

Editorial

## Paul Martin's Thesis of Limited Sovereignty

On September 22, 2004 Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin addressed the United Nations speaking about the need to reform its institutions to meet the challenges of the day. Nowhere in his speech did Martin address the urgent necessity to eliminate the veto of the big powers on the Security Council. Nor did he talk about the recurring problem of the United States violating the territorial integrity of member states against the expressed wishes of the majority of the members of the Security Council. Instead, he spoke of the necessity to further limit the sovereignty of the smaller countries and make it easier for the big powers to violate their territorial integrity.

Of course, Martin couched his support for the agenda of U.S. imperialism within rhetoric about human rights and the prevention of human catastrophes: "...we should have the legal right to

intervene in a country on the grounds of humanitarian emergency alone when the government of that country is unwilling or unable to protect their people from extreme harm as a result of internal war, repression or state failure." This rhetoric ignores the fact that it is always the big powers which define what constitutes repression or state failure. The United States has even labelled Venezuela a "failed state" because its government refuses to accept American dictate, despite the fact that the Venezuelan state is functioning normally, maintaining law and order and expanding the level of social services provided to the poorest sections of the population. Likewise, Cuba is accused of repression, human rights violations and trafficking in children for the sole purpose of justifying American intervention in that country. Meanwhile, Colombia and El Salvador, where the governments

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Commentary

## CLC President Softens Position on Neo-Liberalism

In a recent speech, Ken Georgetti, president of the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), talked of a North American economy, stating that in regard to NAFTA, it was hard to "unscramble an omelette". A recent CLC position paper on the economy said that free trade has not been the "economic disaster" once predicted. Despite this, Georgetti is now trying to suggest that the CLC policy is still to oppose NAFTA and similar trade deals.

This is not the first indication that the CLC is trying to gradually accommodate itself to neo-liberalism. During the past year Georgetti has also been quietly pushing Public-Private Partnerships (P3s) as a solution to the problems confronting the Canadian

economy. At this time, P3s are one of the main ways being used by American multinationals to penetrate the public sector in Canada. The support for P3s by Georgetti and various other trade union leaders is threatening to split the CLC. It is not yet clear what these union leaders stand to gain from such policies, which will have a significant impact on public sector workers, but they appear quite determined in their support for P3s.

There have always been problems with the CLC position on neo-liberal trade policies. Instead of analyzing the current direction of the capitalist system, the negative impact it is having on the living and

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## On Revolutionary Reforms

As the crisis of capitalism deepens and broadens, more and more people are discussing alternatives. Many of these alternatives do not go beyond the bounds of the capitalist system and are really little more than attempts to put a human face on monopoly capitalism. They call for the regulation of capitalism, for restrictions on what the capitalists can and cannot do, but they do not call for the overthrow of capitalism and the renewal of society. We have discussed the futility of such alternatives in previous issues of *Modern Communism*. In this issue, we want to begin discussing revolutionary reforms which actually weaken the capitalist system and strengthen the anti-capitalist movement.

However, before we can discuss a revolutionary program, we have to be clear about the nature of our era and the political-economic system that prevails. In his pivotal book, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, V.I. Lenin made a number of very important observations in this regard. He pointed out that monopoly capitalism is the highest and final stage of capitalism and that the next stage of human society is socialism. He also pointed out that monopoly capitalism means reaction all down the line.

Canada is an advanced monopoly capitalist country. It does not have remnants of feudalism which must be eliminated in order for the struggle for socialism to advance. Therefore, if we accept Lenin's analysis of the character of our epoch, there is only one possible stage of revolution in Canada - socialist revolution. There cannot possibly exist a transitional stage of so-called "democratic" capitalism between monopoly capitalism and socialism.

This is an important point. If there were a transitional "democratic" stage of capitalism, then the various reforms or programs of reforms being put forward to democratize monopoly capitalism may have some legitimacy. However, since this is not the case, such demands are merely dead ends which divert the revolutionary forces into activities which are harmless to the monopoly capitalist system.

It is not sufficient that a reform be necessary or desirable for it to be revolutionary. To be revolutionary a reform must actually undermine the capitalist system and strengthen the anti-capitalist forces. Furthermore, there is nothing inherent to any particular reform which makes it a revolutionary reform. Indeed, even reforms which have revolutionary potential are not revolutionary reforms

if they are pursued in isolation from the overall struggle for socialism. What is needed, therefore, is not a struggle for a series of isolated reforms, but a struggle for revolution and socialism within which various demands for reforms are presented to move that struggle forward. In other words, for a particular reform to be considered revolutionary it must be part of a program for revolution.

Within the context of the transition from capitalism to socialism there are different periods. For example, once the Russian Revolution was successful and socialism was constructed in the Soviet Union, the aim of counter-revolution was to destroy this great achievement of the working class and to block the path for the same thing happening in other countries. Wherever there was revolutionary crisis and the danger of the working class taking power, as took place in Italy, Germany and Spain, the bourgeoisie turned to fascism. Within these conditions, the call for a united front against fascism arose to solve the main problem of the time, without which there would be no possibility to build socialism.

Today, the main thrust of counter-revolution is neo-liberalism, the main character of which is anti-social retrogression on every front. Every right to which people feel entitled is under attack. There are no longer two camps in the world; now various imperialist powers are rising to collude and contend with U.S. imperialism and one another for world domination. At the same time, everywhere people are fighting for their rights and a new period for the renewal of the world has been ushered in. This is the period of democratic renewal.

Nevertheless, the content of our epoch remains the same as it was during Lenin's time - the transition from capitalism to socialism. In an earlier period this content took the form of the struggle against fascism and imperialism. Today the struggle for democratic renewal, against anti-social retrogression, is the struggle for socialism.

A program of revolutionary reforms must position itself within this struggle for democratic renewal in such a way as to provide both content and coherence to the struggle. It must have an internal logic which leads to the elimination of monopoly capitalism and the establishment of socialism. In the next issue of *Modern Communism* we will discuss some of the elements of such a program.

# **Cuban Foreign Affairs Minister Addresses U.N. General Assembly**

On September 24, Felipe Perez Roque, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba, addressed the General Assembly of the 59<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations. He presented Cuba's views about the current world situation, the role of the U.N. in it, and the role the people of the world must play in creating a new world order.

Roque stated that since the U.S.-led aggression against Iraq the U.N. has ceased to exist as a useful and diverse forum and that it is now past the point where reforms are possible. "It pales, it pants, it feigns, but it does not work", he declared. He called on U.S. troops to withdraw from Iraq immediately, saying that there is no other way out for an occupying power faced with a population in revolt.

The minister went on to talk about the need for the world to fight against terrorism. He argued that this requires cooperation among all nations and respect for international law not massive bombing or preemptive wars against those the U.S. declares are the "dark corners of the world". Roque's words were in sharp contrast to those of other speakers, including Canadian Prime Minister Martin, who jumped on the U.S. bandwagon justifying violations of territorial integrity and intervention in countries labelled as terrorist by the U.S. and other big powers.

In the past, Cuba has called for reform of the U.N.

## **U.N. Conference on Palestine Condemns Continuing Occupation**

From September 13-15, the United Nations-sponsored International Conference of Civil Society in Support of the Palestinian People was held in New York. The theme of the conference was: "Ending the Occupation – a Key Requisite for Peace in the Middle East".

In opening the conference U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said: "The aim of this conference... is to provide civil society organizations from all regions of the world with an opportunity to: discuss the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem; coordinate their activities; and develop action-oriented proposals in support of the Palestinian people". The conference took last July's International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling on the separation wall being constructed by Israel, as its focus. The ICJ ruled that the construction of the wall is in violation of international law.

so that it would actually fulfill its mandate to help solve the problems in the world. However, since the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Cuba considers the possibility of the U.N. playing a positive role as extremely unlikely. Roque pointed out that there is no hope left for any reform of the U.N., since it is clear that the privilege of the veto in the Security Council will remain, the Security Council will not be democratized or expanded to include any underdeveloped countries, the General Assembly, where all countries have a voice, will continue to be ignored and there will be more actions driven by the interests of the U.S. and its allies.

In the face of this reality, Roque called instead for the revitalization of the Non-Aligned Movement and the G77, comprised of underdeveloped countries. He said these countries now need to unite to defend the U.N. Charter before it is redrafted "with the deletion of every trace of principles such as the sovereign equality of states, non-intervention, and the non-use of or threat to use force".

Roque concluded by pointing out that the solutions to the problems facing humanity are attainable. "We are optimistic because we are revolutionaries" he said. "We have faith in the struggle of the peoples and we are certain we will accomplish a new world order based on respect for the rights of all".

Delegates decided to use the ICJ ruling as the basis of an international education campaign about the situation of the Palestinian people. Tactics such as boycotting Israeli products, linking with human rights groups operating within Israel and the occupied territories, and creating a space for discussion about the situation in the Middle East were some of the ideas discussed. The conference also learned that Palestinian representatives will be submitting a draft resolution on the wall to the U.N. General Assembly. For the first time the resolution will call for sanctions against Israel if it fails to comply with the ICJ ruling.

The conference adopted a plan of action for the coming year. This includes a focus on using international law and institutions such as the U.N. to support the Palestinian people in their struggle for national self-determination.

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run death squads which kill thousands of innocent civilians every year, are supported as models of democracy.

Martin went on in his address to state that the United Nations "must ensure that weapons of mass destruction do not spread to states or terrorists prepared to use them under any circumstances, and especially against innocent civilians." He specifically identified North Korea and Iran as being of particular concern in this regard. The fact that the United States not only possesses the world's largest stockpiles of weapons of mass destructions, including nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, as well as enormously destructive convention bombs and missiles and that it has used them to kill more innocent civilians than any other country since Nazi Germany, seems to have escaped Martin's notice.

It is very convenient for the big powers to arm themselves to the teeth and then threaten to destroy any other country which arms itself in self-defence. There is an urgent necessity to stop the proliferation of all kinds of weapons, including small arms, but attention should be paid first to the biggest possessors and proliferators of these weapons, namely the United States, Russia, Britain, France, Germany and China. If these countries were banned from producing and peddling weapons all over the world, 90 percent of the problem would be eliminated.

Martin went on to talk about the problems in the Darfur region of Sudan, suggesting that it is a prime example of the need for relaxed criteria for international intervention, both military and non-military. Significantly, he does not call on various permanent members of the UN Security Council to cease their financing and arming of the warring factions in Sudan as a first step towards defusing the situation there. Instead, he puts all of the blame on the government of Sudan.

There is no doubt that there are humanitarian crises in various parts of the world, including Sudan, much of central Africa, Liberia and Sierra Leone. There are also problems in areas of Southeast Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, especially Haiti and Dominican Republic. However, in every case the underlying problem can be traced to various multinational corporations vying for control of sources of raw materials or to the imperialist powers

vying for strategic military bases. These problems should be addressed by the United Nations and those who are behind these conflicts should face the harshest censure and sanctions of that organization.

Removing what little respect there is for the territorial integrity of the smaller countries, far from reducing the frequency and scope of humanitarian catastrophes, will actually ensure that these problems will be further exacerbated. It will mean that the big powers will be given *carte blanche* to create chaos in any country as a pretext for invasion and occupation – a return to the old days of gunboat diplomacy which was prevalent during the first half of the twentieth century.

The "reforms" of the United Nations which Martin is advocating represent outright support for the imperialist agenda of the United States and other big powers. Such reforms will not result in greater peace and security for the world's people, but precisely the opposite.

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working conditions of Canadian workers and what working people should do to transform the situation, the CLC has confined itself to telling horror stories about millions of Canadian jobs being lost to low-wage countries like Mexico. While there is mounting evidence that large numbers of high-wage Canadian jobs have been replaced by low-wage jobs, the CLC appears to be content with the explanation of the Canadian government that this has nothing to do with NAFTA.

## **Modern Communism**

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