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Socialist Voice #110, July 17, 2006

## **Cuban People Demonstrate Power of Internationalism**

**By Sabrina Johnson**

*Editor's Note: July 26, 1953 is the date of the attack by young Cuban revolutionaries on the Moncada military barracks in Santiago, Cuba. This act was the opening salvo of the Cuban revolution, which triumphed six years later, in 1959. As we approach the anniversary of the Moncada attack, Cuba is strengthening its alliance with peoples in struggle across Latin America and around the world. Sabrina Johnson, a Toronto activist in solidarity with Cuba, discusses the meaning of Cuba's extraordinary commitment to international assistance.*

Is free health care a crime? So you might think, considering the Bolivian capitalist establishment's panicked reaction to the activity of Cuban doctors in that country.

Seven hundred Cuban medical personnel are providing care to thousands of Bolivians who have never been able to afford it, saving hundreds of lives in the process. Officials of Bolivian medical associations have threatened to quit their government posts in protest, while the Bush administration cites Cuba's medical aid as evidence of a dangerous "erosion of democracy" in Bolivia. Bolivia's government is defiant: "As long as I am president, not one Cuban will leave Bolivia," declares President Evo Morales.

The U.S. administration has good reason for alarm. After all, it does not assure the human right of medical care even to its own citizens. Its allocation of foreign "aid" consists mainly of military and police equipment and training. U.S.-style "development" promotes trade deals like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) that has caused hunger and desperation throughout Mexico and has driven 7.2 million Mexicans to seek a better life in the United States, and risk their lives doing so. U.S. "democracy" is imposed by overthrowing popularly elected governments — as in Haiti, with the noteworthy cooperation of Canada.

Cuba's actions and policies are the exact opposite. According to Bolivian government records, the 700 Cuban doctors in the country have assisted more than 450,000 patients in three months and saved the lives of 810 of them. Cuban ophthalmologic centers in the Bolivian cities of Cochabamba, Santa Cruz, and La Paz have restored the vision of 7,300 patients; another 1,700 have been treated in Havana. In addition, Cuba will train 7,000 young Bolivians as doctors and it has committed to helping Bolivia train 5,000 more.

Bolivia pays nothing for the Cuban doctors. They are paid by Cuba — the same salary as they would receive on the island. They live and work in impoverished and remote communities, far from home and family. As Cuban president Fidel Castro has said, Cuban doctors' basic training consists of teaching not only medicine, but also solidarity and humanism.

### **37,000 specialists in Third World countries**

Cuba has limited financial means and supplies to offer to other countries but is rich in human resources. Bolivia is one of 108 countries benefiting from Cuban assistance of 37,000 health, educational, and sports specialists.

- After the devastating October 2005 earthquake in Pakistan, more than 2,000 members of Cuba's Henry Reeve Internationalist Contingent cared for 1.74 million people in the mountains of Pakistan.
- Cuban doctors answer emergency calls in the middle of the night in countries where they are posted — from poor communities in Venezuela to poor neighborhoods in Haiti and Indonesia, places where many residents have never before seen a doctor.
- Seniors and other adults are learning to read in Cuban-assisted programs in Venezuela, Bolivia, Mexico, Peru, New Zealand and in many other countries.
- Students from Latin America, the Caribbean, sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Oceania, and even the United States live and study in Cuba at no cost as recipients of Cuban scholarships.
- Under the ALBA agreement between Cuba, Venezuela and Bolivia, the three countries plan to train 200,000 Latin American and Caribbean doctors over the next ten years.
- Cuba's assistance in the defense of Angola's independence throughout the 1970s and 1980s against invasion by the white racist South African government contributed to the independence of other African countries and, eventually, to the demise of South African apartheid.

Cubans view their international commitment as the realization of the principle proclaimed by José Martí, the leader of Cuba's war of independence in the 1890s: "Homeland is humanity," and of the moral attitude evoked by Che Guevara: "Our vanguard revolutionaries must idealize this love of the people, of the most sacred causes, and make it one and indivisible."

Cuba's revolutionary leadership understands that the Cuban revolution will best survive and develop in partnership with other peoples in struggle for their freedom. They argue (as does Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez) that the only viable and enduring solution to the problems

of imperialist oppression and capitalist pillage is socialism, and that socialism can only develop through collaboration and interchange between governments of workers, farmers, and indigenous peoples of many countries. Today, the Bolivarian revolution in Venezuela and the indigenous victory in Bolivia open the way towards such a process in Latin America.

### **The role of ALBA**

In December 2004, Cuba and Venezuela signed the historic ALBA agreement (ALBA means “dawn” and it is the Spanish acronym for the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas). It represents a threat of a different kind for the U.S. imperialist agenda.

Ricardo Alarcón, president of Cuba’s national assembly, has called ALBA the best guarantee for the consolidation of an anti-imperialist front. Addressing an international forum in Caracas January 25, Alarcón asked, why waste time in looking for answers “in the air,” since ALBA “is the answer.” (See Paul Kellogg, “The Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas,”)

The Cuba-Venezuela partnership encompasses health care, education, energy planning, the treatment of HIV, and a variety of other important social and economic programs. It offers a road of human solidarity to defend Latin America’s peoples against imperialist pillaging and robbery. On April 29, 2006, Bolivia became the third country to join ALBA, and its principles have also been applied in agreements with many other Latin American countries.

ALBA is unique in enabling the three countries to cooperate and trade in solidarity, independently of the world capitalist market. The relationship is a fraternal partnership, utilizing trade in kind rather than market transactions, thereby seeking to meet the urgent needs of the people.

The strength achieved by consolidating the efforts of people from various countries who are struggling to change their common situation is a powerful example that can also inspire working people in the industrialized world.

### **Alarm in Washington**

The upsurge in Latin America, of which ALBA is the most advanced expression, is causing increasing alarm in the U.S., as its grip on countries in its backyard slips away. The inspirational flame has even reached the large Latino population inside the U.S., as shown by the demonstrations of millions for immigrants’ rights this year.

Washington has passed laws to prevent its citizens from visiting and learning about Cuba. It has branded Cuba as a repressive dictatorship and campaigned—with little success—for international condemnation of Cuba for so-called human rights violations. For more than four decades, the U.S. government has relentlessly enforced a blockade against Cuba that costs the island billions of dollars. The U.S. also enforces the blockade outside its borders, in blatant violation of other countries’ sovereignty and laws. Canada is a prominent target of such measures—with no protests from the Canadian government.

### **Anti-Cuban terrorism**

The Cuban people have been the target of numerous U.S.-sponsored terrorist attacks which have resulted in 3,478 deaths and 2,099 injuries. These attacks include the blasting of a Cuban civil airplane in 1976, resulting in 73 deaths. The masterminds responsible for this attack are Orlando Bosch, who was pardoned by President George H. Bush, and Luis Posada Carriles, an ex-CIA agent with a long history of criminal activity throughout Latin America on behalf of the U.S. government.

The U.S. authorities were recently forced to detain Carriles when he held a press conference in Miami and his presence in the U.S. thus became undeniable and an embarrassment to them. But Washington has ignored Venezuela's request for his extradition to stand trial for the plane bombing and refuses to address the charges of terrorism against him. It has instead opted to charge him with illegally entering the U.S. (His entry was aided by an undercover FBI agent.)

The anti-Cuba terrorism campaign has included hotel bombings, numerous attempts to assassinate Fidel Castro, smuggling of terrorists and military equipment into Cuba for the purpose of staging a fictional uprising against the revolution, sabotage against the agricultural and tourism sectors — not to mention a full-scale invasion at the Bay of Pigs in 1961.

Meanwhile, five Cubans patriots who infiltrated U.S.-based terrorist organizations in order to foil further attacks have been unjustly imprisoned in the United States since September 1998. The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention determined that their trial was illegal and a three-judge panel at the Atlanta Court of Appeals unanimously revoked the trial in Miami and ordered a new trial. The Cuban Five, who themselves participated in internationalist missions, are heroes in their country and supporters of Cuba are waging a determined campaign for their release.

Despite all of these attacks, the Cuban revolution has survived and is expanding its influence — a tribute to the conviction and tenacity of Cuba's people and their continued participation in its defense; and to international solidarity, especially now from other peoples in the Americas.

Cuba's example demonstrates how a country's capabilities can be considerably enhanced and human potential developed once freedom from the private profit system is achieved. Cuba shows how the power of mutual and collective cooperation among revolutionaries throughout the world can bring each oppressed country a step closer to achieving a fair distribution of resources and opportunities for everyone. Its example has, in fact, encouraged the peoples of other countries to join the struggle for human rights.

Cuba proves that another world is truly possible and the Cuban people and government deserve an aggressive and unflinching defense by all supporters of freedom, self-determination and human rights, internationally.

Socialist Voice #111, July 24, 2006

## **Canadian Union Takes Important Step Against Israeli Apartheid**

**by Adam Hanieh**

*(This article originally appeared as issue #22 of The Bullet, an E-Bulletin published by Socialist Project. Adam Hanieh is a member of the Al Awda Right of Return Group (Toronto), the Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid and CUPE.)*

At the annual convention of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Ontario, held 24-27 May 2006 in Ottawa, the union passed a resolution of historic importance. Resolution 50 — adopted unanimously by the 900 delegates at the largest convention in the union's history — expressed support for the global campaign against Israeli apartheid. The union stated that it would educate its members on the apartheid nature of the Israeli state and Canadian political and economic support for these practices. It also declared that CUPE Ontario would participate in the international campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel until the realization of Palestinian self-determination. Most importantly, the union highlighted the significance of the right of return of Palestinian refugees as a critical component of Palestinian self-determination.

Resolution 50 is a vital step for both Palestinian rights and the North American labour movement. CUPE Ontario is the largest public sector union in Ontario and represents over 200,000 workers in the most highly populated province of Canada. The resolution represents the most powerful statement in support of Palestinian rights ever made by a North American trade union.

Two days after Resolution 50 was adopted, another boycott resolution was passed by the largest union of university teachers in Britain, the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE). NATFHE, representing around 70,000 members, declared its active support of boycotts against Israeli academics and academic institutions that do not publicly take an explicit stand against Israeli apartheid and Israel's discriminatory educational system.

These two resolutions represent the latest in a snowballing movement to isolate Israeli apartheid in the manner of South African apartheid. A long list of institutions, city councils, religious organizations, political parties and unions have endorsed the call for boycott, divestment and sanctions (see below for a selected list of these initiatives). Two weeks ago, the Green Party of the United States issued a powerful policy statement that supported "divestment from and boycott of the State of Israel until such time as the full individual and collective rights of the Palestinian people are realized." In February 2006, the Church of England's general synod—including the Archbishop of Canterbury—voted to disinvest church funds from companies profiting from the Israeli occupation. On 16 December 2005, the regional council of the Sør-Trøndelag in Norway passed a motion calling for a comprehensive boycott on Israeli goods to be

followed up with an awareness raising campaign across the region. Sør-Trøndelag was the first Norwegian county to boycott South Africa and is now the first to boycott Israeli apartheid.

This growing movement has provoked a widespread crisis within the Zionist movement. The Israeli press is full of stories, editorial comment and debate about the boycott, divestment, sanctions campaign. No other international solidarity effort has so dominated the Israeli debate. Underlying most of this commentary is a deep fear that the identification of Israel with apartheid is reaching a critical mass within popular consciousness world-wide. The response of the Zionist movement has been strikingly incompetent and reflects their inability to deal with the charge of apartheid.

Take for instance the Canadian Jewish Congress's (CJC) "action alert" against the CUPE Ontario decision. The alert raises three questions that the CJC urges its supporters to raise with CUPE Ontario leaders:

Last summer, Israel withdrew its settlements from Gaza and the northern West Bank. A new Israeli government has just been elected on a platform of continuing this disengagement process. Why would CUPE Ontario call for a boycott that will punish Israelis just as these important steps are being taken?

The Palestinian election of a Hamas-dominated government that supports terrorism and is committed to the destruction of Israel has led to an economic crisis; international aid has correctly been denied to this recognized terrorist organization. Concerned Canadians should be looking to offer humanitarian help to the Palestinians, not to punish Israelis. Why would CUPE Ontario fail to use its voice in a constructive way?

CUPE Ontario's resolution calls for the unlimited return of refugees to Israel. It is well recognized that this approach would spell the end of a Jewish state. Why is CUPE Ontario adopting this extreme position ?

The most striking feature of the CJC alert is that it completely avoids any mention of the question of apartheid. The word itself does not appear at all in the entire statement. This is a most remarkable omission and can only be considered deliberate given that the main thrust of the CUPE Ontario decision (see below) is the comparison with South African apartheid. Indeed, the first item of the CUPE resolution is to conduct an "education campaign about the apartheid nature of the Israeli state". Only one conclusion can be drawn from this omission: the CJC is neither able nor willing to argue against the charge of Israeli apartheid.

The three points raised by the CJC confirm this conclusion. While the CJC praises Israeli "disengagement", this so-called concession is widely accepted as the final step in the construction of an apartheid solution. Apartheid-era South Africa placed the black population into territorially disconnected areas called Bantustans. Bantustans appeared to give blacks control over their own municipal affairs while denying them self-determination and any real or effective control of their lives. Movement in and out of the Bantustans was controlled by permits and pass cards. Economic control remained in the hands of the white apartheid state. This is precisely the situation that 'disengagement' is meant to formalize in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

All informed commentators agree that Olmert's disengagement plan is aimed at leaving the major settlement blocs in the West Bank intact. Olmert himself touts this as the major plank of his plan. The aim is to win international acceptance for Palestinian Bantustans – the Palestinian population crowded into isolated and divided cantons separated by settlements, Israeli-only roads and military checkpoints. This is not a new strategy; it has been the clear intention of Israeli leaders since the occupation of these areas in 1967.

The current situation in the Gaza Strip is a powerful illustration of this apartheid reality. Israel completely controls the economy and borders of this tiny area that constitutes the most densely populated place on earth. Israeli missiles can be dropped on Gaza day and night, with the population starved from all work, outside supplies and possibility of travel. This is what 'disengagement' portends for the West Bank.

Precisely because Israel controls all flows of funds, people and goods into the isolated Palestinian Bantustans the CJC is able to champion the severing of aid to the Palestinian Authority. In the last month, this has led to deaths of at least four hospitalized Palestinians who were unable to obtain dialysis treatment due to Israeli control of what goes in and out of Palestinian areas. A few weeks ago, Palestinian prison guards were forced to appeal to relatives of inmates to provide food because there was not enough to feed prisoners. Enforced mass starvation of a civilian population is quite simply a war crime. An important statement signed two weeks ago by the major Palestinian organization in Canada put it this way: Palestinian right to life should not be conditional on acquiescence to Israeli apartheid.

Finally, the third CJC talking point reveals the crux of the debate. The CJC states that the right of return of Palestinian refugees "would spell the end of a Jewish state." Israeli apartheid is founded upon the notion of an exclusively Jewish state that denies equal rights to everyone else. In 1948, 80% of the indigenous Palestinian population were driven from their homes and land and became refugees. The Israeli state guarantees any person of a Jewish background, anywhere in the world, the right to become a citizen of Israel yet the indigenous population is refused their right to return. The right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and land is not simply a legal question (although it is guaranteed under international law). Most significantly, it points to the fact that we should oppose any state that operates on the basis of one religious or ethnic exclusivity. The central goal of the anti-apartheid struggle is a state in which anyone can live, regardless of their religious or ethnic background. This unquestionably means the right of return of Palestinian refugees to their homes and lands from which they were expelled in 1948.

Jonathan Cook, an outstanding journalist for the British newspaper, *The Guardian*, recently discussed how Olmert's disengagement plan confirms the basic premise of the current anti-apartheid struggle:

"Olmert outlined to Israel's Haaretz newspaper the most serious issue facing Israel. It was, he said, the problem of how, when the Palestinians were on the eve of becoming a majority in the region, to prevent them from launching a struggle similar to the one against apartheid waged by black South Africans. Olmert's concern was that, if the Palestinian majority renounced violence and began to fight for 'one-person, one-vote',

Israel would be faced by “a much cleaner struggle, a much more popular struggle — and ultimately a much more powerful one”. Palestinian peaceful resistance, therefore, had to be pre-empted by Israel. The logic of Olmert’s solution, as he explained it then, sounds very much like the reasoning behind disengagement and now convergence: “[The] formula for the parameters of a unilateral solution are: to maximise the number of Jews; to minimise the number of Palestinians”. Or, as he put it last week, “division of the land, with the goal of ensuring a Jewish majority, is Zionism’s lifeline”.”

Both the CUPE Ontario and NATFHE resolutions are big steps forward in the struggle against Israeli apartheid. They confirm that recognition of Israel as an apartheid state is now approaching a stage of popular acceptance. This victory was not achieved overnight but is the culmination of the work of many activists worldwide who have persevered with the ongoing tasks of leafleting, posterings, teach-ins, demonstrations and many other activities. Most of all, it is testament to the unbelievable endurance of the Palestinian people on the ground in Palestine and in refugee camps throughout the region. Our challenge is to continue to deepen the confidence among wider layers of the population in Canada and elsewhere in arguing for and becoming active in the struggle against Israeli apartheid. The resolutions of the last week have made this task much easier.

**Full Text of the Canadian Union of  
Public Employees Ontario Resolution:**

**CUPE ONTARIO WILL:**

1. With Palestine solidarity and human rights organizations, develop an education campaign about the apartheid nature of the Israeli state and the political and economic support of Canada for these practices.
2. Support the international campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions until Israel meets its obligation to recognize the Palestinian people’s inalienable right to self-determination and fully complies with the precepts of international law including the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN Resolution 194.
3. Call on CUPE National to commit to research into Canadian involvement in the occupation and call on the CLC to join us in lobbying against the apartheid-like practices of the Israeli state and call for the immediate dismantling of the wall.

**BECAUSE:**

- The Israeli Apartheid Wall has been condemned and determined illegal under international law;
- Over 170 Palestinian political parties, unions and other organizations including the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions issued a call in July 2005 for a global campaign of boycotts and divestment against Israel similar to those imposed against South African Apartheid;
- CUPE British Columbia has firmly and vocally condemned the occupation of Palestine and have initiated an education campaign about the apartheid-like practices of the Israeli state.



**A Selected List of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Initiatives Globally Since March 2005**

**May 29, 2006:** Members of Britain's largest college teachers' union agreed on a boycott of Israel over what members called "apartheid" policies toward Palestinians, saying union members will refuse to cooperate with Israeli academics who do not "disassociate themselves from such policies. "The 69,000-member National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE) debated the proposal for the boycott at its annual conference in the northern English city of Blackpool. Two parts of the motion passed with a show of hands while a third went to a vote. Under the boycott, union members also will not submit articles to Israeli research papers.

**May 27, 2006:** CUPE Ontario declares that it will "Support the international campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions until Israel meets its obligation to recognize the Palestinian people's inalienable right to self-determination and fully complies with the precepts of international law including the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN resolution 194."

**May 14, 2006:** Green Party of the United States calls for "divestment from and boycott of the State of Israel until such time as the full individual and collective rights of the Palestinian people are realized."

**February 7th, 2006:** The Church of England's general synod-including the Archbishop of Canterbury-voted to disinvest church funds from companies profiting from Israel's occupation of Palestine.

**16 December 2005:** The regional council of the Sør-Trøndelag in Norway passed a motion calling for a comprehensive boycott on Israeli goods to be followed up with an awareness raising campaign across the region. Sør-Trøndelag has a population of 270,000 out of Norway's 4.6 million. Trondheim, Norway's third largest city, forms part of the region and will participate in the boycott initiative. Sør-Trøndelag was the first [Norwegian] county to boycott South Africa. Upholding this good tradition, the County council, as the first in the country, has decided to boycott Israeli goods, by not buying Israeli goods and through awareness raising efforts.

**December 8th, 2005:** The Socialist Left Party, a member of the center-left Norwegian government launched a solidarity campaign for Palestine beginning in the New Year. The campaign focuses on a consumer boycott of Israeli products and will push for a ban on any arms trade between the Norwegian government and the Israeli regime.

**November 28th, 2005:** The city council of Arbizu, in the Basque country, declared they will: "call for boycott, will support and execute it. The boycott consists of a consumer boycott of Israeli products as well as a boycott of all the firms, Basque or not, which make business with Israel, and non-cooperation with Israeli initiatives on the field of culture, education and sports."

**August 8th, 2005:** The Presbyterian Church (USA) published its divestment list that singles out Caterpillar, ITT Industries, Motorola and United Technologies as concrete measures towards economic pressure against Apartheid Israel and its accomplices.

**July 27th, 2005:** A resolution passed by the Anglican Consultative Council in Nottingham, England, urged Anglican churches around the world to divest from companies whose activities profit from the occupation of Palestine.

**July 16th, 2005:** The UN International Conference of Civil Society for Peace in the Middle East unanimously adopted the Palestinian call for boycott, divestment and sanctions.

**March 2005:** The World Council of Churches urged its member churches give “serious consideration” to pulling investments out of Israel and endorsed the 2004 decision by the Presbyterian Church of the United States to seek “phased selective divestment” from Israel. “This [Presbyterian] action is commendable in both method and manner, uses criteria rooted in faith and calls members to do the things that make for peace,” the WCC said.

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**Send a Note of Support to CUPE Ontario:**

There is a lot of pressure being waged, and certainly going to be waged, against the CUPE resolution from conservative forces in the media, in government, and even the labour movement. Please send a note of support to the Ontario head of CUPE, Sid Ryan, at [sryan@xxx](mailto:sryan@xxx). Alternatively send support through the CUPE Ontario fax number at: (416) xxx-xxxx or through the website at [www.cupe.on.ca](http://www.cupe.on.ca).

To lend your support and become active in the Boycott Israeli Apartheid campaign e-mail: [endapartheid@xxx](mailto:endapartheid@xxx)

Socialist Voice #112, July 24, 2006

## **Cuba: 'The Party Must Be Strengthened More Than Ever'**

*Granma*, July 4, 2006

The First Secretary of the Cuban Communist Party, Fidel Castro, presided over the 5th Plenary Meeting of the organization held on July 1.

The participants delved into different issues related to the Party's organization, national defense, the incorporation of new members to the Central Committee, and other subjects related to the country's development and the complex international situation in today's world.

### **Everybody Is Compelled To Think**

In several interventions during the meeting and in his closing remarks, Fidel said the Revolution is committed to facing the serious challenges stemming from the complicated international situation and its own deficiencies.

The president noted the decisive role that the Party must play in the current battle being waged by the nation and how it needs to be strengthened more than ever. The Secretariat is re-established, he said, at the time the Party needs it most. It is made up by a number of Party cadres with proven success in their work in the provinces and who have accumulated valuable experiences. They can be of great help to the organization, he stressed.

The leader of the Cuban Revolution elaborated on the negative impact the United States has on the international economy. He pointed to, among other factors, the uncontrolled printing of dollars to pay for goods and services above its real purchasing power, noting that "dollars are paper that people no longer want to amass." Given the grim economic and social panorama that is affecting above all poor countries, "the world is becoming a kind of volcano that could erupt anywhere," he argued.

It is of utmost importance -he added- that everyone has a clear idea of these serious problems, of the price of every product the country buys or exports. He warned about the need to do away with the old habit of asking for things without measuring the consequences. He insisted in that people should have a comprehensive knowledge and vision of the problems that exist within their circle of action. Everybody is compelled to think and not drop their guard, at a time when any recklessness becomes more inexcusable.

He made an appeal, aided by everybody's input, for a forceful fight against crime, a battle he said will be undoubtedly won. He cited the effective role performed by Party members at work centers who recently labored for two months to bring a new style and more dynamic methods that have become a permanent asset in the organization's work. He highlighted the importance of criticism, of appealing to people's integrity in the fight against criminal behavior, and even using the media, mainly the local media, in this fight.

The First Secretary of the Cuban Communist Party affirmed that although the country has achieved military invulnerability, the same cannot be said about the decisive front of the

economy where it is taking more time to achieve that status. In that light, Fidel spoke on the many important economic initiatives being undertaken in the country and the pivotal role that saving has as a source of resources, especially of electric power and fuel.

He made reference to the nation's accomplishments in healthcare and education, without ignoring the deficiencies that still prevail in those vital services. He also mentioned the efforts being made to guarantee food for the population at a time when the cost of foodstuffs are skyrocketing on the world market. He further pointed to the measures being adopted to get the island ready to face even more complex situations, like those that could derive from the spread of the avian flu epidemic.

Cuba's prestige grows with each passing day, he noted, because it is doing things not being done by anyone else. He mentioned the examples of the Operation Miracle eye-surgery program and the massive help being provided to other countries in healthcare and education, including the training of thousands of doctors in Cuba.

This makes us stronger, he said, because it won't be easy for an empire to destroy a people who are giving back eyesight to millions of Latin Americans. And he summed it up by saying: "We have enormous strengths to stand on, and they are essential in this battle that is almost won."

However, he said the task does not become easier because the enemy has lost ground. To the contrary, the threat is greater because a hurt beast is much more dangerous. It is necessary, he said, to struggle with all our strengths and means in the political arena. We must continue strengthening ourselves, within and outside, economically and militarily, amidst this great battle that our people will undoubtedly win.

### **Consolidating the Military Invulnerability Already Achieved**

Another relevant topic dealt with was the report by the Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces about the state of readiness of the nation's defense, presented by the Second Secretary of the Central Committee and Minister of the Revolutionary Armed Forces, Army General Raul Castro Ruz, and approved by the Fifth Plenary Meeting.

The document summarizes the results achieved since the July, 2003 Extraordinary Plenary Meeting of the Communist Party Central Committee that analyzed this topic and the main tasks to be accomplished in such a decisive area.

Important advances in defense planning and organization were identified at the national and local levels with the purpose of developing of our defense strategy taking into account the current way the enemy makes war, and the possibilities of their firepower.

Defense preparation has gained in its effectiveness, both of the military personnel on active duty as well as the civilian leaders and officials and the population in general, with a more rational and efficient use of the time that Cubans devote to such a sacred duty. Also mentioned as significant are the results achieved in the preparation of the theater of military operations, as well as the study of every inch of the national territory in the interest of the defense, among other tasks of great complexity and magnitude.

The important results achieved in the modernizing and manufacturing of combat equipment with the latest advances in science and technology, and above all, to adapt them to the uses foreseen in Cuba's defense strategy, were key points mentioned. Also highlighted were the efforts made by a large number of businesses and other entities both military and civilian.

The Plenary recognized the decisive role played by the Bastion 2004 Strategic Exercises in the strengthening of the defense, including the important decisions made by the Commander in Chief during and after their development. This wasn't limited to strictly technical-military matters, but also involved aspects related to the economic and social development of the nation with a considerable direct impact on the defense.

With a standing ovation, the Plenary unanimously adopted the ideas presented by the Second Secretary of the Party on June 14, on the occasion of the 45th Anniversary of the Western Army, and in particular when he stated:

“We are confronting an enemy whose stubbornness and arrogance frequently leads it to make mistakes, but that doesn't mean that it is a fool. It knows that the special trust that the people have in the founding leader of a Revolution can not be transmitted as if it was an inheritance, to those that in the future will be occupying the main leadership positions of the country.

“I repeat what I have said on many occasions: The Commander-in-Chief of the Cuban Revolution is one and only one, and only the Communist Party, the institution that groups the revolutionary vanguard and guarantees Cubans unity during all times, can be the dignified heir of the trust deposited by the people in its leader. We are working for that, and that's how it will be, the rest is pure speculation.

“In the same way that we have won all previous battles, both in Cuba as well as abroad when accomplishing our internationalist duties, we will defeat the enemy that attempts to hide among our lines, and we will consolidate the Revolution and become stronger on all fronts,” said Raul Castro.

### **Members of the Secretariat and Seven New Members of the Central Committee Elected**

As an important step in the ongoing process to improve the Party's work, the Plenary approved the proposal submitted by the Political Bureau to reestablish the Secretariat, as a directing entity that will aid in the daily work of the Party and that will be in charge of assuring that its accords be fulfilled.

In the proposal on the members of the Secretariat, qualifications, experience and the background of the comrades were taken into account as well as, the presence among its members of both historical leaders and others that have proven themselves during the 47 years of Revolution, working from the grassroots level and up.

In addition to the First and Second Secretaries, comrades Fidel and Raul, it was agreed that the following comrades form part of the Secretariat:

- José Ramón Machado Ventura
- Esteban Lazo Hernández

- Jorge Luis Sierra Cruz
- Abelardo Álvarez Gil
- María del Carmen Concepción González
- Mercedes López Acea
- Lina Pedraza Rodríguez
- Víctor Gaute López
- Roberto López Hernández
- Fernando Remírez de Estenoz Barciela

The Plenary coincided in the evaluation made by the Political Bureau during its meeting of April 26 regarding the advances that have been accomplished in the work of the Party during the past months resulting from the changes introduced in the style and working methods, and above all in the emphasis given to the direct attention at work places.

According to the Cuban Communist Party Statutes, new members can be named to the Central Committee in accordance with their merits, personal conditions and the important responsibilities assigned to them. As such, the Plenary agreed to bring into the Central Committee the following comrades:

- Olga Lidia Tapia Iglesias, first secretary of the Provincial Committee of the Party in Pinar del Río.
- Pedro Betancourt García, first secretary of the Provincial Committee of the Party in Matanzas.
- Roberto Morales Ojeda, first secretary of the Provincial Committee of the Party in Cienfuegos.
- Francisco Soberón Valdés, Minister-President of the Central Bank of the Republic of Cuba.
- Omar Ruiz Martín, first secretary of the Provincial Committee of the Party in Villa Clara.
- Julio García Rodríguez, first secretary of the Provincial Committee of the Party in Camaguey.
- Luis Torres Iríbar, first secretary of the Provincial Committee of the Party in Guantánamo.

In addition to these movements, the Plenary analyzed the case of comrade Marcos Portal Leon, whose mistakes at the helm of the Ministry of Basic Industry were cited in the past, mainly in relation to the policy for the development of nickel production and the strategy of electricity generation, errors that Portal Leon admitted with frankness.

Taking into consideration that these were not matters of principles, the Plenary approved his removal as a member of the Political Bureau, although keeping him as a member of the Central Committee. It also recommended to the Council of State, that in agreement with the established procedures, he be also relieved as a member of this State entity, while maintaining his status as member of the National Assembly of the People's Power (Cuban Parliament).

These words spoken by Fidel Castro summarized the spirit prevailing at the Plenary of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party: “However good the perspectives may be in all aspects, we can not neglect the smallest detail.” He added: “This nation has many great merits for what it has done up until today and many more yet to be done.”

Socialist Voice #113, July 24, 2006

## **Evo Morales: 'The US Is Conspiring Against Bolivia and Venezuela'**

*[Green Left Weekly, July 5, 2006] On July 2, elections for a constituent assembly and a referendum on regional autonomy were held in Bolivia. A week earlier, **Pablo Stefanoni** spoke with President **Evo Morales** about the new assembly and Morales's first five months in government. The following is abridged from the interview*

### **The opposition says that Bolivia has changed its dependence on the US for dependence on Venezuela.**

There is no dependence on Venezuela and Cuba. These two sister nations have expressed a grand unconditional solidarity in favour of Latin American integration. We recognise this aid — for example, from Cuba — which is helping us in achieving literacy, along with countries such as the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden and Canada. Italy and Spain are supporting projects in the areas of roadways and irrigation.

Argentina collaborated on medicines and food after the natural disasters; I want to pay homage to the Argentine soldiers who died in Bolivia [last March] while giving us their solidarity.

Why is Podemos [Social Democratic Power — a right-wing opposition party] so scared of [Venezuelan President] Hugo Chavez? Because Chavez is confronting the US — and the instruments of Bush's empire ... like [ex-president] Jorge "Tuto" Quiroga, are also confronting Chavez. But there is no interference [by Venezuela in Bolivia], there is cooperation based on solidarity. Thanks to Venezuelan investment we will be able to industrialise our gas.

### **Have Chavez's visit and his statements in Bolivia worsened relations with the US embassy?**

The embassy and the US government have a defined line: to attack, provoke and conspire against our governments. For example, there is the case of Leonilda Zurita. Previously as a union leader she had a US visa, yet now that she is a senator [for Morales's Movement Towards Socialism (MAS) party] her visa has been removed. The same happened to the vice-minister for water, Rene Orellana.

Secondly, there is the North American military presence, camouflaged as students who supposedly come to study Quechua, when, according to trustworthy information, they are actually gathering intelligence. It was not Chavez's visit that affected relations. The position of the US has already been decided: to conspire against our government.

### **Colombia and Peru have already signed free trade agreements (FTAs) with the US, and Venezuela has said the Community of Andean Nations (CAN) is "dead". Why do you insist on resuscitating the bloc?**

If CAN returned to its founding principles — to strengthen national and regional economies — it would be very different. CAN was weakened by the FTAs, which destroy small producers and rural communities. Nevertheless, we have the obligation to return to those principles and to



strengthen this bloc — not for the benefit of the transnational economy, but rather of the communal and popular economy in the Andean region.

**How do you see your balance sheet after five months in government?**

In five months we have consolidated ourselves as a government that attends to social demands, and at the same time is taking on structural issues. We have increased wages and repealed "labour flexibility." We have promoted literacy and identification programs along with health policy projects for the most vulnerable, such as Operation Miracle [providing treatment to recover eyesight, with Cuban support]. All this has been accompanied with a firm austerity policy [e.g., halving the salaries of parliamentarians and other highly paid public servants] and a struggle against corruption in the public sector.

We nationalized hydrocarbons and passed the law for the convoking of the constituent assembly, which will become the space where we can refound our country. In these five months we have followed the slogan of governing by obeying and today we have garnered greater support from the Bolivian people. [A recent Grupos Mori survey gave Evo Morales an 81% approval rating and 80% for vice-president Alvaro Garcia Linera.]

**What distinguishes Evo the president from Evo the union leader?**

I see myself more as a union leader than president of the republic; sometimes I still do not believe that I am president. I prefer it when people refer to me as Evo — *companero* Evo — because it represents a greater confidence in me. My security guards used to call me "Mr President", now they just call me president or "presi". We eat together as equals and that has generated a greater closeness with the people from the police and the armed forces.

**Why do you continue to be the president of the six federations of *cocaleros* [coca growers] of Chapare?**

It was the unanimous will of the six federations, but it is also a guarantee for them, my extended family. My political learning began in peasant union activities. We marched together, we bore the brunt of the repression together, we cried for the dead and injured of the Chapare and we also danced together and celebrated our triumphs. It is something that I will never forget. Because of that brotherhood I have accepted continuing to be a union leader.

**What is the government's response to the medical corporations' rejection of the presence of Cuban doctors in Bolivia?**

Some doctors say "Cubans out", but those doctors have no feelings for the national majorities, for the poor, for the peasants and indigenous people, who for the first time have free health care. The ophthalmological centres, built with the cooperation of the Cubans, have the latest technology and include specialists. I very much lament that some of the doctors are opposed to them, when the great majority of the population is supporting their presence. The Bolivian doctors have often treated the indigenous peoples as pigs, whilst the Cubans work with a lot of friendship and affection.

**You recently accused the Monasterios family, which owns the Unitel media network, of having acquired its land illegally and announced that your government will promote the creation of community radios as alternative media. How do you see your relationship with the media?**

The employers should not be the only ones to have their own media. The poor and the peasants also have the right to have their own media. Today, the only opposition is the large media networks, which defend the interests of a handful of families that have lived off politics and concentrated economic power in their own hands. That had to change, and now that we have removed their baby's bottle, [the large media corporations] have become annoyed and so each day they attack the popular movement and the MAS government.

**How far will your “agrarian revolution” reach?**

We are beginning to prepare the agrarian revolution, which is not a simple distribution or redistribution of land, but also establishing markets for the products and the mechanization of the countryside. We have begun to redistribute public land and we will continue with the [redistribution of land owned by the] latifundios [large landowners] who do not comply with their social and economic function.

**Many ask “why do we want the constituent assembly if we already have a president who represents the social movements?” What purpose should the constituent assembly serve?**

The constituent assembly is about peacefully changing the structure of the state, about the recuperation of territory and natural resources, to incorporate communitarian justice — at this time the justice system is based on blackmail and corruption — and to refound our nation incorporating the national majorities. This is how we will revert the original sin of Bolivia: the exclusion of 90% of the population when it was founded.

**In the election campaign you declared yourself a socialist. Do you continue to be a socialist?**

Of course, that is the goal.

Socialist Voice #114, July 24, 2006

## **Mercosur: More Than a Trade Pact**

**By Marie Trigona**

Cordoba, Argentina, July 25, 2006 (Venezuelanalysis.com) —The South American trade pact Mercosur concluded its summit in Cordoba, Argentina on Friday with eight presidents agreeing to work toward regional integration to offset U.S. influence. Venezuela's Hugo Chavez dominated the spotlight with the oil-rich nation making its formal entry into Mercosur during the summit, boosting the regional trade bloc composed of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay. Fidel Castro made a surprise visit to Cordoba for the regional meeting, signing several trade agreements and encouraging his left-leaning sympathizers to fight against US hegemony.

The Mercosur bloc was established by the heads of state of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay in 1991. For many years the trade pact was described by analysts as a novice attempt of a South American version of the European Union. More than 15 years later, the Mercosur trade pact is beginning to emerge as a key economic force with the continent's No. 1 economy (Brazil) and second largest economy (Argentina) now joined by the third-largest economy (Venezuela). The bloc's cumulative gross domestic product (GDP) ranks it as one of the world's largest economies.

Regional integration was a key issue discussed at the summit. Presidents committed to join together to fight against unemployment and lack of access to education and health. The leaders made major headway with trade agreements, natural resource accords and committing to build a new regional bank. Associate members Evo Morales from Bolivia and Michelle Bachelet from Chile attended the meeting as associate members, focusing on gas prices and trade. Even though some conflicts came up during the summit, the central meeting was filled with optimism and inside jokes.

### **Venezuela's entry**

Argentina's president, Nestor Kirchner said that Venezuela's entry into Mercosur was "a historic moment." Many expect Venezuela's entry to boost Mercosur economically with the nation's oil reserves and politically with Chavez's criticisms of the U.S. In a poll published in the national daily, Pagina 12, seven out of 10 Argentines polled think that Venezuela's entry into Mercosur is a positive step. However, Brazil, which currently holds Mercosur's presidential seat, seems uneasy over the possibility of Venezuela taking over Mercosur's leadership.

Chavez made several key proposals during the meeting, promising oil reserves for the Mercosur trade bloc for the next 30 years. Venezuela, Argentina and Uruguay signed an accord for Enarsa (Argentina's dormant state oil company) and Uruguay's Ancap to begin oil explorations in Venezuela's Cuenca del Orinoco region.

### **FTAA's death**

Leaders from Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, and Paraguay followed Chavez's lead with criticisms of the impact of Free Trade agreements on the third world. Carlos Aznarez, political analyst and

editor of *Resumen Latinoamericano*, said that the regional meeting marked the revival of Mercosur. "With Venezuela's entry and the possible entry of Bolivia, something which is immanent, the goal of revitalizing an organization that had been inactive has been achieved. For an organization that was dead, it's a step forward. Venezuela's entry gave Mercosur an ideological spin, incorporating a courageous discourse to confront Pro-Free Trade policies coming from Washington."

Nearly 40,000 people attended the parallel people's summit to hear Hugo Chavez and Fidel Castro speak. During his address, Chavez said that the Free Trade Area of the Americas, a U.S.-backed proposal blocked by the Mercosur nations last year, was dead. "10 years have gone by and we have followed the road toward crucial changes. In 1994 almost every Latin American government had to answer to the US empire. By January 1, 2005 the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas should have already been installed throughout the entire continent. Today we can say we destroyed the FTAA and a new Mercosur has been born, a new Mercosur has been built."

Mercosur leaders openly rejected the FTAA during last November's Summit of the Americas meeting of regional heads-of-state in Argentina's coastal city of Mar del Plata. Surprising even U.S. President George Bush, who hoped to push through free trade accords throughout the Southern Cone. In his speech, Chavez referred to that historic summit. Chavez reminded the audience that during previous summits, Venezuela and Cuba represented the only challenge to U.S. free trade policies. "At one of those summits, Fidel passed me a piece of paper with the message 'Chavez, I feel like I'm not the only devil at these meetings.'"

### **Mercosur's agenda for integration**

According to Aznarez, Mercosur's revival has many implications for the people of the Southern Cone. "What does this mean for the people of Latin America in the short term? The extension of regional economic alliances, in different industries such as pharmaceuticals and energy resources. In the mid-term, the possibility of building a regional gas pipeline that Venezuela proposed."

Mercosur's new full-fledged member also proposed the long term project of building an international oil pipeline that will run from Venezuela to Paraguay, Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina. Securing energy sources has been one of Mercosur's primary objectives.

During the Mercosur summit, Venezuela also proposed to build a new regional bank for nations frustrated with conditions imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Argentina, Brazil and Venezuela have already committed 70 million dollars in reserves to get the bank up and running. The regional financial institution will finance infrastructure projects and business investments in those countries at a low interest rate. The bank may function as an alternative to structural adjustment policies imposed by the IMF, which are used as a yardstick to qualify for loans from the IMF and other multinational lending institutions.

The Mercosur leaders also discussed the possibility of reaching a unified stance for the upcoming IMF meeting in Singapore. The economy ministers from Mercosur are working on joint proposals to improve their countries' standing in the IMF that they will present in September at the lender's annual meeting.

## **Tensions**

Papermills – Uruguay brought up the dispute with Argentina over the proposal to build a paper mill near the border of the two countries. Argentina's Kirchner had avoided the pulp mill row during the summit. Tabaré Vázquez addressed his Argentine counterpart during his Mercosur presentation. He said that "Uruguay is open to negotiations and is worried about the health of Argentines." The paper mills project has strained diplomatic relations between Uruguay and Argentina, historically friendly neighbors.

This is the first time Vázquez has addressed the issue since the UN's highest court rejected Argentina's request for an order to immediately halt the construction of the plants earlier this month. Argentina had wanted the World Court to temporarily halt construction of the mills on the shared river, while it weighed its claim that the mills violated a bilateral treaty, which states both countries must consent to all issues that could affect the water of the shared river body. Hundreds from the Argentine town of Gualeguaychu attended the summit in Cordoba to confront Vázquez and to pressure the Mercosur leaders to stop the construction of the plants.

Trade pact with Israel – Mercosur leaders were expected to sign trade accords with Cuba, Pakistan, and Israel. Human rights organizations and Islamic groups in Argentina had requested that the nations suspend the trade negotiations with Israel until Israel suspends attacks against civilians in Lebanon. The Mercosur nations refused to sign the accord and signed an official document calling for a cease fire and end to the attack against Lebanon.

## **Social agenda for Mercosur**

Fidel Castro surprised Mercosur's left leaning members with his arrival on Thursday. Chavez had invited the island President to participate in the summit. Castro, who will soon turn 80, addressed the people's summit for nearly three hours in his trade mark green fatigues, urging for social pacts among Latin American nations.

"Today trade between Mercosur and Cuba is at 500 million dollars in imported goods from Mercosur and we export 50 million dollars. We have a tremendous amount of possibilities in our hands. Today in the meeting we talked about Mercosur's economy. And Mercosur's social agenda? Don't forget that word! Mercosur's social aspects, what that means and what can be accomplished"

The historic revolutionary figure also reminded Mercosur leaders that they mustn't forget social and humanitarian agenda's toward building a new Latin America. "We can build a new education program throughout Latin America. In three years we can eradicate illiteracy. We have to believe it to achieve it." The Cuban leader focused on education and health, applauding Venezuela and Bolivia for the recent initiatives in health and education. "Let's not forget about globalization. We should globalize solidarity." Both Cuba and Venezuela have exported their socialism to many parts of the Third World. For many years, Cuba has trained hundreds of doctors and provided specialized surgery for many fellow Latin Americans.

Cuba, a nation with a limited economy, signed several trade accords with the Mercosur nations. Juan Mignetti, professor of political economy at the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo's popular

university, said that Cuba's participation was a step forward toward globalizing solidarity. "Politically, Mercosur is very important for Latin America. The possibility that Latin American markets integrate and include Cuba means a lot because regional economies will help to break the blockade against Cuba."

### **Washington's silence**

Washington's State Department remained silent over last week's Mercosur summit. Some Republicans and Democrats agreed that the Mercosur presidential summit was a political meeting, not a meeting leading to trade consolidation and economic pacts.

Aznarez mentioned that the new regional alliance means an end to isolation. "For the U.S., this trio composed of Evo Morales, Hugo Chavez, and Fidel Castro, signifies a true enemy because they are resisting North America's plans for Latin America. They have rejected the FTAA and the U.S.'s other alternative: individual free trade agreements based on country to country. This regional alliance is going to make those individual accords much more difficult."

### **Outcome of Mercosur**

Both Chavez and Castro set a strong playing ground for their fellow leaders to follow. The leaders of Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay haven't been as outspoken in their commitment to social policies as Chavez and Castro. Before Venezuela's entry, Mercosur's agenda didn't include a social agenda. In his address, Castro said Latin American leaders need to make a stronger commitment to social programs. He applauded Chavez and Bolivia's Morales for how quickly they've learned the road to socialism. Without saying anything, he criticized Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay for falling short.

Castro criticized South America's second largest economy for its high child mortality rate. He also said in his speech that continental governments should commit to humanitarian needs: train more doctors, teachers and university teachers. Argentina has long recovered from its 2001 financial crisis but this recovery hasn't reached the ranks of the working class.

What remains clear is that Venezuela's fellow Mercosur leaders are excited about Venezuela's economic might, but wary of his socialist discourse. With the exception of Castro and Chavez, the Mercosur presidents departed as quickly as they could after the summit. Not a single government official from Nestor Kirchner's administration attended the parallel people's summit. Chavez reminded the some 40,000 spectators that the crucial changes in Latin America came thanks to social movements' resistance to imperialism.

The Mercosur presidential summit marks a clear separation from U.S. imposed economic policies. However, most of the accords set during this summit benefit the major economic groups of the corresponding nations, not the people. Castro hit a strong point when he reminded his admirers that Mercosur should include a social agenda.

*Marie Trigona is a Buenos Aires based writer and translator. She can be reached at [mtrigona@riseup.net](mailto:mtrigona@riseup.net). Visit [www.agoratv.org](http://www.agoratv.org) for more information on the people's summit in Cordoba.*

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## **The Meaning of the Second Lebanese War: Zionism and Imperialism as Terrorist Regimes**

### **Zionism and Imperialism as Terrorist Regimes**

by **Daniel**

*The current Israel/U.S. assault on Lebanon and the Palestinian territories has provoked protest and outrage around the world, including in Israel itself. The author of the following article is a socialist from Argentina and member of the Partido Obrero there. He currently resides in Israel. This article is printed with permission and includes explanatory notes by the editors of Socialist Voice.*

HAIFA, ISRAEL, JULY 24 — Even some bourgeois analysts are baffled by what they term the “overreaction” or “disproportionate response” of Israel, with the full backing of American imperialism, to the killing and kidnapping of a few soldiers. After all, Israel kidnapped Mustafa Dirani on May 24, 1994 in Lebanese territory. And on March 14, 2006, it did the same with the general secretary of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Ahmed Saadat, until then held illegally in a Palestinian Authority prison due to Israel’s pressure on Arafat.

But there’s a clear logic in the sanguinary Zionist madness. Israel, with a colonialist Jewish population of little more than 5 million people, faces 300 million Arabs and many hundred million more Muslims in the region, e.g. in Iran. The Zionist apartheid regime can therefore survive only by imposing what is, in the full sense of the word, a regime of terror over the peoples of the Middle East.

That’s why the militarily insignificant guerrilla operations of Hamas and Hizballah in the southern and northern border areas of Israel have a huge political significance. They threaten to demolish the myth of the invincibility of the Israel Defense Forces, the main prop of imperialism in the region.

Hence the bestiality of the Israeli reaction to Hizballah’s act of solidarity with the Palestinians. [The capture of two Israeli soldiers on July 12—SV editors]. Their capture took place against the background of a Zionist killing spree in the Gaza strip and the West Bank that left more than 130 Palestinians dead and that goes on unabated while the headlines are being occupied by the events in the North.

The potential implications go much further than the perspective of dismantling the Zionist segregation regime in Palestine and the downfall of client Arab governments in the Middle East. The oppression of the peoples of the Third World, amounting to more than 90% of humanity, by a handful of imperialist states is only possible because of, on the one hand, the collaborationist role of the local comprador bourgeoisies (which are particularly weak among the Palestinians and the Lebanese Shiites) and, on the other hand, their disunity and military intimidation.

In other words, the dominance of imperialism — above all, of course, of the United States — is in the last instance also based on imposing a regime of terror over the semi-colonial masses of Asia, Africa and Latin America. The limits of imperialism's ability to impose its will by military means has already been revealed by the Iraqi and Afghan resistance to US occupation, and by the defiant stance of several governments in places as widely apart as Iran, North Korea and Venezuela.

Taking the widest historical view, therefore, what is at stake is the survival of the present system of exploitation, of world capitalism.

That's why the G-8 rushed to the defense of Israel at the outset of this new war, and the US has gone beyond declarations of solidarity to speed up the delivery of aviation fuel and precision-guided bombs to Israel. That's also the reason why Israel, with full U.S. backing, rejected several cease-fire offers from Lebanon and Iran. Zionism and imperialism wanted war, and they are getting it with a vengeance.

### **The Plans of Zionism and Imperialism**

Already once, in 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon, in an operation planned and carried out in full coordination with the U.S. The aim of the operation was to reach Beirut, wipe out the Palestinian guerrillas operating in the country, and install a quisling dictator.

The first Lebanese war of 1975-1990 left 120,000 dead and 300,000 wounded out of a total population of 3 million. It and paved the way for the rise of a non-secular force, Hizballah, as the dominant anti-Zionist and anti-imperialist force in the region.

The aim of Zionism and imperialism is, once again, to install a puppet regime in Lebanon. The code name for this operation is "the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1559," which calls for the disarming of Hizballah and the deployment of the Lebanese Army throughout southern Lebanon.

The groundwork for this latest aggression was laid in 2004 by former Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri when he worked with the US and France to pass Resolution 1559 in the Security Council. The plan had the full support of Israel and client Arab regimes of the U.S.: Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt.

But who will be able to disarm Hizballah and assure that it remains defenseless? Certainly not the Lebanese army, which didn't even try to defend the country from the Israeli attacks and in whose ranks are to be found many Shiites, the denomination which provides the social base for Hizballah. Before and immediately after the outbreak of the war, Israel repeatedly stated its opposition to the deployment of even an "international" (i.e. imperialist) force in Lebanon and said that it will not agree to the presence of any troops in south Lebanon save for the Lebanese army. In other words, Israel wanted the resulting agreement to be the installation of a puppet regime under direct Zionist/American control, fearing that even an international force would make it more difficult for the IDF to terrorize the civilian population and implement the Zionist plans for the country.



A few days of fighting with the Hizballah guerrillas have been enough to make Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert change his mind. Currently, the Israeli government fantasizes about a European-Arab (more concretely, French-Egyptian) force that will somehow be able to do what Israel has been unable to do itself — defeat and disarm Hizballah — with the backing, we are told, of the formidable Lebanese army and the tremendously popular Hariri-Siniora team. [Faoud Siniora is the current prime minister of Lebanon. His predecessor, Rafik Hariri, was killed in February 2005. The latter's son, Saad, leads the majority bloc of seats in the Lebanese Parliament—SV editors.]

### **The Failure of the “Yugoslav Model”**

At the beginning of the second Lebanese war, the military analysts in Israel wanted to believe that it would be “a second Kosovo war,” that is, a war that would be won quickly through mass bombings by aerial forces alone. Without going into the moral perversity of people who take as a model the low-intensity nuclear warfare waged by NATO against Yugoslavia, littered with corpses and depleted uranium, it is clear that this “successful” precedent is irrelevant for the current war, even though the ratio of explosives dropped by Israel is anything from 1,000:1 to 800:1 compared to Hizballah's bullets and missiles.

The failure of the “Yugoslav model” has led Israel to employ its traditional strategy of ethnic cleansing. According to UN data, half a million Lebanese have already been turned into refugees. In the territory of Syria alone there are already 150,000 Lebanese refugees. In addition, Israeli airplanes have been dropping leaflets calling for the residents of Southern Lebanon (a region with a population of 400,000 people) to leave their villages. If this happens en masse, the number of refugees may increase by several hundred of thousands more.

Yet even after killing more than 380 civilians, completely destroying the Lebanese economic infrastructure, and turning 20% of the Lebanese population into refugees, Zionism has achieved literally nothing. The combat ability of the Hizballah fighters remains intact and they are even able to launch coordinated missile attacks against all the Northern cities of Israel, encompassing one million inhabitants. The economic activity of the North is completely paralyzed and 25% of its inhabitants have already fled to Southern cities, creating a potentially serious refugee problem within Israel itself. The economic cost of the war in Israel was estimated at between 20 and 50 million shekels daily (roughly 4.5 to 12 million dollars) by the Zionist daily Haaretz.

The failure of the original Zionist strategy has led the Israeli government to call up thousands of soldiers of the reserve and attempt a full-scale invasion of the country by ground troops. The implications of such a move are clear: Northern Command Chief Maj.-Gen. Udi Adam stated explicitly that Israelis should “stop counting the dead,” adding for good measure that “civilians will be killed too.”

But for all the bombast and macho-talk, the unusually high military casualties incurred by Israel in the ground warfare with Hizballah (the ratio is almost 1:1, whereas in the territories there are usually dozens of Palestinian fighters killed for every Israeli soldier) is a serious worry for the Israeli military and government, not at all sure that the Israeli population will be willing to back such bloodletting for long.

Anti-war vigils and rallies have already taken place in Haifa and Tel Aviv (the latter drawing several thousand demonstrators) and ministers and Members of the Knesset from the government parties (such as Meir Sheerit of Kadima and Ophir Pines-Paz and Danny Yatom of the Labor Party), have begun to express reservations in recent days over an expanded ground operation in Lebanon, fearing that the Israeli army will get bogged down into a prolonged guerrilla warfare.

What the Zionists didn't count upon — used as they were to kill basically defenseless Palestinian guerrillas — is that this time they were facing an organization which was armed during the last decade by Iran, and which therefore was able to retaliate to the Israeli attacks, however disproportionate the military forces.

### **Lebanon: The Zionist Vietnam?**

Military correspondents on the three Israeli television channels report that the Israeli forces, “like the Americans in Vietnam,” are facing a tough guerrilla resistance hiding in bunkers and caves. They don't see any moral problem with the analogy, since they all feel that nothing imperialist is alien to them. Let us recall that between two and three million Vietnamese, Laotians and Cambodians, and 56,000 to 60,000 Americans, were killed as a result of the Vietnam War during the years 1963-1975. (An additional 500,000 Vietnamese and 75,000 French had been killed in 1945-1954). The tonnage of bombs dropped by the US on North Vietnam exceeded that in all the theatres during World War II.

Perhaps the most grotesque character was the military analyst who explained why the fighting was so hard: “We mustn't forget that we are facing a terrorist organization with a yearly budget of 100 million dollars” — which is quite embarrassing considering that Israel gets 30 times that sum yearly from the US, not counting the huge local military budget, estimated at \$9.45 billion by the CIA in 2005.

In sum, several thousand determined guerrilla fighters, with a small military budget and a modest supply of weapons from a Third World country (Iran, and perhaps Syria as well), are inflicting serious blows upon a monstrous military apparatus built up by imperialism for decades. Potentially, it's Vietnam all over again — terrible suffering for the Lebanese people and, to a much lesser degree, for the Israeli civilians — but good news for the anti-imperialist fighters all over the world.