

Editorial

War Criminals Must Be Brought to Justice

Richard Colvin, a top-ranking intelligence officer posted to Afghanistan in 2006 and 2007, has testified to parliament that he repeatedly advised Canadian diplomatic and military officials that prisoners of the Canadian Forces turned over to the Afghan authorities were being routinely tortured. He stated that probably every transferred prisoner was tortured and, rather than acting on his information, Canadian officials at the highest level attempted to cover up their complicity in torture. The Canadian Forces took 10 to 20 times more prisoners than the British and Dutch forces stationed in the same areas and most of those prisoners were innocent farmers. Colvin testified that: "Many were just local people: farmers; truck drivers; tailors, peasants – random human beings in the wrong place at the wrong time." Colvin also stated that he advised military leaders that both this widespread apprehension and torture

of innocent civilians was counterproductive and generating support for the Taliban, but his advice was ignored.

Colvin also testified that the top Canadian military commander in Afghanistan, as well as former commander, General Rick Hellier, were both aware of his reports and that it is inconceivable that Prime Minister Stephen Harper would not have been advised, as well. Yet Harper consistently denied any problems with Canada's prisoner transfer policy. He told parliament that if there were such problems then surely the International Red Cross would have reported on them. However, Colvin testified that Canadian officials in Afghanistan refused to accept phone calls from the Red Cross for a three month period and that the information it provided to the Red Cross on prisoner transfers was so outdated as to be

See page 2: War Crimes

The Deepening Trade Contradictions Between the U.S. and China

On November 15 U.S. President Barack Obama made his first visit to China and met with Chinese officials, including President Hu Jintao. At the top of the list of issues discussed was the deepening trade tension between the two countries. In recent weeks the U.S. has imposed a 35 percent tariff on Chinese-made tires and other products and as much as 99 percent on Chinese steel pipes. The Chinese government has retaliated by imposing tariffs on U.S.-made automobiles and is investigating unfair subsidies to U.S. chicken producers. Obama is under pressure from U.S. businesses and trade unions to adopt more protectionist measures against Chinese imports.

The contradiction between the U.S. and China centres on China's rapidly growing trade surplus,

which has reached \$159.23 billion so far this year. The U.S. is pressuring China to revalue the yuan upwards in relation to the U.S. dollar in an effort to reduce the trade imbalance, as well as to devalue the massive Chinese reserves of U.S. dollars. China has emerged as the largest holder of U.S. Treasury bills outside of the U.S. itself, with a total of almost \$800 billion. In turn, China accuses the U.S. of trying to offload its financial crisis onto China and other developing countries.

The massive trade imbalance between the U.S. and China is the creation of the U.S. itself. During the 1990s the U.S. negotiated a deal with China in which surplus U.S. investment capital flowed into China to establish low-wage production facilities to supply

See page 2: Trade

War Crimes...from page 1

useless. His testimony indicates that the Canadian government and military systematically obstructed the efforts of the Red Cross to investigate allegations of torture of Canadian prisoners transferred to the Afghan authorities. In addition, he and others were advised not to put anything down on paper and Colvin stated that Canadian records on prisoners were a shambles, making any meaningful investigation virtually impossible.

Following Colvin's testimony, a series of Conservative ministers has made statements suggesting that Colvin was a "Taliban dupe" and that his testimony amounted to nothing more than hearsay. The federal government is still denying that any torture took place, despite growing evidence that it is used routinely by the Afghan forces on virtually every prisoner. During the period in question, the British and Dutch forces were sufficiently alarmed by the reports of torture that they took special measures to follow up on every prisoner they transferred to the Afghans. However, the Canadian authorities did absolutely nothing.

There have been calls in parliament for an inquiry into Canada's prisoner transfer policy. However, the real issue is not the transfer policy but the complicity of Canadian political and military leaders in torture. First, Canadians found out that their government was complicit in sending Canadian citizens to third countries knowing that they were being tortured and now we find out that they were complicit in the torture of Afghan detainees as well. The use of torture is

deemed a war crime under international law, so the real inquiry that is needed is an inquiry into who in the Canadian military and government was aware that transferred prisoners were being tortured, when they found out and what they did to encourage or stop the practice.

The Canadian government routinely presents itself as the world's greatest defender of human rights. It has been quick to call for the arrest and trial of war criminals in various conflicts, including Rwanda, Yugoslavia, Darfur and others. It self-righteously lectures China and Cuba on human rights. Yet it not only condones the torture of those it deems it considers "enemies", but is complicit in that torture, knowingly turning over thousands of detainees to be tortured at the hands of Afghan authorities.

There can be no double standard in the treatment of war criminals. Where there is evidence that a war crime may have been committed, all those responsible must be brought to justice. Colvin's testimony does not represent conclusive proof of the guilt or innocence or any particular individual. However, it raises serious enough questions about criminal activities and an ongoing criminal cover-up to warrant an inquiry into possible war crimes committed by Canadian officials. Those found by an inquiry to have participated in crimes should then be sent to The Hague to stand trial before an International War Crimes Tribunal. Failure to do so can only lead to the conclusion that the Canadian state is a rogue state which cares nothing for human rights and international law.

Trade...from page 1

cheap commodities to the U.S. market. In return, China agreed to invest much of the profits in U.S. Treasury bills. This arrangement worked well for both countries until the near collapse of the U.S. financial sector in 2008 and the ensuing recession in the U.S. and most other countries.

China has already been hit hard by the collapse of U.S. consumer spending, with its exports down over 20 percent from last year. Tens of millions of Chinese workers have been thrown out of work and unrest is growing throughout China. If China were to submit to the U.S. demands to revalue the yuan and increase the prices of its exports, the Chinese economy would

suffer yet another major blow. On the other hand, if it refuses to submit, the financial and economic crisis in the U.S. will deepen further and the U.S. will be forced to devalue the dollar, which will also shift the burden of the crisis onto its trading partners. China, as the biggest trading partner of the U.S. as well as the biggest holder of U.S. debt, will be hit doubly hard. As for the Americans, they too face a no-win situation. If they succeed in forcing China to revalue the yuan, prices of Chinese imports will rise and the Chinese will buy fewer U.S. Treasury bills, both of which will impact negatively on any potential U.S. economic recovery.

See page 3: Trade

Malalai Joya, author of *A Woman Among Warlords* speaks in Winnipeg

Afghani author and politician Malalai Joya spoke in Winnipeg on November 16th during a Canadian tour to promote her book: *A Woman Among Warlords: The Amazing Story of an Afghan Who Dared Raise Her Voice*, which she co-authored with Derrick O'Keefe. The event took place before a capacity crowd at the University of Winnipeg.

Malalai Joya was elected to the Afghan parliament in 2005. She was suspended by that body two years later for condemning senior officials in the government as warlords, even though in this is an opinion similar to that of many of her fellow members of parliament. As a result of her continued outspoken views on the nature of the Afghan government she lives under the constant threat of assassination, having so far survived at least four attempts on her life. In spite of this, Ms Joya still lives in Afghanistan and intends to stay there and continue working on behalf of the Afghani people

The essential point presented in the book and in Ms Joya's presentation at the University of Winnipeg is that the intervention of U.S.-led foreign troops in 2001, which removed the Taliban government, did not improve life for the Afghani people.

The Taliban operated as a fundamentalist regime, medieval in outlook that imposed an extreme interpretation of Islam on Afghans, which sanctioned treating women either as the property of their husbands or their male relatives. However, the replacement of the Taliban regime has not essentially changed the condition of the Afghan people. The occupation forces simply replaced the Taliban regime with one based on the Northern Alliance, which had battled and been defeated by the Taliban in the civil war that took place after the withdrawal of Soviet forces in 1989. The Northern Alliance and government of Hamid Karzai is essentially identical to the Taliban regime it replaced; in fact the Karzai regime may actually be worse. It is characterized by

Trade...from page 2

In other words, no matter how, or even if, the U.S. and China sort out their trade differences, both the Chinese and American economies and people will suffer. The disaster facing the U.S. is a direct consequence of the monopoly capitalist system and the disaster facing China is a direct consequence of its leaders tying the Chinese economy hand and foot to U.S. monopoly capital.

the same misogynistic fundamentalism of the Taliban but it is also utterly corrupt. Under the current regime Afghanistan's economy has developed almost completely in the direction of the production and sale of narcotics. The proceeds of that trade largely go to the Taliban insurgency and the warlords who sit in the Afghan parliament or those in senior government positions.

The U.S. and NATO forces are in Afghanistan for the primary purpose of securing the U.S. position in central Asia. Oil and gas resources are significant in the region and Afghanistan straddles important transportation routes for petroleum pipelines. The U.S. also has an interest in blocking China's growing interest in the area's resources. While the western occupation forces prop up the warlord regime in Kabul and safeguard their investments and position in Afghanistan, the people have been caught between these two powerful warring forces.

Ms Joya maintains that the war between the Taliban and the U.S.-led forces of occupation has produced an intolerable situation in the country. The result is that the security of the people of Afghanistan is worse now than it ever has been. Instead of having one enemy Afghans have two, one that bombs them from the air and one that attacks them on the ground. In the meantime there has been little or no progress in developing Afghanistan's economy or in advancing the rights of women. The situation for women in Afghanistan today is just as difficult as it was under the Taliban. To the extent, Ms Joya states, that killing a woman is essentially treated no differently than killing a bird. The only real difference is that now the crimes against women are carried out under the banner of democracy.

In her presentation and in her book, Malalai Joya calls on Canada to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan not in 2011 but immediately. The continued presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan does nothing but add a patina of democracy to a brutal and anti-democratic regime, she says.

Canada's pretext for the continued presence of its armed forces in Afghanistan is that these forces are needed to ensure the safety of Afghans and secure the success of development projects in Afghanistan. It is clear in Malalai Joya's assessment that Canada's role in that country is simply to support one gang of criminals over another. Doing so, she says, is neither in Canada's interest nor the best interests of the people of Afghanistan.

Liberals/Conservatives/NDP - Enough Shame to Go Around

The Conservative Party of Canada last week sent out a mailer to constituents in several ridings where there are a significant numbers of Jewish voters. Two of these ridings are represented by Jewish Members of Parliament, Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal) and Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre).

The mailer accuses Liberal MPs and the Liberal Party itself of anti-Semitism because of the alleged failure of the Liberal Party to support Israel. This is an inspired bit of political slight of hand by the Conservatives as it kills two birds with one stone. On the one hand it completely misrepresents the Liberal position in the matter of supporting of the state of Israel. On the other hand it deliberately misrepresents the nature of anti-Semitism.

Contrary to the claims made in the Conservative Party mailer, the Liberal Party in Canada and its individual members of Parliament have been almost as shameless as Stephen Harper and the Conservatives in their uncritical support of Israel. In fact few politicians in Canada, Liberal/Conservative/NDP ever take a principled stand on the question of Israel. Canadian political parties have uniformly been either apologetic or silent in the light of Israel's 42 year occupation of Palestinian lands in Jerusalem, The West Bank and Gaza. The silence has been even longer on the matter of a just resolution for the Palestinian refugees who were forced out of Israel at the creation of the state in 1948. Canadian politicians have nothing to say as Israel daily humiliates and brutalizes the Palestinian people in the occupied territories with its separation wall and countless military checkpoints that strangle the economic and social lives of the Palestinian people. Few if any have decried the embargo of Gaza since 2006 that has reduced the population there to the level of starvation. We heard only apologetics when Israel launched a brutal attack on the civilian population of Gaza last December and January that killed 1300 Palestinians and reduced the entire area, hospitals, houses, infrastructure and businesses, to rubble. Nor did any of Canada's politicians object to Israel's use of banned weapons, such as white phosphorous against the civilian population in that attack. Liberals, Conservatives and NDP alike say nothing as Israel continues to seize and destroy Palestinian land and houses in East Jerusalem, and the West Bank to create Jewish-only settlements and roads. All these actions are profoundly unjust and done in

contravention of international law yet no outrage emanates from the lips of Canada's major political parties.

The Liberals, NDP and Conservatives are entirely consistent in their unwillingness to question Israeli actions or to demand justice for the Palestinian people or for any of the other people subject to Israeli attacks. Israel for example has waged six wars on Lebanon and is contemplating a seventh. Few Canadian politicians have ever raised their voices against Israel for its unconscionable behavior. More commonly we see politicians like Steven Harper suggesting that any criticism of Israeli actions amounts to an anti-Semitic attack.

It might be news to Mr. Harper and other politicians but Israel and the Jewish people are not identical. Nor do all Jews support Israeli actions or the concept of a Jewish-only state which is the fundamental principle of Zionism. Many Jews in Canada and elsewhere believe as do most Canadians in law, fairness and social justice. They understand that Israeli actions are inconsistent with these beliefs. Criticizing Israeli actions and policy is not an attack on Jews.

The Conservative Party mailer is profoundly disturbing. It equates belief in justice and the rule law with anti-Semitism. How can it be anti-Semitic to uphold the very principles they espouse as the basis for Canadian society? In their attitudes towards Israel however the Liberals and NDP are equally hypocritical.

Modern Communism

**Bulletin of the Manitoba Regional Committee
of the Communist Party of Canada**

(Marxist-Leninist)

Editor: Ken Kaltornyk

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

Email: mrc-cpcml@mts.net

Internet: www.modern-communism.ca

Produced by volunteer labour