

Canada Follows Orders on Anti-Russian Sanctions: The Kremlin Reacts

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Global Research, November 07, 2017

[New Eastern Outlook](#)

Region: [Canada, Russia and FSU](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

“Canada’s decision to extend its anti-Russia sanctions under the false pretext of hypocritically championing human rights is absolutely pointless and reprehensible,” read a November 3 statement from the Russian embassy in Ottawa.

Pointless and reprehensible. Reprehensible this action is but there is a point, the point being to create as much anti-Russian feeling among Canadians as possible and to support the American governments tightening economic blockade of Russia in retaliation for insisting on its own sovereignty, the right to run its own affairs and for insisting on protecting its own international interests as in Syria and along its borders.

On Friday November 3, Canada invoked the so-called Magnitsky Law to slap sanctions on 52 people, 30 linked to Russia, and aside from a couple from South Sudanese, the rest linked Venezuela, including President Maduro.

The new Canadian law, the official name of which is the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act, won final approval in the Canadian Parliament two weeks ago. It allows the Canadian government to freeze Canadian assets of corrupt foreign officials and prevent them from entering Canada and mirrors a similar put into effect in the USA.

Russian President Putin responded to the law strongly accusing Canada of playing “unconstructive political games,” which it certainly is. In fact the Russian embassy in Ottawa stated correctly that Canada is “isolating itself from one of the key global powers.” The statement added, according to Tass that dozens of Canadians have now been banned from entering Russia.

Maria Zakharova, speaking for the Russian Foreign Ministry said,

“We have repeatedly warned the Canadian authorities against attempts to exert pressure by imposing sanctions on Russia. We told them that such actions would not remain unanswered. To our great regret, Ottawa again introduced restrictions on our citizens under the pretext of the recently adopted Magnitsky Act.

“We have to act in kind. Proceeding from the principle of reciprocity, the Russian Federation prohibits entry to many Canadian citizens. The list is long and contains dozens of names the Russophobic Canadian citizens that have been systematically destroying bilateral relations.

“This raises the question: Is this what Ottawa wanted to achieve? Do its politicians really think that it is possible to put pressure on Russia? Or are they

simply pampering their political ambitions?

If our Canadian partners like to play sanctions games, we will have to respond, although we certainly prefer to develop constructive cooperation on the issues important for the peoples of both countries. We hope the political circles of Canada will have a stroke of insight and they will give up the destructive policy that further exacerbates bilateral relations.”

Good questions but the answer can only be found in Washington that calls the shots, not in Ottawa, where the Canadian governments sits waiting to take American orders.

This is clear from the Canadian foreign minister’s statement. Chrystia Freeland stated,

“Today’s announcement sends a clear message that Canada will take action against individuals who have profited from acts of significant corruption or who have been involved in gross violations of human rights,”

Instead of naming President Trump, Bill or Hilary Clinton, Tony Blair or a thousand others she could have named as paragons of corruption and whose violations of human rights around the world are legendary, she targeted President Maduro of Venezuela who has risked his life fighting the corruption and criminality of the finance and business oligarchs that want to retain their powers to fleece the Venezuelan people. President Putin’s government, which is targeted, has done more to eliminate corruption in Russia country than anyone since the fall of the USSR.

We can look at the other names too but the point is made. Why they threw in a couple of names from South Sudan is anyone’s guess as it is difficult to learn the details. Perhaps to make it look like they were spreading things around a bit. But no one is fooled. The aim of this action is not to go after the corrupt but to make propaganda.

And who is it that is presuming to make these people targets of an anti-corruption campaign, a campaign for human rights? Why, the very Canadian foreign minister who meets with and supports Nazis in the government of the Poroshenko regime in Ukraine; a foreign minister who has lied about her grandfathers Nazi past. No, this is not about human rights but a display of the Canadian government’s smug hypocrisy veiling its own crimes.

Just a few weeks ago the Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau devoted his entire UN speech to the General Assembly apologising for the gross human rights violations carried out by successive Canadian governments against the original peoples of Canada who, despite the apology continue to live lives of terrible desperation, desperation so terrible that native youth have resorted to incidents of mass suicide.

I wrote once and will repeat that Canada has once again revealed itself as a country without any existential existence. It is a regional backwater of the United States of America, the remaining vestiges of sovereignty and independence submerged in the swamp of American imperialism and culture.

Long gone are the glory days when a Canadian actually felt distinct in North America, when Canada tried to maintain an independent foreign policy and a national culture born out of the richness of the three founding peoples, the First Nations, the French and the English.

Canada remained a formal colony of British capital until 1867 when it was finally organised as a self governing state within the British empire after a series of internal struggles for more self rule by the growing mercantile and industrial elites but it only achieved any real independence as a country in the 1930's as Britain's power rapidly declined after its huge losses of the First World War. But the establishment of a country more independent of Britain did not result in an independent nation. Canada relied on foreign capital to build its infrastructure, its continental railway systems, its hydro-electric projects, its factories, its cities and where British capital could not supply the need it was quickly replaced by American capital.

The domination of the country by the Americans accelerated after the Second World War but it was countered by a rising nationalist feeling generated in part by Canada's disproportionately large contribution to fighting the fascists in Europe.

A nation of eleven million people fielded military forces of almost a million and in 1945 Canada had the third largest navy in the world. After the war the working classes, many of whom viewed the Soviet Union as the most progressive nation in the world, despite the elites' anti-Russian and anti-socialist propaganda, supported socialist ideals that resulted in the establishment of free national health care and low cost education, affordable housing and were enthusiastic about Canadian artists and writers.

They saw how a nation like Russia had rapidly developed its industrial and societal resources in a landmass that was very similar to Canada and realised that they could do the same. But it was not to be. Soon the American dominance began to be felt, with the forced dumping of Hollywood films in Canadian theatres, the take over of oil and gas exploration and pipeline construction, the stifling of any really independent steps to national development and of course the fateful decision under US pressure to join the NATO alliance.

The years of the late 50's and 60's saw Canadian leaders trying to act independently of the American power. In one famous episode, Prime Minister Lester Pearson declined U.S. requests to send Canadian combat troops into the Vietnam War. Pearson spoke at Temple University in Philadelphia on 2 April 1965 and called for a pause in the American bombing of North Vietnam, so that a diplomatic solution to the war could be found. President Johnson, who rose to power through the coup d'état against President Kennedy in 1963, saw this criticism of American foreign policy on American soil as an intolerable sin. Before Pearson had finished his speech, he was summoned to Camp David, Maryland, to meet with Johnson the next day. Johnson, a very large man, who was a notorious thug, reportedly picked up Pearson, a very small man, by the lapels and shouted, "Don't you come into my living room and piss on my rug."

The last gasp of Canadian attempts at real independence took place under Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau who, though not withdrawing from NATO, tried to create a foreign policy in Canadian interests and was one of the first western leaders to open the door to China, long before Nixon, and remained friends with Fidel Castro all his life. It was Trudeau that finally negotiated with the British for the repatriation of the Canadian Constitution in 1982, finally severing the last legal ties to British rule. He called for the creation of a "Just Society" with real participatory democracy and concern for the collective good and for Canada to become more engaged with the rest of the world instead of just being fixated on the United States. But the fall of Trudeau and the rise of the right wing in Canada in the late 80's led to the rise of the continentalists, that is those Canadians financiers and industrialists who saw their interests lying in New York instead of Toronto. The counter-revolution in the USSR

accelerated this process as neo-liberalism and free trade became the dominant doctrine and, in a series of free trade and security agreements, starting in 1993, Canada quickly surrendered its hard won sovereignty almost overnight to the interests of American capital.

The lesson to be drawn from all this is that any nation that surrenders its sovereignty to a dominant power becomes the tool of that power. The interests of its own people count for nothing. International law and peace count for nothing. Human life counts for nothing.

Nations like Canada can choose their own path, their own destiny in peaceful cooperation with the nations and peoples of the world, with Russia and Venezuela. The problem is how the people of Canada, and, indeed, all nations, can escape this domination and survive it. Unfortunately, with the continentalists still in control in Washington and Ottawa, New York and Toronto, and with American control of the economic resources at an intolerable level, the situation looks bleak for the immediate future. Canadians are nothing more than servants in their own house, when, to use the phrase of the Quebec nationalists in their struggle for self determination, we should be "maître chez nous," masters of our own house. Instead our government is a servant of Washington and will suffer any humiliation and disadvantage that these sanctions will undoubtedly bring upon us in order to lick the hand that pats its head.

Christopher Black is an international criminal lawyer based in Toronto. He is known for a number of high-profile war crimes cases and recently published his novel "[Beneath the Clouds](#)". He writes essays on international law, politics and world events, especially for the online magazine "[New Eastern Outlook](#)."

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