

Editorial

## **The Double Standard on Nuclear Weapons**

On February 10, the Foreign Ministry of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) announced that it was withdrawing indefinitely from the six-party talks on the North Korean nuclear weapons program. It also announced that North Korea has now manufactured nuclear weapons and will be building more in the future. The Foreign Ministry statement pointed out that North Korea was forced into this position by the intransigence of the American Bush administration which has repeatedly called for "regime change" in North Korea and has threatened the country with a pre-emptive nuclear strike.

The North Korean announcement was greeted with skepticism by the Bush administration, which, after four years of claiming that North Korea already

possessed nuclear weapons, now claims that the announcement is a negotiating ploy. However, whether or not North Korea possesses nuclear weapons is a secondary issue. The main issue is that the aggressive imperialistic foreign policy of the Bush regime has succeeded in convincing a number of countries, including North Korea and Iran, that they will soon suffer the same fate as Iraq if they do not acquire weapons of mass destruction to defend themselves. Despite the claims of "bad intelligence", it is widely believed that the U.S. would not have dared to invade Iraq except for the fact that it knew full well that Iraq did not have any weapons of mass destruction. In other words, if the North Koreans do

*See page 2: Double Standard*

## **Will the Ceasefire in the Middle East Last?**

The February 8 summit between Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian Authority president Mahmoud Abbas was a success before it even began, according to most Israeli media reports. As predicted, the two leaders announced an immediate ceasefire and pledged to restart the peace talks.

Sharon declared that he and Abbas had "agreed that all Palestinians will stop all acts of violence against all Israelis everywhere and, at the same time, Israel will cease all its military activity against all Palestinians anywhere." Israel, he told the Palestinian people, has "a genuine intention to respect [Palestinians'] right to live independently and in dignity. I have already said that Israel has no desire to continue to govern over you and control your fate." Sharon concluded his remarks by stating: "You

too must prove that you have the strength and the courage to compromise, abandon unrealistic dreams, subdue the forces which oppose peace and live in peace and mutual respect side-by-side with us."

Abbas, already heralded by both Sharon and the Bush administration as a true partner for peace, told the summit: "I stress our eagerness to honour and implement all our obligations. We will not spare any possible effort to protect this new chance for peace, which has been made possible by what we announced here today." "It is time for the Palestinian people to regain their freedom and independence," Abbas concluded. "It is time for an end to long decades of suffering and hardship. It is time for our people to enjoy peace and the right to lead a normal

*See page 2: Middle East Ceasefire*

### ***Double Standard...from page 1***

not already possess nuclear weapons, they have been put in the position of having to acquire them soon.

The issue of nuclear weapons is complicated. Their destructive capacity is so huge that all countries should be banned from constructing or possessing them. However, a double standard is being used to decide who can possess such weapons and who cannot. On the one hand there are the big powers – the U.S., Britain, France, Russia and China – who have had nuclear weapons for decades and clearly have no intention of destroying them, regardless of the treaties they have signed requiring them to do so. Then there are various countries closely allied to one or another of these big powers, including Israel, India and Pakistan, which were assisted by the U.S. or others to acquire nuclear weapons. The apartheid regime in South Africa also had the assistance of the U.S. in building an arsenal of nuclear weapons, although the post-apartheid government of that country claims that they have been destroyed. No significant action has ever been taken by either the U.S. or the United Nations to demand that any of those countries get rid of their nuclear stockpiles or suffer international sanctions and isolation if they do not do so. Yet the whole weight of the international community is being used to deny nuclear weapons to North Korea and Iran. It does not seem coincidental that these two countries are on the American list of “tyrant” states in need of American-sponsored regime change, while the others are not.

The right of a country to defend itself against aggression is a universally recognized right. The United States even used this principle to justify its invasion of Afghanistan, although the Afghan government had committed no aggression against the U.S., nor was it in a position to do so. The U.S., on the other hand, not only has the capacity to invade other countries, but has demonstrated on numerous occasions that it will not hesitate to do so. During the past several years it has invaded Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq and has been threatening to invade North Korea, Iran, Syria and Somalia. In the case of North Korea and Iran, spokespersons of the Bush government have also publicly discussed the use of tactical nuclear weapons if U.S. forces are in danger of being overrun. Both the Bush

administration and the previous Clinton administration also talked about pre-emptive strikes against North Korea using strategic nuclear weapons. Thus, the concerns of the governments of North Korea and Iran are not insignificant or unwarranted.

In order to justify this nuclear double standard, the U.S. and others divide the world into “responsible” states and “rogue” states, the former being trusted to possess nuclear weapons and the latter not being trustworthy. However, neither North Korea nor Iran is threatening to attack any neighbouring countries. Nor is either country threatening to launch pre-emptive nuclear strikes against other countries. Such behaviour has been demonstrated exclusively by the “responsible” nuclear states, especially the U.S., Britain, Israel, India and Pakistan. For its part, the U.S. has clearly demonstrated that it will not be bound by international law or the will of the international community. The Bush Doctrine goes so far as to threaten military strikes against any country which dares to arm itself to a level comparable to the U.S. By any standards, it is the U.S. which is a rogue state and which should be banned from possessing weapons of mass destruction, nuclear or otherwise.

---

### ***Middle East Ceasefire...from page 1***

life like the rest of the world under the rule of law, under one authority that is the only party allowed to carry weapons, and through political pluralism.”

The ceasefire is not in any way a surprise. It may or may not last – the last ceasefire, reached in April 2003, was breached by the Israelis when they bombed a Gaza apartment building, killing a dozen Palestinians including their official target, Hamas leader Sheik Yassin. However, the Israelis, despite their propensity for doing whatever they want whenever they want are under extraordinary pressure to maintain the ceasefire this time around.

The same is true for Abbas, who staked his entire political career and indeed, his life, on the promise that he will be able to deliver a Palestinian state. It may not be the state Palestinians have struggled for the past 60-odd years; it may not even be the pseudo-state George Bush promises the Palestinians in his peace plan of 2003, but it must be something. If Abbas is unable to demonstrate that any significant

***See page 4: Middle East Ceasefire***

# The Winnipeg New Music Festival Abandons its History and Promotes Anti-Communism

The 14<sup>th</sup> annual Winnipeg New Music Festival was held from January 29 to February 4. For the past 13 years the festival has presented new trends and developments in the world of classical and New Music. It has introduced Winnipeggers and Manitobans to numerous new composers and performers, many of whom have come to the festival and used the opportunity to explain the influences, challenges and purposes of their music. During those last 13 years a stimulating atmosphere has existed in which all sorts of musical questions have been eagerly discussed.

The festival has often adopted a theme as a means to give some organization to the year's work. In past years themes have included women composers, the percussive influences in New Music, choral music, and visual and electronic influences in New Music, amongst others. This year the announced theme was the reflection in New Music of the works of past musical, literary and visual artists. The festival program stated: "During the 20<sup>th</sup> century many composers felt the need to cut themselves off from historical influence. We believe that this pendulum is now swinging in the opposite direction. The composers you will hear at this year's festival recognize the great variety of musical and artistic traditions and place 'classical' music in a much broader world context."

Under this guise, appropriating the idea of historical influence, the curators of the festival – Conductor Andrey Boreyko and Composer-in-Residence Patrick Carrabre – introduced the theme of an attack on communism and the promotion of religion in its place. Rather than presenting a program of New Music that reflects the works of past musical, literary and visual artists, as they promised, their choice of certain composers and comments in their program notes, presented Winnipeggers with their political views of communism.

The chosen Distinguished Guest Composer this year was the Ukrainian-Russian Leonid Desyatnikov. The festival opened with his work *The Rite of Winter 1949*, which parodies a textbook used in the Soviet

Union to teach English to children. Of this composition the program stated: "Desyatnikov brings us face to face with the false positivism of Joseph Stalin's rule... [He] gives us a glimpse of the true Russian spirit that waited beneath the oppressive domination of Soviet Socialism." The festival also included works by fellow self-avowed, anti-communists Polish-Canadian Peter Paul Koprowski and Russian Alex Levkovich.

If audience members were not clear about the direction of the festival, it was spelled out during the week when, during a concert entitled *The Triumph of Heaven*, festival co-curator Patrick Carrabre announced that the festival's program was following an arc from the depth of human experience of communism to the heights of heaven. That evening's concert opened with a work by Alex Levkovich described in the program notes: "As on our opening night, this music looks back at the era of Soviet domination and asks why?"

Interestingly, the organizers of the festival admitted: "While communism wasn't a musical style *per se* and despite the fact that artists working behind the iron curtain were often subjected to harsh censorship, some of the most fertile minds we have heard from at recent festival (Kancheli, Part, Silvestrov, etc.) forged their musical voices during those difficult times." However, rather than encouraging a serious discussion of the vibrant cultural life in the Soviet Union, particularly during the Stalin era, the organizers editorialized using ridicule and hyperbole to block and suppress any such discussion.

The problem for the organizers is that any serious and dispassionate discussion of the Stalin era would inevitably have to come to grips with the reality that during this period there was an unprecedented flourishing of all kinds of culture within the Soviet Union. Some of the greatest cultural workers in the world emerged during that period in literature, music, dance and art. Journalism also reached new heights

**See page 4: New Music Festival**

### ***New Music Festival...from page 3***

during that period. In terms of mass culture, this period witnessed the first real attempt in human history to educate an entire population and the result was an extremely rapid advance in all academic fields and the creation of millions of scientists, doctors and teachers. Chess became a mass participation sport. How is it possible to reconcile this reality with the tales told by the anti-communists of rampant terror, torture and persecution of cultural workers? Can they point to a similar raising of cultural standards in Nazi Germany or Fascist Italy, or for that matter in “democratic” Britain or the United States? Can they explain what has happened to mass culture in Russia and other former Soviet Republics now that they have emerged from what the organizers refer to as the depth of human experience of communism” and arrived at the so-called heights of heaven? It is precisely because a serious discussion of Soviet culture during the Stalin era would shatter their anti-communist stereotypes that the festival organizers saw fit to prejudice the discussion with trite propaganda.

Until now, the Winnipeg New Music Festival has been a place where an engaging and broad range of music has been presented. These works have been presented in a spirit that says: “Here you are. Enjoy this abundance of New Music. Listen to it. Argue about it and come to your own conclusions.” It would be a positive contribution for the festival to return to such an approach. There is certainly a need for a discussion of the accomplishments of the Soviet Union during the Stalin period. The creation of such a high level of mass culture, as well as the creation of some of the greatest artists of our time, indicate that Soviet socialism must have been doing some things right. The fact that socialism collapsed and the high ideals previously promoted by Soviet culture have been replaced by narrow nationalism, capitalist greed and religious obscurantism also indicate that various errors must have been made. However, as long as the discussion of the Stalin era remains at the level of Cold War propaganda and wild, unsubstantiated accusations, a serious and dispassionate discussion is impossible.

### ***Middle East Ceasefire...from page 1***

progress has been made, there will be no ceasefire, and no Mahmoud Abbas.

The first Palestinian *intifada* was born from the struggle of a people with nothing to lose but everything to gain. They succeeded in putting the question of the Palestinian right to self-determination on the international agenda. They achieved a major victory in forcing Israel to officially recognize the right of a Palestinian state to exist on Palestinian lands. The Palestinian Authority under the leadership of Yasser Arafat accepted the compromises outlined in the Oslo Peace Accords in order to realize the dream of every Palestinian – the creation of their own state. However, the Israelis, with the support of their U.S. backers, were able to stall implementation of the Oslo accords indefinitely, mainly because the Israeli right refused to recognize the right of the Palestinians to exist.

The second *intifada* was born from the anguish of a people whose hopes had been dashed time and time again. The second time around, the Israelis have used the shield of the so-called war on terror to deflect attention away from their occupation of Palestinian lands. They have spent the last four years systematically eliminating Palestinian resistance leaders and destroying even the paltry infrastructure built up by the PA throughout the 1990s.

The Palestinian people have fought for 60 years; it is no surprise that they want time to rest, to think and to plan. However, it would be foolish to assume that the desire for an end to the daily violence of Israeli occupation and the resistance to it in anyway negates that dream of every Palestinian for their own state.

## **Modern Communism**

**Bulletin of the Manitoba Regional Committee  
of the Communist Party of Canada  
(Marxist-Leninist)**

**Editor: Ken Kalturnyk**

***To contact the Manitoba Branch of CPC(M-L):***

**Fax: 477-6741**

**Email: [mrc-cpcml@mts.net](mailto:mrc-cpcml@mts.net)**

**Internet: [www.modern-communism.ca](http://www.modern-communism.ca)**

**Produced by volunteer labour**