

The stench of dictatorship

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The raids carried out by the FBI against antiwar activists last week are an ominous warning to the entire working class. The police-state tactics show the extent to which basic democratic rights—including the right to free speech and political association—have been undermined in the US.

The Obama administration ordered the invasion of the homes of several individuals—primarily members of the Freedom Road Socialist Organization (FRSO)—and the seizure of documents, computers, cell phones, cameras and other personal and political material. Those targeted have been summoned to appear before a grand jury on October 12 and may face criminal prosecution for “material support” for terrorism.

What is the rationale for these actions? There are vague and unsubstantiated allegations of visits to groups that the US government officially designates as “terrorist.” These designations are entirely guided by the requirements at any given time of US foreign policy—that is, organizations are deemed to be “terrorist” depending on whether they are supporting or opposing US interests in the Middle East, Latin America or other parts of the globe.

Under attack is not simply one organization. The government and its array of military-police agencies aim to expand the criminalization of dissent in the United States.

The move by the FBI and the Obama administration is intended as a trial balloon. They seek to create a precedent as well as gauge the reaction from the public and from the media. On the last score, the administration is no doubt pleased with the response: near-universal silence. The newspapers have buried the story, and the television news has not covered it. The *New York Times*, the voice of the liberal establishment, printed a small article on its inside pages.

The supposedly “left” press has also remained silent.

The *Nation* magazine has yet to produce an article or comment on its web site. This reaction is no accident. The *Nation* and the coterie of pro-Democratic Party organizations around it support the Obama administration and its policies—including the expansion of war, the attack on the working class, and the further dismantling of democratic rights in the United States. Their main aim is to prevent any exposure of the real character of the government.

On every front, Obama has continued the policy of Bush in expanding the power of the state to spy, imprison, torture and assassinate its opponents. The police raids came at the same time as revelations that the administration is seeking to extend government spying to include Facebook, Skype and BlackBerry communications. It has repeatedly invoked the “state secrets” doctrine to block court cases on rendition, torture and warrantless wiretapping.

The administration has asserted the right of the government to assassinate anyone, including US citizens, on sole authority of the president. It has extended the Patriot Act and other anti-democratic legislation passed under Bush. And the administration is in the middle of global campaign of smears and intimidation targeting Wikileaks for its role in exposing the criminality of US wars abroad.

The dismantling of American democracy is connected to two interrelated processes. First, the expanding US-led wars bring it into ever more direct conflict with the world’s population. The use of torture, the establishment of the Guantanamo Bay detention camp and other anti-democratic measures are ultimately an outcome of these criminal wars. The same tactics will increasingly be used against opposition within the United States.

Obama is now leading a bloody offensive in Afghanistan and Pakistan and is ratcheting up tensions with China, Iran and other powers, threatening a global

conflagration. It is standard procedure for any imperialist power to seek to criminalize opposition to its interests with the label of “terrorism.” If the term has any objective meaning, however, it must certainly apply to methods of the US government itself, including drone attacks launched against helpless civilian populations in the far reaches of the world, controlled by CIA officials in air-conditioned offices in the US.

Second, the breakdown of American democracy is inextricably linked to the growing social crisis in the United States itself. Inequality in the US is at record heights. The financial aristocracy has exploited a crisis of its own making to vastly enrich itself. It is now demanding that the bill be paid by the working class in the form of wage cuts, mass unemployment and austerity.

As the Socialist Equality Party notes in its program, *The Breakdown of Capitalism and the Struggle for Socialism in the United States*, “The growth of social inequality is incompatible with democracy. The new aristocracy brings with it the aristocratic principle of government, in which the state functions ever more openly as an instrument of class rule.”

The ruling class knows very well that its policies will encounter resistance from the people. Determined to maintain and increase its ill-gotten wealth at whatever cost, it will resort to ever more open forms of political repression.

While the Socialist Equality Party has many fundamental political differences with the Maoist and nationalist politics of the FRSO and similar groups, it unreservedly defends their democratic rights. We demand an immediate halt to the investigation and the campaign of fear and intimidation launched by the US government.

War, inequality, and attacks on democratic rights are all products of the capitalist system, which is maintained through the political and economic dictatorship of the banks and giant corporations. The fight to defend these rights, therefore, is bound up with the independent political mobilization of the working class on the basis of a socialist program. The SEP urges all those who want to carry out such a fight to study its program and make the decision to join the Socialist Equality Party.

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