

Editorial

## Iran Has a Right to an Independent Nuclear Energy Program

On September 21, 2009 the Iranian government sent a letter to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) advising it that Iran is building a second uranium enrichment facility. The U.S., Britain and other western countries immediately claimed that this constitutes proof that Iran is planning to produce nuclear weapons. The Iranian government reiterated its position that the enriched uranium is to be used to produce electricity. The UN's chief weapons inspector, Mohamed ElBaradei, has stated quite categorically that there is absolutely no evidence of any weapons program in Iran, although he agreed that Iran should have disclosed the existence facility sooner. U.S. intelligence sources claim that they have been aware of the facility for several years.

Talks between the six big powers and Iran have been taking place in Geneva, with the U.S., Britain, and France calling for further sanctions against Iran, while Russia and China taking a more conciliatory approach.

The UN Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty stipulates that every country has the right to develop its own nuclear energy facilities and to possess the technology for uranium enrichment. In return for a pledge that the non-nuclear weapons possessing nations will not use that technology to develop nuclear weapons, the nuclear powers – the U.S., USSR, Britain, France and China – agreed to gradually reduce and eventually eliminate their own nuclear arsenals. Not only have the big powers failed to keep

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Commentary

## On the Sixtieth Anniversary of the People's Republic of China

October 1 marked the sixtieth anniversary of the victory of the Chinese revolution and the founding of the People's Republic of China under the leadership of the Communist Party of China and Mao Zedong. The anniversary was marked by military parades in China and a barrage of anti-communist propaganda in the western media.

Interview after interview and commentary after commentary harps on the various failures of the Chinese revolution and Mao Zedong, from the Great Leap Forward to the Cultural Revolution, including the failures of the current regime to provide "democracy and human rights" to the Chinese people. However, none of these interviews or commentaries even attempts to either explain those failures or to put them into context. Instead, the

unspoken message is that China would have been better off remaining a semi-feudal colony of the Europeans and the United States.

The victory of the Chinese revolution in 1949 stands on its own merits. It put an end to more than a century of China's subservience to the western colonial and imperialist powers. It created conditions whereby the remnants of feudalism could be wiped out and a modern economy and society could be built by the Chinese people themselves. It also inspired a generation of anti-colonial, anti-imperialist national liberation struggles throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Despite various shortcomings in regard to building a self-sufficient socialist economy, great strides were made by the Chinese people during the next several

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their end of the bargain, they have also violated the treaty by secretly assisting their allies, such as Israel, India and Pakistan, to develop nuclear weapons.

While the western powers claim that their only concern is Iran's alleged nuclear weapons program, the real issues have little or nothing to do with nuclear weapons, at least in the short term. The U.S. and Israel are concerned that Iran has ambitions to become a regional power, which would weaken their own hegemony in the Middle East. They are determined to keep Iran weak and to return it to the subservient position it held prior to the 1979 revolution. Israel possesses approximately 200 nuclear warheads, the materials and technology having been illegally transferred to it by the U.S. in contravention of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty. It has threatened to use those weapons against its neighbours if it feels that its strategic interests are threatened. The ability to independently enrich uranium provides Iran with the option of developing its own nuclear weapons in a relatively short period of time if it feels sufficiently endangered by the U.S. and/or Israel. So, Iran's possession of an independent enrichment program undermines the nuclear blackmail of Israel and the U.S. in the region and weakens their control over the various Arab regimes. They are, therefore, determined to eliminate that possibility by bullying Iran into giving up any independent nuclear program.

Furthermore, with the specter of an end to cheap oil facing the world, the importance of nuclear power generation has increased in recent decades. Iran is utilizing a majority of its oil supplies for internal energy needs, which is reducing its export potential. Nuclear power will allow it to continue to export large amounts of oil for the foreseeable future. Other countries are also looking towards nuclear power as an alternate energy source. Just as the big powers have striven to monopolize other sources of energy, especially oil, they are striving to monopolize the sources of fuel for nuclear reactors. In the mid-1900s when only a handful of countries possessed the economic, scientific and technological infrastructures needed to enrich uranium, control of the enrichment

process did not appear to be a problem for the big powers as only a few other countries, such as Canada were able to enrich uranium. Now, however, the situation has changed and many countries either are able to enrich uranium or have the financial resources to buy the technology. Therefore, a mad scramble has ensued to shut the door on any new countries acquiring uranium enrichment technology and to re-write the non-proliferation treaty.

A key aspect of the proposals being made by the big powers is to limit uranium enrichment technology to the current nuclear powers and to force every other country to purchase fuel from them. They even suggested that Canada should give up its existing technology and buy its fuel from one of the other powers. Since it would be politically unwise to admit that their aim is the monopolization of nuclear energy, the big powers are using Iran as a scapegoat to achieve their aim and are raising the bogey of the proliferation of nuclear weapons as a smokescreen. No matter how many times Iran has proved that it has no weapons program, the big powers have used their monopoly position in the UN Security Council to maintain onerous economic sanctions on Iran in an attempt to blackmail it into giving up any independent nuclear industry. Although Russia and China have been less aggressive in their stance towards Iran, they have still gone along with some level of sanctions as they have the same strategic aim as the other big powers to profit from a monopoly on nuclear fuels.

The position taken by the Iranian government is a just position. Iran is exercising its right under the non-proliferation treaty to develop an independent nuclear energy capability. Given the constant threats from the U.S. and Israel to bomb Iran's uranium enrichment facilities, it may be reasonable for Iran to attempt to conceal the existence of the second enrichment facility. It is important for all people to realize that the big-power bullying of Iran on this issue is not just an attack on the Iranian government and the Iranian people, but an attack on the rights of all smaller countries to develop an economic source of energy in the face of shrinking reserves of oil.

## Commentary

# The Fraud of Democracy in Afghanistan Exposed

In the days following the August presidential elections in Afghanistan the election commission reported that incumbent president Karzai had received over 50 percent of the votes and had been re-elected. However, UN election observers reported widespread election fraud, with the number of votes at many polling stations far exceeding the number of electors eligible to vote. Some polls reported 100 percent of the votes cast for Karzai.

In the case of the recent elections in Iran, the U.S. and other western powers made a lot of noise about a failure of democracy and there were many calls for regime change in Iran. However, despite far more evidence of election fraud in Afghanistan, the western powers said little. There were no condemnations of the lack of democracy in Afghanistan and no calls for regime change. The Canadian government, which claims to have troops in Afghanistan for the purpose of defending democracy, has said virtually nothing about the rampant election fraud. This demonstrates a profound double standard on what constitutes democracy and fair elections and proves that the imperialist powers do not give a damn about democracy. They promote elections when that serves their interests and ignore the results when that serves their interests.

However, as more and more evidence mounted, including videos of Karzai supporters stuffing ballot boxes, support in Europe and North America for the war plummeted. The occupying countries were forced increasingly to distance themselves from the Karzai regime and to put pressure on Karzai to accept a runoff vote with second-place finisher Abdullah Abdullah. Initially Karzai refused, but eventually he succumbed to the pressure and accepted a run-off election to be held in mid-November.

The failed election in Afghanistan illustrates a number of important features of the current international arrangement between the big powers. First, none of the big powers has seen fit to point out that international law does not recognize the validity of elections held under conditions of occupation. It is impossible for the people of a country to express and exercise their sovereignty when their country is

partially under the control of foreign military forces. Furthermore, democratic elections are impossible under such conditions since those political forces opposed to the occupation are not allowed to contest the elections. In the case of Afghanistan even the decision to hold a run-off election was not made by the Afghan government, but was forced on it by the occupying powers. So, quite apart from the issue of election fraud, it is a fraud to even talk about democracy in Afghanistan so long as foreign troops remain in the country.

These elections also illustrate that there are not only intense contradictions within the ranks of the Afghan collaborators, but also intense contradictions among the occupiers on the issue of which group of collaborators to prop up. Both the Karzai faction and the factions opposed to him are hated by the people for their past crimes, as well as for their current corruption and their support for the American-led military occupation. However, Karzai has accomplished virtually nothing during his almost eight years in power from the point of view of the occupiers. He has not succeeded in creating a viable Afghan army, nor has he done anything to alleviate the suffering of the people. Furthermore, in the eyes of the world's people he is seen as a corrupt and inept politician, a reputation which was further enhanced with the recent election fraud. So he is increasingly becoming a liability to the occupiers, undermining their war effort both within Afghanistan and among their own peoples.

The problem faced by the U.S.-led occupiers is that their lies are growing thin. People are increasingly coming to the conclusion that the war in Afghanistan has nothing to do with democracy and human rights and everything to do with imperialist conquest. Those Afghan nationals supporting the occupation are increasingly exposed as corrupt warlords and drug dealers. Therefore, regardless of the results of the November run-off elections or even if a power-sharing arrangement is reached which does away with another election, public opinion will continue to turn against the imperialists and their war of occupation.

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decades. Illiteracy was largely eliminated and the rural peasantry was lifted out of abject poverty and given control over the land. Health care, however rudimentary, was provided to the vast majority of the people. Massive manufacturing and energy projects were built. Some of those projects may have been less than successful, however, given the depths of poverty from which China was emerging and the widespread destruction resulting from almost 40 years of continuous warfare, the advances made by China in the years following its revolution were nothing short of spectacular.

At the same time, the strategic course set by the leaders of the People's Republic of China in the years following the revolution contained the seeds for destruction of the revolution itself. From the beginning the leadership was split on some fundamental questions, such as how to build a socialist economy, what relations to build between China's numerous nationalities and what relationship China should have with the various other countries of people's democracy that had emerged in the post-war period. Power struggles between the top leaders erupted on a regular basis and during some periods, such as the Cultural Revolution, the struggles became quite violent.

The split in the International Communist Movement and the resulting hostilities between China and the Soviet Union during the 1960s resulted in further setbacks to China's development of a self-sufficient economy. By the early 1970s China's economy was stagnating and unrest was growing. At this critical moment Mao Zedong decided to establish an alliance with U.S. imperialism in order to counter the power of the Soviet Union. In 1972 Nixon visited China and during the next few years a complex relationship between the two countries developed, based on their mutual animosity towards the Soviet Union. Following the death of Mao Zedong in 1976 and the rise to power of Deng Xiaoping a new strategic policy was adopted in regard to developing the economy, with an emphasis on developing capitalist joint ventures with foreign monopoly capitalists. In the cities, new factories were built on the basis of importing foreign capital from the U.S. and Japan. In the countryside the gains of the poor peasants were reversed, land was privatized and a new wealthy rural strata emerged. By the mid-1990s millions of impoverished peasants were flowing into

the cities, creating a huge pool of surplus labour and driving down wages. The flow of foreign capital increased throughout the 1990s, but the collapse of the international hi-tech markets in 2000 turned the flow of foreign capital into a flood. China's economy boomed based on the export of cheap manufactured commodities to the rest of the world, especially to the United States. The enormous profits generated within China have been used both to expand capitalist development within China, as well as to prop up the U.S. economy. During the past few years China became the largest holder of U.S. debt, surpassing Japan.

The capitalist crisis that hit the entire world last year has resulted in severe economic dislocations in China. Exports declined by over 15 percent. Over 25 million Chinese workers were thrown out of work. Wages have plummeted and working conditions have deteriorated.

The current situation in China demonstrates the problems that emerge when a society departs from scientific economic and social planning. It is clear to almost everyone that socialism has run off the rails in China and, as a result, China has returned to the capitalist fold with all that that entails – unemployment, poverty, reliance on foreign investment capital and economic crisis. However, the source of these problems is not the victory of the Chinese Revolution in 1949, but the radical departure from the goals set by that revolution. Interestingly, the western media does not focus on these disasters for the Chinese people as a failure of capitalism, but continues to blame all China's problems on its decision 60 years ago to stand on its own feet.

## **Modern Communism**

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