

Editorial

What is the Issue in Tibet?

For the past couple of weeks the news media has been full of reports on Tibet, following the outbreak of anti-China protests and riots in the region. The protests have been described by some as being in support of Tibetan independence from China, while others claim that they are in support of greater autonomy. Still others, such as the U.S. and Canadian governments, have focussed on the issue of “human rights”. The Chinese government claims that the protests were organized by the Dalai Llama and that its police and security forces were merely responding to widespread violence and property destruction perpetrated by lawless rioters.

The reports of tourists caught in Lhasa during the rioting tend to bear out the claims of the Chinese authorities. Despite loaded questions by reporters about “brutal repression” of “peaceful protestors” by Tibetan police and the Chinese army, few eye-

witnesses confirmed such claims. Most spoke about the brutal attacks and murder of ethnic Chinese residents and the burning of their property by Tibetan mobs. One Canadian tourist told the CBC that, despite his sympathies with the cause of Tibetan independence, he believed that the response of the Chinese authorities was what one would expect in any country where angry mobs were burning, looting and beating other citizens.

Whatever the objectives of the protesters, which really are not very clear, what is clear is that the protests have been seized upon by the U.S. and its allies to destabilize and attempt to extract economic and political concessions out of China. In fact, given the entire history of CIA involvement in organizing and funding the Tibetan independence movement, as well

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Harper Gambles on Quebec

Two years into a minority government, Stephen Harper’s Conservatives still haven’t been able to make the breakthroughs in Ontario that would guarantee them a majority. In fact, despite polls which show that Canadians favour Harper as a leader two-to-one over Liberal leader Stephane Dion, the Conservatives have never moved beyond 39 percent in the polls, which means that their prospects for winning a majority remain slim.

Canadian federal politics were thrown into a state of disequilibrium in 1993, when the Progressive Conservatives were reduced to two seats and two regional powers emerged: the Bloc in Quebec and Reform in Western Canada.

Stephen Harper was one of the early organizers of the Reform Party but he left federal politics for a

time in the 1990s, convinced that an alliance between the oil and natural resource capitalists of the West and the finance capitalists of Ontario wasn’t possible. As head of the National Citizens’ Coalition, he penned the infamous “firewall” letter, suggesting that Alberta’s provincial government opt out of federal programs and essentially remove Alberta economically from Canada.

As talks got underway to merge the Reform/Canadian Alliance parties and the remnants of the old Progressive Conservatives, Harper was persuaded to re-enter politics. He ran for and won the leadership of the newly created Conservative Party and then toppled the Liberals after 13 years, winning a minority government in 2006. Despite small vote gains in rural

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Ontario, Harper couldn't break through in seat-rich southern, urban Ontario to win the seats that would guarantee him a majority. The Conservatives did, however, end their decade long exile in Quebec, picking up ten seats in the wake of the collapse of Liberal support combined with soft nationalists turning away from the Bloc.

Since 2006, Harper has tried repeatedly to position himself as an Ontario-friendly leader, with virtually no success. His confrontational relationship with the Liberal government in Ontario has gone from bad to worse, with his Ontario lieutenant, Jim Flaherty, a former finance minister under Mike Harris, now officially engaged in a war of words with the Premier McGinty. John Baird, another of his high-profile Ontario MPs, has been linked to a scandal in Ottawa municipal politics and has had to lower his profile in the province.

Instead, it appears that Harper has decided to gamble on Quebec giving him the seats he needs to win a majority. In the past week, his labour minister, Jean-Pierre Blackburn, told Quebec media that if the Conservatives win a majority in the next election, they would re-open the constitution to recognize Quebec as a nation within Canada.

Harper's control over his ministers is now the stuff of legend in Ottawa – there is no doubt that Blackburn spoke with Harper's full authorization. This follows Harper's 2007 Parliamentary motion, which recognized the Quebecois as a nation within Canada without opening the constitution.

This strategy marks a shift for Harper. As leader of the Canadian Alliance, he delivered a speech to a Montreal crowd in January 2002 in which he criticized soft nationalism as an approach for Conservatives to win seats in Quebec.

“Over the past few years I have concluded that this strategy is fundamentally mistaken. It ignores the real lesson of Canadian history - that while Conservatives have come to power by exploiting a nationalist strategy in Quebec, such coalitions have never lasted very long. Indeed, they have ended in political disaster,” he said.

He wasn't mistaken and in fact, the last attempt to amend the Constitution by a Conservative Prime

Minister led to the 1993 destruction of the Progressive Conservatives. It appears, however, that Harper has become so desperate to win a majority that he is willing to once again roll the dice on Quebec, while at the same time positioning himself to Ontario finance capital as the only Canadian politician who can control the nationalists in Quebec.

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non-Jews still make up only 20 percent of the population of Israel, when the entire territory occupied and militarily controlled by Israel is considered, Jews make only 50.3 percent of the population and will soon be in the minority. Within the Zionist community this is known colloquially as Israel's “demographic time bomb”.

In spite of Israel's open discrimination in favour of Jews in Israel proper, it constantly claims itself to be a democratic state. As time goes on and the Zionists continue build and populate more and larger Jewish-only settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem the sham of the democratic Jewish state becomes harder and harder to maintain. There are now at least five different classes of people living in the territory of the Palestine. There are Jews in Israel proper and Jews in Jewish-only settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. These people are all considered residents of Israel wherever they reside and have full rights as citizens in the state of Israel. In addition there are Israeli Arab citizens of Israel proper. These people are citizens of Israel but that citizenship is attenuated by official discrimination in favour of Jews. There are also the Palestinian Arab residents in East Jerusalem who are considered residents of Israel but not citizens. Finally there are the Palestinian Arabs residing in the West Bank, the Golan and Gaza who are neither citizens nor residents and have no rights in respect of the governing power that controls them.

Sixty years after the advent of Israel and nearly one hundred and eighty years after the birth of the Zionist project in Palestine, the Zionists have succeeded in creating a profoundly undemocratic, racist, multi-ethnic entity whose only future is greater and greater oppression of an increasing majority of its citizen/residents.

Marking 60 years of the Zionist State

The sixtieth anniversary of the creation of the Jewish state of Israel occurs next month. Its inauguration on May 11, 1948 officially dates to the end of the civil war in the British mandated area of Palestine. The members of the United Nations Security Council voted to partition Palestine on November 19, 1947. The partition gave 55 percent of the territory to the Jewish population and 45 percent to the indigenous Arab population. The UN resolution gave the largest portion of the land to the Jews even though they formed only 37 percent of the population of Palestine at the time and owned only 7 percent of the land in what was to become the Jewish section of the partition of Palestine.

The partition decision in the UN was followed immediately by a "civil war" between the Palestinian Arabs and the Palestinian Jews over control of the land. The Arabs goal was to prevent the creation of the Jewish state. The aim of the Jews was to establish that state and control as much of the pre-partition territory of Palestine as possible. A second and equally important goal of the Jewish leadership was to exclude as much as possible of the Arab population from the new Jewish state.

The entire Zionist project from its very beginnings in 1880 was to create an exclusionary Jewish state in all of what came to be the mandated territory of Palestine which the Zionists considered to be the biblical land of Israel. The state of Israel was to become the homeland of all the world's Jews. The Arabs who had lived in Palestine for thousands of years were to be dispossessed of their lands and encouraged or forced to relocate to neighbouring Arab lands or elsewhere.

The fighting between the Zionist forces and the Palestinian Arabs and the subsequent war involving Syria, Jordan, Egypt and Iraq ended in 1949 with the Zionists in control of more than 70 percent of partitioned territory and a Arab population that made up approximately 20 percent of the population of the state of Israel. Another 700,000 Palestinian Arabs about 80 percent of the total Arab population of pre-partition Palestine who had lived in what became Israel were displaced as refugees into camps in the

West Bank and Gaza Strip as well as to adjoining Arab countries, mainly Syria, Jordan and Lebanon.

Subsequent wars were provoked by Israel in 1956, 1967 and 1973. In all of these conflicts Israel received massive material and logistical support for the governments of Western Europe and the United States. These wars left Israel in military control of the entire area of the old British mandated Palestine partly as Israel proper and the rest in occupied territory. The Arab Palestinian state that had been mandated by the UN resolution of 1947, was of course never created.

Since it conquered the Golan Heights, West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967 Israel has moved more than 400,000 Jewish colonists into settlements in the occupied territories and East Jerusalem. It maintains these settlements by force of arms and maintains a network of Jewish-only roads to link the settlements to each other and to Israel proper.

As the state of Israel approaches its 60th anniversary however it faces the cold reality that the Zionist plans for an exclusionist Jewish state in Palestine will never come to fruition. There are several reasons for this. First and foremost is that contrary to Zionist theory, Israel is not the solution to anti-Semitism. Zionism maintains that Jews will never be free of anti-Semitism while they continue to live in non-Jewish countries. The only escape from the anti-Semitism of non-Jews according to this logic is to move to the Jewish state of Israel.

By and large Jews living outside of Israel are living quite peacefully and free of oppression in their home countries in the Americas and Europe. They are not subjected to pogroms and are well integrated into their societies and free from discrimination official or otherwise. Ironically, Israel as an officially Jewish state, routinely practices discrimination against its non-Jewish citizens. The vast majority of the world's Jews have chosen not to move to Israel because they have not felt the need or desire to do so. Consequently, the Jewish population of Palestine is not being swelled by an influx of Jewish immigrants.

Second, the population of Arabs in Israel and the occupied territories is growing rapidly. Although

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as similar anti-government movements in Ukraine, Georgia, Lebanon, and various Central Asian republics, there is probably little doubt that the current protests are the work of the U.S. and its intelligence agencies.

There is a massive amount of disinformation spread concerning Tibet and its relationship to the rest of China. Despite considerable evidence to the contrary, claims of cultural genocide and widespread human rights abuses abound and are simply accepted and promoted as the truth by the pro-American news media. On the other hand, the claims of the Chinese authorities that their treatment of Tibetans and other national minorities within China's borders is beyond reproach are also suspect.

As any other nation, the nation of Tibet has the right to self-determination, up to and including independence if its people so desire. However, this is a matter between the Tibetan people and the Chinese government. It is not the business of the United States, which has never supported the right to self-determination of any nation. In fact, the history of U.S. foreign policy is a history of supporting the domination of smaller nations, either by itself or by its allies. It has never supported the liberation of oppressed nations, and any support it has ever lent to national liberation movements has been for the purpose of displacing the former oppressors and taking over that role for itself. The people of the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Cuba and most other peoples of Asia, Latin America and Africa can attest to this truth.

The U.S. is also in no position to lecture China regarding standards of human rights. When the U.S. shuts down its torture chambers in Guantanamo, Iraq and various Eastern European countries; when it withdraws its occupation troops from foreign soil; when it stops organizing death squads in Central America; when it stops propping up warlords in Africa, Afghanistan and other regions; when it stops treating its own Aboriginal peoples, Blacks and Hispanics as second- and third-class citizens, then maybe it will have the moral authority to criticize the human rights records of other countries.

The Canadian government, which will not even protest the torture and murder of its own citizens at the hands of the U.S. imperialists, which supports the U.S. imperialist efforts to enslave other peoples and which condemns hundreds of thousands of its own people, especially Aboriginal peoples, to lives of extreme poverty and misery, is also in no position to lecture others about respect for human rights.

The U.S. and Canadian governments could care less about the human rights of the Tibetan people. Nor do they have any illusions that they can succeed in separating Tibet from China and making it a puppet of U.S. imperialism. Their only concern about the situation in Tibet is to exploit it in order to maximize the damage to China, hoping to thereby weaken it in its inter-capitalist rivalry with various U.S. and Canadian corporations. The U.S. imperialists also hope to fuel ethnic tensions in all of China's western regions, further destabilizing China and threatening its access to the vast energy resources of Central Asia.

The Canadian working class and people should refuse to get caught up in these imperialist intrigues. The aspirations of the peoples everywhere for genuine human and democratic rights will never be achieved by lining up with one group of monopoly capitalists and imperialists against another. In fact, they can only be realized through the complete elimination of monopoly capitalism and the imperialist system of states.

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To contact the Manitoba Branch of CPC(M-L):
Fax: 477-6741
Email: mrc-cpcml@mts.net
Internet: www.modern-communism.ca
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