are the only conclusions one can draw in the light of the current widespread condemnation of aggression and terrorism, side by side with the ability of certain nations to attack others with impunity, and to organize murder, kidnapping and massive destruction with the support of some permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. South Africa is such a country."

The Battle of Cuito Cuanavale

In 1987-1988, a decisive series of battles occurred around the southeastern Angolan town of Cuito Cuanavale. When it occurred, these battles were the largest military engagements in Africa since the North African battles of the Second World War. Arrayed on one side were the armed forces of Cuba, Angola and the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO), on the other, the South African Defense Forces, military units of the Union for the Total National Independence of Angola (UNITA) – the South African proxy organization — and the South African Territorial Forces of Namibia (then still illegally occupied by Pretoria).

Cuito Cuanavale was a critical turning point in the struggle against apartheid. From November 1987 to March 1988, the South African armed forces repeatedly tried and failed to capture Cuito

Cuanavale. In southern Africa, the battle has attained legendary status. It is considered the debacle of apartheid: a defeat of the South African armed forces that altered the balance of power in the region and heralded the demise of racist rule in South Africa. Cuito Cuanavale decisively thwarted Pretoria's objective of establishing regional hegemony (a strategy which was vital to defending and preserving apartheid), directly led to the independence of Namibia and accelerated the dismantling of apartheid. Cuba's contribution was crucial as it provided the essential reinforcements, material and planning.

In July 1987, FAPLA, the Angolan armed forces, launched an offensive against UNITA, the apartheid state's surrogate. The Cubans objected to this military operation because it would create the opportunity for a South African invasion, which is what transpired. The South Africans invaded, stopped and threw back the Angolan forces. After terrible human and material losses, the Angolans were forced into a headlong retreat to the town and strategic military base of Cuito Cuanavale.

As the fighting became centered on Cuito Cuanavale, the Angolan Armed forces were placed in an extremely precarious situation, with its most elite formations facing annihilation. Indeed, Angola faced an existential threat. If Cuito Cuanavale fell to South Africa then the rest of the country would be at the mercy of the invaders. [...]

Determined to transform its initial military success into a fatal blow against an independent Angola, Pretoria committed its best troops and most sophisticated military hardware to the capture of Cuito Cuanavale. As the situation of the besieged Angolan troops became critical, Havana was asked by the Angolan government to intervene. On November 15, 1987 Cuba decided to reinforce its forces by sending fresh detachments, arms and equipment, including tanks, artillery, anti-aircraft weapons and aircraft. Eventually Cuban troop strength would rise to more than 50,000. It must be emphasized that for a small country such as Cuba the deployment of 50,000 troops would be the equivalent of the U.S. deploying more than a million soldiers.

The Cuban commitment was immense. Fidel Castro stated that the Cuban Revolution had "put its own existence at stake, it risked a huge battle against one of the strongest powers located in the area of the Third World, against one of the richest powers, with significant industrial and technological development, armed to the teeth, at such a great distance from our small country and with our own resources, our own arms. We even ran the risk of weakening our defenses, and we did so. We used our ships and ours alone, and we used our equipment to change the relationship of forces, which made success possible in that battle. We put everything at stake in that action..."

The Cuban government viewed preventing the fall of Cuito Cuanavale as imperative. A South African victory would have meant not only the capture of the town and the destruction of the best Angolan military formations, but, quite possibly, the end of Angola's existence as an independent country. The Cuban revolutionary leadership also decided to go further than the defense of Cuito Cuanavale. They decided to deploy the necessary forces and employ a plan that would both put an end once and for all to South African aggression

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against Angola and deliver a decisive blow against the racist state. [...] South Africa's efforts to seize Cuito Cuanavale were stymied by the Cubans and Angolans. With the South Africans preoccupied at Cuito Cuanavale, the Cubans achieved a strategic coup by carrying out an outflanking maneuver. To the west of Cuito Cuanavale and along the Angolan/Namibian border, Havana deployed 40,000 Cuban troops, supported by 30,000 Angolan and 3,000 SWAPO troops. Pretoria had left themselves exposed to a major military counterstroke.



The Cubans, together with Angolan and SWAPO forces advanced toward Namibia. This advance exposed the insecurity and vulnerability of the South African troops in northern Namibia. Such was this vulnerability that a senior South African officer said, "Had the Cubans attacked [Namibia] they would have over-run the place. We could not have stopped them." This was further compounded by South African debacles at the end of June 1988 at Calueque and Tchippa, where the South Africans suffered serious defeats, which were described by a South African newspaper as "a crushing humiliation." Cuba also achieved air supremacy. Facing the new powerful force assembled in southern Angola and having lost control of the skies, the South Africans withdrew from Angola.

This defeat on the ground forced South Africa to the negotiating table, resulting in Namibian independence and dramatically hastening the end of apartheid. The regional balance of power had been fundamentally transformed. The respected scholar Victoria Brittan observed that Cuito Cuanavale became "a symbol across the continent that apartheid and its army were no longer invincible." In a July 1991 speech delivered in Havana, Nelson Mandela underscored Cuito Cuanavale's and Cuba's vital role:

"The Cuban people hold a special place in the hearts of the people of Africa. The Cuban internationalists have made a contribution to African independence, freedom and justice unparalleled for its principled and selfless character. We in Africa are used to being victims of countries wanting to carve up our territory or subvert our sovereignty. It is unparalleled in African history to have another people rise to the defense of one of us. The defeat of the apartheid army was an inspiration to the struggling people in South Africa! Without the defeat of Cuito Cuanavale our organizations would not have been unbanned! The defeat of the racist army at Cuito Cuanavale has made it possible for me to be here today! Cuito Cuanavale was a milestone in the history of the struggle for southern African liberation!"

In 1994, Mandela further declared: "If today all South Africans enjoy the rights of democracy; if they are able at last to address the grinding poverty of a system that denied them even the most basic amenities of life, it is also because of Cuba's selfless support for the struggle to free all of South Africa's people and the countries of our region from the inhumane and destructive system of apartheid. For that, we thank the Cuban people from the bottom of our heart." [...]

Paying Humanity's Debt

As a direct witness and participant in Africa's anti-colonial and national liberation struggles, the late Jorge Risquet always elaborated on the profound ties that bound Cuba and Africa together. This unbreakable historic connection formed the poignant base for the Cuban Revolution's solidarity with Africa. In a 2012 speech honoring the great Pan-Africanist, Kwame Nkrumah, Risquet pointed out:

"This was the understanding with which Cuban fighters came to ancestral Africa to fight side by side with the people against colonialism and the oppressive apartheid

regime. For 26 years, 381,000 Cuban soldiers and officers fought alongside African populations — between April 24, 1965, when Ernesto Che Guevara and his men crossed Lake Tanganyika, and May 25, 1991, when the remaining 500 Cuban fighters returned home triumphant... Twenty-four hundred Cuban internationalist fighters lost their lives on African soil. Today we no longer send soldiers. Now, we send doctors, teachers, builders, specialists in various fields."

While circumstances may have changed, Cuba's solidarity with Africa continues. Cuba made a critical contribution to the fight against the Ebola epidemic in the West African nations of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The Cuban medical mission was by far the largest sent by any country. Standing side-by-side with the peoples of West Africa, Cuban doctors and nurses went to West Africa and joined the struggle against Ebola. As Jorge Lefebvre Nicolas, Cuba's ambassador to Liberia, declared: "We cannot see our brothers from Africa in difficult times and remain there with our arms folded." At the September 16th, 2014 meeting of the United Nations Security Council, Cuban representative Abelardo Moreno declared: "Humanity has a debt to African people. We cannot let them down." Even the Wall Street Journal declared, "Few have heeded the call, but one country has responded in strength: Cuba."

Cuba is often described as the only foreign country to have gone to Africa and gone away with nothing but the coffins of its sons and daughters who died in the struggles to liberate Africa. Cuba's role in Angola illustrates the division between those who fight for the cause of freedom, liberation and justice, to repel invaders and colonialists, and those who fight against just causes, those who wage war to occupy, colonize and oppress. The island's internationalist missions in Africa are a profound challenge to those who argue that relations among the world's nations and peoples are — and can only be — determined by self-interest, and the pursuit of power and wealth. Cuba provides the example that it is possible to build relations based on genuine solidarity and social love: demonstrating the alternatives which permit people to realize their deepest aspirations, and that another better world is possible.

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I • Ban Fracking Everywhere

carbon-heavy petroleum from the Canadian tar sands to the Gulf Coast, for refining and export. The process of extracting this oil produces about 17 percent more planet-warming greenhouse gases than the process of extracting conventional oil.

During the review there was no discussion of why refining could not be done in Canada and why the oil should not largely serve Canadian, not U.S. needs. Nor how best to contend with oil production and transport more generally in a manner that serves the interests of the peoples in both countries.

Obama's rejection comes in part as he is seeking to leave a legacy as a "leader" on climate change — while continuing to meet the oil and natural gas demands for U.S. wars, including potentially world war. It is also part of increasing conflicts among the energy and military monopolies. So while Obama denied the TransCanada KXL request, he has been meeting many of the demands of competitor Enbridge for pipeline projects. Numerous other pipelines are also being developed. The Pacific Northwest, for example, is facing the carbon equivalent of five Keystone XL pipelines.

Obama is also a major backer of the dangerous fracking pushed by the energy/military monopolies like Exxon and Halliburton. He promotes their lie that fracking can be done safely, even though numerous studies show it has a greater impact on the climate than comparable CO2 emissions. Fracking also pollutes water and land and causes serious health problems, like birth defects. Fracking serves war, is harmful and dangerous and should be banned



everywhere. Obama is instead opening more public lands to fracking and facilitating its expansion.

Maneuvering concerning oil and gas development, including numerous pipeline and other transport projects, are an integral part of the governing arrangement put in place of the United States of North American Monopolies. This is dominated by the U.S. and its military might, with Canada and Mexico being annexed and their natural resources used for development of imperialist empire.

Obama did not say oil production should be curtailed, he did not reach the conclusion that fracking should be banned. He simply said this particular pipeline "Would not make a meaningful long-term contribution to our economy." The move was made ahead of a

major United Nations summit on climate change in Paris in December, when Mr. Obama hopes to present the U.S. as a leader on climate change, rather than one of the world's biggest polluters. The Pentagon, for example is the world's single largest polluter. "America's now a global leader in taking serious action to fight climate change," Obama said. "And frankly, approving this project would have undercut that global leadership. And that's the biggest risk we face, not acting."

The action needed, for the economy and climate, is to stop funding war and stop the war economy, where energy resources are geared to war. AN anti-war government is what would do the most to contribute to the fight against climate change and for justice.

The People Rejected Keystone XL

Jamie Henn, 350.org

Four years ago, on a hot August night in 2011, a few dozen people gathered in a church in Washington, D.C preparing to get arrested.

It was the eve of Tar Sands Action, two weeks of sit-ins that we'd planned to take place at the White House to help elevate a relatively obscure infrastructure project, the Keystone XL pipeline, as an iconic struggle in the fight against climate change.

We'd come relatively late to the fight against Keystone XL. For years, indigenous peoples at the source of the tar sands in Canada and farmers and ranchers along the pipeline route had been fighting against TransCanada, the company attempting to build the project. But while resistance was growing in the Heartland and up north, few people in DC had ever heard about it.

I remember making pitch calls that night in August, trying to convince press to come out and cover the sit-ins, and consistently coming up short. Journalists either shrugged their shoulders and said, "Keystone? Never heard of it." Energy reporters who

knew about the project dismissed the protests, "The pipeline is a done deal."

And yet looking into the eyes of the people who were gathered in the church that night, I had the feeling that this done deal was about to become spectacularly undone. It's not that we were confident. In fact, most people there were terrified. But there was a sense of quiet determination amongst the participants, a feeling that addressing the climate crisis required something more than just emails and petition signatures: it was going to take putting our bodies on the line. I remember one woman standing up during the nonviolent direct action training that night and admitting, "I never thought I'd be the type of person who did anything like this, but I feel like something has to be done."

And so we did something. Over the next two weeks, 1,253 people took part in those sit-ins and were taken away from the White House fence in handcuffs. It was the start of a movement that would continue to grow and intensify over the next four

years. In November 2011, we came back to the White House with 15,000 people to surround the entire property. In February 2013, 50,000 people came to the Forward on Climate Rally to urge President Obama to reject the pipeline. 18 months later, more than 400,000 people marched in the streets of New York City as part of the People's Climate March to demand real climate action. Time after time, people were willing to set aside their day-to-day lives in order to engage in a fight for the future.

And today, that work paid off. Around noon, the president announced that he would reject the Keystone XL pipeline because of its impact on the climate. "America is now a global leader when it comes to taking serious action to fight climate change," he said. "And frankly, approving this project would have undercut that global leadership. And that's the biggest risk we face--not acting."

Not acting. That's the biggest risk that I think we face as citizens, as well. So much in our society tells us that we're small, that we are insignificant, that there is no way ordinary people can make a change. The media ignores the impact of social movements. The pundits dismiss us as 'radicals' or, worse, 'politically naive.' And we write our own selves off, preferring

to wrap ourselves in a comfortable cynicism instead of betting on hope. For years, it's not been the denial that global warming is happening that worries me most. It's the denial that we can do anything about it.

Today should stand as a counter to all that. The victory against Keystone XL isn't everything. TransCanada succeeded in building the southern leg of the pipeline, a project that community members are still fighting to this day. Other pipelines have made it through--along with fracking wells, mines, ports, and other tentacles of the fossil fuel industry. And there's no guarantee that if a Republican president is elected he or she won't go ahead and try and build Keystone XL anyway.

But this win is still so significant. For the climate--stopping Keystone XL will keep 800,000 barrels a day of dirty tar sands oil in the ground, preventing the equivalent emissions of 51 coal fired power plants--and for ourselves.

It wasn't just President Obama who rejected the Keystone XL pipeline. It was the people. And in doing so, we reaffirmed the belief that even in this mixed up, warming world we can still count on the power of everyday people to do extraordinary things.

Obama's Rejection of Keystone XL Is Positive, but That is Not the Whole Story

Common Dreams

President Obama's official rejection of the Keystone XL pipeline on Friday was met with applause from those who opposed the project and organizers who worked tirelessly, despite long odds, to force the administration's hand.

However, even as celebrations were enjoyed and an evening rally was scheduled outside the White House, there is more to this story than the simple rejection of a single pipeline and the ultimate climate legacy of a president.

Mass Movement Successful

Through years of unprecedented campaigning, ordinary people in the United States and Canada turned what could have been an unremarkable rubber-stamping of yet another fossil fuel pipeline into an internationally watched fight to stop climate change. Since 2011, communities across the United States have staged over 750 direct actions and protests across the country — from mass sit-ins at the White House to a tens-of-thousands-strong march on the National Mall. Farmers, workers, students, Indigenous peoples, and communities on the frontlines of oil refineries and extreme weather put their bodies on the line — risking arrest, talking to their neighbors, and taking to the streets.

"We stood our ground," said Jane Kleeb, director of Bold Nebraska. "Our unlikely alliance showed America that hard work and scientific facts can beat Big Oil's threat to our land and water."

In the words of Tom Goldtooth, executive director of the Indigenous Environmental Network: "The black snake, Keystone XL, has been defeated and best believe we will dance to our victory!"

[...]

Economics of Tar Sands

The pipeline rejection comes amid a continuing plummet in crude oil prices, which has forced some oil giants to ditch certain projects and means dwindling enthusiasm for tar sands production. Bloomberg reported the rejection was just a confirmation that "there is less appetite for expensive Canadian oil sands in an era of \$45 crude."

Yet the falling price of oil has left TransCanada "undeterred," and as Christine Tezak, an energy market analyst at ClearView Energy Partners, told the *New York Times*, "How long it takes [to move tar sands crude] is just a result of oil prices. If prices go up, companies will get the oil out."

Not So Fast on Obama's Climate Leadership

Obama took the occasion of the Keystone announcement to tout his administration's environmental track record — but should rejection of this one project be allowed to overshadow his administration's numerous shortcomings when it comes to climate?

"America is leading on climate change by working with other big emitters like China to encourage and announce new commitments to reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions," Obama said, adding that "if we're going to prevent large parts of this Earth from becoming not only inhospitable but uninhabitable in our lifetimes, we're going to have to keep some fossil fuels in the ground."

However, Obama's rejection of the Keystone XL pipeline comes

only months after he approved offshore drilling in the Arctic, an affront to climate activists and a near-fatal blow to vulnerable communities and marine life that was only avoided when Royal Dutch Shell called off its exploration project in September. [...]

As climate experts have pointed out ahead of the United Nations-sponsored COP21 talks in Paris, beginning later this month, the U.S. is far from a leader in climate action and is one of several wealthy nations that are not meeting their potential to reduce greenhouse gases. [Obama is a leader in supporting and opening public lands to fracking, the dangerous drilling method for natural gas that is far more harmful to the environment than CO2 emissions — VOR Ed. Note]. Though the U.S. has historically been the planet's leading polluter, the U.S. under Obama has continued to evade its financial obligations to help developing countries deal with the immediate impacts of global warming.

Then there is the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the 12-nation agreement and “corporate power grab nightmare” that Obama has pushed through even as experts warn the deal is an absolute “nightmare” when it comes to the environment.

In The Shadow of KXL, A Troubling Network of Pipelines, Oil Trains, and Climate Denial

The fight over Keystone XL (KXL) has not prevented the fossil fuel and fracking and pipeline industries on both sides of the U.S./Canada border from aggressively — if quietly — planning, proposing, and building a network of infrastructure projects that

collectively “dwarf” KXL in their capacity.

In the U.S., a vast network consisting of thousands of miles of new pipelines has been built in recent years. As Steve Horn, a freelance investigative journalist who writes for DeSmogBlog, said: “While the Obama White House Keystone XL decision has been touted by most environmentalists and criticized by Big Oil and its front groups, the truth is much more complex and indeed, dirty. That’s because for years behind the scenes the Obama Administration has quietly been approving hundreds of miles-long pieces of pipeline owned by pipeline company goliath Enbridge.”

And Daphne Wysham, director of the Climate and Energy Program at the Center for Sustainable Economy in Washington state, added, “The Pacific Northwest is facing the carbon equivalent of five Keystone XL pipelines in the form of coal, gas, and oil via rail and pipeline.”

Meanwhile, the exponential growth of oil-by-rail has become an area of serious concern for environmentalists and community members who have done their best to squelch the false argument that we must choose between the inevitable destruction of a pipeline disaster or the wreckage of the next fiery oil train derailment.

As Stephen Kretzmann, of Oil Change International, said in 2013, “There is no use talking about the best way to transport a product which climate science tells us shouldn’t even be being produced... It’s like debating whether or not menthol or regular cigarettes are worse for you. They both kill, and that’s the point.”

1989 Fall of the Berlin Wall

Where Did All the Euphoria Go?

Pauline Easton, TML Weekly, cpcml.ca

Twenty-six years after the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989 the world is truly a different place but not the one we were told it would be. That much is clear.

Twenty-six years ago, the event seized the imagination of the entire world unleashing a flood of events in rapid succession. Even before the Berlin Wall was torn down in November, an agreement was reached in April 1989 in Poland between the government and Solidarnosc. Later in December, came the assassination of President Nicolae Ceaușescu of Romania. Within two years, the Soviet Union had collapsed, ending the bi-polar division of the world. The period of flow of revolution went into a period of retreat of revolution.

Brandenburg Gate the day after the Berlin Wall was brought down

At that time, the imperialist media and governments created a climate of euphoria and victory. Euphoria and more euphoria based on a massive campaign against communism was the order of the day for the ruling classes in the U.S., Canada and the big powers of Old Europe, its scale unprecedented even by Cold War standards. Everything would be set right, they declared.

What is there to show for it?

First came the war in Bosnia, the Russian invasion of Chechnya, Georgia’s claims over Abkhazia, Armenians and Azeris fighting

over Nagorno-Karabakh, the bombing of Somalia, the NATO war to dismember Yugoslavia, 9/11 and its aftermath of even more anarchy and violence.

Protest against Canadian participation in NATO bombing of Yugoslavia, Ottawa, April 4, 1999.

Under the aegis of “making everything right,” nothing has been “made right.” Crimes against humanity have become the distressing “new normal,” whether in Palestine, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and now Syria and many other countries. Crimes against the peace and killings of civilians are dismissed as collateral damage by the criminal imperialist leaders George W. Bush and Tony Blair and their cabals, and the others of their ilk who have followed.

The most common method has been to launch a known lie such as, “weapons of mass destruction” to justify a response considered merited. Invasion, regime change, responsibility to protect, training of police and military including former and current Nazis in the name of peace missions, colored revolutions, anti-terror legislation, and the extension of NATO beyond the borders of the north Atlantic to encircle Russia are all justified with false pretexts which are cynical to the extreme. These include “responsibility to protect,” “defense of women and religious minorities” and “humanitarian aid for refugees.”

This has gone hand in hand with free trade mania in all directions under the control of the most powerful global monopolies, accompanied by massive unemployment and the accumulation of poverty at one pole and the greatest riches at the other. Humanity is subjected to the worst treatment by the monopolies and oligopolies and by the world bourgeoisie, which does not want to depart the scene of history and give way to the new.

This onslaught against the working class, against the communist and workers' movement, and against the broad masses of the peoples the world over has been facilitated by those who failed to deal with the Cold War period and its quest to extinguish the revolutionary flow of the post World War Two period. The Anglo-American imperialists launched the assault to ensure humanity would not march to the drumbeat of democracy, freedom and emancipation following the victorious defeat of Hitler Nazism, Mussolini fascism and Japanese militarism. They imposed a definition of rights, which would not recognize economic, social and cultural rights but only civil rights on an anti-communist basis. The Americans organized a Marshall Plan economically to restore Old Europe to its reactionary might and put it under their control. They entered into a social contract to keep the working people and especially their leadership tied to the outmoded capitalist system in the imperialist heartlands. Last but not least, they imposed and enforced a public political authority to make sure the police power represented by NATO and the secret services of the U.S. and Britain, called the shots.

In Western Europe as a case in point, an Anglo-American imperialist sponsored mafia was put into the seat of power in Italy. The same imperialists imposed on Greece a 40-year rule of dregs of the British-spawned monarchy, fascist generals and directors of concentration camps. So too the instruments of counter-revolution were covertly established in all the people's democracies in Eastern Europe. The same Anglo-American imperialists organized the assassination or imprisonment of communist leaders, the heroes of the anti-fascist resistance and those who were in the van of the world anti-imperialist and anti-colonial movements. Within this bloodbath of imperialist repression, some communist parties fought valiantly, some suffered terrible irreparable losses and some were incorporated into the parliamentary political system driven by the Anglo-American police power.

Ultimately, the failure to defend the revolution in the former Soviet Union and people's democracies, and the success of the Anglo-American so-called social contract to subvert the workers' movement in the imperialist heartlands distorted communism to such an extent the people rebelled against the hopelessness of its fictional representation. This ushered in the current period of retreat of revolution towards the end of the twentieth century, emboldening the U.S. imperialists to launch their bid to fashion through military might and subversion a "unipolar world" under their hegemony.

The U.S. imperialists sang the refrain "mission accomplished" over and over again to announce victory but each time the facts on the ground tore the banner to shreds. The unipolar striving for world domination of the U.S. imperialists and the collusion and contention of their NATO allies cannot be consolidated because nobody

anywhere agrees to submit, not even within their own camp, while the consequences of their actions deepen the crises in which the old world is mired.

U.S. hegemony has shown itself to be unsustainable, constantly demanding a change of tactics to deal with new forces and alliances that emerge daily, which are encouraged by one another to hold the U.S. and its aggressive NATO axis in check. Talk turns to the establishment of a new balance of power internationally to preserve the peace, even as others pursue warmongering as a means to achieve the upper hand.

What is all this about? Is the world beginning to come to terms with what happened 26 years ago? What comes next? What role will the Trudeau government play in these developments?

The unfolding events have to be observed, studied, deliberated on and analyzed in the coming period:

- the developments in Syria and throughout West Asia and North Africa, and the relevant speeches of the presidents of Russia, Syria, Iran, China and others, as well as the response of the U.S. ruling circles and those of their allies; the upcoming G7 and G20 summits taking place in Turkey;
- the Climate Conference taking place in Paris and ongoing related events and unfolding developments are all occasions to undertake study and actions with analysis.

Certainly the euphoria which accompanied the destruction of the Berlin Wall 26 years ago has long since evaporated. But has the dust settled? What do we see?

We see that the working class and the peoples of the entire world are a decisive part of the equation. They have come to see ever more clearly that the destruction of the power of the imperialist bourgeoisie does not happen merely with a change of government, with regime change or with changing the form in which elections are held. Summing up the experience of how to deprive the imperialist bourgeoisie of its power to deprive the people of their right to solve problems and move society forward is the crux of the matter today.

TML Weekly will do its best to provide information and orientation pertinent to these questions of war and peace, and the need for democratic renewal and an anti-war government, which so profoundly concern humankind.

