

“Cheats and Deceivers”

Bill Van Auken
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In an editorial published Sunday, the *Financial Times* of London joined the media onslaught against Iran, calling its rulers “cheats and deceivers” who “cannot be remotely trusted” in relation to the country’s nuclear program.

If the newspaper is committed to exposing “cheats and deceivers,” why has it waited so long? It could have provided its readers with this valuable service nearly seven years ago during the buildup to the war against Iraq. After all, this epithet perfectly fits the role played by the US and British governments.

It is now a well established historical fact that Bush and Blair systematically deceived their own people and the entire world as they prepared for a war of aggression against Iraq. They sought to stampede public opinion behind the war by portraying Iraq as an imminent threat because of its supposed “weapons of mass destruction” and (wholly fabricated) ties to Al Qaeda and the 9/11 attacks. Not only have these claims been proven to be lies in the wake of the March 2003 invasion of Iraq, there is ample evidence that those who told them knew they were lies at the time.

In attempting to bolster its case that Iran’s nuclear program poses a similar threat, the *Financial Times* published not only its editorial, but, on the facing page, a column penned by Paul Wolfowitz, one of the principal architects of the Iraq war and a leading purveyor of the false intelligence used to prepare it. This individual, who should be indicted and tried for war crimes, is now recycled as an expert on the Iranian “threat.”

All this is forgotten and forgiven. The same people responsible for a war that has claimed the lives of over one million Iraqis are back in business, with the entire propaganda machine of the corporate-controlled media set into motion to amplify their charges against Iran.

Along similar lines, *Washington Post* columnist Richard Cohen, who happily parroted the Bush

administration’s lies about Iraqi WMD, wrote a column Tuesday dismissing Iran’s claim that its nuclear facilities are designed for peaceful purposes. “Those Persians lie like a rug,” he snorted.

More ominously, he used the column to attack Obama for being too conciliatory and to propagandize for war. “Only the United States has the capability to obliterate Tehran’s underground facilities,” he wrote. “Washington may have to act.”

The latest hysteria has been whipped up in advance of the October 1 talks set to take place in Geneva between Iran and the P5+1 powers, i.e., the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council—the United States, Russia, China, Britain and France—plus Germany. It has centered on the purported discovery of a “secret” underground nuclear facility near the city of Qom, melodramatically announced last Friday at a joint press conference staged by US President Barack Obama, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and French President Nicolas Sarkozy.

As it turns out, Iran had notified the United Nations nuclear watchdog agency, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), four days earlier of the plant’s existence, and US intelligence had been aware of it for several years. According to the non-proliferation treaty signed by Iran, the country is required to notify the IAEA of such a facility only 180 days before nuclear fuel is brought to it, something Tehran says will not happen for another year and a half. Thus, this latest revelation has produced no evidence that Iran is out of compliance with the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), much less engaged in a program to produce nuclear weapons.

More fundamentally, neither Washington nor any other major power has bothered to explain why Iran’s alleged pursuit of such weapons is a crime against humanity, while it is perfectly acceptable for India, Pakistan and Israel to obtain nuclear bombs of their

own. Unlike Iran, none of these three countries has signed the 40-year-old NPT or allowed the IAEA to inspect their facilities.

Israel is believed to possess hundreds of nuclear weapons and has repeatedly threatened to attack Iran. The US has consistently shielded Israel from inspection and recently denounced a resolution passed by the IAEA General Assembly calling on the Zionist state to conform to the NPT.

For that matter, Iran itself would be a nuclear power today—with Washington’s blessing—were it not for the 1979 revolution that overthrew the hated US-backed dictatorship of the Shah. Washington’s biggest arms customer and regional gendarme, the Shah openly declared his intention to obtain nuclear weapons, and the US sold him the reactors and fuel to do so.

There is a principled argument—and the *World Socialist Web Site* has made it—that an attempt by the bourgeois nationalist regime in Iran to obtain nuclear weapons would not only be reactionary, but would fail to protect the country against imperialism. The working class cannot support the arms policy of any bourgeois government. It can rely only on its international unity in the struggle for socialism to defeat war.

That being said, who are Iran’s accusers to preach against nuclear weapons? The United States, the principal instigator of armed violence around the world, possesses the largest stockpile of nuclear weapons of any country. It has the grim distinction of being the only power to ever use such weapons. It dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki to demonstrate its military power by incinerating the civilian populations of two major cities. Moreover, the US is itself in violation of the NPT, having failed to move towards nuclear disarmament and instead developed new generations of nuclear arms such as “bunker-buster” bombs.

Britain and France, with their long histories of crimes against the colonial countries, both have their own nuclear arsenals, while Germany—for well known historical reasons—is not in a position to lecture anyone about anything. In any case, Berlin, which is embarked once again on the buildup of its military, has obtained the technology and developed the nuclear fuel cycle that would allow it to produce nuclear weapons in large quantities in a matter of months, if not weeks. Its World War II ally Japan has developed the same capacity.

Washington’s opposition to Iran obtaining a similar capacity is based on purely strategic calculations. It fears that an Iranian nuclear capability would alter the balance of power in a region where US imperialism is waging two wars—on Iran’s eastern and western borders. The aim of both the Afghanistan and Iraq wars is to assert US hegemony over the vast energy resources of the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Basin, of which Iran’s oil and gas reserves constitute a substantial part.

Those tempted to swallow the latest propaganda campaign against Iran should snap out of their political amnesia. The Obama administration is following the same playbook used by Bush in 2002-2003. It is circulating increasingly ominous and completely unsubstantiated claims about alleged Iranian “weapons of mass destruction,” while demanding that Tehran commit what amounts to slow-motion suicide by acceding to an endless series of impossible demands. And in furtherance of its objective of regime change, it has provided active support to a right-wing, pro-imperialist Iranian opposition.

Mr. Obama, far from changing anything in relation to these strategic objectives, has merely imbued US imperialist policy with even greater hypocrisy. It is he and his allies who, like Bush and Blair before them, have earned the title “cheats and deceivers.”

There is a logic to such deceit. It would be a great mistake to believe that Obama, as distinguished from his predecessor, is committed to diplomacy and merely wants to pressure Iran. Behind the official lies and the increasingly hysterical media campaign there is a real and present danger that Washington is preparing to launch a military attack against Iran, and sooner than many might think.

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