

Editorial

Provincial Jurisdiction vs. Human Rights

The recent decision by the Canadian Supreme Court regarding funding of treatment for autistic children is yet another piece of evidence that the Canadian state places “fiscal responsibility” before human rights. The Supreme Court ruled that levels of funding for treatment of autistic children fall within provincial jurisdiction and, therefore, are up to the provincial governments to decide.

The case was brought to the Supreme Court by parents of autistic children in British Columbia. The B.C. government has consistently refused to fund the most advanced and effective treatment for autistic children, claiming that at approximately \$60,000 per year the treatment is too expensive. This from a government which has no difficulty finding billions of dollars per year for subsidies to multinational corporations, such as the huge American lumber

companies. Some other provinces do fund this form of treatment, but generally only for children of certain ages.

The Supreme Court decision is a bad decision for Canadians. It is a decision which strips the Charter of Human Rights of any meaningful content. What does the notion of equality mean if it is not linked to the specific circumstances of an individual? If effective treatment is available which assists autistic children to function more fully in society, then such treatment must be considered their right, just as heart surgery or other medical procedures must be considered the right of every Canadian who requires such treatment to participate as fully as possible in society.

Even from the point of view of “fiscal

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Commentary

Democracy and the Ukrainian Election

Last week’s runoff in the Ukrainian presidential election has given rise to a crisis in that country as both candidates are claiming victory. The electoral commission has officially ruled that the election was won by Viktor Yanukovich, but opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko is claiming widespread voting fraud and the Ukrainian parliament has now voted not to recognize the results of the election.

Observers from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Union (EU) have reported voting irregularities and proclaimed that the election did not meet democratic standards. The United States and Canada are also disputing the election results and, along with the EU, are threatening to take economic

measures against Ukraine if Yushchenko is not installed in office. Although the word “democracy” is being thrown around a lot, it is clear that democracy has nothing to do with the furor over the election results. The OSCE and EU observers are claiming that voters in some precincts were intimidated by Yanukovich supporters and that voter turnout in some pro-Yanukovich areas exceeded 100 percent. Other observers report similar irregularities in areas that voted heavily for Yushchenko. Interestingly, the same irregularities were reported in several American states during the recent U.S. presidential elections, but the OSCE and EU have not seen fit to comment on the acceptability of the U.S. election results.

In this situation the crux of the matter is which

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imperialists will control the strategically important territory of Ukraine. Yanukovich favours closer ties to Russia and is supported by Russian President Vladimir Putin. His electoral support is mainly in eastern Ukraine. Yushchenko favours weakening ties to Russia in favour of closer a relationship with the U.S. and Europe, including membership in NATO and the European Union. His support is mainly in western Ukraine and Kiev.

This division within Ukrainian society has historical roots. A thousand years ago, the Ukrainian nation did not yet exist and Kiev was the capital of Russia. The repeated invasions of Europe by the Tatars between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries split the Russian population, with the northern section relocating its capital to Moscow. The southern Russians eventually became a distinct nation, which in the twentieth century became known as Ukraine. Through the centuries, Ukraine was controlled by its more powerful neighbours – Russia, Poland, Austria and Hungary. It did not become an independent state until after the 1919 Russian Revolution and the ensuing civil war. The defeat of the imperialist-backed White armies led to an independent Ukraine joining the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. However, large sections of western Ukraine remained under Polish and Hungarian control until after the Second World War.

The Eastern European nationalism that emerged during the latter half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century was a form nationalism that was based on xenophobia, racism and anti-communism. In fact it was created by the most backward feudal elements and reactionary religious leaders to oppose the growing socialist and communist sentiment of the working people in the region. Ukrainian nationalism was no exception and from the beginning it allied itself with Polish and Austrian imperialism in opposition to Russian imperialism. It also opposed the revolutionary movement of the workers and peasants because most of the Ukrainian nationalist leaders were themselves big landlords. As a result, the anti-communist Ukrainian nationalist movement has always been strongest in the western areas of Ukraine, especially those areas that were historically

under Polish and Austrian control.

During the Second World War the Ukrainian nationalists allied themselves with Nazi Germany and played a notorious role in assisting the Nazis to murder Jews and communists. Following the war, many of the nationalist leaders were forced to flee the country or face execution as traitors and the nationalist movement in Ukraine subsided. However, during the Gorbachov years tens of millions of dollars poured into Ukraine to revive a narrow nationalistic movement which owed its allegiance to U.S. and European imperialism. Similar nationalistic movements were also organized in other Soviet Republics. These nationalistic, pro-western imperialism movements played a key role in the destruction of the Soviet Union and the restoration of open capitalism in its member republics.

The pro-western leaders who emerged in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union brought disaster to the people of Russia, Ukraine and other former Soviet republics. Living standards collapsed, wages and pensions were not paid and western vulture capitalists ran off with a significant portion of the national wealth. In Russia, this led to a backlash against pro-western politicians and the election of Vladimir Putin who has actively sought to restore the Russian Empire to its former glory. Within Ukraine and other former Soviet Republics most of the former “communists” have, in one way or another, pledged their loyalty to the new Russian empire.

In other words, the conflict developing over the Ukrainian election has nothing to do with upholding the democratic will of the Ukrainian people. Rather it is part of the inter-imperialist rivalry over which group of imperialists will control the agricultural and mineral wealth of Ukraine. The U.S. and European imperialists are supporting Yushchenko as a means of weakening Russian influence in Ukraine and thereby weakening the Russian imperialists. Putin is supporting Yanukovich in order to strengthen Russian influence in Ukraine and thus strengthen Russian imperialism.

There are reports that professional pro-western agitators from Georgia and Yugoslavia are pouring into Ukraine along with huge amounts of western money in order to repeat the regime changes that

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Terrorism and Imperialism: The FLQ

This is the fifth article in *Modern Communism's* series on the relationship between imperialism and terrorism.

Most Canadians are at least generally familiar with the FLQ (Front du liberation du Quebec) and the events of the 1970 October Crisis. According to official mythology, this radical group of ultraleftist Quebec nationalists (sometimes also described in textbooks as a communist or Marxist-Leninist group) was committed to the use of terror to achieve an independent, socialist Quebec. The kidnapping of British Trade Commissioner James Cross and the kidnapping and murder of Quebec Labour Minister Pierre LaPorte are the two most famous acts of terrorism the FLQ is associated with, although there were also a few bombings and plots to blow-up prominent American targets located in Quebec.

The FLQ emerged onto the Quebec and Canadian political scene in the 1960s, when the revolutionary youth and student movement was in flow. Thousands of young Canadians and Quebecois were joining the revolutionary movement. In his book on the genocide in Rwanda, retired Lt-General Romeo Dallaire describes his early involvement with the Canadian armed forces during the late 1960s and early 1970s. It was a time, he said, when revolution in Quebec and Canada not only seemed possible, but probable.

Within this context, the FLQ began to organize in Quebec. From the beginning, the FLQ was covered prominently by the Quebecois and Canadian bourgeois media. Different FLQ members were promoted extensively as the true representatives of the Quebecois revolutionary movement and the group's literature was even put on required reading lists for some university courses. This was despite the fact that the group never had widespread popular support. Indeed, the FLQ's activities discredited the revolutionary movement to the point where the movement's effectiveness was weakened, particularly in Quebec.

As was the case with the Red Brigades in Italy, the existence of the FLQ provided all the justification the Canadian state needed to launch an all-out offensive against the revolutionary movement. This offensive

began even before the Trudeau government invoked the War Measures Act during the October Crisis. Under the draconian provisions of the Act, however, (similar to the provisions of anti-terrorism legislation passed by the Chretien government in November 2001), Trudeau authorized the RCMP to take extraordinary actions against revolutionary activists. Rule of law was suspended, the armed forces were deployed and thousands of youth and student activists, not just in Quebec, but across Canada, were arrested and held without charges for weeks and months. Hundreds of members of the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist) were arrested during this time.

Trudeau's mantra during this period is one that echoes eerily today: trampling the civil liberties of all Canadians was necessary to protect the country from the scourge of terrorism. The FLQ, Trudeau argued, posed a direct threat to Canada's national security and territorial integrity.

A subsequent investigation about the abuse of police power during the 1960s and 1970s, the MacDonald Commission of Inquiry into Certain Acts of the RCMP, revealed that the FLQ was, from its inception, completely infiltrated by police agents. The Commission's report, released in 1981 with the exception of one volume which has never been released for "national security" reasons, found police agents were responsible for planning and sometimes carrying out terrorist activities within the FLQ. The portion of the Commission's report that was published detailed how the RCMP used paid agents within the FLQ (and other Canadian and Quebecois groups) to spy on and discredit the revolutionary youth and student movement. The Commission detailed 11 different types of activities carried out by RCMP agents that violated Canadian law. These included:

- RCMP agents turned over information that was used to compile files on tens of thousands of Canadians. These files were shared with police agencies in other countries, including the United States, India, Pakistan, Israel, Lebanon, Iran, Britain and Ireland.

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responsibility” the B.C. refusal to fund this treatment makes no sense. It appears that most autistic children who receive this form of treatment are able to live relatively normal and productive lives. Those who do not receive this treatment are often permanently disabled and institutionalized, which costs society and the government far more than \$60,000 per year. It seems that the real motivation of the B.C. government is the fear that if the most advanced treatment is considered a right for those living with autism, then people with other ailments, such as multiple sclerosis, cancer and heart disease, will also demand the right to the most advanced forms of treatment. The Supreme Court apparently agrees with this logic.

The argument advanced by governments across the country that there are financial limits to what forms of treatment they can fund is a red herring and not a serious argument. This argument is never raised by governments in objection to handing over billions of dollars to large corporations. In fact, most of those handouts take place in secret with little or no debate in parliament.

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- RCMP agents stole membership lists from the Parti Quebecois and used these lists to recruit members for the FLQ and other groups that were heavily infiltrated.
- RCMP agents burned a barn in Quebec as part of a “training session” for terrorist activities.
- RCMP agents acquired weapons, explosives and cash for members of the FLQ. RCMP agents also provided training in the use of these weapons and explosives.

The MacDonald commission, however, concluded from its investigation that the problem was a lack of civilian control of the RCMP – one of its main recommendations was for the creation of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS). Despite evidence to the contrary, the Commission also suggested the activities of the RCMP were carried out without the knowledge of senior members of the Trudeau government.

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took place in those countries. However, it is difficult to see how Putin can afford to allow Ukraine to slip out of his hands. Following the creation of the Soviet Union, large sections of Russian territory were transferred to Ukraine in order to provide that republic with a more balanced economy and with access to the Black Sea. Ukraine is also a strategic military buffer zone between Russia and its European rivals. The Ukrainian economy is almost totally dependent on Russian markets and the Russian economy relies heavily on Ukrainian resources. While Yushchenko could not possibly change that economic reality overnight, the potential loss of Ukraine to the western imperialist powers is simply unthinkable for Putin and the Russian imperialists he represents. Therefore, if the U.S. and EU persist in their efforts to overthrow Yanukovich a serious showdown with Russia could ensue.

The fact of the matter is that neither the U.S. and EU nor the Russians have any business interfering in the internal affairs of Ukraine. While the OSCE and EU “observers” cannot possibly be considered as independent or objective, since the Americans taught the Ukrainians how to hold elections it goes without saying that the elections were neither fair nor democratic. It is also a given that both sides are probably equally guilty of electoral fraud. However, this is a matter for the Ukrainian people to sort out for themselves. Any “solution” imposed on them by either the West or by Russia can only serve the interests of those who are determined to prevent the Ukrainian people from exercising democratic sovereignty over their own country.

Modern Communism

**Bulletin of the Manitoba Regional Committee
of the Communist Party of Canada
(Marxist-Leninist)**

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