

Editorial

On the Twentieth Anniversary of the Fall of the Berlin Wall

The western media have seized upon the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall to launch a massive propaganda campaign against socialism and communism. They repeat over and over again buzz words like “authoritarian” and “totalitarian” to describe the systems that existed in the former Soviet Union and people’s democracies of Eastern Europe and describe their collapse as “the failure of communism”. At the same time, commentator after commentator is forced to admit that those things that the people of Eastern Europe were fighting for 20 years ago have still not been achieved. However, rather than actually analyzing why that is the case, they simply dismiss it as another “failure of communism”, as a consequence of the political

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immaturity of the people of those countries.

Two questions emerge from this propaganda campaign. First, if communism died 20 years ago with the fall of the Berlin Wall, then why do the imperialists and their media find it necessary to continuously discredit communism as a political and economic system? Second, if communism was responsible for all of the problems of the people of Eastern Europe, why do those same problems exist after 20 years of capitalism?

The fact is that the imperialists and their media know very well that what fell in Eastern Europe in the period from 1989 to 1991 was not socialism or communism. They were quite aware at the time that socialism had ceased to exist in anything but name in

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Afghanistan and the Imperialist Double Standard Towards Elections

The runoff presidential elections in Afghanistan slated for November 7 were called off and Hamid Karzai declared the winner after his opponent Dr. Abdullah Abdullah dropped out of the race, citing ongoing rampant election fraud. The U.S., Canadian and other western governments immediately recognized Karzai’s new government as “legitimate” despite reports from international agencies confirming Abdullah’s claims. This is in sharp contrast to their attitude towards the presidential elections in Iran, which they continue to dispute despite the fact that their own polling agencies predicted the landslide win by president Ahmadijad. It is also in sharp contrast to their attitude towards the election of Hamas as the

government in Gaza, which they have refused to recognize despite overwhelming evidence that those elections were free of corruption.

The haste of the imperialists to recognize the Karzai government, which they, themselves, acknowledge has become synonymous with corruption in Afghanistan, demonstrates that the imperialists’ claims that they stand for democracy ring hollow. In reality, they recognize the results of elections if those results serve their interests and refuse to recognize elections which do not serve their interests.

In the case of the Afghan elections, attempts were made to suppress reports of widespread election

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those countries by the early 1960s, replaced by a form of state monopoly capitalism ruled by a new bourgeois ruling class comprised of the top state and party bureaucrats. As in the western capitalist countries, the dominant political ideology was social democracy – the “welfare state”.

By the 1980s social democracy was in crisis everywhere in the world, not just in the Soviet Union and countries of Eastern Europe. Social democracy and the welfare state were instrumental in restoring high rates of capitalist profits following the Great Depression. However, by 1982 profits were in steep decline and social democratic policies were no longer working to reverse that trend. In order to address this crisis of capitalism the imperialists, particularly the Anglo-American imperialists, created a new set of policies that became known as neo-liberalism. One of the central tenets of neo-liberalism is privatization of the public sector, especially publicly-owned corporations or what can loosely be described as the state monopoly capitalist sector. In Canada this sector included Air Canada, Canadian National Railway, many of the provincial telephone and electricity utilities, most of which were privatized during the 1990s.

However, the Soviet Bloc represented the mother lode of state monopoly capitalist institutions – virtually their entire economies. The Anglo-American imperialists spent millions of dollars during the 1980s to convince the economic and political elites in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe of the tremendous profits that could be realized through the privatization of those economies and large sections of those elites were won over, including many of the leaders, such as Mikhail Gorbachov. In the late 1980s, the would-be oligarchs within those countries, with the help of various western intelligence agencies, systematically organized protest movements demanding democratic reforms. In country after country the storming of embassies was organized as a focal point for these movements. In 1989 a flood of East German émigrés was organized to go through Hungary and other countries to get to West Germany. Under intense pressure, the East German government resigned en masse and on November 9, 1989 masses of protesters began to tear down the Berlin Wall.

What followed during the next several years can best be described as the rape and pillage of entire nations. The top state and party bureaucrats simply appropriated companies and even entire industrial sectors as their private property. The pensions and savings of the people were stolen. The health and education institutions collapsed. And all the while, trillions of dollars flowed out of these countries and into the hands of “investors” in New York, London, Frankfurt and elsewhere. This pillage was not anarchic in nature, but was systematically carried out under the direction of a team of Harvard economists, who quickly became billionaires themselves.

It is important to distinguish between the motives of the peoples of Eastern Europe and the motives of the imperialists and oligarchs who were the only ones to benefit from the dismantling of the welfare states of Eastern Europe. The communist movement in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe emerged from the Second World War at the head of an international movement for democracy – an anti-colonial, anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist movement. During the post-war period some strides were made in terms of expanding economic democracy in those countries, but for various reasons they balked at expanding political democracy. As a result, socialism was strangled and most of the advances in economic democracy were reversed. The political and economic elites paid themselves huge salaries and converted the socialist economy into a form of state monopoly capitalism which was operated for the collective enrichment of this new bourgeois class. The economies of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe stagnated under the combined pressure of the arms race, incompetent management and rapidly increasing foreign debts. Standards of living declined and discontent was met with state violence, just as it was in many of the countries under the domination of imperialism and capitalism.

That discontent could have gone either of two ways. It could have coalesced around demands for a return to real socialism and communism or, as it did, around false promises that open capitalism could give the people what pseudo-socialism could not. The experience of the Soviet Union and countries of people’s democracy prior to 1989 demonstrates that

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The Dispute Over the U.S. Government's "Buy American" Policy

Canada's new ambassador to the United States, former Manitoba premier Gary Doer, has pledged to make it his top priority to eliminate the "Buy American" clauses associated with the American stimulus spending. He promises to explain to American lawmakers that it is in their best interest to allow "competition" in the awarding of government contracts. In return, he is promising them that he will influence Canadian governments not to take protectionist measures in regard to Canadian stimulus spending.

The dogfight over the U.S. "Buy American" policy highlights the real predatory nature of imperialist trade. When it serves the big monopolies to penetrate the markets of their rivals they demand "free trade"; when it serves their interests to keep their rivals out of their markets they rely on protectionist laws. This has been the experience in trade between Canada and the U.S. since the signing of the Free Trade Agreement and the North American Free Trade Agreement in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Since then, Canadian exports of wheat, softwood lumber, beef and other commodities have faced non-stop challenges, tariffs and other trade barriers erected by U.S. governments. Despite repeated rulings that these trade barriers are illegal, they remain in place.

The veiled threats from Doer and the overt threats of some of the provincial premiers of retaliation with "Buy Canadian" policies attached to Canadian stimulus spending are not likely to cause much concern south of the border. The size of Canadian stimulus spending relative to American spending means that it is far more profitable for American monopolies to maintain a "Buy American" policy than to abandon it. Furthermore, many of the biggest corporations bidding on Canadian government contracts are Canadian in name only, being branches of American corporations. So the losses to American corporations from a "Buy Canadian" policy would be minimal.

The dispute over the "Buy America" policies illustrates the problems created for a relatively small economy existing next door to the biggest economy in the world. It further illustrates the folly of such a small economy trying to compete on an even playing field with the larger economy. Further exacerbating matters is the fact that "free trade" can never exist in an international economic order dominated by capitalism. This is especially the case at the stage of monopoly capitalism where the biggest capitalists

control national states and use those states to create an advantage for themselves and a disadvantage for their rivals.

From its inception as a British colony, Canada's economy has been based on the export of raw materials to a larger economy and the import of manufactured goods, primarily from the same larger economy – first Britain and now the U.S. As such, the Canadian economy is extremely vulnerable to economic and political developments over which Canadians have no control. There are some, including various provincial premiers and some of the biggest trade unions, that suggest that Canadian protectionist measures can address this problem. Others insist that "free trade" policies are essential to the Canadian economy. However, both positions are wrong. History has shown that neither protectionism nor free trade serves the interests of the Canadian economy.

Protectionist policies during the first half of the twentieth century did nothing to create an independent, self-reliant economy in Canada. Far from it, they gave rise to a branch-plant economy with the highest level of foreign ownership of any country in the world. Similarly, the "free trade" policies of the last two decades have done nothing except to further integrate the Canadian economy with that of the U.S. Protectionism and "free trade" are, in reality, merely two sides of the same coin – weapons of monopoly capitalist and imperialist domination and plunder. So, to expect some different result would be naïve.

The problems confronting the Canadian economy do not result, primarily, from the trade policies of the U.S. Rather, they result from the fact that the Canadian economy is a capitalist economy. As such, the motive of production for "Canadian" capitalists, as it is with capitalists anywhere, is the pursuit of maximum profits and not the satisfaction of the needs and aspirations of the Canadian people. Canadian capitalists have achieved maximum profits through the selling of the land and labour of the Canadian people to the highest bidder and that situation will not change so long as the Canadian economy is a capitalist economy. An independent and self-reliant economy can only be created if the interests of the working people are put in command. In other words, it can only be achieved on the basis of organizing the economy on the basis of scientific socialism.

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economic democracy without political democracy cannot endure. The experience of those peoples since 1989 demonstrates that political democracy (however illusory) without economic democracy is equally doomed to failure. The net result for the peoples of the former Soviet Union and countries of people's democracy has been massive unemployment, dire poverty, insecurity and a life expectancy that has been reduced by decades from previous levels.

Now that the peoples of these countries have learned from their own experience that capitalist "democracy" is just as hollow as pseudo-socialist "democracy", they once again are faced with the

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fraud during the first round. When those attempts failed, the imperialists and their media tried to suggest that the fraudulent activities were not significant. When videos surfaced of Karzai supporters stuffing ballot boxes and numerous polling stations reported far more ballots cast than eligible voters, attempts were made to broker a deal between Karzai and Abdullah to avoid a runoff election. However, those attempts also failed and a runoff election was scheduled to take place under the supervision of the same election officials who were implicated in the prior corruption. Abdullah's repeated calls for the establishment of an independent electoral commission fell on deaf ears.

If Abdullah had been the candidate of choice of the imperialists, rather than Karzai, there is little doubt that the streets of Kabul would have been teeming with protesters supported by the big powers. They would have featured prominently on the evening news and the imperialists would have been threatening to impose economic sanctions to force a new round of "fair" elections. However, since Karzai is their man none of those things took place. Abdullah is now being offered a prominent position in the new government to placate him and defuse any opposition to the Karzai regime.

To cover up their complicity in the rampant corruption in Afghanistan, the imperialists have been making a lot of noise about the necessity for reforms. U.S. President Barack Obama, in recognizing the Karzai government, appealed to Karzai to get rid of corruption. British Prime Minister Brown made similar appeals, going so far as to demand that Karzai establish an anti-corruption commission if he wants

choice – capitalism or socialism – that is faced by all of the peoples of the world. One of the objectives of the current imperialist propaganda campaign against communism and socialism is to divert the people from the path of revolution and socialism into the dead-end politics of fascism and tribalism. There is an urgent necessity for all those who consider themselves socialists and communists to unite and give rise to a great movement for democracy and socialism, a movement capable of providing the people with the democratic reforms they desire and need and to block the great tragedies being organized by the imperialists in the name of "freedom", "democracy" and "human rights".

British troops to continue to prop up his regime. However, all of this is mere window dressing to fool the public about the ongoing mission in Afghanistan. It is an attempt to shore up the bankrupt claims that the imperialists are in Afghanistan to defend freedom and democracy.

The imperialists knew that Karzai was corrupt when they chose him to head the puppet government in Afghanistan. They know that their warlord allies are not only corrupt, but the biggest drug lords in the country. They also know that the strata of corrupt politicians and drug lords is the only strata of Afghan society that supports the occupation of Afghanistan and that an end to corruption in Afghanistan would spell the end of the foreign occupation. Therefore, nothing will come of the "demands" for an end to corruption and the next elections will be just as fraudulent as the last ones, so long as Afghanistan remains an occupied country.

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