

Editorial

“Buy Canadian” – Chauvinism in the Service of the North American Monopolies

Large-scale layoffs in the auto and steel industries in Canada have given rise to a “Buy Canadian” chorus from the federal and provincial governments and various trade unions. Ironically, the same voices could be heard a couple of weeks ago condemning the U.S. Congress for its inclusion of a “Buy American” clause in the Obama administration’s stimulus package.

These calls to buy domestically produced products are presented as a “solution” to the economic crisis and as a way to save jobs. However, they are neither. In reality, they are thinly disguised calls for Canadian workers to line up behind the North American monopolies in their trade wars with the European and Japanese monopolies.

What does it mean to “Buy Canadian” when

three-quarters of the Canadian economy is foreign-owned? What does it mean to “Buy Canadian” when most of the major manufacturing industries have globalized their production facilities and a product may contain parts manufactured in many different countries? For example, cars assembled in Canada contain parts from the U.S., Mexico, China and probably half a dozen other countries. Steel produced in the U.S. uses iron ore mined in Labrador. Production has become so internationalized that the whole concept of buying domestic has been rendered virtually meaningless.

Protectionism in the form of “Buy Canadian” or “Buy American” is not a solution to the current economic crisis. It can only lead to further
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“The Land Speaks Arabic” Film Review

“The Land Speaks Arabic”, a documentary film by Palestinian film maker Maryse Gargour was shown in Winnipeg on March 4 to mark Israeli Apartheid Week. This is the fifth annual observation of the campaign to organize opposition to Israel’s occupation of Palestinian land and its discrimination against its Arab citizens. The showing was sponsored by the Canada Palestine Support Network.

“The Land Speaks Arabic” provides a rarely heard perspective on the creation of the state of Israel and the disaster that it represented for the Palestinians people. It also exposes many of the common myths and fabrications that are so often used to justify and rationalize the brutal and ongoing dispossession of Palestinian Arabs from their lands and livelihoods. Ms Gargour makes use of historical film footage and photographs as well as interviews with historians and

Palestinians who lived through the Naqba (the Catastrophe) to chronicle the events that preceded the declaration of the state of Israel in May 1948.

In North America, the standard story of the founding of a Jewish state in the Middle East is almost always told by Israel’s supporters. This story sets the Jewish people in a hostile world, perennial victims who in the face of implacable anti-Semitism, pogroms and genocide finally return to their promised land. In the Zionist telling, the Jewish holocaust is presented as the justification for a Jewish state and the Zionist solution to age-old anti-Semitism. However as shown in Ms Gargour’s film, this is not the whole story of Zionism.

Well before the near annihilation of European Jews by the German Nazi regime in the 1940s, the Zionist
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movement had established its goal of creating a “home” for Jews and only Jews in Palestine. Zionist leaders pursued this aim by attempting to sell the idea to the imperial powers of the time. After the concept was rejected by the Ottoman Turks, the Zionist leadership went shopping the Jewish state proposal to the western powers of France and Britain and the United States. The Zionists were well connected and well funded by powerful and influential backers both Jewish and non-Jewish. The Zionist pitchmen sold the idea of a Jewish state in the Middle East as an island of European “civilization” among the barbarian (Arab) masses of the region. Zionism never had any problems with western imperial interests and was only too happy to further these interests.

The Zionist goals were received most favourably by the British and French who in the early 1900s were aspiring to replace the tottering Ottoman Turkish Empire in the areas of Arabia east of the Suez Canal that it still controlled. Zionist connections and influence proved useful to the British during the First World War as British armies were fighting the Turks. In recognition of its identity of interests with the Zionist plan for Palestine Britain in 1917 declared its support for a “national home” for the Jewish people in Palestine, the Balfour Declaration.

The British and French governments had made promises to the Arabs during the war. The Anglo-French covenants pledged that the Arab populations could establish national governments of their own choosing in keeping with the principles of self-determination. These undertakings applied to the larger area the Arab Middle East that was under Ottoman control. There was no specific undertaking to Arab residents of Palestine.

Once Britain became the mandated power in Palestine after the defeat the Turks it began to allow large scale Jewish immigration to Palestine. Balfour explained after the war that Britain had made no undertaking with respect to Palestine and saw no need to consult with the 700,000 Arabs living there as to their wishes as to the future of Palestine. The actions and statements of British government officials in this period left the Zionist leaders with no doubt that the British mandatory authorities wanted as many Jews as possible to migrate to Palestine. With this green light the Zionists redoubled efforts to promote and finance Jewish immigration to Palestine. More and more European Jewish immigrants flooded into Palestine throughout the 1920s and 1930s.

The film chronicles the Palestinian struggle against the waves of Jewish immigration. Hostility between the Palestinian residents and Jewish colonialists soon led to violence between the communities. Murders and riots increased until 1936 when the Palestinians staged an uprising against the British authorities who were correctly seen as being responsible for Jewish immigration and the looming dispossession of Palestinian Arabs. The film contains interviews with Palestinians who took part in the uprising and witnessed the brutality with which the British army crushed the revolt. The British forces jailed or hanged any Palestinians caught with firearms. British actions in crushing the uprising left the Palestinians disarmed, disheartened and at the mercy of the Zionists.

As noted in “The Land Speaks Arabic” the Zionist leaders were secular Jews. They did not use religion as a justification for their intention to displace the Palestinians from their land. The Zionist project was colonial not messianic. They saw it as analogous to the European conquest of the new world. Their problem however was that the Arabs living in Palestine owned the land. They held title under the same kind of legal regime that existed in European nations. This was a highly inconvenient fact. As one Zionist leader is quoted in the film, there has never before been a colonial state created where it was necessary to buy the land to be colonized. There was no legal way for the Zionists to obtain land if the Palestinian owners refused to sell. As legalities only matter in normal times Zionist determined to move to the extra-legal framework that exists during a state of war. War therefore became the modus operandi of the Zionist project of ethnic cleansing and remains so to this day.

Ms Gargour’s film shows how the Jewish settlers in Palestine prepared for armed conflict from the very beginning. Jewish villages and kibbutzim were organized as paramilitary entities where residents, both male and female, were given arms and military training. As their numbers reached a critical mass in the late 1930s and early 1940s the Zionist enterprise became increasingly aggressive. Many Jewish terrorist groups arose that waged war against Palestinians and increasingly against the British administration.

With the end of the Second World War, the Zionists decided that the British were of no further use to them and in fact had become an impediment to the swift creation of the Jewish state. Once the partition of Palestine was approved by the United Nations in 1947,

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Israel Bans Human Rights Activist from Accepting International Award

A decision by Israel's government to deny the head of a Palestinian human rights group permission to travel to receive an international human rights award was upheld by Israel's Supreme Court on March 11. Shawan Jabarin, director general of Al-Haq, had been hoping to travel to the Netherlands to receive the Geuzenpenning Prize for Human Rights Defenders, which this year was presented to both Al-Haq and the Israeli peace group B'Tselem.

The Geuzenpenning is a Dutch award given to persons or organizations that have fought for democracy and against dictatorship, racism and discrimination. It has been awarded annually since 1987 in the city of Vlaardingen.

Israel has not allowed Jabarin to leave the occupied territories since 2006 when he became General Director of Al-Haq, even though he was relatively free to travel before that. According to Ayelet Filo, a spokeswoman for the Israeli Supreme Court, the court's ruling was based on the fact that Jabarin is "involved with terror groups", adding the court has "real evidence" linking Jabarin with these groups. Neither the Israeli government nor the Supreme Court has publicly disclosed this evidence, citing "security concerns". Since October 2006, Israeli military authorities, who have complete control over the occupied Palestinian territories, have repeatedly denied him permission to leave the West Bank to attend human rights conferences in various countries.

In an interview with Electronic Intifada, Jabarin describes Al-Haq's human rights work. "To be able to advocate for the respect for human rights, we

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the Zionists moved aggressively to resolve the land question. Even though the partition approved by the UN gave the Jews 55 percent of Palestine, Jews only owned seven percent of the land in the Jewish part of the Partition. This problem was solved by waging war on the Palestinian Arabs and throwing them off their land at the point of a gun.

"The Land Speaks Arabic" graphically tells the story of how the Zionist forces went about expelling the Palestinian people from the land where they had lived for centuries. The film contains extended

collect first-hand data on violations of human rights in Gaza and the West Bank, regardless of who is the perpetrator. We look into violations committed by Israel, the occupying power, and by its soldiers. We also research human rights violations committed by the Palestinian Authority. The data we collect are also being used to hold violators accountable. Without bringing crimes to court, the violations will continue. Impunity will lead to repetition. We not only want to hold individual violators of human rights accountable, but also companies that are involved in criminal activities. Last year we started, in cooperation with the people of Bilin village, legal proceedings in Quebec against Green Park International Inc. and Green Mount International Inc. These two Canadian corporations have been involved in constructing, marketing and selling residential units in the illegal Jewish Israeli settlement of Modi'in Illit in the occupied West Bank, on the unlawfully appropriated land of the village of Bilin. We are currently preparing more legal action in several countries in Europe."

The Geuzenpenning is an initiative of the Geuzen Resistance (1940-1945) Foundation. The organization takes its name from the resistance group called "De Geuzen" which was active in the Netherlands during World War II. After the war, surviving members of the group started the foundation to honor the memory of their fallen comrades and the Geuzen ideals, to promote and maintain democracy in the Netherlands and to heighten global awareness of all forms of dictatorship, discrimination and racism.

interview with Palestinians who were forced from their homes during the 1948 war.

The Palestinians were unarmed, unorganized and lacking any determined political leadership. The Zionists on the other hand were organized as an army and led by ruthless men who knew exactly what they wanted. That was to be rid of the Palestinians. Zionist leaders like David Ben-Gurion, Menachem Begin, and Yitzhak Shamir led a campaign of terror in the service of ethnic cleansing. The goal was simple – to remove as many as possible of the 700,000 Palestinian Arabs in the newly portioned Jewish state.

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exacerbation of the crisis and retaliatory measures by those competitors who find themselves shut out of markets. That, in turn, will lead to trade wars which eventually degenerate into shooting wars. This is certainly not a “solution” that favours the working class and people. Canada, which has an export-oriented economy, would suffer the most if protectionism becomes widespread. It can hardly afford to be promoting such a thing.

Despite what Harper and others are claiming, the crisis in Canada will undoubtedly be more severe than it will be in many other countries precisely because of its overwhelming dependence on exports to the U.S. This is the result of geographical, historical and political factors, not the least of which is the fact that the Canadian capitalist class has always subordinated itself to foreign capital – first British and then American. It has traditionally sold out the land and labour of the Canadian people for a quick buck. How will a “Buy Canadian” campaign alter that

reality?

The solution to the current crisis and the solution to Canada’s vulnerable economic status are interconnected. Those who have created this mess in the first place – the monopoly capitalists (both domestic and foreign) – and the governments that serve them must be removed and an independent, planned economy must be established. The Canadian economy can then gradually become a self-reliant economy in which primary emphasis is placed on serving the needs of the working class and people, both at home and abroad. This has nothing to do with building a protectionist, insular economy. Such a thing has never been possible or desirable, least of all in a modern world. A self-reliant economy is one which has both a strong domestic market and strong trading links based on mutual benefit. Such an economy would not be devastated by an international economic crisis to the extent that Canada will be by the current one.

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The method was intimidation through murder. The Zionist myth respecting the creation of the state of Israel is that the Palestinians left of their own accord or were getting out of the way so the Arab armies could make a clean sweep of the Zionist forces. This is a fairy tale. As is made clear in “the Land Speaks Arabic” what drove the Palestinians out was simply fear for their lives at the hands of murderous Zionist militias.

The Palestinians interviewed by Maryse Gargour for her film were in Palestine in 1948. They experienced the Zionist threats, the terror, saw family members and neighbours murdered. Their accounts are compelling. Their memories of Zionists as merciless butchers are fresh and raw. They clearly understood that the Zionists in 1948 gave them only two options – flee or die. Their testimony has been confirmed by every serious historians of the Israeli – Palestinian conflict.

“The Land Speaks Arabic” tells a dark tale but it throws a welcome light on the Middle East’s enduring conflict. The film ends in 1948 but the Zionist enterprise in Palestine has never changed its nature or its methods. Israel has consistently refused to allow the return of Palestinian refugees to their land and property in the Jewish state. This refusal is contrary to international law but is entirely consistent with the

theory and practice of Zionism over the past century. Israel continues to wage war on the Palestinians in the same manner in the occupied Palestinian territories in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem. It continues to annex and expropriate Palestinian land and to build Jewish-only settlements on land that it does not own. The historic events described in Maryse Gargour’s film need no more confirmation than the ongoing activities of Israel at this moment. The title of the film is also a slogan of “Land Day”, March 30, a day of protests against the expropriation of Arab land by Israel for “security and settlement purposes”.

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