

Editorial

## Was It All Just a Spelling Mistake?

For the past several weeks we have been hearing carefully managed “admissions” about the failures of various U.S. intelligence agencies prior to the events of September 11, 2001, as well as in the lead-up to the invasion of Iraq. We are now being told that there was no connection between the regime of Saddam Hussein and al Q’aida, Iraq possessed no weapons of mass destruction, did not have a program to produce nuclear weapons and posed no immediate threat to neighbouring countries, let alone the United States. We are being asked to believe that this was all a colossal mistake.

Also during the past few weeks, the Bush administration has been hinting that Iran is the real threat to international security. Iran is being accused of developing nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. It is claimed that there is evidence of ex-

tensive connections between the Iranian government and al Q’aida. There is talk of human rights abuses in Iran. One indignant U.S. official even charged that the Iranian government is interfering in the internal affairs of Iraq! All of this talk is eerily reminiscent of the lead-up to the invasion of Iraq. Is the Bush administration preparing public opinion for a similar invasion of Iran? Will the next shocking revelation of CIA incompetence be that the agency inadvertently made a spelling mistake and meant Iran all along?

If one were to take these admissions of failure seriously, one would be forced to conclude that the U.S. imperialists have no intelligence agents in the field, no analysts capable of figuring out what is going on and has no identifiable agenda. Rather, it is merely acting with good intentions on bad intelligence. However, if

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Commentary

## The Historical and Political Roots of Social Democracy

Much has been written in recent years about social democratic parties around the world “losing their roots”. When British Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair lined up behind the war chariot of U.S. President George W. Bush, a significant section of the Labour Party accused him of betraying the principles of social democracy and abandoning the historical roots of that movement.

The same chorus has been raised in Canada during the past few years. During the NDP leadership convention in 2002, a section of the NDP membership began a movement to “return the NDP to its roots”. When Jack Layton was elected leader, many of these same members claimed that he was the man who could accomplish this feat. During the recent federal election campaign various commentators either praised Layton

for successfully returning the party to its social democratic roots or decried that under his leadership the NDP had lost its roots.

In all of this talk, nobody has actually explained exactly what are the roots of the NDP and other social democratic parties that they have allegedly lost. Instead, we are simply left with the vague impression that the social democratic parties must at one time have stood for peace, democracy and socialism, that its roots are in the movement against capitalism and imperialism. Many ordinary members of social democratic parties firmly believe this to be the case. However, nothing could be further from the truth.

Social democracy developed as a distinct political movement during the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> cen-

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ture when the socialist movement split over what attitude to take towards imperialism, the new form of capitalism which had emerged during the last two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The social democratic tendency within the socialist movement, led by such notables as Eduard Bernstein and Karl Kautsky claimed that imperialism was a force for peace and prosperity and that it would peacefully evolve into socialism, thereby eliminating the necessity for socialist revolution. The revolutionary Marxist section of the socialist movement, led by V.I Lenin, argued that imperialism would inevitably lead to catastrophic wars and the darkest reaction and that socialists could, therefore, not accommodate themselves to imperialism.

This struggle within the socialist movement came to a head with the outbreak of the First World War, when all of the social democrats allied themselves with their own imperialist states and issued calls for the workers of their “motherland” to take up arms and kill the workers of the “enemy” countries. By contrast, the revolutionary socialists opposed the war and called upon workers to refuse to kill each other and, instead, to turn their guns against their own imperialist rulers.

By the end of the war, the socialist movement had split into two irreconcilable camps – social democracy and communism. This split was deepened with the victory of the Russian Revolution and the outbreak of socialist revolutions in Germany, Hungary and other countries. In the case of Germany, the social democrats occupied positions of power within the post-war government and sent troops to crush the revolutionary workers. They went so far as to authorize the execution of the revolutionary leaders Rosa Luxembour and Karl Liebknecht, even though they were all members of the same political party.

Between the two world wars, the parties of social democracy throughout the world formed an alliance with imperialism against revolutionary socialism and communism, and supported the imperialist interventions against the newly established Soviet Union. In Canada, where most of the socialist activists joined the Communist Party during the 1920s, it took some time for the social democrats to organize themselves. When they finally managed to form a new social democratic party in 1933 (calling it the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation or CCF for fear of being mistaken for socialists), one of the main reasons given for the need for such a party was to combat the growing movement for communism amongst Canadian workers. During the Spanish Civil War, the CCF officially opposed any of

its members participating in the International Brigades or in any activities within Canada in support of Republican Spain, although a significant number of its members defied the party on this issue. David Lewis, one of the leaders of the CCF, bragged in his autobiography about his success in smashing communist-led trade unions in Nova Scotia and bringing those workers under the control of the United Mine Workers, an American trade union notorious for the high degree of corruption amongst its top leaders.

During the 1950s the CCF played a major role in the McCarthyite attacks against communist trade union leaders. During this same period, the CCF endorsed Canada’s membership in NATO and NORAD and fully supported the anti-communist and counter-revolutionary policies of U.S. imperialism. In this regard, the CCF was no different than all of the other social democratic parties around the world.

In many countries, including Britain, Germany and France, social democratic parties have formed governments at various times following the Second World War. While in power, they have pursued the same anti-communist, pro-imperialist policies as their Conservative counterparts. Within Canada, the CCF/NDP has formed provincial governments in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, British Columbia and Ontario and they too have pursued policies indistinguishable from Liberal or Conservative provincial governments.

So, what exactly has changed about the NDP, the British Labour Party and other social democratic parties that would prompt some to claim that they have lost their roots? Following the Second World War, the advanced capitalist countries, led by U.S. imperialism, adopted Keynesian economics in order to modify the capitalist business cycle and stimulate economies that were stagnating because of a lack of demand for commodities. Government spending on infrastructure, health systems and educational institutions was an important means for the transfer of wealth into the pockets of the monopoly capitalists. The expansion of the welfare system also contributed to the maximizing of capitalist profits. Keynesian economics fit in with the social democratic myth about the end of class struggle and the peaceful evolution of capitalism to socialism, so all of the social democratic parties adopted Keynesian economics as their official doctrine. However, because these policies assisted the monopoly capitalists to maximize their profits during a particular period, all of the openly capitalist parties also adopted Keynesian policies as their

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## Review

## **Fahrenheit 9\11 Exposes Bankruptcy of U.S. Imperialism**

Filmmaker Michael Moore's latest documentary begins by asking Americans 'Was it all a dream?' as footage of the 2000 U.S. Presidential elections plays on. The film closes with a close-up of George W. Bush, mangling an American folk saying which cautions people not to let themselves be made fools of twice.

For two hours in between, he presents a scathing critique of the Bush administration, with a particular emphasis on the so-called War on Terror. His aim in making this documentary is clear: he wants mainstream America to see this film and understand some of the crimes this administration has committed. He wants Americans who have been raised to be proud of their country to ask themselves some questions about what their country is doing in the world.

Moore makes this clear in several scenes in the movie as well as in interviews he has given subsequent to its release; he believes his film was necessary because the news media in the U.S. has failed to present even the flimsiest pretext of impartiality as they have lined up as cheerleaders behind the War on Terror.

In one memorable interview on CBS, when asked by an interviewer whether his film is propaganda, Moore replies that there are many who think the CBS nightly news is propaganda. Instantly uncomfortable, the interviewer tries to steer the conversation in a different direction, but Moore keeps pressing her: why did the media simply report various lies by the Bush administration about the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq? She, stammering, has no answers and can only try to get out of the situation as quickly as possible.

Moore asks the same questions in the film; he provides footage that the corporate media in the U.S. has simply pretended doesn't exist: shots of the destruction caused by the Americans' "shock and awe" campaign over Baghdad; interviews with U.S. soldiers who either question why they are in Iraq or are so indoctrinated that they cannot view the Iraqis as human beings.

He also lets ordinary people speak for themselves and juxtaposes people and places to draw the viewer towards inevitable conclusions about the nature of the American ruling class. A working class mother talks about the pain of losing her son who died for a cause she increasingly questions; her grief is mirrored in a scene filmed in Baghdad of a woman surveying the wreckage of her bombed-out home and weeping for her lost child.

Two U.S. marine recruiters target poor, inner-city youth to sign-up as cannon fodder while a group of young black men talk about the lack of jobs and hope they face in their community. Moore brings a young military officer who has decided he will not serve in Iraq to confront the members of Congress who send the children of the poor off to die while their own children live in privilege.

Moore has come in for his fair share of criticism since the movie was released, including some blistering attacks written by a few left-wing critics. They claim Moore is merely preaching to the converted and condemn the movie for propping up the U.S. Democratic Party. They also dismiss Moore's film as not being revolutionary and therefore, not having real merit. Their criticisms don't amount to much, though. The first charge is simply silly - if the millions of Americans who have seen the movie were all part of the anti-imperialist movement in the U.S., the American ruling class would be trembling at the knees. Only a few could claim Moore has any illusions about the Democratic Party, as he underlines several times their moral bankruptcy in supporting the invasion of Iraq, the suppression of civil liberties in the U.S. and abroad and even their complicity in assisting Bush with his coup following the 2000 elections. To dismiss the movie as not really revolutionary is to entirely miss the significance of Moore's undertaking. Fahrenheit 9\11 is the first mainstream openly subversive cultural work produced in the U.S. in decades - since the McCarthy witch hunts of the 1950s, in fact. It is easy to criticize from the sidelines; it is much harder, as Moore does, to make a contribution.

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that were the case, it would be difficult to understand how they manage to maintain such a massive empire, let alone always be lucky enough to invade countries that just happen to have oil or strategic military importance to U.S. imperialism.

The “admissions” of intelligence failure are actually blatant examples of disinformation designed to deflect criticism from those who were actually responsible for the “bad intelligence” – the Bush administration itself. In recent months, two former high-ranking members of the Bush administration have written books in which they charge that the invasion of Iraq was being planned long before the events of September 11. In fact, they claim that the Bush administration was so pre-occupied with the planning for an Iraq invasion that it had no time to deal with the many intelligence reports indicating that al Q’aida was planning a large-scale terrorist attack on American targets. Furthermore, in the months prior to the invasion of Iraq, both the CIA and Britain’s MI5 leaked reports to the press refuting the claims of U.S. President George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair that they had solid intelligence that Iraq posed an imminent threat to the world. Those leaked reports exposed the fraud of Iraq trying to buy uranium and the claim that Iraq could launch a nuclear warhead in 45 minutes. They also raised serious doubts about the claims that Iraq possessed chemical or biological weapons.

At the time, there were media reports exposing the fact that the “intelligence” reports being cited by Bush, Blair, Colin Powell and others were not, in fact, written by the American and British intelligence agencies, but by public relations groups established in both countries to create a justification for war. In Britain, this group was answerable directly to the Prime Minister’s Office and was caught plagiarizing a ten-year old thesis by an American graduate student and trying to pass it off as current intelligence. In the U.S., the public relations group was established and directed by Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld because he was not satisfied that the intelligence reports coming from the CIA and military intelligence agencies would provide the necessary justification for war.

The fact of the matter is that the invasion of Iraq had absolutely nothing to do with any of the justifications offered by the Bush and Blair administrations either before or after the fact. The various intelligence reports, real or manufactured, had no relevance in their decision to go to war. The war was waged to advance the geo-political interests of U.S. and British imperialism, to give them a stranglehold over the oil fields of

the Middle East. Those same interests now dictate a take-over of Iran and, eventually, the military occupation of the entire Middle East, so the Bush administration is gearing up its propaganda barrage against Iran.

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official doctrines.

Keynesian policies went into crisis in the 1980s in the sense that they were no longer successful in maximizing capitalist profits. By the mid-1980s a new economic doctrine had been adopted by imperialism to maximize capitalist profits – neo-liberalism. The main aspects of neo-liberalism were the transfer of the Keynesian public sector into the hands of private capitalists and the transfer of government funds out of social programmes and directly into the pockets of the rich. In response to the new needs of the imperialists, various social democratic parties also adopted neo-liberalism as their official doctrine, especially in those countries, such as Britain, where they had become ruling parties.

The adoption of neo-liberalism by the British Labour Party and various other social democratic parties, including the various NDP provincial governments, does not represent a departure from their roots. The shift to neo-liberal policies, far from being in opposition to those roots, is actually a necessity in order for social democratic parties to remain true to their historical and political roots, which are anti-communism and support for imperialism. To bemoan the NDP “losing its roots” is to create illusions about social democracy and cover up its actual pro-imperialist roots. In reality, the roots of social democracy are so rotten that losing them would be about the most progressive thing that the NDP could possibly do.

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