

Editorial

Oppose Use of the “Terrorist Threat” to Attack the Rights of the People

On the weekend of June 3-4 ten adults and five teenagers alleged to be an “al Qaeda-inspired terrorist group” were arrested by Toronto police and the RCMP. Police claimed that two other adults who had previously been arrested for attempting to smuggle guns into Canada from the United States were also connected to the group. The formal charges against the 17 individuals include conspiracy to carry out a terrorist activity, training for terrorist purposes, bomb-making and illegally importing guns and ammunition. The individuals have apparently been under police surveillance for the past two years.

A police synopsis of the allegations against the individuals claims that the group intended to blow up a number of Toronto buildings, including the Toronto Stock Exchange, and discussed taking over the Parliament buildings and beheading Prime Minister Stephen Harper. It is also alleged that the group tried to buy three tons of ammonium nitrate fertilizer to make bombs, although there are conflicting reports as

to whether or not the RCMP supplied the fertilizer or just delivered it, substituting a harmless material *en route*. In any case, defence lawyers have cautioned that police synopses are notoriously inaccurate and are often works of fiction, so it remains to be seen how much of the information provided by police is accurate and how much is merely playing to the media and to U.S. security officials. It must be kept in mind that two years ago 26 Muslim men were arrested supposedly as part of “an Al Qaeda sleeper cell”, but the only charges ever laid against them consisted of minor immigration offenses.

The media has used the recent arrests to organize racist attacks against an entire section of the Canadian people, describing the defendants in dehumanizing terms, attributing their actions to “radical Islam” and claiming that they were recruited through a particular mosque, despite knowing virtually nothing about the

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Bolivia Nationalizes Natural Gas with Support from Venezuela

Bolivian President Evo Morales chose May 1 to issue a decree nationalizing the Bolivian natural gas industry. “The time has come, the awaited day, a historic day in which Bolivia retakes absolute control of our natural resources,” he said. “The looting by the foreign companies has ended.”

Morales made the announcement the day after returning from a joint meeting in Havana with Cuban President Fidel Castro and Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. Morales became the third Latin American leader to sign on to the Bolivarian Trade Agreement of the Americas (ALBA), which Cuba and Venezuela have proposed as a counter to the U.S. sponsored Free Trade Agreement of the Americas. Speaking from San Alberto, one of the country’s two

largest natural gas fields, which is currently owned and operated by Petrobras (of Brazil) with some involvement by the Spanish multinational Repsol YPF and the French multinational Total SA, the president declared that Bolivia’s wealth would once again belong to Bolivians.

“The state reclaims the property, the possession and the total and absolute control of these resources,” states Article 1 of the decree. Article 2 states that as of May 1, all petroleum companies in Bolivia currently active in the production of gas or petroleum must hand over to YPFB, the Bolivian state oil company, 82 percent of the value of all production of hydrocarbons.

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Commentary

The Iran Nuclear Negotiations

The representatives of the five permanent members of the Security Council - Russia, China, the United States, Britain and France - plus Germany have agreed on a new set of proposals as a basis for discussion with Iran on its nuclear program. The proposals were drafted by the six major powers in Vienna on June 1 and delivered to Iran's Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, Ali Larijani, on June 6 in Tehran. The Iranian authorities have stated that they will thoroughly study the proposal and reply to it.

Although the contents of the proposal have not been disclosed, British Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett released a brief statement on behalf of the six major powers that said: "We are prepared to resume negotiations should Iran resume suspension of all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities as required by the IAEA. And we would also suspend action in the Security Council. We also agreed that if Iran decides not to engage in negotiations further steps would have to be taken in the Security Council. So there are two paths ahead. We urge Iran to take the positive path and to consider seriously our substantive proposals which would bring significant benefits to Iran."

The statement closely resembles the position announced by U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice at a press conference on May 31, the day before the Vienna meeting, in which she stated that the U.S. would agree to take part in direct negotiations with Iran on the condition that Iran suspends its uranium enrichment activities. The offer to join in the negotiations is a change of approach for the United States. Prior to May 31 the United States had consistently opposed all negotiations and advocated that the UN Security Council impose economic, political and military sanctions against Iran.

Iran has always been open to a negotiated settlement. It has already held extensive negotiations with the EU-3 and Russia. The last round of negotiations were unilaterally terminated by the EU-3. Then Russia made a proposal but negotiations

were short-lived because the United States did not agree with the Russian proposal. Iran did not set any preconditions for any of the past negotiations nor has it set any preconditions for a new round of negotiations. However, as a sovereign state, Iran considers itself entitled to the same rights as any other state and expects other states to respect those rights. If the United States and the other big powers are viewing negotiations as anything other than talks amongst states with equal rights then negotiations are unlikely to succeed.

The path of negotiations with Iran has always been open to the United States, Britain, France and Germany. However, the preferred approach of the Americans has been to get sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter on the grounds that Iran is a threat to international peace and security. The problem with this approach is that the U.S. have been unable to convince Russia and China to go along with it. In other words, the change in the U.S. approach towards negotiations with Iran, and the British, French and German offer to resume negotiations, does not stem from a change of heart but from the failure of their preferred approach.

Does the change in the U.S. approach to negotiations with Iran mean that the U.S. has abandoned its preferred approach? Judging from the statements by the British Foreign Secretary and the U.S. Secretary of State it does not seem so.

It is the position of *Modern Communism* that all countries have an inalienable right to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. It is a decision for each country whether they develop nuclear energy and to what extent it is developed. It is not the place for any country to dictate to another country what they can do in this respect. There is no reason why Iran should not have this technology while others like the United States have it. When it comes to international peace and security it is the United States that poses the biggest threat with the largest nuclear and conventional arsenal of all countries.

For Your Information

The Modern History of Terrorism in Canada

The modern Canadian experience with terrorism began in the late 1960s and early 1970s with the FLQ bombings in Quebec. It turned out that most of these acts were inspired by RCMP agents, who also supplied the dynamite used to make the bombs. The RCMP were operating as part of Operation Chaos, an operation involving U.S., British, Canadian and Australian intelligence agencies aimed at disrupting the revolutionary movement of the youth and students which was growing in those countries at that time.

The 1970 FLQ crisis was used to justify the imposition of the War Measures Act in Canada. Under the War Measures Act, hundreds of political activists were arrested and imprisoned without charge for lengthy periods of time, including hundreds of members and supporters of the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist) which had publicly condemned terrorism on numerous occasions, and which has never supported or excused terrorism as a legitimate form of political struggle. Several years later, two members of the FLQ cell which held British Trade Consul James Cross admitted to being RCMP informants. They revealed that the RCMP knew the exact location of Cross at all times and could have rescued him any time they wished, but they left him a prisoner of the FLQ for two months in order to justify their continuing assault on the progressive and revolutionary movement. Around the same time an RCMP officer was caught planting explosives when the bomb blew up prematurely and severed several

fingers.

In the early 1980s series of terrorist acts, including the bombing of Litton Industries in Toronto, took place in Canada. At this time a movement was gaining momentum against the testing of U.S. Cruise missiles on Canadian soil. These terrorist acts, which also bore the trademark signature of the RCMP, were used to attack and disrupt the movement against Cruise missile testing.

A third round of terrorism on Canadian soil occurred in the mid-1980s, culminating in the Air India bombing of June 23, 1985. The attack was supposedly carried out by Sikh separatists demanding an independent Sikh homeland called Khalistan. However, at the time both the RCMP and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) claimed that the bombing had been planned and organized by the Indian intelligence services, probably with the assistance of the American CIA, as a means to discredit and destroy the Khalistani movement. There were also suspicions about the involvement of the Israeli Mossad, which supported the Khalistani movement as leverage to blackmail India into dropping its support for the Palestinian cause.

This history of terrorism in Canada over the past 50 years demonstrates that terrorism is not a weapon used by oppressed people to fight against their more powerful oppressors. Rather, it is a weapon used by imperialism and oppressor states, such as the Canadian state, to strengthen themselves and disrupt the revolutionary movements which seek to put an end to imperialism and oppression

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individuals, their motivation or their history. The media frenzy, including a torrent of racist letters to the editor blaming the problem on an immigration policy that allows entry to people who do not share “Canadian values”, emboldened some individuals to vandalize the largest mosque in Toronto, resulting in tens of thousands of dollars in damage.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Security Minister Stockwell Day and various state officials have been pointing to the arrests as proof of the preparedness of the Canadian state to deal with the threat of terrorism, as well as proof of the correctness of the participation of Canadian military forces in Afghanistan. At the same time, they have been quick to claim that the motivation of the individuals has nothing to do with Canadian foreign policy but rather with their hatred for “Canadian values” of freedom and democracy.

Meanwhile, the response south of the border has been mixed. While members of the Bush administration praised the Canadian government, those members of the U.S. Congress who are pushing for the erection of fences on America’s borders used the arrests as proof that Canada is a breeding ground for terrorist groups.

Canadians oppose all forms of terrorism, both individual acts of terrorism, as well as state-organized acts of terror against the rights of the people, against national minorities and against other countries. However, an equal or greater danger to the Canadian people is posed by those, such as Harper and Day, who seek to exploit the arrests to justify both the increasing erosion of rights of the Canadian people as well as the increasing militarization of Canada’s foreign policy.

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As well, by July 1, the YPFB will have taken over control of all oil and gas production, exploration and distribution and within six months, all companies involved in the hydrocarbon industry in Bolivia will be required to sign nationalization agreements with the Bolivian state, or be asked to leave the country.

Nationalization of the country's natural gas resources was one of the key electoral promises Morales' Movement Towards Socialism (MAS) party was elected on in December 2005, with an unprecedented 54 percent of the popular vote. The election of MAS followed a wave of mass mobilizations throughout the countryside after the previous government failed to act on the results of a 2004 referendum, in which 94 percent of Bolivians voted in favour of nationalizing natural gas production.

Simply by increasing from 50 to 82 per cent the value on all gas or petroleum production, the May decree almost doubles the monies collected by Bolivia from the industry – to \$760 million (U.S.) from the \$440 million collected in 2005. According to YPFB president Jorge Alvarado, even receiving only 18 per cent of the value of gas being produced, the large energy conglomerates operating in Bolivia can expect profit rates of up to 25 percent, as natural gas and oil prices have risen threefold over the past five years.

Bolivia, the poorest country in Latin America, has the second largest natural gas reserves on the continent, second only to Venezuela. YPFB was first created in 1937, and by 1940, the state-run company was producing 882,000 barrels of oil per year, more than Standard Oil had produced in 15 years of operation in Bolivia. By 1953, YPFB was producing enough oil to take care of all national consumption needs and between 1985 and 1995, YPFB was the source of over 50 per cent of all state revenues in the country.

However, the industry was privatized in 1996, following intense pressure from the IMF and World Bank, which declared that the Bolivian economy would continue to “stagnate” without massively increasing foreign investment in the industry. Since privatization, billions of dollars worth of natural gas has been extracted from the country by a handful of conglomerates and sold to neighbouring countries, particularly Brazil, Argentina and Chile. During this

same time, these companies have invested next to nothing in further developing the Bolivian infrastructure for the export of natural gas. Nor has there be any investment during this period in developing the infrastructure for the internal use of natural gas, which could be processed within Bolivia and used to produce everything from fertilizer to plastics to electricity. While an estimated 80 percent of Bolivian households do not have access to natural gas or electricity in their kitchens, connecting every kitchen in the country to natural gas would only use up about 1.5 per cent of the country's reserve.

The reaction to the nationalization from the handful of foreign companies who have controlled Bolivia's natural gas for the last decade was swift, with expressions of “deep concern” from France and Spain. However, the Brazilian government reacted by saying it would “monitor the situation closely” and has since invited Morales, Chavez and Argentinian President Nestor Kirchner to an August 2006 summit to discuss continental energy issues.

On May 26, Morales and Chavez signed their first agreement under ALBA, creating a joint mining company, Minesur, and a fertilizer company, Fertisur. At the same time Venezuela pledged to invest some \$500 million in YPFB's efforts to modernize Bolivia's natural gas infrastructure.

Reacting to the nationalization decree, which was supported by 94 percent of the Bolivian population, U.S. President George Bush said on May 22 that he was “concerned about the erosion of democracy” in Bolivia and Venezuela.

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