

Under bourgeois democracy, the capitalists, by a thousand and one tricks – which are the more artful and effective the more democracy is developed – debar the masses from a share in the work of administration, from freedom of press, the right of assembly, etc. . . . For the toiling masses, participation in bourgeois parliaments (which never decide important questions under bourgeois democracy, they are decided by the stock exchange and the banks) is hindered by a thousand and one obstacles, and the workers know and feel, see and realize perfectly well that the bourgeois parliaments are institutions alien to them, instruments for the oppression of the proletarians by the bourgeoisie, institutions of a hostile class, of an exploiting minority

V.I. Lenin

Chapter IV

The Present Crisis Which Propels Fascism and War

Today the danger of a fascist state arising stems both from the inherent decay and degeneration of capitalist democracy in America, and from the present state of the class struggle world-wide. The current crisis faced by American imperialism is the most severe in its history. It is a crisis of capital accumulation, growth and profits. It is also a crisis of legitimacy, a crisis of U.S. alliances and hegemony within the world imperialist system. As a result, the capitalist class in America has come to fear democracy more than fascism.

This reality is openly proclaimed by the pundits of the Tri-Lateral Commission. In *The Crisis of Democracy* they proclaim: "Some of the problems of governance in the U.S. stem from an excess of democracy – an 'excess of democracy' in much the same sense in which David Donald used the term to refer to the consequences of the Jacksonian revolution which helped precipitate the Civil War. Needed, instead, is a greater degree of moderation of democracy. (*The Crisis of Democracy*, New York University Press, p. 113)

Behind the widespread discussions of America's decline and at the root of Wall Street's campaign to "Make America Great Again" is the reality of the decay and parasitism of American imperialism. In the last decade, many of

the deep-seated contradictions of the post-World War II era have come out full blown. After 1945, U.S. imperialism launched its strategic offensive. It combined military aggression, economic aggression through the "aid" and "assistance" of such institutions as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and ideological aggression which perpetrated the myth of American democracy and the superiority of the "American way" over communism. Certainly these contradictions were evident long before the defeat of the U.S. in Vietnam. The Suez crisis in 1954 and the formation and triumph of OPEC demonstrate this. But by the end of the 1960's, the alignment of world power had begun to change dramatically, and with it, the fortunes of U.S. imperialism.

The struggle between the working class and the capitalist class in many countries accelerated. The contradiction between the oppressed nations and peoples and U.S. imperialism was most evident in Southeast Asia. Contradictions among the imperialist powers and various monopoly groups surfaced, particularly between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., and within the U.S. imperialist bloc, among the U.S., Germany and Japan. In all corners of the world, the struggle between capitalism and socialism was on the rise.

For the U.S., both its international and domestic policy began to unravel. Nixon openly attacked and limited democratic rights, while Ford and Carter served to portray "democracy" as feeble and inept, laying the basis in the public consciousness for the necessity of a "strong leader". Reagan has moved into this role with ease. Abroad, the "containment of communism" policy of Truman and Eisenhower gave way to the Nixon Doctrine of surrogate policemen (as exemplified by the Shah's role in Iran and the Middle East), which in turn gave way to the Carter ploy of "human rights". Now Reagan pursues an unprecedented course of militarization and renewed confrontation — not on the same basis as containment, but on the new terrain of intense imperialist contention for world markets.

Each has represented a different tactic on the part of American imperialism to strengthen its global hegemony. Events in Iran, Nicaragua, South Korea and now El Salvador, vividly illustrate the inability of U.S. imperialism to curb the rising tide of revolution. Combined with the energy crisis, world food shortages, the monetary crisis, the ecology crisis and other contradictions of world capitalism, it is clear that American imperialism faces major difficulties in its quest to re-establish, on a new basis, the stability and order of the post-war period.

At home, a decade of deficit spending, inflation, Watergate, Nixon's resignation, the defeat of three incumbent Presidents, the steady erosion of participation in elections and three major periodic crises (1969-70, 1974-75, and 1979-80) have all created a highly unstable, unprofitable situation. Many cities cannot afford to operate schools, hospitals and transportation systems.

The future ability of U.S. imperialism to temporarily resolve the current crisis and overcome problems of inflation, stagnation and accumulation, depends upon events in both the international and domestic arena. It de-

pends upon the ability of monopoly capitalism to turn around the present slump in the underutilization of productive capacity, to curb inflation, to spur capital investment and to modernize the main industries. These in turn depend upon the ability to stabilize the supply of essential natural resources (the least important of which is oil from the point of view of necessary self-sufficiency) and the ability to both stabilize and expand U.S. imperialism's share of the world consumer market. To the extent that the present policy succeeds in these directions, the present crisis will be temporarily abated. It would be unscientific and a-historical to assume that this is either impossible or certain. Only the concrete developments of the class struggle will tell us for sure. The majority of progressive people underestimate the contradictions which threaten U.S. imperialism and propel it toward fascism and war. Among the left, however, the danger of exaggerating the demise of world imperialism, in general, and the collapse of U.S. imperialism in particular, abounds.

The present task is to situate the danger of fascism and imperialist world war within a scientific framework and realistic assessment of the present crisis of imperialism. Use of the term "crisis" is itself a problem, when such terms as "crisis" and "revolution" are utilized in a thousand ways to describe everything from inflation to a national liberation movement to a new product which solves the "detergent crisis" in a "revolutionary new way"! The present situation is not a revolutionary crisis, in the sense that the existing rulers are unable to rule in the old way, and the ruled are unwilling to be ruled in the old way. For capitalism, however, there does exist a profound political crisis which is the problem of how to maintain political rule. There is also a profound economic crisis, which is the problem of accumulation of capital and profits. These factors have brought U.S. imperialism to a new juncture. It is a juncture at which the necessity for a fascist state and a new imperialist war is greater than ever before. The traditional reserves available to U.S. imperialism to stave off the crisis have been considerably weakened, both by the success of the anti-imperialist struggles in the colonies and the neo-colonies and by the mounting competition between the U.S., the U.S.S.R., Germany and Japan for world markets.

The obstacles to correctly viewing the present position of U.S. imperialism within the world imperialist system are many. There is a real weakening of U.S. hegemony since World War II. But there exists as well a carefully orchestrated campaign to exaggerate and misrepresent this crisis of hegemony. American imperialism has manufactured a myth about the nature and extent of the crisis to enhance its ability to introduce severe new measures of exploitation and repression. For example, when Nixon and Mao Zedong unveiled the theory of three worlds, it was designed to maneuver public opinion into believing that the U.S. could no longer compete with the U.S.S.R. Out of this sprang the U.S.-China alliance and a broad movement to re-arm America, to "win the war against the Soviet Union", as Nixon recently put it.

In short, while the crisis of U.S. hegemony is real, it is not a crisis which

threatens to dethrone American imperialism. No possibility exists in the near future that a rival imperialist power will replace the U.S. at the center of the world imperialist system. In all probability, the demise of American imperialism will signal the demise of world imperialism. Nevertheless, the quest for an "American Century" and to "Make America Great Again" and resolve the current economic and political crisis has brought U.S. monopoly capitalism to a juncture which makes the emergence of a fascist state a real possibility.