

A Rouge Forum Broadside

The Camps Are Already Open

Perpetual War and Tyranny or Social Justice?

(Third in a series)

“If there's another attack by Arabs on U.S. soil, not too many people will be crying in their beer if there are more detentions, more stops, more profiling, There will be a groundswell of public opinion to banish civil rights. There will be internment camps.” (Peter Kirsanow, Bush appointee, US Civil Rights Commission speaking to Arab-Americans, July 19 2002).

“US troops must ready for pre-emptive military action against Iraq, a massive assault against President Saddam Hussein could be likely at short notice.” (George Bush, July 21 2002).

“Every time they say that they will coordinate more,” Mr. Muhammad said, referring to American commanders. “They killed my people in Oruzgan, and they said they would not make a mistake again and that they would contact us first. Then they did it again.” (New York Times, July 21 2002)

There will come a time when an international community of people, connected in friendly ways, will lead reasonably free, creative, humane, lives where they do not have to split life from work, where a society based on a war of all on all seems a distant memory, and where love, labor, and rational knowledge are seen as centerpieces of the key idea of a new way of governing, all for all, equally, inclusively, and democratically.

That time will be born from social conditions that exist today, and the choices we make. US rulers promise citizens a perpetual pre-emptive world war, wrapped in tricky language that equates battles for cheap labor, raw materials, and markets with freedom and democracy. Our true social condition must be named: capitalism.

Capitalism expands or dies: imperialism. Greed, racism, and hubris kept things going. In WWII, the Soviet Red Army and Chinese Communists stopped the fascist advance from Germany and Japan. 20 million Russians died, and untold millions of Chinese, compared to 500,000 US casualties. After WWII, the US allied with known fascists worldwide, restoring them to power, as in Germany, Japan, the Philippines, Vietnam, Latin America, and South Africa, and many more—playing the ‘great game’ against the Soviet Union, a nation which quickly restored capitalist relations (exploited, alienated labor, imperialism) following their anti-Czarist revolution.

Both world wars bore revolutions. In China, in 1949, a mostly egalitarian and democratic Red Army drove the fascist Kuomintang into the sea. But the ‘socialist’ Chinese government quickly restored inequality and tyranny, on the job and in daily life. By 1955 it was clear that socialism, which merely nationalized the work force and promised better times ahead under a benevolent party dictatorship, had failed to meet its promises—a lesson that cost the lives of millions of people who fought for freedom.

Since 1945, the imperial US battled the world, and usually failed. In Korea, US troops (backed by jets and naval bombardment) fled in panic for 120 miles, from an enemy of about equal size, only lightly armed. Despite a policy of “Kill All, Burn All,” the US government lost the war in Vietnam, abandoning its allies, costing about 2 million Vietnamese lives and 55,000 US casualties. People’s victory in Vietnam, caused in part by US troops’ refusal to fight, transformed the world. The US stood exposed as a paper tiger at home and abroad. Citizens everywhere knew the US government, an executive committee of the rich, could not be trusted. The US economy nearly collapsed.

The US challenged the Soviets to a war of military spending. The Soviet economy fell apart. With capital in full bloom in the once-USSR, doctors dig roots for food. US military spending grew to 50.5 % of the budget (2002). Now, US rulers seek to resolve the contradiction of the unyielding international demands of capitalist relations and the necessity of a national armed military base for specific capitalists in power. The US overseers invade the world, and try to make fascism popular at home. September 11, which evidence says was predictable, surely served their purposes.

“Exterminate All the Brutes”

or

Organize to Comprehend and Change the World?

This is a partial list of places where US troops (and CIA) are now active: Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakstan, Georgia (USSR), Turkey, Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, India, Pakistan, Venezuela, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Palestine, China, Nepal, Bhutan, Brazil, Argentina, Iraq, Iran, Paraguay, Mexico. At issue is the survival of US capitalism, mainly in the form of cheap labor, but also in the battle for key raw materials like oil, as well as the battle of ideas—they key weapon being the idea that there is no other way to live. US leaders no longer bother to tell troops they are fighting for democracy. The only motivator: fight or you and your buddy will get killed. Only despair, rooted in no clear alternatives, makes that believable.

Still, the US military, as in Vietnam, cannot surmount US strategic and political weakness. US rulers cannot be friends to the majority of people. The oil war in Afghanistan, initiated long before September 11, is already a failed war. The enemy slipped away, the US re-installed dope-dealer warlords as the government. They are killing each other. US military leaders, knowing its troops are quickly unreliable, are left with a techno-war, blindly bombing civilians with drones. The US is a very fragile power.

With the institution of the Patriot Act, which negates most key constitutional freedoms (longtime myths for many poor, especially black, citizens), and the Homeland Security Act, the structures of fascism are in place inside the US. Untold thousands of people are held, now, without rights to attorneys, without trials, in US gulags. But fascism is only the institutionalization of capital's war of all on all. Fascism implodes, cannot prevail—often at great cost to those citizens who were its more fervent supporters.

Capitalism diminishes everyone it touches. It creates horrors: a modern holocaust, the likely starvation of 15 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2002 (UN estimate) The Taliban was a logical outcome of capital's processes: ignorance and irrationalism coupled with violence and death.

Capitalism's injustice also spawns resistance. People are fighting back. In Venezuela a CIA coup was defeated, temporarily, by popular uprisings. In Argentina, millions of people are taking to the streets in opposition to government-imposed cut-backs. South Africans are beginning to mobilize to demand the equality and democracy the ANC promised them. 200 million homeless people in China, peasants driven from their land to create a massive urban workforce, repeatedly battle the “Red” Army, as do those left in the hinterlands. General strikes hit Greece, Italy, and Spain in 2002. A similar fight is afoot in London.

Inside the US, fascism is popular. With the economy in crisis, the possibility of large numbers of troops returning in body bags from Iraq, the memory of Vietnam may cause popular discontent. But a culture steeped in selfishness for years is not likely to produce significant mass organized resistance quickly.

Even so, there is no way out in the long run but to get beyond capitalism. 350 years of capitalist history demonstrates that it leads to war and impoverishment. Reforms, without overcoming capital as a strategic goal, just urge people into blind canyons. Everything connects in the real world. Any reform effort should combine an important social change, like free health care or sane schooling, with new methods of organizing, tactics that meet the strategy, going outside the exclusive hierarchies of most reform movements, to the goal that each person fully grasp methods of understanding and changing the world.

Reform organizations in the US, however, are not even seeking reforms, and are incapable of the kind of organizing that even a reform movement requires. All of the trade unions *support* capital's war.

The industrial working class, which civilized the US, winning reforms like rights to free speech, to organize, to strike, social security and the 40 hour week, is largely gone, deindustrialized outside the US. Those who remain are trapped in unions which will never be democratic, will never oppose capitalism, because they were organized to support capital, not transcend it. But things will change. A fair world is possible.

The people who are most oppressed, who are most likely to lead resistance, are excluded from most unions. Immigrants, black people, poor peoples' lives are now organized around schools, not industrial work sites. Because schools are now the central organizing point of US life, because a key product of schools is new ideas, because action in schools can spark action elsewhere, it is reasonable to suggest that the focal point of organizing for people who are serious about change should be in US schools. Such is the path to a fair world.

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