

Editorial

What is the Significance of the U.S. Election?

In the run-up to the U.S. presidential election, numerous pundits declared that it would be one of the most significant elections in American history. During the election itself, commentator after commentator declared that the voter turn-out was massive, of historic proportions, and that it could easily top 70 percent. In the aftermath of the elections, various commentators are still trying to convince us that this was an historically significant election, despite the fact that the voter turnout remained in the mid-50 percent range and absolutely nothing of any significance changed with the re-election of George W. Bush.

The Bush camp is suggesting that it has received a solid mandate to “move to the right” and to continue with its “war on terror”. In actual fact, Bush received the support of just over 25 percent of the eligible voters and those who did vote are still split right down the middle on whether they support or oppose his policies. Furthermore, it is not just the electorate

which is divided but the U.S. imperialist ruling class, itself, which cannot agree on how best to achieve its goal of undisputed world domination. In this respect, these elections merely duplicated the results of 2000.

In order for an election to be of special significant, either something of importance must change as a result of the election, or, at the very least, there must be the possibility of important change hanging in the balance. Neither is the case in this election. Even the fact that the Republicans now control all three branches of government is not a significant change, since on all issues of substance – the “war on terror”, the invasion of Afghanistan, the invasion of Iraq and the Patriot Act – the Democratic members of the Senate and Congress voted almost unanimously for the Bush agenda. Furthermore, John Kerry was not proposing a different agenda; he was merely pledging to do a better job of implementing the Bush agenda.

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Commentary

The U.S. War of Terror Continues in Fallujah

There are reports that in the days leading up to the U.S. presidential elections the bombardment of the Iraqi city of Fallujah was stepped up in preparation for the all-out military assault on the city, which has begun during the past few days. Hundreds of Iraqi civilians have already been killed or injured by the American bombardment and thousands more will suffer as American and Iraqi troops enter the city. The stated purpose of the American offensive is to deal the Iraqi resistance a decisive blow in preparation for general elections in Iraq which are scheduled for January 27, 2005.

The U.S. is hoping to engage the Iraqi resistance fighters in direct, frontal combat, which it would undoubtedly win due to superior numbers and weapons. If the Iraqi resistance fighters refuse to fall into the U.S. trap, then the Americans are hoping that the destruction of Fallujah will convince the Iraqi people to withdraw their support for the resistance.

However, like all forms of terrorism, the American war of terror against the people of Iraq is bound to fail. It can only deepen the resolve of the Iraqi people to drive the foreign occupiers out of their land.

Revolutionary Reforms: A Program of Social Renewal

In the last issue of *Modern Communism* we discussed a program of political renewal and some possible revolutionary reforms which could be part of such a program. The point was made that without such a program of political reforms economic reforms are meaningless. By the same token, the purpose of economic and political renewal is to create conditions for social renewal, for the revolutionary transformation of society. If this purpose is forgotten, then no amount of reforms will actually change the situation.

The main block to renewal the of Canadian society is monopoly capitalism. The stranglehold that the monopoly capitalists exercise on the economic and political systems enables them to extract massive tribute from the rest of the population. This, in turn, creates widespread poverty and deprivation, as well as a general lowering of standards of education, health care, culture and so on.

Social renewal must begin from the premise that every person has certain inalienable rights simply because they are human. These rights include the right to a livelihood, the right to an education, the right to health care and the right to conscience. In Canada today, all of these rights are proclaimed to exist in the abstract, but in reality they are violated on a continual basis.

By wresting control of the economy and political system away from the monopoly capitalists, monies which are currently flowing to the wealthy elite in the form of profits would be freed up to invest in society. The monopoly capitalists, both domestic and foreign, also extract tribute from society in the form of interest payments on the public debt. That debt has actually been repaid to the finance capitalists many times over, but the continuing interest payments account for a third of government expenditures. A moratorium on debt payments would free up huge amounts of capital to invest in Canadian society – approximately \$50 billion per year.

This social investment could take many forms, but the most urgent necessity is to invest in those areas

which tend to eliminate poverty and social inequities – education, health care and financial assistance to those in the most desperate straits. Expanding the scope and the quality of such programs tends to even out some of the inequities created by differences in income. It also strengthens the sense of community and assists greatly in solving many of the social problems afflicting society.

However, increasing spending on social programs is just one aspect of renewing society. Investment in research and development, in protection of the natural environment and in transportation are also essential for the health of a modern society.

Of course, investing more money in social programs is not the total solution to the problems afflicting Canadian society. Cuba, for example, spends far less on health care than Canada and, despite shortages created by the American economic blockade, is able to provide reasonably good levels of health care to its people because it concentrates on preventive medicine and nutrition. It has also created a pharmaceutical industry that produces world class medicines at a fraction of the price charged by the multinational pharmaceutical companies.

This illustrates another block to renewal imposed on society by monopoly capitalism. Under monopoly capitalism, all social programs are ultimately subordinated to the need of the capitalists to maximize their profits. Thus, the entire health care system in Canada is distorted. Preventive medicine is cost effective for society, but does nothing to maximize the profits of the capitalists; therefore, it is not pursued in Canada. For example, the fast food industry is not concerned about the health or nutrition of Canadians, only about maximizing profits. Similarly, degradation of the environment is cost effective for the capitalists because the costs associated with it in terms of health effects and cleanup are borne by society rather than by the capitalists.

In other words, the monopoly capitalists impose

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For Your Information

Imperialism and Terrorism, Part IV: Italy's Red Brigades: Revolutionaries or Agents of Imperialism?

In this series on imperialism and terrorism, *Modern Communism* is examining some of the ways in which the imperialists have used terrorism to further their own aims. At times, this is quite evident – for example, in the first part of this series, we looked at the use of a police agent to toss a bomb into a crowd in Chicago in the 1880s. This “terrorist” act was used as the pretext to crack down on the growing revolutionary movement in the U.S.

The series has also examined the direct link between different imperialist powers and terrorist groups operating in various regions of the world. For example, the U.S., it has been well documented, provided training, arms and money to death squads that operated throughout Central and Latin American in the 1970s and 1980s.

Nevertheless, there is a lot of confusion generated in progressive and revolutionary circles on the question of terrorism. Some groups claiming to be socialist or communist carry out terrorist attacks against civilian populations. Their apologists suggest that these groups are on the side of the people and are striking a blow against imperialism, arguing that the problem is just with their tactics. However, an examination of some of these so-called revolutionary groups reveals that they are often straightforward agents of imperialism. Certainly their use of terror has been all the pretext needed by different states, on the one hand, to crack down on all progressive movements and, on the other hand, to discredit revolutionary struggles.

The youth and student movement of the 1960s gave rise to several of these groups. In Europe, one of the best known was the Red Brigades in Italy. The group, which described itself as Marxist-Leninist, advocated violence “in the service of class warfare and revolution”. During the 1970s and 1980s, the Red Brigades carried out a number of attacks against state targets; they are best known for the kidnapping and murder of the former Italian Prime Minister Aldo Moro, in 1978. At the height of its popularity, the group claimed thousands of members and had adherents in Europe, Canada, Australia and the U.S. The group was also completely infiltrated by both Italian and American secret service agencies, and its terrorist activities were used to discredit the revolutionary movement and to justify further

fascization of the Italian state.

While the Red Brigades claimed that it was a communist organization, in reality, many of those associated with the group were “visceral anti-communists”, according to British author and journalist Philip Willan. Willan reported on the Red Brigades for years and in 1991 published a book exploring the political use of terrorism in Italy. The group used a number of radical professors as a way to recruit students into its ranks. For example, Professor Toni Negri, co-author, with Michael Hardt, of *Empire*, was a well-known apologist for the Red Brigades. He urged his students to participate in street violence and “class war” to bring about revolutionary change. These days, however, Negri has become a post-modernist who denies the existence of the working class, talking instead about the “multitude”. Willan argues that Negri has always been an anti-communist and that he may have had ties to American and Italian intelligence agencies. He also notes that Negri’s brother was killed by Italian partisans as he was defending Mussolini’s republic, while Negri himself was a Rockefeller Foundation scholar who studied in the U.S. before returning to Italy to preach class warfare. Corrado Simioni, another prominent Italian associated with the Red Brigades and leader of the ultra-leftist Superclan faction, was in fact on the payroll of the CIA in Italy in the 1960s and had mafia connections.

While Willan notes that many of the people involved with the Red Brigades came to the group through their activism in the student movement, “a number of people involved in left wing terrorism [in Italy] appear to have been in direct contact with Western secret services.”

The aim of this infiltration of extremist groups? Willan concludes it was very straightforward: “The secret services used the extremist political and terrorist groups and guided the course of events to thwart the growing demand for political change and to undermine the rising strength of the Communist Party.” (*Puppetmasters: The Political Use of Terrorism in Italy*, p. 180). At crucial moments in history, Willan writes, “the secret services had infiltrators in place who ... were able to steer the course of the armed struggle on their behalf.” (p. 182).

(To be continued)

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As in the 2000 U.S. elections there are claims of widespread fraud, both in counting the votes and in keeping millions of eligible voters off the voters lists. However, even this is nothing new. Corruption of all sorts has been a constant feature of the American electoral system ever since its inception. These kinds of complaints merely serve to cover up the fact that the entire American system of elections is designed to keep political power out of the hands of the American people.

In other words, absolutely nothing changed as a result of the re-election of George W. Bush and there was no possibility that anything of substance would have changed if Kerry had been elected. Why, then, are so many pundits on both the "right" and the "left" so excited about the historic significance of these elections?

The answer can only be that these pundits want to convince people that American democracy is not dead and that substantial change is still possible within the confines of electoral politics. During the past several months, this myth was used to disorganize and disorient the American anti-war movement, as concerted efforts were made, with considerable success, to convert it into an election machine for the Democratic Party. Opposition to Kerry's pro-war positions was suppressed, while Ralph Nader, the only candidate who actually campaigned against the war in Iraq, was condemned as a *de facto* supporter of Bush. Whether the American anti-war movement can recover from this debacle remains to be seen. At the very least, immeasurable damage has been done to the movement and it was largely demobilized precisely at a time when the Bush regime was escalating its war of terror against the Iraqi people. In this way, the Democrats assisted the Republicans in diverting the progressive movement into activities which are harmless to U.S. imperialism.

If the anti war movement and various other progressive movements in the United States had refused to be co-opted and diverted, then this election may have had some significance. It could have represented a break with the politics of supporting the "lesser evil" which has rendered the American "left" impotent for decades. This, in turn, could have opened a path for the advance of the revolutionary movement within the United States.

Unfortunately, this did not happen and the American people have been stripped of any initiative and rendered passive at a time when U.S. imperialism is threatening the entire world's people.

This election, therefore, is of little real significance to either the American people or to the people of the world. It merely underlines the fact that the people of the world must continue to struggle against U.S. imperialist militarism and expansionism and that, at least for the foreseeable future, they can expect little real assistance from the American people in stopping the imperialist juggernaut.

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relations and conditions on the rest of the population which are extremely damaging to society as a whole, but which result in maximum profits for the capitalists. The elimination of monopoly capitalism creates the possibility for the development of healthy relations, healthy food and a healthy environment.

The solution to these social problems in Canadian society is a long-term project which cannot even begin unless economic and political power is in the hands of the people. The capitalists claim that economic and political relations are unchangeable and advocate that people should restrict themselves to efforts to eradicate poverty, disease and suffering within the confines of the monopoly capitalist system. Growing poverty and the crisis afflicting Canada's health and education systems is evidence that such an approach is futile. Real reform of Canadian society can only be accomplished on the basis of an all-round revolutionary program which begins with the elimination of monopoly capitalism and the vesting of sovereignty in the hands of the people.

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