

Contribution of Ray O. Light (USA)

The Aggressive and Expansionist Character of US Imperialism, the Intensifying Contradictions Among the Imperialist Powers and the Local and Regional Wars Driving Toward World War

"Our challenge in this new century is a difficult one: to defend our nation against the unknown, the uncertain, the unseen, and the unexpected...[T]o accomplish [this task], we must ...take risks and try new things---so we can deter and defeat adversaries that have not yet emerged to challenge us." ---US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, (Our emphasis, "Transforming the Military", p. 23, *Foreign Affairs*, May-June 2002)

The quote cited above from US Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld certainly sounds like the ravings of a lunatic; yet, at the same time, it represents the precise military position of United States imperialism in this historical moment when the one imperialist "superpower" has marched forward to assert its new world order---its claim to world empire. This combination of "lunacy" and precision underscores the extent to which imperialism, headed by US imperialism represents the last, dying stage of capitalism. As Lenin taught, imperialism offers the peoples of the world only one path to salvation---socialism, the path of the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat on the basis of the smashing of the system of international capitalism, on the basis of the military-political defeat of imperialism.

Rumsfeld's ravings also reflect the extent to which this truly "evil empire" moves inexorably toward isolating itself, while providing an increasingly strong basis for almost everyone else in the world to find common ground upon which to unite against the imperialist juggernaut.

As far back as Bush senior's administration, with its projection of a "new world order", then U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz had written that, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the USA must act to prevent the rise of peer competitors in Europe and Asia. (See G. John Ilkenberry's "America's Imperial Ambitions", *Foreign Affairs*, Sept/Oct. 2002) As Ilkenberry puts it, "America is to be less bound to its partners and to global rules and institutions while it steps forward to play a more unilateral and anticipatory role...The United States will use its unrivalled military power to manage the global order."

In June 2002, in his West Point commencement address, President Bush II established the centerpiece of his post 9-11 US security policy as follows: "America has, and intends to keep, military strengths beyond challenges..." This "new grand strategy taking shape in Washington"... "begins with a fundamental commitment to maintaining a unipolar world in which the United States has no peer competitor." (Ibid) Rival imperialist powers have learned this lesson the hard way.

Since 9-11, wherever oil and/or natural gas is in abundance, or where strategic transport routes and pipelines for oil and natural gas are at stake, from Georgia in the former USSR to Qatar in the Middle East, to Colombia in South America to the Philippines in Southeast Asia, and especially in Afghanistan and Iraq, the US military has been sent to take control of the world's oil and natural gas supply in order to maintain US economic hegemony in the world.

George W. Bush (with the aid and comfort of Britain's Tony Blair) unilaterally threatened and then launched unprovoked ("pre-emptive") war against oil rich Iraq in March 2003. Most significantly, in this process, Bush moved a few hundred thousand US troops with phenomenal armaments into the oil laden sheikdoms of Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, etc and militarily occupied Iraq and surrounded Saudi Arabia, the only country in the world with proven oil reserves greater than Iraq's. (Iraq and Saudi Arabia are really one land literally divided by a line in the sand drawn by British and French imperialism in the closing days of the First World War.)

Prior to the Spring 2003 open war of aggression and subsequent military occupation of Iraq, the US had no lease agreements for Iraqi oil fields with the Saddam Hussein regime, while French and Russian leases were for huge oil reserves and Germany possessed lucrative construction contracts for Iraqi infrastructure and industry ⁽¹⁾.

Since mid 2002, when Bush began to focus on Iraq as his next target, the partner-rivals of US imperialism have begun to realize that they are in danger of becoming "permanent" economic subordinates to the hegemonic imperialist power. This growing realization led to growing resistance, especially on the part of French and German imperialism, along with the Belgian imperialists and big capitalist forces in China and Russia. Thus, the US-led war against the people of Iraq and the Middle East, in contrast to the *global* coalition that attacked Afghanistan, was virtually a *solo* act by the United States ⁽²⁾.

Even *before* US and British imperialism launched their war against Iraq, mainstream US news sources had leaked the fact that US imperialism's post Saddam Hussein direct US military occupation government in Iraq, under US General Tommy Franks (ultimately Paul Bremer), had been planned, including the allocation of Iraq's vast oil reserves, to US oil companies. Likewise, no-bid contracts for the reconstruction of Iraq were granted to Halliburton, Bechtel Corp., and other Bush-Cheney-Rumsfeld connected corporations by the bloodthirsty Bush Regime before they had even destroyed it!

The awful unity of the US-led global coalition for imperialist war and aggression against the people of Afghanistan was precipitously transformed in the 2002-2003 Iraqi war

scenario where such partner-rivals of US imperialism as Germany, France and Russia were not only not part of the coalition but actively opposed its initiative! These powerful monopoly capitalist and imperialist states (as well as the powerful capitalist states in Asia including China, India, Pakistan and of course Imperialist Japan) must find vehicles to express their selfish interests in opposition to those of US imperialism.

Thus far, while the British Labor (i.e. Social-Democratic) government has remained closely allied to US imperialism, international Social-Democracy, led by Germany's S-D's in state power and by the Christian Democrats at the head of the French government, has been the main vehicle to express the contradictions between these powerful capitalist and imperialist states on the one hand, and US imperialism on the other. Even within the USA, Social Democracy (as manifested in the top leadership of both the AFL-CIO and the NAACP) became opposed to the specific imminent war on Iraq in late 2002 seemingly in concert with the European imperialist powers. The massive demonstrations worldwide were largely fueled by this phenomenon. However, as soon as Bush declared his quick victory at the beginning of May, these same imperialist partner-rivals, just as quickly jumped back into line behind US imperialism. And the global anti-war movement in its tens of millions virtually dried up overnight!! ⁽³⁾

All of these representatives of international capital have been made desperate and therefore shameless by the impact of the *global capitalist economic crisis*. Each tries to shift the burden of the crisis off its shoulders and onto those of its partner-rivals as well as the international working class. Its German and French partner-rivals, Russia and China and others have been toadying to US imperialism since the end of the official war in Iraq, some even canceling part of Iraq's debt to their governments, *despite the fact that all of them were big losers to US imperialism with the overthrow of Saddam's regime abrogating his contracts with their companies!* At the same time, thus far, the Bush Regime has been unwilling to share this new great "opportunity" for international capital with companies from these countries which had failed to march to the US military baton in Iraq as they had done in Afghanistan, *despite the fact that it now needs their support in Iraq!*

The contradiction between the various imperialist countries and groups is clearly intensifying. This is especially the case in the rivalry between the leading countries of the European Union on the one hand and United States imperialism on the other.

This is an historical moment in Europe---pregnant with promise for the European (and world) proletariat. In order to defend and promote its own interests as distinct from the interests of US imperialism the European imperialist bourgeoisie has to allow the European communists and workers to mobilize and unite the European masses against US imperialism. In the process, European imperialism cannot stop the revolutionary proletariat of Europe at the door which it has itself opened to the working class for the purpose of education and organization of the European masses in opposition to US imperialism; it cannot stop them from marching on to education and organization against imperialism *in general* and against *their own* imperialist bourgeoisie, in particular!

In our view, the European Communist movement, in particular, needs to pay careful attention to the following formulation about the main enemy, i.e. **"imperialism, headed by US imperialism"**. A European vanguard party dominated by opportunism can err on either side. If too much emphasis is placed on *imperialism in general* then US imperialism gets away lightly and the European working class and masses are not sufficiently mobilized against US imperialism, the current bulwark of world capitalism and juggernaut of reactionary violence and war throughout the globe. On the other hand, too much emphasis on *US imperialism* by European opportunists creates bourgeois democratic, social-pacifist and social-chauvinist illusions about imperialism in general and about "their own" imperialists in particular.

An example of this latter tendency emerged in the May 2003 Brussels international communist seminar conducted by the Belgian Workers Party (PTB). At the time, Belgian imperialism along with German and French imperialism had begun to oppose US imperialist hegemonic warfare. International social-democracy was being used by the European imperialist bourgeoisie to defend its interests over against those of Bush and US imperialism, helping to build massive demonstrations of millions of Europeans against the imminent US war in Iraq. Yet the Brussels Seminar Outline focused only on "United States war policy since September

11" without any mention of the war drive inherent in European (or Japanese) imperialism! Such focus on US imperialism is just and correct only as long as the Belgian and other European comrades use the tremendous opportunity afforded them by their temporary anti-US imperialist alliance with European imperialism to *educate the European masses in their millions about the bestial nature of imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism, in general, and of European imperialism in particular.* (4)

We opened our analysis of the World-Wide Strategy of US Imperialism in 1999 with the following quote from great Lenin: "A proletariat that tolerates the slightest coercion of other nations by its 'own' nation cannot be a socialist proletariat." If our European comrades are successful in embracing this Leninist approach to the specific question of "US war policy" and to the question of imperialist war in general then great victories for the European and world proletariat will be ours.

Even the proposed JCG topic (which neither our group nor anyone else apparently sent in a correction about) discusses the "growing threat of war" rather than something like "the local and regional wars driving toward world war", along the lines of the title of this article. The formulation, the "growing threat of war", by making it seem that the imperialist and imperialist-sponsored wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, the Philippines, East Timor, Colombia, Liberia, Yugoslavia, etc. are of little or no significance, has a serious element of great nation chauvinism.

As we have already seen in 2003, there was a sudden and rapid resistance to US military policy from its "closest and most powerful imperialist allies" that arose around the prospect for US led war on Iraq and its attendant adverse consequences for these imperialist powers. The intense animosity that seemed to come out of nowhere in the USA toward its oldest historical ally, France, (French fried potatoes became "freedom fries"), reflected the serious obstacle that France, Germany, and Russia, among others, represented for the US "pre-emptive" war on the peoples of Iraq and the Middle East. The current abeyance of this contradiction is temporary. Fueled by the gravity of the sharpening world capitalist economic crisis, there is an uneven but unmistakable drive toward greater and more substantial resistance on the part of US imperialism's partner-rivals as US imperialism continues to use the "sword" to

slice up the pie of imperialist superprofits in more and more inequitable pieces.

Local and regional wars are leading inexorably toward world war among the great powers. The only way to avoid such a global conflagration is for the international proletariat, under international communist leadership, to triumph over imperialism, headed by US imperialism in the local and regional wars of colonial and

dependent peoples for national liberation and socialism, which today remains the main contradiction. If such revolutionary struggles are unable to prevent world war, then it will be our task to make sure that the world war will lead to proletarian revolution. ☆

RAY O. LIGHT
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(¹) According to Ohio Democratic Congressman Dennis Kucinich in a March 2003 article entitled simply "Obviously Oil", Saddam Hussein had refused to make oil lease contracts with the largest US and UK multinationals: Exxon-Mobil, BP-Amoco, Shell, and Chevron-Texaco---respectively the second, fourth, eighth, and fourteenth largest companies in the world. By contrast, according to a January 26, 2003 front-page article in the Boston Globe, the largest foreign contracts to develop Iraqi oil fields at that time were between the Saddam Hussein government and French and Russian companies. The French based contracts include the Majnoon oil field with an estimated potential of 10 to 30 billion barrels of oil and the Bin Umar oil field with an estimated potential of 6 billion barrels of oil. The Russian based contracts include the West Qurna oil field with an estimated potential of 15 billion barrels of oil.

(²) Indeed, in the little over two years since 9-11, with the rapid, unilateral projection of US military power over so far-flung an area around the world, the "strategic overextension" that provided the condition for the decline of the British Empire a century ago is fast being visited upon the US Empire under its ignorant, chauvinistic and arrogant ruler, George W. Bush. One of the outstanding facts of the US-British imperialist occupation of Iraq, is that, thus far, they have been unsuccessful in getting any significant Arab or Muslim military to relieve the mostly US troops and mercenaries. Especially stunning was the inability of US imperialism to coordinate its puppet Iraqi council with its reactionary client Turkish regime so that the latter was unable to send its army into Iraq, compelling this regime to reject the eight and one-half billion dollar bribe which the Bush forces were offering in order to get these Muslim troops to become part of the occupation forces there.

(³) As we wrote previously, "On May 1st, 2003, George W. Bush declared victory. He declared that the war in Iraq was over and that he had won. In addition, governments in countries such as Germany, France, Russia, and China, which had most stubbornly protested the criminal invasion of Iraq by US imperialism, quickly ratified Bush's victory in their haste to obtain some of the lucrative post war contracts being dispensed by Bechtel Corporation and Halliburton on behalf of the Bush-Cheney Regime. Just six weeks after the end of the war with Iraq, under US dictation, the United Nations Security Council, including France and Russia, voted 14 in favor and **none opposed** (with Syria, the one Arab member "not voting") to lift sanctions on Iraq. Thus, the UN Security Council allowed the resumption of Iraqi oil exports (now that US imperialism will get the profits) and gave their blessings to the United States military occupation of Iraq!" ("Revolutionary Organization is Key", September 2003)

(⁴) The agenda for the 2002 international communist Seminar in Brussels, by contrast, contained no mention of the word "war" at all, despite the fact that US imperialism, at that very moment, was leading a coalition of the imperialist powers, with Brussels as the military headquarters of NATO playing a key role, in an open-ended war of aggression against Afghanistan and all the world's peoples! International Social-Democracy, up to and including the Social Democratic government of Germany, Belgian imperialism, etc. was then loyally supporting the one imperialist superpower, US imperialism. In the context of the bloodthirsty role being played by European imperialism in Afghanistan, the 2002 Brussels Seminar was largely silent on the question of war and peace, even though previous Seminars held there had discussed this question at length!! Such silence on the US-led imperialist war against Afghanistan objectively supported the role of the European imperialist bourgeoisie as junior imperialist partners in the oppression of the masses of Afghanistan and the rest of the world, just as the overemphasis on US imperialism did at the 2003 Seminar by taking the heat off of the imperialist stage of capitalism and its general drive toward war and creating dangerous social-democratic illusions about European imperialism in particular.