

Editorial

Support the Just Stand of the Iranian People and Government Against the Bullying of the United States and EU

A special meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) Board of Governors will be held on February 2 in Vienna to once again deliberate on the issue of Iran's nuclear energy program. The meeting was formally requested by France, Germany and Britain (EU-3). They are accusing Iran of violating its nuclear treaty obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). They want the Board of Governors to refer the matter to the United Nations Security Council where the United States, France and Britain will press for some kind of punitive action against Iran. The Canadian government has fallen into step with the United States and the EU-3. On January 12 it issued a statement accusing Iran of "non-compliance" with the NPT, supporting the call for

the special meeting, and supporting Security Council action against Iran.

The United States, the EU-3 and the Canadian government are using the big lie technique. Together with the mass media in these countries, their state officials repeat time and again that Iran is building nuclear weapons even though there is not a shred of evidence to prove it. They are building their "case" against Iran in the same manner that the United States and Britain built their "case" against Iraq on the issue of "weapons of mass destruction". Ultimately, the issue of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq was exposed as a lie and scare-mongering diversion and as a cover for naked aggression and the violation of international law by the United States and Britain.

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Commentary

The Manipulation of Public Opinion in the Interest of the Monopolies

During the past few weeks, Canadians have witnessed, once again, a most cynical exercise in manipulation of public opinion posing as "democratic elections". At the mid-point in the current federal election campaign it appeared that Canada's ruling elite pulled the plug on the Liberal Party and anointed Stephen Harper as Canada's next prime minister. The event that began the Liberal slide and Conservative rise in opinion polls was the RCMP announcement that it was investigating a possible leak of Liberal plans concerning investment trusts. While the RCMP spokesperson was careful

to add that there was no evidence to implicate Finance Minister Ralph Goodale or anyone in his office, the message was that clear corruption continued to plague the Liberal Party.

The RCMP announcement of its investigation would have been unusual at any time, but is unprecedented during an election campaign. Furthermore, it was followed by two subsequent announcements of other ongoing investigations into potential wrongdoings by the Liberal government. Following each announcement public opinion polls

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Now the United States, the EU-3 and the Canadian government are going down the same disastrous road with no regard to the consequences which could be far greater than ever before. The United States and the EU-3 are presenting themselves as the victims of smaller countries like Iran that dare to stand up for their national rights and dare to oppose the big powers. The EU-3 unilaterally cancelled their talks with Iran scheduled for February and together with the United States have declared that "the point of no return has been reached." French President Chirac, in a not-so veiled threat against Iran, announced on January 19 that France would use nuclear weapons to "guarantee our strategic supplies and to defend our allies" even though these "strategic supplies" (i.e. Iranian oil) do not belong to France.

This latest hysteria against Iran was triggered on January 3 when the Iranian government informed the IAEA that it had decided, which is its right under international law, to resume research and development for its civilian nuclear energy program. On January 10, in the presence of IAEA inspectors, Iran removed the seals on its Natanz uranium enrichment plant and resumed its nuclear fuel research. At the same time, the Iranian government assured the IAEA that this research would continue to be supervised by the IAEA and that the Iranian government remained fully committed to the NPT and its obligations to the IAEA. To date, Iran has allowed 1400 man-hours of inspections by the IAEA at its nuclear facilities.

As a signatory to the non-proliferation treaty, Iran and every other party to the agreement have the "inalienable right...to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes" and the "right to participate in the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy." More than one year ago, Iran voluntarily suspended its research as a "goodwill gesture". Prior to this it voluntarily agreed to the IAEA conducting spot inspections of its nuclear facilities as a "confidence-building" measure. In return, France, Germany and Britain were to prevail upon the United States to reverse its campaign of misinformation, obstruction and intervention against Iran, which it has maintained since the Islamic revolution in 1979, along with a full economic embargo.

Thirty years ago, the United States had an agreement to provide 10 nuclear reactors to Iran. This

caused no problem for the United States at the time because the fascist regime of the Shah was a strong ally of the Americans. This double standard is also evident in the complete silence of these big powers about Israel's huge nuclear weapons arsenal. Israel - not a signatory to the NPT - has had this capability for years, and is believed to have more than 200 nuclear weapons, plus the missiles to deliver them. It is no secret that it has been threatening strikes on Iran's Bushehr nuclear electric power plant, just as it launched an unprovoked and illegal attack on Iraq's Osirak nuclear electric power plant in 1981. Furthermore, the U.S. has recently concluded an agreement with India for the exchange of nuclear technology, despite the fact that India refuses to even sign onto the NPT.

No other country except Iran has been asked to forgo its rights under the NPT. At the same time, the United States and other nuclear powers have not fulfilled their own obligations under the NPT, including the obligation that they "pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a Treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control." Instead, they continue to modernize their nuclear weapons and escalate the arms race.

The threats against Iran by the United States, Britain, France, Germany and the Canadian government are totally unacceptable and must be opposed. The Canadian government should reverse its stand and reject the use of force and diplomatic coercion in the settling of disputes between countries. Furthermore, it should demand that the nuclear powers fulfill their own obligations under the non-proliferation treaty.

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announced dramatic drops in Liberal support and corresponding increases in Conservative support. By the middle of January some opinion polls were predicting a Conservative majority government. Since then they have reported that Conservative support has peaked and is in decline, while the support for the Liberal Party has recovered to some extent. There is some evidence that at least some of these opinion polls exaggerated or deliberately misrepresented their findings in order to create the increased support for

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Ariel Sharon will be Remembered as a War Criminal

Whether or not he recovers from the massive stroke he suffered on January 5, it is clear that Ariel Sharon's political life has come to an end. In the hours after Sharon was rushed to hospital, a number of world leaders issued statements praising Sharon as a man of peace and wishing for his full recovery. Such statements fly in the face of reality. Sharon's main aim, both as a military leader and a politician, has been to extinguish the national rights of the Palestinian people.

As an army officer in the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) during the 1950s, Sharon set up one of the units established for the purpose of ethnic cleansing of dozens of Palestinian towns and villages, both within the newly-formed Israeli state as well as within areas at the time under Jordanian rule. The unit under Sharon's command killed 69 Palestinian civilians and blew up 45 houses in the West Bank village of Qibya in 1953, a fact duly recorded in Israeli military history books.

Following this operation, Sharon began his rise through the ranks of the IDF. He was a commander during the 1967 Arab-Israeli War and then served as commander of Israeli forces in Gaza, before taking a break from the military to enter politics as one of the founders of the Likud Party. It was during this time that he was instrumental in the birth of the settler movement. He returned to the military to lead Israeli

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the Conservative Party that they were reporting already existed.

Both the unprecedented intervention by the RCMP into the election campaign and the use of opinion polls to generate support for the Conservative Party are indications that the political and economic elite in Canada, or more specifically the Bay Street monopoly capitalists, have decided to drop the Liberal Party in favour of the Conservative Party. Why would they do this, especially in light of the fact that the Martin Liberals have done everything asked of them by the Bay Street monopolies?

The answer lies in the nature of Canada's parliamentary system which is based on the British model. The British parliamentary system relies on a governing party and an opposition party which can alternate in government. Both parties represent essentially the same economic interests and

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forces during the 1973 war.

Sharon also planned and led the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. During the invasion, an estimated 20,000 civilians lost their lives. Sharon was also instrumental in organizing the massacre of 2,000 Palestinian refugees, including women, children and the elderly, living in Lebanon in the Sabra and Shatilla refugee camps. He was forced to step down as commander of the IDF after an impartial Israeli body set up by the Israeli parliament to investigate the Sabra and Shatilla massacres, the Kahane Commission of Inquiry, found that Sharon bore personal responsibility for these crimes. However, even after his forced resignation, Sharon remained active in Israeli right-wing politics.

In 1988, shaken by the outpouring of international support for the first Palestinian *intifada*, Sharon made a now infamous speech to a settler gathering in which he urged them to "run and grab every hilltop" to ensure the Judaization of the occupied territories. He was also a staunch opponent of the Oslo peace process and spent most of the 1990s fundraising and proselytizing in support of the Israeli settler movement and against a negotiated peace settlement with the Palestinians.

It was his visit in 2000 to a joint Muslim and Jewish holy site in East Jerusalem, surrounded by hundreds of Israeli bodyguards and soldiers, that is believed to have triggered the second Palestinian *intifada*, when soldiers opened fire on Palestinians demonstrating against his visit. In 2001, he returned to politics as leader of the Likud Party. Elected Prime Minister, he moved quickly to get American approval for a plan to entrench settlements in the West Bank in exchange for Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. He also began construction on a separation wall that has effectively redrawn the boundaries of Israel to include much of the West Bank and East Jerusalem. He overrode opposition within his own party and the settler movement that he nurtured from its infancy to unilaterally withdraw from Gaza in the summer of 2005, arguing that it was the only way Israel could hang on to the bigger settlements in the West Bank. In essence, Sharon's actions have sought to ensure that any future Palestinian state will not be economically or geographically viable, in keeping with his lifelong ambition to extinguish the Palestinians' national aspirations.

It is for all these crimes that Ariel Sharon will be remembered by history.

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implement essentially the same policies, whatever ideological differences they may profess with one another. In Canada those parties have traditionally been the Liberal and Conservative parties at the federal level, while the NDP has replaced the Liberal Party in various provinces. When the pro-capitalist policies of one party have discredited it in the eyes of the electorate, the monopoly capitalists simply call on their loyal opposition party to take its place and use their media to manipulate the people into thinking that there has been an actual change.

The collapse of the Progressive Conservative Party in 1993 and the resulting balkanization of the Canadian political scene threw the entire political system into disequilibrium. Neither the ruling nor opposition parties could claim to be truly national and the extreme social conservatism of the Reform/Alliance Party restricted its potential to ever form a national government. This created a dangerous situation for the Canadian bourgeoisie in which people fed up with the ruling Liberal Party had no electoral alternative and might increasingly seek extra-parliamentary alternatives. For the past 12 years the Bay Street elite has been attempting to resolve this disequilibrium. After repeated failures, the Reform/Alliance and Progressive Conservative parties were finally brought together to form the new Conservative Party. However, in the last federal election the Conservatives failed to overcome their right-wing image sufficiently to make major headway in Ontario or Quebec and the result was a minority Liberal government.

Underlying the social conservatism of the Reform/Alliance/Conservative parties are the interests of the oil monopolies. Just about anywhere in the world that there are movements based on the most backward, ignorant religious dogmas, one will find the influence and money of the oil monopolies and Canada is no exception. At the most fundamental level, the disequilibrium in the Canadian political system has reflected the intense contradictions between the western-based oil monopolies and the eastern-based finance and industrial monopolies, each group eager to amass the greatest portion of the profits for itself.

If the Conservatives form the next government as is being predicted, does that mean that the inter-monopoly contradictions have been resolved or that one group has prevailed over the other? There is no evidence either that the eastern monopolies have prevailed over the oil monopolies nor that the super-profits that the oil monopolies have enjoyed over the

past couple of years have enabled them to prevail over their eastern rivals. However, the fact that the Harper Conservatives have been taking great pains recently to portray themselves as identical to the Liberals does indicate that some sort of temporary truce has been struck between the competing factions of monopoly capital in order to bring some stability and equilibrium to the Canadian political system. This conclusion is further substantiated by the fact that the eastern monopolies are attempting to stop a Conservative majority from materializing by raising the spectre of Harper's hidden agenda. Apparently Stephen Harper will have to demonstrate his loyalty to the eastern monopolies before they will trust him with a majority government. Conversely, a minority Conservative government may give the ruling elite an opportunity to revive the credibility of the Liberal Party so that it can once again form a majority government in the next election. Undoubtedly, the extent to which the Quebec sovereignty movement makes headway in this election and in subsequent months will also play a big role in determining whether the Liberals or Conservatives get the nod from the monopolies in the next election.

The bottom line for Canadians is that regardless of which party wins the election and regardless of whether there is a minority or majority government, the resulting government will be a government of the monopolies, just as every previous government has been. This means that the same neo-liberal, anti-social policies will be implemented regardless of which party emerges the victor, because those are the policies that represent the interests of the monopoly capitalist class.

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