Venezuela says “no” to US coup - page 9

Oil industry profits from price gouging

How much of the 55¢/litre gas price hike is going to big oil? All of it, pretty much.

Read Page 3

Speaking the truth
Prominent independent journalist Eva Bartlett was on tour to Edmonton and Vancouver in early May, presenting voices from Syria and Venezuela ignored by the western corporate media.

Page 2

OK, but more is needed
Almost two years after defeating the anti-labour Liberals, the BC NDP government is making changes to the Labour Code and Employment Standards. But a lot more is needed.

Page 5

Sports vs. Science?
In a ruling that defies science and logic, South African runner Caster Semenya has been ordered to take medical action to suppress natural hormones in her body.

Page 11

Anti-BDS targeting
Palestinian activist Omar Barghouti, a resident of Israel and co-founder of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, was denied entry into the US, despite having valid travel documents.

Page 12
Eva Bartlett dismantles media lies about Venezuela and Syria

PV Vancouver Bureau

Speaking at meetings in Edmonton and Vancouver on May 4 and 5, independent journalist Eva Bartlett shredded the corporate media narrative about the situation of people in Syria, Venezuela and elsewhere, which targeted for “regime change” by US imperialism and its allies, including Canada. The forums were organized by the Edmonton and Vancouver Peace Councils, which are affiliates of the rapidly-growing Canadian Peace Congress. Bartlett spent a number of years living in Gaza, and later reporting directly from Syria, becoming highly knowledgeable about events in these areas. She has also spent time in Venezuela, most recently in March of this year, arriving shortly after the country-wide power blackout caused by outside attacks on the electricity grid.

Regarding Syria, she shared the views of many ordinary citizens and long-time residents of the country, explaining that the so-called “peaceful and popular uprising” against the elected Assad government which began in March 2011 was quickly taken over by foreign-backed extremist elements hoping to impose a religious Caliphate.

She went through examples of events in various Syrian neighborhoods and cities, presenting first-hand reports from the people, to show that the impact of the armed conflict was mainly due to the tactics of terrorist groups, not the Syrian government. Her talk focused partly on refuting accusations from the outside world that the government has deliberately starved its own people, using food as a weapon of war. The same tactics have been used by the imperialist powers and corporate media in Venezuela, Bartlett explained. Although her recent trip to Caracas during the blackout, she did not see anything like the western media’s claims of widespread violence, looting and hunger. There was calm on the streets, and people going about their daily lives despite the Caracas metro being unable to function. While high inflation means that most people cannot afford to shop in the supermarkets of upscale neighbourhoods, most residents have access to other sources of food, such as local collective gardens.

One fascinating part of Bartlett’s presentation was film footage of a visit to one of the poorest barrios in Caracas, where one would expect to see serious hunger and desperation if media reports were true. Instead, she found what people had a range of problems, most were well-fed, responding to her questions about hunger and starvation with incredulity.

The speaking tour was a welcome antidote to the daily stream of anti-Venezuelan propaganda in the Canadian and world media. On May 6, for example, the Globe and Mail published an article for intervention in Venezuela, written by Ben Rowswell, president of the Canadian International Council, who served as ambassador to Venezuela from 2014 to 2017. Rowswell was heavily involved in the usual accusations against the Bolivarian government of President Maduro, slandering it for a wildly exaggerated “humanitarian crisis” and “mass starvation.” From there, he warns against the “ISIS air force.”

One only has to recall the disasters associated with the R2P doctrine to reject this proposal. The case of Libya in 2012 is very instructive. In that situation, R2P advocates urged the imperialist powers to establish a “no fly zone” - not to overthrow the Gaddafi government, but simply to protect civilians! Of course, the “no fly zone” consisted of bombing raids against Libyan military and civilian targets, including Canadian Armed Forces pilots who cynically called themselves the “ISIS air force.”

The harried reality is that provincial and federal governments on the Strike made many recommendations unfunded one over another, including a maximum 8 hour work day, “building of workers’ homes,” “proportional representation,” “payment of a living wage,” “public works to relief unemployment,” and “equal opportunities in education.”

Many of the recommendations broke new ground, demonstrating that the Strike – heavily influenced by Russia’s Socialist Revolution stricken fear into the capitalist class, grown rich from the war in Europe and impoverishment of “their own” workers in Canada, “state insurance against unemployment, sickness, invalidity and old age,” “the right to organize,” and “recognition of unions.”

The commissions accepted that the labour unrest was due to “upheavals in Europe” and “the most revolutionary doctrines were advocated” at a convention of trade union leaders in Western Canada prior to the Strike. Some good will come from the celebrations, to the extent the revolutionary aspects are not downplayed by the official trade union portrayal of the Strike as a protest only for higher wages and union recognition.

The Communist Party and other left forces will do well making use of the added interest to exit the year with a working class better prepared for political power and socialism.

PV Vancouver Bureau

Another $2700 has been raised towards our $50,000 Press Fund Drive target since our previous issue, taking us past the half-way point, with a current total of $27,765, or 51.6%. A number of important fundraising events are coming up in May, June and the summer months, but we still need to get close to our $25,000 target.

Percentage-wise, Quebec remains in first place, with $430 (16%) of their $500 target raised. That represents very generous support from a relatively small number of contributors, and we are extremely grateful. Nova Scotia is still in second place, with $355 towards their target of $700, or 51.3%. Ontario is close behind, with a current total of $16,120 towards their quota, or 68.5% of their $23,500 target for the province.

Saskatchewan has also picked up some ground, now with $385 raised, 14% of their $2700 target. Manitoba is close behind, with $22,500 target for the province. They are optimistic that much of the remaining amount to raise.

As of the middle of March, we have $10,900 in donations, with 81% of their $13,500 target. As provincial elections approach in Alberta, new donations are starting to arrive, taking us to $715, or 22.8% of their $3000 target. As teachers, Alberta Federation of Labour members have their own concerts and talks. We look forward to their report.

Here’s my contribution to the PV Fund Drive!

Enclosed please find my donation of $____ to the 2019 People’s Voice Press Fund Drive.

Name __________________________________
Address __________________________________
City/town __________________________________
Prov. ______ Postal Code _______________

Contribute online at peoplesvoice.ca/donate

Check out Bartlett’s Edmonton talk on YouTube, at this link: www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXMrEL17YYo
Temporary foreign workers tell court of years of employer abuse

The boss cheated them, but they were happy he did. Therefore, Hector Mantolino should not go to jail.

That was the pitch Mantolino’s lawyer made to a court in Halifax in January 25. It was an argument beneath contempt. But not really surprising coming from a man who had nothing but contempt for the workers he preyed on.

Mantolino was charged with fraud but could be sentenced. He pleaded guilty in 2013 to cheating 28 workers out of $500 in wages. Often paying them as little as $3.13 an hour. Finally, after six long years, he would be punished. He could get as much as two years in jail. His lawyers argued he should get none.

His lawyer told the judge workers were happy to let him cheat them. It was their way to repay him for giving them the opportunity to achieve the “Canadian dream”, he said. Whatever he was guilty of, they were too, he said.

This was just the latest indignity the cheated and exploited workers had to bear because of Mantolino. Yet, even though he pleaded guilty, his hold on them remained strong.

Only twelve of the 28 he cheated filed victim statements with the court. Just four choose to read their statements into the record in open court. They cried as they read. None of them said they were happy they were part of Mantolino’s scheme.

Joven Edanalagum moved from the Philippines to Halifax in 2009 to work in a building cleaning business Mantolino owned. He expected to make enough to even send money back home to help with his parents medical bills. When he got his first pay cheque that dream evaporated. He had been cheated.

His contract promised Joven, $10.60 an hour. He actually got roughly $3.13 an hour. Joven was forced to work 20-hour days, seven days a week to make up the shortfall. He says he was so exhausted most days that he couldn’t stay awake to drive home. He claims that’s why he had two car accidents.

Joven says that he and his co-workers at the time had very few, if any, days off. Joven only day off after he became violently ill.

“My name [was] almost dizzy that time and threw [up] some blood, and that’s the time I called him and said ‘I need a day off,’ and I see the doctor,” he said.

Joven continued to work under conditions for four years. In his victim impact statement to the court he wrote he accepted the situation because he “didn’t want to start a family feud.”

Eventually, Joven and 27 other Filipino workers blew the whistle on Hector Mantolino.

Rhodee Beniglo, another one of the workers employed by Mantolino, told the court that he was afraid to speak up for fear of being sent back to the Philippines. “Those were the days that my self-esteem was at the very lowest part of my life,” added Rhodhe. “Being deprived of a proper salary for almost two years is a trauma deeply engraved on my heart.”

Raymond Basilio explained that even though he put in long hours of work, he had no money to send to his relatives in the Philippines. Additionally Mantolino forced him to garden and clear snow for him, and took Basilio’s tax refund.

“I had no choice but to follow his orders,” added Basilio. “I lost pride and self-respect doing all his orders and errands.”

Joan Borromeo added, “it’s very difficult and painful for us. Behind our financial struggles, Hector [was] enjoying his luxurious life, party, vacation and gambling in casino until now.”

Liza Alcantara said that she received just $500 for 134 hours of work—$3.73 an hour. “How can I save? And what better life I can get? More work—$3.73 an hour. ‘How can I save? And what better life I can give to my children?’” she told the court.

Crown prosecutor Timothy Lee said: ‘I need a day off,’ and I see the doctor,” he said.

“Canadian dream”, he said. “People get away with it, which is why the CCPA is calling for regulation. “They pretty much use any excuse—like routine maintenance or bad weather—to increase prices at the pump,” he explains. “Metro Vancouver drivers are paying 20-30 cents more per litre to refiners alone. This translates into an extra $500 to $750 million per year flowing from Metro Vancouver and no supplying stations in Metro Vancouver to skyrocket, says a senior economist with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives BC Office. “It’s not taxes that are causing the current pain at the pump, it’s industry gouging,” says Marc Lee. “Alberta’s oil industry is making huge excess profits as the expense of Metro Vancouver drivers.”

Lee’s research, released April 29, finds that almost 90 percent of the 55-cent-per-litre increase in prices this April 2016 is from higher crude oil prices, higher profits going to refiners and high mark-ups taken by gas retailers.

“Higher crude oil prices are being charged for gas in Metro Vancouver have spiked in recent years and are much higher than in other Canadian cities, which makes no sense,” Lee says. BC drivers are being gouged by big Alberta-based oil companies that are charging higher prices because they can get away with it, which is why the CCPA is calling for regulation.

“Some politicians have already regulated electricity and the corporate media to increasing fuel and carbon taxes to alleviate the current pain at the pump, but cutting taxes would only reward companies, which campaigns against human trafficking, noted. “Many popular businesses in this city are reaping immense profits off the backs of labour trafficking victims.”

In July 2017, temporary foreign workers and their supporters rallied in Montreal to protest terrible working conditions.

Temporary workers who come here are dependent upon their employer for their work visa. If they lose their job, they must leave the country. The result is often very unfair, even cruel.

For example, in the aftermath of the 2016 Fort McMurray wildfire, it took extraordinary intervention to prevent the deportation of temporary foreign workers whose employers’ offices and factories had been burnt out.

“Trade unions in the UFWC (United Food and Commercial Workers ) and CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees) have taken up these issues with campaigns to defend temporary foreign workers.”

The UFWC for example, runs a “Justice and dignity for temporary foreign workers” campaign. The union also has nine migrant workers support centres across the country.

“For governments to thrust current immigration policy on developing countries, treats workers as mere commodities and prohibits landed residency and citizenship, usually, inhumane, and un-Canadian,” writes the UFWC.

The BC government has been the Nova Scotia courts see it that way depends on whether or not they sentence Mantolino to jail on March 1.

This article was originally published by The Canadian Labour Institute.

Oil industry profits from price gouging, says CCPA

www.policyalternatives.ca

Gas prices in Metro Vancouver hit $1.73 per liter in late April, a record high for the year and the corporate media to point the blame at recent carbon tax increases and the oil companies that are charging higher prices because they can get away with it, which is why the CCPA is calling for regulation.

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This article was originally published by The Canadian Labour Institute.

“Mantolino’s abuse of vulnerable temporary foreign workers is hardly unique. In fact, the mistreatment of foreign workers by unscrupulous employers is a major issue everywhere in Canada.”

The Otto René Castillo Club invites you to join us to celebrate our 98th Anniversary.

Centre for Socialist Education
706 Clark Drive, Vancouver BC
Saturday, May 25, 2019, at 6:00 pm
We will have a speaker, poems, music, food and refreshments.

Entry by donation
Organized by Otto René Castillo Club

89th Anniversary of the Communist Party of Canada
1921 - 2019

P E O P L E ' S V O I C E | M A Y 1 6 - 3 1 , 2 0 1 9 | 3
Salute to the Winnipeg General Strike

In the sweeping historical panorama of the working class movement, certain episodes tower above the plains, for all to remember. The Winnipeg General Strike which began 100 years ago this month is undoubtedly the most outstanding example in Canada. As the imperialist slaughter of the First World War ended, these events left a profound mark on the grassroots and mobilized the working people of the country to fight for their rights. As the Great Strike which began on May 15, 1919, 100 years ago, the newest generation of the working class in Canada will never forget.

The political landscape is tilting - think left

By Kimball Curious

Several events during April and May point to a potential reemergence of the political landscape in Canada, linked to the deepening crisis of the global environment, and the desire for governments that are more responsive to the views and interests of working people.

Most immediately, the latest gains by the Greens in both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts are a signal that the next Parliament may look quite different. The Greens ran strongly in the recent PEI provincial election, gaining 30.6% of the popular vote and electing 8 out of 27 members of the legislature. Then on May 6, Green candidate Paul Manly won a federal by-election in Nanaimo-Ladysmith, with 37.3 per cent, well ahead of the Conservatives (24.8 per cent), the NDP (23.1 per cent), and the Liberals (just 11 per cent). Three far-right candidates picked up a mere 4 per cent, a strong rejection of their divisive, xenophobic policies.

Manly’s win was not a shocker, due to his long history of activism in the Greens and his track record of progressive positions, but also the relative popularity of the Greens on Vancouver Island. However, the outcome was a blow to the NDP, which has won this largely working-class seat in most elections for decades, and for Justin Trudeau, a failed political star after his falling poll ratings. It’s a long way to the Oct. 21 federal election, and campaigns contain unexpected twists and turns, but pundits will clearly be busy adjusting predictions and forecasts.

These upheavals don’t take place in a vacuum. Voters on both coasts are intensely aware of the impact of massive global climate change, which is already taking place. Rising oceans are causing deep concern on islands across the planet, including PEI. Communities such as North Sydney, Cape Breton, which rely heavily on tourism, dread the potential devastation of oil tank spills along the west coast.

But these catastrophic (and increasingly likely) scenarios are just the tip of the iceberg. In the past month alone, highly credible scientific reports have warned that humanity has only a decade left to reverse the deadly expansion of greenhouse gas emissions, and that a stunning one million out of the estimated eight million species of animal life on earth face extinction.

Even as the planet grapples with the terrible implications of the environmental crisis, governments keep pouring fuel on the fire, spending over a trillion dollars a year on military purposes, with the US and its NATO allies such as Canada leading the way. And the widening gap between a tiny handful of mega-billionaires and most of the world’s population is increasingly alarming.

Little wonder that voters in many countries are looking at alternatives when they go to the polls. The parties which remain yoked to the myths of neoliberalism, austerity, and military spending (and this includes most social democratic parties), have met frequent defeats, sometimes at the hands of so-called “populist” parties which challenge bourgeois orthodoxy positions from left or pro-environmental perspectives.

In this fall’s election, voters in Canada will have a number of such options on the ballot. The ones getting most attention in the corporate media will be those on the right, spouting their perspectives. From left or pro-environmental perspectives, the concept of socialism is rapidly gaining support, in many countries. However, some “green capitalist” innovations, this system of private property and market forces is mostly not even counted in national state emissions totals.

Not least, the Communist candidates will be the only ones pointing to the elephant in the room: that governments keep pouring government and support for affordable electric vehicles. Instead of leaving energy and other natural resources in the hands of private, profit-seeking corporations, the Communist Party calls for public ownership, control, and development of a truly sustainable economy which puts people and nature before profits.

Communists will be calling for a wide range of strategies to help Canada meet its GHG emission reduction targets, such as a focus on expanding renewable energy sources (solar, wind, hydro and geothermal power), free public transit, retrofitting of homes to save energy, and support for affordable electric vehicles. Instead of leaving energy and other natural resources in the hands of private, profit-seeking corporations, the Communist Party calls for public ownership, control, and development of a truly sustainable economy which puts people and nature before profits.

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The Communist candidates will be the only ones pointing to the elephant in the room: that governments keep pouring...
The BC Federation of Labour welcomes improvements, but much more is needed

By Kimball Curious

The BC Federation of Labour has welcomed revisions to Employment Standards legislation and to the Labour Code. Announced on April 30, these are the first significant changes since the bitterly anti-working class Liberal provincial government was defeated in 2017. This is a “glass half full and half empty” story. In many respects, the changes fall short of the demands of labour activists, but most agree that even minor shifts away from the 16 years of attacks under the Liberals is positive.

“The Employment Standards Act is being modernized, providing a more just level of protection for BC workers while removing barriers to access to justice by removing the self-help kit and extending wage recovery times,” said BC Federation of Labour President Laird Cronk. The BC Federation appeals the increase in the minimum age for formal employment to 16 (which was a shocking 12 under the Liberals), while allowing light duty work for younger workers.

Employment standards are particularly important for the most vulnerable workers in society, such as women, immigrants, minorities, young workers, and precarious workers,” said Cronk. Secretary-Treasurer Susanne Skidmore added, “Providing leave to workers in cases of intimate, personal and family violence leave is the right thing to do. It’s needed for victims to start addressing the impact of violence on all aspects of their life. However, we are concerned that the most vulnerable may not access this leave because it will be unpaid.”

Similarly, the BC Federation says that proposed revisions to the BC Labour Code will help restore a measure of fairness at unionized workplaces.

“British Columbia remains a low-wage province, and precarious work is the rise. The best antidote to precarious work and inequality is greater union density,” according to Cronk, who pointed out that fewer unions means lower pay rates and fewer benefits for workers.

The government also moved to expand successorship rights that protect workers when contract services are retendered. Contract flipping has been frequently used in sectors such as construction, food and building services, security and health care, to arbitrarily terminate collective agreements and maintain poverty-level wages.

“Contract flipping promotes a race to the bottom, and as workers lose pay and benefits - or even their job - when their employer’s contract is retendered or flipped, they need to reapply for their previous jobs, a process that many workers term ‘their own jobs,’” said Cronk.

The BC Federation was also pleased to see a mixed vote on Labour Code amendments, supporting changes that ensure workers retain the right to join a union, but voicing concerns that the “two-step” union certification process remains in place, although in a more limited form.

The Labour Code will preserve a second vote on unionization from the current ten. “A second vote in any form is a delay tactic that favours those with power in workplaces without a union, and that’s the employer,” said Cronk, arguing that a second vote should not be necessary when more than 70 percent of employees workplace sign cards saying they want a union. Employers should try to limit employer interference during the five-day delay before the second application deadline, a change that the labour movement intends to monitor closely.

“Other observers are somewhat less optimistic. For example, writing on The Tyee website, Paul Willock said the “ NDP government... mostly got it right with changes to the two most important laws affecting the working lives of British Columbians. But they still fall far short of the changes needed to reverse a long, destructive decline in the quality of jobs in B.C. and across Canada.”

During their first term (2001-2005), the BC Liberals weakened the labour code, attacked Employment Standards, and gutted public sector union agreements (notably the Teachers Federation and Hospital Employees Union, which were founded for such workers under the Campbell government). The Liberals followed this rampage by refusing to boost the minimum wage for over a decade. In Willock’s view, the Labour Code will continue to address these negative trends, “at least one point.” He notes out that it would make it easier for employers to retender agreements and maintain poverty-level wages.

In the private sector, unionization rate dropped from 24 per cent in 1997 to 16.7 per cent in 2016, in large part due to Liberal policies that made it harder for employees to organize and bargain collectively. One such move was to add the requirement for an employee vote on unionization; capital in all the best moves to get signatures from 55 per cent of workers in the proposed bargaining unit.

From 1996 to 2000, about 380 new union certifications were approved each year. From 2006 to 2008, after the Liberal changes, the number dropped to about 100, dropping to 58 in 2018.

Labour Minister Harry Bains blamed employers for the low requirement, but the minority NDP government and the BC Federation got to win about 120 new Green MLAs in the Legislature.

There is widespread understanding that a second vote is needed to reverse the impact of many years of austerity, anti-union policies. BC Federation more workers are in precarious jobs, and very few in fast food and other sectors are in a union with any ability to negotiate working conditions and wages. It will remain very difficult to organize small worksites with few employees and higher turnover, even if these employees all work for a handful of giant corporations or their franchises.

The BCFED has a mixed view of the 1992 revision of the Labour Code, under an earlier NDP government, proposed sectoral bargaining to prevent the bundling of workers in certain sectors to organize. Twenty-seven years later, the BCFED says it’s time to study this idea, guaranteeing nothing will happen during their recessions, but the BCFED will continue to decline under relentless corporate pressure.

The wealth belongs to those who produce it


The World Federation of Trade Unions, on the occasion of its 97 million members in 130 countries of the 5 continents, greets the celebration of the International Workers’ Day 2019 with the slogan: “The wealth belongs to those who produce it!”

We greet workers throughout the globe, and their irreparable role in the production of all goods and services, necessary to cover the current needs of the peoples internationally. We honour the history of the world working class, the great struggle of workers in Chicago in May 1886, who first achieved the establishment of the 8-hour working day, even by sacrificing their life.

The class-oriented trade union movement, through the ranks of the World Federation of Trade Unions, firmly continues its struggles with demands for the defence of the right to organise, the right to the working and living conditions of workers and poor popular strata.

Nowadays, when 1% of the population possesses more than 80% of the produced wealth, while 4.5 billion people live in poverty and misery, workers must claim even more dynamically all the wealth we create, so as to put an end to the injustice and inequalities.

In countries of Africa, Asia, Latin America, monopolies exploit their immense natural resources, in order to produce it!

We participate actively in the European Social Forum, in order to unite the peoples and to claim that strikes, demands, actions of trade unions have become out-dated, so that they can serve the interests of the big monopolies.

With massive, dynamic strike mobilizations everywhere, under the banners and slogans of WFTU, which expresses the class unity and internationalist solidarity. With demands for full-time stable work for all, salary and pension rises, free and high quality health and education services for workers and their families, in defence of the rights of youth and women.

For peace, for the end of foreign wars, for the end of foreign interventions in internal affairs of the countries. For the right of the peoples to decide on their own about their own future.

For the end of fascist, racism, xenophobia, which is promoted by capitalist exploitation. For the unity of all workers. For the end of imperialist wars, waged for the interests of a minority who exploit the toil of workers and enslave the peoples in blood.

The class oriented trade union movement, for a society with true justice and equality, for peace, for the world workers will belong to those who produce it, to workers, who are the driving force of all historical advances and achievements of humanity.

Since the first moment of its existence, after 150 years of its course and action, the WFTU firmly by the side of the workers around the globe, on the occasion of May Day 2019 expresses once more its solidarity to the peoples of Venezuela, Cuba, Palestine, Syria, Yemen, Libya.

We will continue our struggles, aiming to make them stronger through new initiatives, activities and mobilizations! With internationalism and solidarity.

Let’s continue our efforts for the strengthening of the militant trade unions with cheap and precarious jobs, without decent young people and women, with the enhancement of the class unity of all workers of the class unity of all workers, by revealing the dirty role of the international bureaucracies that turn trade union movements into servants of the bourgeoisie.

We participate actively in the strike of May Day 2019. Long Live the International Working Class! The wealth belongs to those who produce it!”

Protests against Liberal attacks on labour rights began soon after they were elected, as seen in this 2004 PV file photo.
Cuba defies Trump with hundreds of thousands in the street

By Alicia Jepho and Bill Hackwell, Resumen Latinoamericano, May 2, 2019 from Havana

Considering the level of belligerence and hostility coming from the empire of the North one might expect that the powerful May Day march through the Plaza of the Revolution might take on a defensive military overtone. But Cuba is never that way and instead they show their resolution and defiance cloaked within their humanity.

Just as the sun started to rise the march to celebrate the International Day of the Worker began and behind the banner that read Unity, Commitment and Victory were among the May Day parties and movements, in keeping with the historical roots of this date. Police repression was used against some of the protests.

Thousands of Communists were among the May Day demonstrators in Moscow and St. Petersburg, calling for improved working conditions and improved working conditions. In Goteborg, Sweden’s second-largest city, protesters threw cobblestones and fireworks at police, including mounted officers, who were trying to keep them away from preventing a neo-Nazi rally.

Numerous workers in Greece paralyzed national rail, island ferry and other transport services. Hundreds of people gathered in central Athens on Wednesday for three separate marches to parliament organized by rival unions and left-wing groups.

Spain’s workers marched in several major cities to make their voices heard days before acting Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez starts negotiating with other parties to form a new government. Trade unions are pressing Sanchez to roll back business-friendly labour and fiscal reforms that have remained in place since the conservatives were in charge.

In Bangladesh, hundreds of garment workers and members of labour organizations rallied in Dhaka, the capital, to demand better working conditions and higher wages. Nazma Akter, president of one of Bangladesh’s largest labour unions, said female garment workers were also demanding six months of maternity leave and protection against sexual abuse and violence in the workplace.

In the Philippines, thousands of workers and labour activists marched near the Malacanang presidential palace in Manila to demand that President Rodrigo Duterte’s government address labour issues including a minimum wage increase and the lack of contracts for many workers. One labour group said its members would not vote for any candidate endorsed by Duterte in upcoming senate elections and burned an effigy of the president.

Construction workers, bus drivers, freelancers and domestic workers from outside the country joined a march through central Hong Kong. The protesters marched from Victoria Park to the main government offices, some carrying banners reading “Misled Out!” The Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions is demanding a maximum standard work week of 44 hours and an hourly minimum wage of at least $4.7 Hong Kong dollars ($7).

Thousands of low-paid workers took to the streets in Indonesia in a rare protest by mid-sized and small companies. Labourers in Jakarta, the capital, gathered at national monuments and elsewhere, shouting demands for higher wages, better benefits and improved working conditions.

In North America, where May Day had its origins with the massive working class protests of 1886, demonstrations took place in dozens of cities. The largest rallies in Canada took place in Toronto, Vancouver, Victoria, Winnipeg, and elsewhere. Many of the events in Canada referenced the 100th anniversary of the Winnipeg General Strike of May-June 1919, which also saw important solidarity strikes across western Canada and the USA.

Millions rally globally for May First

PV Vancouver Bureau

May the First, International Workers’ Day, was celebrated around the world Saturday as millions marched, rallied and other events, large and small, in literally hundreds of cities. In most places, May Day actions were organized by trade unions and progressive political parties and movements, in keeping with the historical roots of this date. Police repression was used against some of the protests.

Thousands of Communists were among the May Day rallies in dozens of cities. The largest delegation in the 14th May Day Brigade at the Julio Mella Camp in Camito. The largest rally this year comes from the United States.

A May Day CPC trade union meeting.”

Organized by the Confederation of Cuban Workers (CTC), thousands of trade unionists representing 103 unions from 87 countries participated. Hundreds of solidarity activists were there including 500 volunteers attending the 14th May Day Brigade at the Julio Mella Camp in Camito. The largest rally this year comes from the United States.

The CTC trade union meeting at the Palace of the Conventions, Ana Teresita Gonzalez Fraga, Cuban Deputy Foreign Minister, explained to the assembled supporters of Latin American unity and sovereignty that we were in a complex period where US Imperialism was trying to hold on to its international hegemony through all out protectionism, the advancement of the Monroe Doctrine, the threat of war, political lies and the use of unconventional warfare against legitimate governments. As she was speaking the first lawsuits from Title III of the Helms-Burton Act were being filed in Federal Court in Miami against Carnaval Cruise Lines for its use of the docks in Havana harbor. Title III is a unique measure of acquiring the rights to regain former property that Cubans who fled the revolution in 1959 by somehow magically turning it into US property because those Cubans later became US citizens. This legal stretch had been shelved by previous administrations from the pressure of European allies who will be affected. Also going into effect today is Title IV that prohibits entry into the US territory people being sued under Title III.

It remains to be seen how deep the new soft policies that the Trump administration will be until they are written into law. In 2018 over 1 million Americans, including Cuban Americans, visited Cuba and in the vicious minds of Trump, Pompeo, Bolton and Pence, his type of family and human interaction has to end, to squeeze Members and a country that has been blacked out since 1962 for being an disobedient colony and positive example to the world. Trump says he will limit family visits and remittances to $1000 every month that will primarily affect small private enterprises.
The Values of April: 45 years since Portugal overthrew fascism

April 25, 2019, marks the 45th anniversary since the April Revolution in Portugal when a democratic uprising overthrew the fascistic dictatorship.

Portuguese murals “Toward Liberty” (above) and “in defence of the nationalizations” (below)

Advocate Bolton is a pathological escalation and to preserve peace. We need Cuban troops in Venezuela. We spoke with President Miguel Díaz-Canel on that time. Let us not forget this, as we question the achievements of the years since April, putting in perspective the erosion or never guaranteed rights for youth.

It is the right to freedom, the freest of April and the fulfilment of what is enshrined in the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic. It is democratic local power. It is access to public services and fundamental goods. It is the defence of national peace, sovereignty, and independence. It is the right to retirement, a reduction of the tax burden, and the fulfilment of what is enshrined in the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic.

Many of those rights have been eroded or never guaranteed by right-wing governments in the years since April, putting in question the scale of the problems faced by the people and the country, but they are steps in the right direction for workers with long contributor careers or tough professions in quarters and regions that aims at freeing the Portuguese people because they demonstrate that it is worth fighting. These victories confirm that there is nothing to do but move forward.

The April Revolution is living proof that it is worth struggle for changes that a people’s strength defeats inevitabilities. There have been many moments across the path of struggle that have demonstrated that it is only by struggle that we can advance our rights and guarantee progress and social justice.

A policy that defends the social rights of the people, strengthening institutions in the social functions of the state – a national health service that is universal and free, quality public schools that are free, a social security system that covers all, and a culture of serving the public.

A policy of defence and investment in the national production and recovery of strategic sectors for our economy that aims at freeing the Portuguese economy from its structural dependency on and domination by monopoly groups.

A policy affirming the sovereign right of Portugal to determine its own path of development, rejecting the interference and impositions of the European Union.

A policy of combating precariousness, unemployment, social inequalities, and ensuring a better and fairer distribution of wealth.

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Most homeworkers lack job security and occupational health and safety standards, and are paid well below a living wage. There are no regulations in Indonesia that explicitly recognize or regulate homeworkers. The Indonesian Government (GOI) has recently acknowledged that a home-based work is widespread and the number of homeworkers is likely to rise. With labor market flexibility and the global supply chains, companies with no direct control of the workers can achieve a higher return from their investments.

The vast majority of homeworkers are paid on a “piece rate” basis. To earn more money, they must work extra hard. Other family members join in, involving the entire household to earn pay cheque.

Meet the “Jobs of the Poor”

In the Philippines, many women work full-time in their homes. They make small items such as children’s toys and clothing. These women do not have job safety, sick leave, or retirement benefits. Their work is driven by the need to generate income in the face of poverty.

The global rideshare giant operated illegally in Australia. More than 6000 people have joined the action, covering drivers across Victoria, Sydney, and Western Australia. It alleges Uber’s drivers were illegal because the company knew its drivers were not properly licensed and did not have proper accident insurance. “Make no mistake, this will be a test case to make sure the alleged illegal operations of Uber in Australia and the devastating impact that has had on the job is an industry and a way of life,” said Andrew Watson, lawyer for the taxi drivers. “It is not acceptable for a business to place itself above the law and potentially to the disadvantage of others.”

The class action alleges Uber adopted a program to avoid enforcement activities, gaining an advantage over law-abiding businesses. The case has exposed an examination of employment and sexual harassment complaints.

Argentina strike against Macri policies

The Argentine Workers’ Central Union (CTA), the Argentine Workers’ Central Union (Autonomías CTA) and the trade union front for the national model (Fresismo) called a national strike on April 30 to protest the effect of the economic, social and anti-union policies of the Argentine government on workers and the general population. Transport unions, mothers of disappeared children, families of Truck Drivers (FNTC) played a key role to initiate the strike. The strike came less than two weeks after the government started freezing prices on basic goods and services, and public measures aimed at winning over frustrated voters.

The price freezes were accompanied by a sell-off in Argentinian stocks and a depression of the peso, reflecting concern that Macri’s government will not be able to dig itself out of a current recession.

Workers in Argentina face declining living standards due to economic policies that have increased prices and cut wages, with an increase in tariffs, and because the tax rate now exceeds nine percent. The government has persisted with measures that have focused on maximizing profits for entrepreneurs at the expense of the working classes. When the general strike was announced, the government began systematic efforts to undermine the strike and threatened to declare the action illegal.

The majority of homeworkers are paid on a “piece rate” basis. To earn more money, they must work extra hard. Other family members join in, involving the entire household to earn pay cheque.

Fiji cracks down on labour leaders

Fiji union leader Felix Anthony was arrested on May 1 amid growing protests over job losses at the country’s water utility company. His lawyer said Anthony was being questioned over alleged breaches of the Public Order Act.

More than 30 people including union members and executives were taken into police custody, over alleged breaches of the Public Order Act. Some have been released but no charges have been laid.

The Fiji Trades Union Congress (FTUC) has called on Fiji’s government to take measures to tackle the problem of illegal immigration.

The Fiji government has announced a three-month lockdown of Suva and Nadi due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The government also said that working conditions are clearly stated in employment contracts, the same as those provided in collective agreements as to “safe and orderly movement of traffic.”

Fiji’s opposition National Federation Party said Fiji has become a police state following the arrest of union members and leaders. The Labour Party has also spoken out, saying police power is being abused. Labour leader Mahendra Chaudhry said it is an intimidation of workers and unions and a denial of their right to engage in peaceful protest.

A group of 80 low-paid hospital staff said they had a special reason to celebrate May Day this year. The catering workers based at sites in South Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire took on and beat billionaire health service privateer Sodexo to win a pay rise — and did it in less than 48 hours. Bosses at Sodexo, which took control in January 2018 when the department was privatised by Doncaster and Bassetlaw NHS trust, also decided to backdate the increase to April last year.

The low-paid staff’s job was to serve meals at a hospital company — a Paris-based firm operating in 80 countries — it was promised that individually employed NHS staff would also be awarded to the 80 catering staff.

After eight years of austerity, NHS staff last year won a three-year deal involving pay increases ranging from 6.5 per cent to 29 per cent, with higher increases geared towards the lowest-paid staff. Sodexo then reneged on its pledge and refused to award the increases.

The catering staff, who are mainly women, voted overwhelmingly to strike and on May 1 launched the first of four three-day weekly walkouts. For many it was their first experience of strike action and picketing. Union organiser Sue Cookman said of the victory: “This is down to the sheer determination of these members of Unison and GMB unions, that they will search together to fight for what they are owed. The energy and enthusiasm was incredible, this was a huge achievement and amazing, and the support from the public has been heart-warming.”

By the end of the year, collective bargaining coverage in the UK had increased by 35% to a five-year high, with the government now accused of attempting to undermine collective bargaining. The 35% increase meant that over 600,000 workers were covered in 2019, up from 450,000 in 2018.
By W.T. Whitney, People’s World

“The Trump administration has declared the most severe new sanctions against Cuba since President John F Kennedy imposed an economic embargo banning all trade with the communist island in 1960, part of a global campaign against Cuba 59 years ago to seek damages in US courts for losses they suffered. According to Washington attorney Robert Muse, a specialist in US courts. He was commuted to house arrest.

On April 17, John Bolton reminded the US “stands with the People of Venezuela and their Freedom!”

The coup attempt was also condemned by world leaders with Bolivian President Evo Morales “vigorously condemning” the coup and Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel rejecting “an attempt to fill the country with violence.”

The European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs Federica Mogherini issued a statement in the afternoon, reiterating “any form of violence” and urging “restraint,” in contrast with European Parliament President Antonio Tajani, who tweeted his support for the unfolding coup. For his part, UN Secretary General also called for “maximum restraint” and for “immediate steps” to be taken to restore calm.

Edited by Lucin Keermer from Caracas.

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The public spectacle on April 30th in Caracas was a result of a months’ long feud between two popular philosophers. It began on May 1st, the first time that Slovenian critical theorist Slavoj Zizek and University of Toronto political philosophy professor met in the same room, the occasion being a live public debate on the topic of history, capitalism versus communism. Many called it the debate of the century, comparing it to a previous public debate between the cultural theorists Michel Foucault and Noam Chomsky in 1971. Zizek—who has written over 40 books, started in several documentaries, and has two doctoral degrees—is far more accomplished than Peterson who has barely authored 4 and only gained fame in the last years due to an incident where he refused to use gender neutral pronouns. Both known for his controversial statements, Zizek with his vulgar comments and Peterson with his assertions that “modern-day Marxists” are conspiring to stifle his freedom of speech and individuality, clearly made himself a communist despite the reactionary positions he has taken. Peterson was supported for the coup bombings in Yugoslavia. Peterson calls himself a centrist despite agreeing with Fidel Castro and having a following among all right- and conservative circles.

It was over a year before their first physical encounter that the two started exchanging quips about each other online. Zizek had criticized Jordan Peterson’s comparison of humans to lobsters to justify social hierarchies as well as his misunderstanding of Marx. Peterson promptly responded to defend his position, eventually inviting Zizek to debate him in person.

The highlight of the live debate was when Zizek finally asked Peterson the question that many have been wondering for a long time, “who are these post-modern egalitarian Marxists?” When asked to provide proof that post-modernists are Marxists and to name at least one, Peterson appeared stopped. In some ways the debate did not go as expected, but in many ways it did. Happiness, the topic that the debate was supposed to be centered around, was not discussed much nor was it the best topic for two pessimists who see no value in happiness. Peterson started with his usual superficial critique of Marxism while Zizek told many of the same jokes and anecdotes he has used in his previous talks. Many times Zizek made valid points that Peterson was not sure how to follow up with. At a certain point Peterson had to admit that he could not entirely defend capitalism, while Zizek also said he was unable to defend the legacy of communism.

Despite their differences, Zizek and Peterson have contributed many things, such as their rejection of political correctness and identity politics, their respectful, but very respectful towards each other and exchanged many compliments. The so-called “Marxist” Slavoj Zizek become friendly with anti-communist professor Jordan Peterson and this put Peterson on the left uncomfortable. Peterson questioned Zizek as to whether he has really accepted Zizek admit that he was more of a Hegelian, rejecting the optimism of Karl Marx and believing Marxism through the lens of Hegel. This showed that the ideas held by Slavoj Zizek and Jordan Peterson are not set in stone, or maybe not what most people thought they were. Though the debate has officially ended, people continue to have conversations regarding it.

May Day greetings from the Canadian Peace Congress

Ever since May 1st was first decreed the International Day of Workers’ Rights in 1886, peace, and opposition to wars of aggression, have always been central themes of May Day marches and celebrations. This is because working people suffer most from the endless wars of intervention, occupation and war – funds taken away from basic needs such as education, healthcare, education, housing, and other social programs services – and because working people invariably bear the brunt of the tragedy of death, displacement and suffering when wars actually occur.

For this reason, the Canadian Peace Congress has always celebrated this important event. This year in particular, as acts of militarist aggression proliferate around the world, and the threat of global nuclear annihilation grows ever more immediate and ominous, we absolutely must raise our voices for peace, disarmament and social and environmental justice now! We invite you to read our “Urgent Appeal against the Growing Danger of War,” which we issued recently, and we urge all of our local Peace Councils, members and friends to support May Day 2019 activities taking place across Canada.

Against Imperialist Aggression & War! For Peace, Disarmament and Social Justice! Long Live May Day!!

About the Canadian Peace Congress

The Canadian Peace Congress, founded in 1949, advocates and works for world peace and disarmament. We maintain that peace, not militarism and war, is the guarantor of democracy, human rights, and social and economic justice. We contend that peace, international friendship and cooperation among peoples and nations are possible and necessary to improve living standards, eradicate unemployment and poverty, illiteracy and disease and to restore the health of the planet. We oppose all attempts from any quarter to make Canada a “military power”. Canada needs an independent foreign policy based on peace & disarmament, not on imperialist aggression and war. In the 21st century human progress has created all of the prerequisites for a peaceful world war never before possible. The internationalization of the economy, membership in aggressive military blocs such as NATO & NORAD, a renewed nuclear arms race and its extension to space, participation in wars of intervention, occupation, etc.

“Regime change” only serve the interests of powerful financial and military elites and not the people.

If You Like us, then Please ‘Like’ and ‘Follow’ us

If you are a Facebook user and have access to our page, we invite you to do so – https://www.facebook.com/CanadianPeace and be invited to ‘like’ and ‘follow’ our page. We now have over 1,200 friends here, but we need many, many more! This way, you will be informed when we post new statements, activities and articles of interest and importance to the peace & solidarity movements. And your support and assistance will help us to keep our website online, operating and growing.

We Need Your Help!

If you appreciate the work our Congress is trying to do, there is another important way you can help. You can help us reach and grow more people across Canada – to publish material and leaflets, to attend peace and other public events – and take other initiatives to strengthen the peace movement.

Unfortunately, our main website is being redesigned, so our online service to receive new material that is critical of U.S. foreign policies around the world. We are currently investigating other platforms for our use, and will inform you when Canadian Peace Congress material are posted elsewhere on the web.

We invite you to read our “Urgent Appeal against the Growing Danger of War,” which we issued recently, and we urge all of our local Peace Councils, members and friends to support May Day 2019 activities taking place across Canada.

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Our mailing address is: Canadian Peace Congress, PO Box 73593, Vychwood PO, Toronto, Ontario M6C 4A7. Thanks for your support!
The Caster Semenya Ruling Is Nonsense
By Dave Zirin, sports editor for The Nation, May 2, 2019

The highest decision-making body in the world of athletics has rendered a judgment that can only be described as both cruel and racist. On Monday, the Court for Arbitration in Sports ruled that South Africa’s two-time Olympic gold medalist in the 800-meter race, Caster Semenya, has an “unfair advantage” every time she competes due to her naturally elevated levels of testosterone. If Semenya wants to compete in the future, they have concluded, she will have to artificially suppress these hormones in her body.

This is sick and disturbed, the equivalent of making Joel Embiid play basketball on his knees because he is deemed too tall, or forcing Michael Phelps to wear weights on his feet to negate the advantage that their flipper-like shape provides him whereas he’s in the pool. In many respects, it’s even worse because there are differing medical opinions on whether or not elevated testosterone levels even aid athletes. The CAS has done everything in its power to demand medical intervention if Semenya wants to keep competing. It’s barbaric, as is the eye of the South African track community, it’s racist as well as sexist.

Semenya and her representatives brought their case to the CAS in an attempt to overturn a ruling from the International Association of Athletics Federations stating that women with “elevated levels of testosterone” had to reduce their levels using medication and hormonal contraceptives for six months preceding any sanctioned international competition. She will be forced to undergo these chemical procedures if she wants to compete in the World Championships this September.

Even the court in their amoral decision described their ruling as “discriminatory” but “necessary.” They are certainly correct about the first part. First, as CAS admitted, the IAAF’s ruling is in fact discriminatory because it targets female and intersex athletes who have naturally high levels of testosterone. They are “necessary” in the eyes of the IAAF and CAS basically because Caster Semenya was kicking the ass of her competition, and since they were unable to win on the track, these athletes, their coaches, and their country’s federations took their complaints to the court.

The IAAF commented on the CAS ruling in a craven statement that it is “grateful” for the decision and “pleased that the Regulations it targets female and intersex athletes who have naturally high levels of testosterone. They are “necessary” in the eyes of the IAAF and CAS basically because Caster Semenya was kicking the ass of her competition, and since they were unable to win on the track, these athletes, their coaches, and their country’s federations took their complaints to the court.

Since 1996, women and girls have been on the run from the IAAF and CAS basically because Caster Semenya was kicking the ass of her competition, and since they were unable to win on the track, these athletes, their coaches, and their country’s federations took their complaints to the court.

As for Caster Semenya, she should get the last word on this subject. She said in a statement, “I know that the IAAF’s regulations were based on assumptions that have never been backed up by science. They targeted me specifically. For a decade the IAAF has tried to slow me down, but this has actually made me stronger. The decision of the CAS will not hold me back. I will once again rise above and continue to inspire young women and athletes in South Africa and around the world, that women can be equal in all the elements of sex biology, intersex, and athleticism.”

The decision of the CAS was “discriminatory” but “necessary.” They are certainly correct about the first part. As for Caster Semenya, she should get the last word on this subject. She said in a statement, “I know that the IAAF’s regulations were based on assumptions that have never been backed up by science. They targeted me specifically. For a decade the IAAF has tried to slow me down, but this has actually made me stronger. The decision of the CAS will not hold me back. I will once again rise above and continue to inspire young women and athletes in South Africa and around the world, that women can be equal in all the elements of sex biology, intersex, and athleticism.”

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Special Guest: PV Editor Kimball Cario
Tickets & Details ph. 780-934-7893
Middle East Eye: In your opinion, why have you been denied entry into the United States, despite having valid travel documents?

Omar Barghouti: This is an instance of Israel out sourcing its anti-BDS repressive measures to its patron, the right-wing Trump administration. McCarthyism is rearing its ugly face again in the US, and loyalty to Israel is its litmus test.

For years, Israel has been accused of denying entry to people based on their political beliefs. This unadmitted practice was partly made official in March 2017 when Israel passed the “BDS law.” Do you think a similar pattern is being used in the US now to silence the BDS movement against Israel? Is the US intensifying its repression of Israel’s critics?

This could well usher in a new phase in US complicity in Israel’s regime of occupation and apartheid whereby the US administration starts banning entry on ideological and political grounds, in violation of US laws. Repression against pro-Palestinian voices and hate speech directed at Palestine supporters by US advocates is certainly on the rise in the US, fanned by an unhinged anti-Palestinian administration that lifts up Israel’s far-right regime of oppression as a model. But this also reflects the immense growth in suppression for Palestinian rights in the US and the growing impact of BDS not just among communities of color and progressives in general, but also in the liberal mainstream.

What does that say of the relation between Israel and the US under the Trump administration? Do you think both countries are cooperating more to suppress anti-Israel voices, and sharing intelligence about individuals who are deemed undesirable for both countries?

Absolutely. After its utter failure in suppressing the growth of the BDS movement for Palestinian rights, Israel and its lobby groups have resorted to unprecedented repressive measures that the American Civil Liberties Union has characterized as “reminiscent of McCarthy-era loyalty oaths.”

By trying to prevent me from meeting with lawmakers in Congress, with the mainstream media, with diverse justice advocates, including young Jewish progressives, Israel and its US cohorts are showing real despair.

Despite their boisterous, anti-democratic repression, and as Israel’s regime becomes the poster boy of the rising far-right, including fascist tendencies from Eastern Europe to Brazil, around the world, Palestine has become squarely part of the progressive agenda.

You faced other travel restrictions in the past, the government restricting your ability to exit and enter the country by not renewing your travel document. Why is Israel trying to prevent you from traveling abroad? What does that say about the impact of the BDS movement?

BDS has succeeded in building alliances between college campuses, pension funds, thousands of artists and academics, LGBTQI groups, among others, showing that it can play a significant role in isolating Israel’s regime of oppression as the most effective means of advancing the struggle for Palestinian freedom, justice and equality.

Benjamin Netanyah has been re-elected this week after a tight election against his main rival Benny Gantz. What does this tell us about the Israeli public? And how does this bode for Palestinians and the pro-Palestinian civil society movement?

Israel has shifted to the far right, with openly fascist political groups now poised to participate in the next Netanyahu government. In parallel, Israel’s crimes against the Palestinian people, especially in Gaza, have escalated.

This could well be a serious challenge to Palestinian rights and even our very existence, in some respect, and an auspicious opportunity to expose Israel’s true face as an apartheid and colonial regime that must be isolated worldwide as apartheid South Africa once was.  

Elodie Farge has been a journalist for the French edition of Middle East Eye’s French website, originally published by Middle East Eye since its inception in 2009, the site was launched in January 2015. She is the author of France & Jerusalem. "Holy War." The Routledge Handbook of International Security & Contemporary Diplomacy (PASSIA, 2015). This article was originally published in Middle East Eye’s French website, https://www.middleeasteye.net/fr

V. I. Lenin on Anti-Jewish pogroms

With anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim hate crimes on the rise in both Canada and the US, and as right-wing forces continue to conflate opposition to Israeli government policy with “anti-Semitism,” Lenin’s writings on the national question and the Jewish question are worth re-reading. The website Marxist-Leninist Today (mtoday.com) recently posted one of Lenin’s brief statements of the principles involved in this issue, written in March 1919.

Anti-Semitism means spreading enmity towards the Jews. When the accused tsarist monarchy was living its last days it tried to incite ignorant workers and peasants against the Jews. The tsarist police, in alliance with the landowners and the capitalists, organised pogroms against the Jews. The landowners and capitalists tried to divert the hatred of the workers and peasants who were tortured by want against the Jews. In other countries, too, those who do actual work are kept in power by the power and strength of capital. Rich Jews, like rich Russians, and the rich in all countries, are in alliance to oppress, rob and despoil the workers. It was by the agreement of the landowners and capitalists that the tsarist government and the tsarist police used the anti-Jewish pogroms as a means of dividing the workers. Pogroms were fomented to prevent the workers uniting and forming a force. Pogroms were fomented to prevent the workers uniting and forming a force.

Lenin believed that the international proletariat should unite against the growing phenomenon of anti-Semitism. He wrote: "The fight against the pogroms is not only the task of the Jewish proletariat. Pogroms are the special crime of the capital and of all nations in the struggle to overthrow capital.

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By Elodie Farge, in Middle East Eye, April 18, 2019

On April 10, Palestinian human rights activist and co-founder of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement Omar Barghouti was denied entry into the United States, despite having valid travel documents. The move was quickly denounced by rights groups as a violation of free speech by the administration of President Donald Trump.

Barghouti was stopped at Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv and told he would not be allowed to board his flight to the US. He was expected to join a panel in Washington the following day. The campaigner was born in Qatar and has permanent resident status in Israel.

Barghouti joined the panel via a video conference call that was live-streamed on social media. He called for taking Palestinian non-violent resistance to the “next level” and called on the international community to uphold Palestinian rights.

It was confirmed that Barghouti was denied entry to the US because of his advocacy for Palestine, while Robert Palladino, a US State Department spokesperson said the US does not deny visas “based solely on political statements or views”.

Barghouti has had difficulties with freedom of movement and travel in the past, but those were due to Israeli government limiting his ability to exit and enter the country by not renewing his travel document. Amnesty International called on Israel to “end the arbitrary travel ban” on the human rights activist.

Denying entry to Barghouti is the latest attack on the BDS movement in the US. Over the past years, dozens of states have enacted laws that restrict companies and individuals from boycotting Israel. The US Congress has also repeatedly condemned the movement, and earlier this year, the Senate passed a bill that encourages states to cut off businesses that boycott Israel. The Democratic-controlled House of Representatives has not yet taken up the legislation.

Lat Aayad, MEE columnist Kamel Hawwash, vice-president of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC), a British organisation that supports the BDS campaign, was also denied access to a flight for the United States from London. We spoke to Barghouti about what happened.

Middle East Eye: In your opinion, why have you been denied entry into the United States, despite having valid travel documents?

Omar Barghouti: This is an instance of Israel outsourcing its anti-BDS repressive measures to its patron, the right-wing Trump administration. McCarthyism is rearing its ugly face again in the US, and loyalty to Israel is its litmus test.

For years, Israel has been accused of denying entry to people based on their political beliefs. This unadmitted practice was partly made official in March 2017 when Israel passed the “BDS law.” Do you think a similar pattern is being used in the US now to silence the BDS movement against Israel? Is the US intensifying its repression of Israel’s critics?

This could well usher in a new phase in US complicity in Israel’s regime of occupation and apartheid whereby the US administration starts banning entry on ideological and political grounds, in violation of US laws. Repression against pro-Palestinian voices and hate speech directed at Palestine supporters by US advocates is certainly on the rise in the US, fanned by an unhinged anti-Palestinian administration that lifts up Israel’s far-right regime of oppression as a model. But this also reflects the immense growth in suppression for Palestinian rights in the US and the growing impact of BDS not just among communities of color and progressives in general, but also in the liberal mainstream.

What does that say of the relation between Israel and the US under the Trump administration? Do you think both countries are cooperating more to suppress anti-Israel voices, and sharing intelligence about individuals who are deemed undesirable for both countries?

Absolutely. After its utter failure in suppressing the growth of the BDS movement for Palestinian rights, Israel and its lobby groups have resorted to unprecedented repressive measures that the American Civil Liberties Union has characterized as “reminiscent of McCarthy-era loyalty oaths.”

By trying to prevent me from meeting with lawmakers in Congress, with the mainstream media, with diverse justice advocates, including young Jewish progressives, Israel and its US cohorts are showing real despair.

Despite their boisterous, anti-democratic repression, and as Israel’s regime becomes the poster boy of the rising far-right, including fascist tendencies from Eastern Europe to Brazil, around the world, Palestine has become squarely part of the progressive agenda.

You faced other travel restrictions in the past, the government restricting your ability to exit and enter the country by not renewing your travel document. Why is Israel trying to prevent you from traveling abroad? What does that say about the impact of the BDS movement?

BDS has succeeded in building alliances between college campuses, pension funds, thousands of artists and academics, LGBTQI groups, among others, showing that it can play a significant role in isolating Israel’s regime of oppression as the most effective means of advancing the struggle for Palestinian freedom, justice and equality.

Benjamin Netanyah has been re-elected this week after a tight election against his main rival Benny Gantz. What does this tell us about the Israeli public? And how does this bode for Palestinians and the pro-Palestinian civil society movement?

Israel has shifted to the far right, with openly fascist political groups now poised to participate in the next Netanyahu government. In parallel, Israel’s crimes against the Palestinian people, especially in Gaza, have escalated.

This could well be a serious challenge to Palestinian rights and even our very existence, in some respect, and an auspicious opportunity to expose Israel’s true face as an apartheid and colonial regime that must be isolated worldwide as apartheid South Africa once was.  

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