

Obama hails police state methods in Chicago

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President Barack Obama on Monday praised the performance of Chicago city officials and the Chicago Police Department after a week of violence, repression and frame-ups directed against antiwar demonstrators in the city.

Speaking at the conclusion of the NATO summit, Obama paid tribute to Mayor Rahm Emanuel, his political crony and former White House chief of staff, and added, referring to the thousands of police mobilized against protesters, “Chicago’s finest did a great job under significant pressure and a lot of scrutiny.”

What was this “great job?”

- Downtown Chicago was effectively shut down for four days, Friday through Monday, not by the protesters, never more than 5,000 people, but by a huge mobilization of police and paramilitary forces who frequently outnumbered the demonstrators. The entire area around McCormick Place, site of the summit, was under lockdown.

- Police arrested well over 100 demonstrators in the course of the week, including more than 60 Sunday, a day of tense confrontations in which police continually vented their hostility towards the demonstrators, who were opposing the US-NATO war in Afghanistan and other imperialist military interventions.

- The violent dispersal of the protesters late Sunday afternoon was entirely one-sided, as described by the *Chicago Sun-Times*—a staunchly pro-police tabloid—which headlined its account, “Riot Gear Cops Rain Down Blows on Protesters.” The beatings were so widespread and indiscriminate that one of the newspaper’s own reporters was among those bloodied. At least 25 demonstrators were injured, with a dozen requiring hospital treatment.

- Most ominously, five protesters were arrested in police raids targeting individuals supposedly preparing “terrorist” attacks on the NATO summit. The same two informants fingered all five men, after the undercover cops had circulated widely among the protesters looking for anyone they could instigate or entrap.

The charges of “conspiring to commit domestic terrorism during the NATO summit,” brought before the Cook County Circuit Court, are a deliberate attempt to intimidate opponents of the US-NATO war in Afghanistan and other imperialist military interventions either under way or being planned by the Obama administration.

The whole machinery of provocation and frame-up, erected over the past decade in the name of the “war on terror,” is now being used against the democratic rights of working people and youth who oppose the policies of the American government. As the *World Socialist Web Site* has consistently warned, the methods tested out against immigrants and Muslims are now being unleashed against the American people as a whole.

The Chicago frame-ups of antiwar protesters follow in the footsteps of previous provocations: last month’s arrest of five Cleveland-area Occupy protesters on similarly trumped-up charges; the systematic police violence against Occupy encampments last fall and winter; the FBI raids on the homes of antiwar activists in Minneapolis and Chicago in the fall of 2010.

They are part of a broader assault on democratic rights being carried out by the Obama administration, which has gone even further than the Bush White House in erecting the scaffolding of a police state. Obama signed the National Defense Authorization Act, which gives the president the right to order the military detention, without trial, of anyone he designates as a terrorist threat, including US citizens. Obama has sharply increased targeted assassinations of alleged

terrorists, including the murder of US citizens, and openly defended the president's supposed unilateral "right" to do so.

Both big business parties are systematically shredding the Bill of Rights and stripping the American people of their constitutionally guaranteed rights.

These heavy-handed measures expose the fraudulent character of the claims by Democratic and Republican politicians that American imperialism is on the side of "democracy" and "freedom" when it wages wars against countries that possess vast reserves of oil and natural gas, or occupy strategic locations adjacent to such resources.

America is the most heavily policed of the industrialized countries. The combined forces of repression—local and state police, the military, the FBI, the CIA and other intelligence agencies, the vast apparatus of the Department of Homeland Security, the endless armies of private security personnel—number in the many millions.

In the final analysis, this vast apparatus of repression testifies to the crisis of American capitalism, not its strength. The more acute the social tensions, the more charged the political atmosphere, the deeper the resentment of working people towards the privileged elite, the more the ruling class is compelled to surround itself with what Marx and Engels described as the essence of the state—"bodies of armed men."

The working class must take a warning from the events in Chicago on the role of the police, including their informants and provocateurs, and the role of the Obama administration.

The decisive issue is the political clarification of the working class and the development of a mass, independent political mobilization of working people and youth based on a socialist and internationalist program. Only such a mass movement, fighting to take political power and establish a workers government, can forestall the drive towards repression and dictatorship by the corporate elite and its political defenders, both Democratic and Republican.

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