

Editorial

Commemorating Two Great Revolutionaries

This issue includes reports on meetings held recently in Winnipeg to commemorate two great revolutionaries of the twentieth century – Shaheed Bhagat Singh and Ché Guevara. Both participated in the anti-colonial, anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist struggles - Shaheed Bhagat Singh in India against British imperialism and Ché Guevara in Latin America and Africa against U.S. imperialism - and both became martyrs to that cause. Both have also inspired successive generations of young people to take up the cause of revolution and socialism.

To a large extent, both Bhagat Singh and Ché have also transcended narrow ideological considerations that are often embraced or laid claim to by many of the sometimes-antagonistic ideological tendencies that exist within the revolutionary working class movement. This is as it should be. A

revolutionary should be recognized as such by his/her deeds rather than by the ideology espoused or organizational affiliations.

For example, few know the specific ideology or political affiliations of the martyrs of the Paris Commune and fewer care. Marx and Engels argued against initiating that revolutionary uprising because conditions did not exist for it to succeed. However, once the battle had begun they gave it their unconditional support and when it was crushed they summed it up and drew the appropriate lessons, both positive and negative.

There are, of course, those who still refuse to accept Bhagat Singh and/or Ché as “genuine” revolutionaries because of their supposed lack of ideological purity. Such individuals are mistaken in

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Canada's Assistance to Haiti

With Friends like Canada, Does Haiti Need Enemies?

There are currently three countries in the world considered priorities for intervention and aid by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Department of Foreign Affairs: Afghanistan, Iraq and Haiti. In Afghanistan this intervention is clearly linked to support for the Canadian role in the military occupation of the country. However, in both Iraq and Haiti the purpose of Canadian aid is less clear. In Iraq most Canadian aid seems tied to support for the Anglo-American occupation of the country, while in Haiti Canada's goal seems to be to support government and institutions that are aligned with a neo-liberal trade agenda for the Americas.

Canada, along with other donor countries, cut off all aid to the elected Haitian government in 2000, in protest at what it described as a lack of commitment to principles of democracy and free markets. In reality, the issue was the refusal of President Aristide and his ministers to accept the numerous restrictions and conditions placed on how aid money could be used. In February 2004, following direct and indirect foreign intervention, a violent coup overthrew the Aristide government. The coup, carried out by armed mercenaries affiliated with Haiti's small but extremely wealthy elite, was supported by the U.S. Bush administration and Paul Martin's Liberal government

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Fortieth Anniversary of the Death of Ché Guevara Commemorated

On the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of his death, a capacity audience of 100 people gathered in Winnipeg on October 12 to pay tribute to the memory of Ché Guevara, the hero of the Cuban Revolution. They also discussed the Cuban Five and other current struggles Cuba is facing. The evening was organized by the Manitoba-Cuba Solidarity Committee.

The first speaker was a Cuban now living in Winnipeg whose entire family was involved in the revolution and who had the honour, as a young soldier, of meeting Ché personally. He spoke eloquently of the place Ché holds in the hearts of Cubans and why he is considered a model for all Cuban youth. The next speaker, who was originally from South Africa, spoke about Ché's internationalism and the high regard in which he is held throughout the world.

A member of the Manitoba-Cuba Solidarity Committee then spoke about the case of the Cuban Five, — *'los cinco'* — who are also heroes in Cuba. They have been held in U.S. prisons since September 12, 1998, charged, tried and falsely convicted of conspiracy, espionage and murder. In fact, all they did was monitor and report on the activities of notorious terrorist groups based in Miami that have been responsible for a multitude of attacks against Cuba and more than 3000 deaths. The speaker gave a succinct outline of the case and called on

participants to attend a conference being held in Toronto on November 9-10. Called Breaking the Silence: Solidarity Conference for the Cuban Five, the conference has been organized jointly by the solidarity networks in Canada, Quebec and the U.S.

The keynote speaker of the evening was the Cuban Ambassador to Canada, Ernesto Sentí, who paid tribute to Ché by talking about his legacy in the character of the Cuban Revolution, the Cuban people and in Cuba's achievements since the revolution. He described the effects of the U.S. blockade on Cuba and pointed out that Cuba's biggest crime in the eyes of successive American governments has been that of upholding its dignity and independence, of refusing to bow down to imperialism. He called on people to support the ideals of peaceful coexistence and to support Cuba and all nations in their desire to make their own decisions and set their own course in this world.

Musicians and singers from the Chilean community, *Grupo Amistad*, and others, sang songs dedicated to Ché, explaining that it is a labour of love to participate in such a commemoration of a great hero. Those present also contributed generously to a fund to assist Aboriginal youth from Manitoba to participate in next summer's Ché Guevara Volunteer Work Brigade, which will undertake its sixteenth trip to Cuba next August.

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their insistence that ideas are more important than reality. This is the mark of philosophical idealism.

In this era of imperialism and proletarian revolution, a revolutionary is someone who devotes his/her life to the overthrow of capitalism and imperialism and the establishment of the rule of the working class — socialism. That is all that matters. There are not a few individuals who claim to stand for socialism but who oppose the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system. There are others who wish to eliminate imperialism without eliminating

its material base — capitalism; and others still who think that capitalism can be eliminated without the overthrow of the imperialist system. Bhagat Singh and Ché Guevara were not of that ilk. Whatever weaknesses may have existed in their ideological or political analysis of specific issues and whatever their choice of tactics, both clearly identified the enemy — capitalism and imperialism — and both called on revolutionaries to put aside their difference and unite in action against these enemies of humankind. This is why their legacy has spanned generations while many other “super” revolutionaries have become footnotes in history.

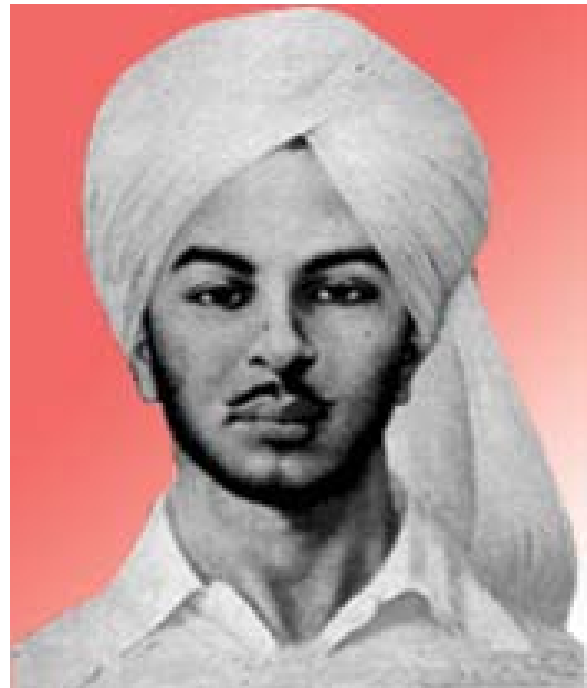
Centenary of the Birth Of Shaheed Bhagat Singh Celebrated in Winnipeg

No matter, if your Government tries and succeeds in winning over the leaders of the upper strata of the Indian society through petty concessions and compromises and thereby causes a temporary demoralization in the main body of the forces. The war shall continue. It may assume different shapes at different times. It may become open, hidden, purely agitational, or fierce life and death struggle. The choice of the course, whether bloody or comparatively peaceful, rests with you. Choose whichever you like. But that war shall be incessantly waged with new vigour, greater audacity and unflinching determination till the Socialist Republic is established. Till the present social order is completely replaced by a new social order, based on social prosperity and thus every sort of exploitation ends and humanity is ushered into the era of genuine and permanent peace. The days of capitalist and imperialist exploitation are numbered. The war neither began with us nor is it going to end with our lives. It is the inevitable consequence of the historic events and the existing environments.

These words were written by Shaheed (martyr) Bhagat Singh in 1931, shortly before he and his comrades, Rajguru and Sukhdev, were hanged for treason against British imperialism. They were sentenced to death for the revenge killing of a British army officer who was responsible for the death of Lala Laipat Rai, an old freedom fighter.

India gained independence from Britain in 1947, but the dream of Bhagat Singh and his comrades still remains unrealized 60 years later. For over seven decades the youth of India, both at home and abroad, have been inspired by the courageous example of Shaheed Bhagat Singh to take up the cause of revolution and socialism.

At the time of their arrest Bhagat Singh and his comrades were members of the Hindustan Republican Socialist Association, but since their martyrdom their legacy has been embraced by every revolutionary tendency in India. In the same spirit, close to 200 people in Winnipeg came together on



October 6 to celebrate the centenary of the birth of this revolutionary hero.

The celebration was addressed by a number of speakers, including a guest from a revolutionary organization in India. The hall was decorated with a display of 120 pictures of Indian martyrs who fought for the liberation of India from imperialism, feudalism and capitalism during the first half of the twentieth century.

The speaker from India noted that the Indian people have never achieved the independence that they have dreamed of for almost two centuries. Instead, as Bhagat Singh had predicted, the British imperialists succeeded in buying the upper strata of Indian society to continue the imperialist domination of India in a new form. He spoke about the increasing impoverishment of the Indian people and the role of globalization and neo-liberalism in intensifying their exploitation. At the same time, he pointed out, increasing numbers of Indians are uniting in opposition to the current Indian government and its policies.

The celebration continued with a cultural presentation of songs and poetry and discussion that continued into the evening.

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in Ottawa. Within weeks of the coup, Canadian aid once again began flowing into Haiti.

According to a CIDA report: "In 2004, the Government of Haiti presented international donors with an Interim Cooperation Framework (ICF) to support Haiti's development. ... Since the spring of 2004, in cooperation with other donors and in support of Haiti's interim government, Canada has actively assisted in developing and implementing the ICF. ... From April 1, 2004 to March 31, 2006, Canada disbursed more than \$190 million." The report identifies four "priority sectors" for Canadian funding:

- a. Political governance and national dialogue – security, justice, policing and disarmament, penitentiaries and human rights, the electoral process, and national dialogue;
- b. Economic governance – institutional capacity building and local development;
- c. Economic recovery – electric power, rapid job creation and microfinance, and environmental protection and renewal;
- d. Access to basic services – water and sanitation, health and nutrition, and education

The CIDA report goes on to note: "Canada also contributed to the re-engagement of certain international financial institutions by paying a portion of Haiti's arrears to the World Bank, Haiti's membership cost to the Caribbean Development Bank, and a portion of Haiti's debt to the Inter-American Development Bank. ... Finally, Canada supported [the interim government] through the deployment of 100 police officers."

While Canadian aid money in support of governance and democracy was once again pouring into the country, the coup leaders - none of who had been elected - ruled Haiti through terror and intimidation. Armed gangs, established by the "interim government", openly roamed neighbourhoods, targetting anyone who expressed support for Aristide. This situation was condemned by numerous human rights organizations that also documented the disappearance of hundreds of human rights activists, trade unionists and opposition politicians between

2004 and 2006. They also expressed concern about the illegal and arbitrary arrest and detention of several thousand Haitians by the Haitian National Police.

It is worth noting that training Haitian police forces has been a cornerstone of Canada's intervention in Haiti. Millions of dollars have been spent on sending RCMP officers to the country to offer courses in things like respect for human rights, due process and the rule of law. Ironically, much of this training took place at the same time that the RCMP was being exposed for its routine violations of human rights in Canada, including handing Maher Arar and other Canadian citizens over to foreign spy agencies to face torture and imprisonment.

The leaders of the coup in Haiti were eventually replaced following national elections in 2006. However, their influence remains prevalent in both the country's police and armed forces. According to the Canada-Haiti Action Network (CHAN), around 4,000 of those arrested during the coup period still remain in jail to this day.

Most recently, mercenaries reportedly working for the country's wealthy elite kidnapped one of Haiti's leading human rights leaders. Lovinsky Pierre Antoine, whose work in Haiti has focussed on trying to get those illegally detained released from prison, has been missing since August 12. A CHAN delegation, on a human rights mission in Haiti that Antoine was working with at the time of his kidnapping, urged the Canadian Embassy in Port-au-Prince to issue a statement condemning his disappearance. The embassy has, to date, refused to do so.

Modern Communism

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

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