

Editorial

Terrorism – A Tool of Imperialism

This past weekend marked the third anniversary of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington. A lot has been written in recent days about those attacks and the events which followed, including the U.S. “war on terror” and its invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. However, very little has been said about whose interests have been served by those attacks.

A myth has been created that the architects of terrorism are people who are oppressed by imperialism and who have no other way of resisting imperialist oppression. However, nothing could be further from the truth. The truth is that terrorism is a tool of imperialism which it uses in various ways to perpetuate its oppression of peoples around the world.

It is not accidental that the origins of many of the terrorist organizations in existence today can be traced

back to the American CIA and the Israeli Mossad. Others were the creation of the KGB or various other imperialist intelligence agencies. The CIA helped to establish the Al Q’aeda terrorist network to carry out attacks against the Soviet forces in Afghanistan. The CIA and Mossad established the Palestinian terrorist organizations Hamas and Islamic Jihad in order to undermine the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people for national liberation. Furthermore, despite the propaganda churned out by the imperialists claiming that they are combating terrorism, the fact remains that the terrorists are still serving the interests of their creators.

Terrorism is used by the imperialists to discredit the revolutionary and progressive forces in the eyes of the people, who, quite rightly, despise violence

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Commentary

What is the Issue in Chechnya?

The world watched, horrified, as terrorists held hundreds of teachers, parents and children hostage in a school in the Russian town of Beslan, demanding the release from prison of a number of their compatriots. The situation ended with the death of over 300 people, half of them children.

The hostage-taking is being presented in the Western media as part of the struggle of the people of Chechnya to liberate their nation from Russian domination. The Russian media is presenting these events as an attempt by U.S. imperialism to control the oil-rich Caucasus region of Central Asia. Russian President Vladimir Putin, while stopping short of accusing the U.S. of organizing the attack, did take advantage of the terrorist attack to demand that the U.S. put an end to its support and funding of Chechen separatists. As with most acts of terrorism, there is extensive debate

on exactly who organized the attack and who stands to benefit from it. Within Russia, supporters of Putin are pointing fingers at the U.S. and/or the Al Q’aeda terrorist network, while his opponents are suggesting that Putin organized the attack himself in order to justify the escalation of the Russian military offensive in Chechnya.

The Charter of the United Nations recognizes both the right of all nations, big or small, to self-determination and secession and the right of all countries to territorial integrity. Some commentators have suggested that these principles are in contradiction, or at least tension, with each other. However, this is not really the case. All nations have the right to self-determination, to free themselves from national oppression, but foreign intervention in the name of humani-

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tarianism or national rights has never led to the liberation of oppressed nations, only to their domination by a different set of oppressors.

This was the case in Kosovo, where a similar struggle for national self-determination was being waged during the 1990s. In that case, various political groups supported the 1999 U.S. aggression as the only way to stop the genocide and/or human rights abuses being committed against the Albanians by the Serbs. Others supported the territorial integrity of Serbia, while denying the national rights of the Albanian majority in Kosovo under various pretexts. In most cases, the latter degenerated into outright supporters of Great Serb chauvinism, demonizing the Albanians as fascists, drug runners and CIA agents in order to justify their national oppression at the hands of the Serbs.

In the case of Chechnya, the same lines are being drawn. The overt or covert supporters of U.S. imperialism are tacitly supporting the acts of terrorism being carried out in the name of Chechen independence. Meanwhile the overt or covert supporters of Russian imperialism are attacking the Chechen people as fascists and CIA agents, thereby attempting to deny their legitimate right to self-determination.

The fact is that both positions are wrong. Chechnya (or Kosovo for that matter) is not the first struggle for national self-determination which has been used by various imperialists to advance their own strategic interests, nor will it be the last. However, that does not reduce one iota the right of the Chechen people to independence and sovereignty.

Nor are the Russian imperialists the innocent victims of a plot by U.S. imperialism to replace them as the masters of the Caucasus oil fields. During the latter half of the 1980s, Soviet President Michail Gorbachov formed a strategic alliance with Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan to destroy the Soviet Union and create one international imperialist economic system. He facilitated the flow of billions of dollars from the Western imperialists to various criminal gangs which used nationalism to weaken the Soviet state and restore open capitalism. Yeltsin and Putin continued these policies following the collapse of the Soviet Union and, in collaboration with U.S. imperialism, they looted the country and established the particular brand of gangster capitalism which controls Russia and all of the former Soviet Republics. It was Gorbachov, Yeltsin, Putin and their gangster-capitalist cronies who facilitated the U.S.

imperialist takeover of the former Soviet republics, including Russia itself. They can hardly complain now that the U.S. imperialists want to remain in charge.

There is little doubt that the conflict in Chechnya is largely a conflict between two sets of gangsters to determine who will get rich off the backs of the Chechen people. Putin's resolve to preserve the "territorial integrity" of Russia merely represents the interests of one of those sets of gangsters. There is also little doubt that U.S. imperialism is supporting another set of gangsters, both for short-term financial reasons and for the long-term strategic interests of U.S. imperialism, and that its support for Chechen "independence" is merely a mask for its own criminal imperialist activities.

At the same time, the people of Chechnya have a legitimate right to self-determination, up to and including the right to secede from Russia if they so desire. This is a matter of principle, which no progressive person can deny. Both those who support Russia's right to territorial integrity and those who, in the name of human rights, support the terrorist-separatists financed by the U.S. are, in reality, opposing this fundamental right of the Chechen people.

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against civilians. It is also used to dehumanize and demonize those who are struggling for national and social liberation, to destabilize entire societies and to justify the most draconian anti-people measures in the name of "security". Israel is a good example of this; the Zionist state relies on terrorist attacks on Israeli civilians not only to justify its continuing aggression against Palestinians, but also to justify the continuing existence of the Zionist apartheid state. Israel could simply not exist in its current form if not for the existence of "Palestinian" terrorism.

Similarly, the Bush regime in the United States would have been history a long time ago if it were not for the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Those attacks served as the justification for the U.S. invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as a massive assault on the civil liberties of Americans, Canadians and others.

Terrorism is also used by imperialism as a tool of foreign policy, especially in those circumstances where direct imperialist intervention is politically deli-

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The Logic of Occupation

Israel openly used the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States to justify stepping up its campaign of warfare against the Palestinian people. Former Israeli Prime Minister (and current Finance Minister) Netanyahu told reporters the day after the attacks that Americans would now understand Israel's policies and that the two nations should unite to rid the world of Muslim terror.

Now Israeli is once again using terror, this time the events that unfolded in Beslan, Russia, to try and justify its continued occupation and oppression of the Palestinian nation. In the past week, two separate groups of Israelis, both with strong ties to the governing Likud party, have issued letters calling for the further entrenchment of Israeli forces in both the West Bank and Gaza.

The first letter, published September 7, came from rabbis currently serving in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The letter calls on the Sharon government, which has proposed withdrawing from Gaza in order to secure the settlements in the West Bank, to give up this proposal and to crack down harder on Palestinian

groups operating in the occupied territories, even if it results in loss of life for Palestinian civilians. The letter was sent to Defence Minister Shaul Mofax, and was signed by a number of rabbis, including the heads of two prominent religious schools and the head of a network of Orthodox rabbis.

In reality this is already Israeli policy, although it is never officially stated. Instead, Israeli Defence Force (IDF) spokespeople have been trained to talk about making every effort to save civilian lives, and the effectiveness of "targetted assassinations" or "targetted bombings". But hearing it talked about so openly by religious leaders gave even many Israelis pause, especially given the myth so carefully cultivated that the Palestinians are dangerous Muslim fanatics and terrorists, while Israel is the only humane and democratic regime in the Middle East.

"There is no war in the world in which it is possible to delineate entirely between the population and the [enemy] army, neither in the U.S. war in Iraq, the Russian war in Chechnya, nor in Israel's wars with its enemies," the rabbis wrote.

"Should the IDF fight the enemy, if [Palestinian] civilians will be killed, or should the IDF refrain from fighting, and thus endanger our civilians? ... Our lives come first ... and we will not view favorably those who prefer the lives of our enemies over our own lives."

On September 9, another open letter, signed by a long list of Likud and other right-wing party activists, was published as an advertisement in three newspapers urging IDF soldiers and policemen to refuse to evacuate settlements in the occupied territories. The letter was apparently the first salvo in what is expected to be a lengthy and costly advertising campaign.

Evacuating the settlements would constitute both "a crime against humanity," a "national crime" and "a clearly illegal act," the letter states. IDF soldiers should disobey orders and "listen to the voice of their national and human conscience."

The letter continues: "In light of the Sharon government's intent to destroy communities in the land of Israel and deliver them into the hands of the enemy, to

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cate. For example, U.S. imperialism supports and finances terrorist groups in Chechnya, Georgia and other regions of the former Soviet Union as a method of destabilizing Russia and advancing its own imperialist interests in those regions. Despite all of its rhetoric about the "war on terror", the Bush administration sent Secretary of State Colin Powell to Panama to pressure the outgoing President of Panama to release several convicted Cuban terrorists who have carried out numerous terrorist activities against Cuba over the past several decades on behalf of the United States.

A lot of confusion is generated in progressive and revolutionary circles on the question of terrorism. It is even suggested by some that the terrorists are actually on the side of the people and are striking a blow against imperialism, however misguided their actions may be. However, the entire history of terrorism during the 20th century proves the opposite – the terrorists are agents of imperialism used to attack the struggles of the people and to advance the interests of the imperialists.

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Canadian Support for Cuba Continues to Grow

Canadians have supported the struggle of the Cuban people for independence and sovereignty since the victory of the Cubans revolution on January 1, 1959. The response of the U.S. to losing its colony was to immediately impose a severe economic and political blockade in the hope of strangling the country. In the more than 45 years since then, Canadians have opposed the U.S. blockade and shown their support for Cuba's anti-imperialist stand in many ways. The Canadian government, for its part, has voted against the blockade in the United Nations and has passed legislation forbidding Canadian companies from following American laws banning trade with Cuba. Canadians have supported efforts to break the blockade, including joining caravans traveling through the U.S. carrying medical supplies to be delivered to Cuba, and in many other ways.

On September 4, as part of a national convention

of the Canadian Network on Cuba (CNC), a demonstration was held at the American Consulate in Toronto to protest the U.S. role in the release from Panama of four convicted terrorists who had tried to assassinate Fidel Castro at the Ibero-American Summit in Panama in 2000. Three of the four were immediately admitted to the U.S. in Florida, from where they have organized terrorist acts against Cuba for more than 30 years, including the mid-air explosion of a Cubana airliner in 1976 which killed all 73 people onboard.

The CNC national convention elected an executive with representation from all regions of Canada, reflecting the sentiment of Canadians across the country in support of Cuba. It also took measures to further develop its work to oppose the U.S. blockade and the new round of attacks against Cuba by the Bush administration.

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violently uproot their residents and expel them, we declare that this expulsion and uprooting are a national crime and a crime against humanity, a display of tyranny, wickedness and arbitrariness, whose goal is to deprive Jews of their right to live in their land, merely because they are Jews. We declare that the Israel Defense Forces were intended for defense against enemies, not for operations against Jewish citizens. The IDF is the people's army, not the army of any political group."

The letter urges "the officers who will be ordered to prepare the groundwork for the ethnic cleansing of Jews from their homeland, and all officers, soldiers and policemen, to listen to the voice of their national and human conscience and not to participate in acts that will tarnish them, and that they are liable to regret all their lives."

It should be noted that Israeli soldiers who have refused to serve in the occupied territories and have urged others to join them have been charged with inciting treason and civil disobedience.

The letter also tells settlers: "Don't cooperate with the expulsion machine, don't accept compensation, oppose the uprooting in practice, but without harming

your countrymen, even though they have come to destroy your homes."

In an interview with *Ha'aretz* newspaper, one of the letter's signatories, who served as chief of staff under Netanyahu when he was Prime Minister, said the evacuation of the settlements would be a crime against humanity because the forced expulsion of Palestinians from their villages in 1967 is defined as a crime against humanity. Failure to view these two situations as morally equivalent means agreeing with the Palestinian claim that Israel is a state based on colonial occupation, he noted, apparently without irony. Such is the logic of the occupiers.

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