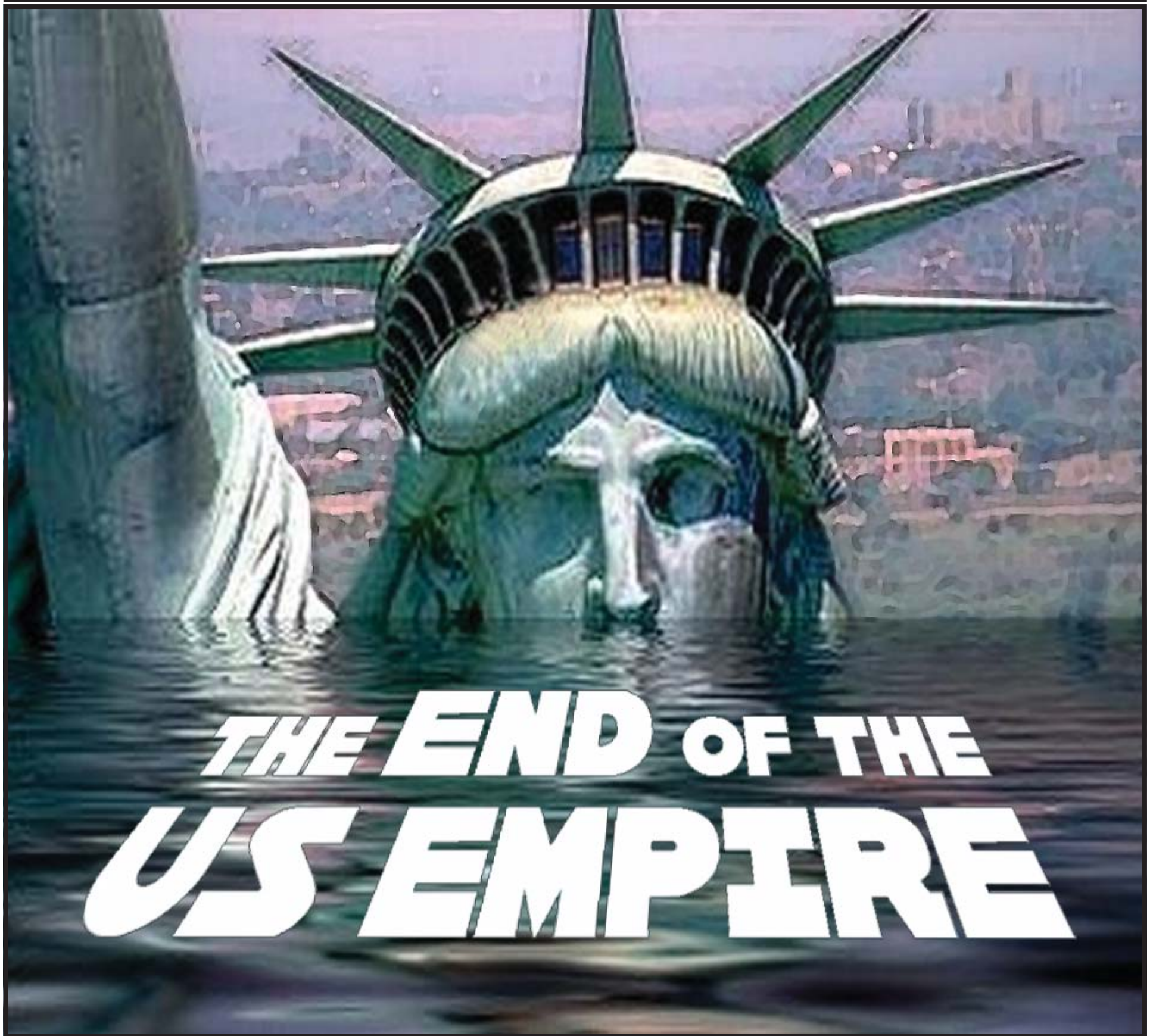


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MOCTEZUMA'S REVENGE



**FROM IMMIGRANT RIGHTS
TO NATIONAL LIBERATION**

THE END OF THE US EMPIRE

By Anastasia Gómez

The US Empire is in a full descent and vertiginous freefall. Once the most powerful empire on earth, it now has no money, its industries are failing, it has a chronic high unemployment rate and it can no longer afford the multimillion dollar governmental subsidies to its agricultural and industrial companies that they depend on.

The wealth disparity between the poor and the rich is the largest it has ever been. Domestic production has been visibly reduced because of the transfer of capital and technology to other countries. The external US debt exceeds 10 trillion dollars. "Made in China" merchandise packs the shelves of all its stores, as it does in every country of the world.

Similarly, we see the former 4-star general of the world, with its mighty military forces and superiority mired in two wars for the last decade in the Middle East with no workable exit strategy in sight. The hands of the USA are tied limiting its intervention in the uprisings of the masses in North Africa. Even its capability to intervene in its own backyard is questioned by the ability displayed by Brazil's leadership of the UN forces, including US troops, in Haiti. We can see that its military and technological power is insufficient for fighting asymmetrical wars and that it can no longer accumulate the material gains of wars, such as oil.

The US Empire has an increasing difficulty making its voice heard and getting its proposals implemented in international organizations like the G8 or in the G20. At each conference of these and similar groups it becomes more difficult for the US to push forward, in a unilateral manner, its political and economic priorities, such as the regulation of international prices or the establishment of commercial trade treaties. This is the case in South American, where the power and influence of Brazil has up to this point not allowed the extension of trade deals like NAFTA or the Free Trade of the Americas Act to countries in the region.

The US is currently led by a president who is incapable of resolving the financial problems that haunt the country and who is continuing the politics of Bush and the Republicans before him. Until now, the steps Obama has taken to control the crisis have been timid, insignificant and have had little impact. His policies are very different from those implemented during the 30s New Deal in terms of the development of industrial and agricultural production, investment in employment, trade deals and distribution of social benefits. For decades the US has been fundamentally focused on enlarging the gains of financial capital. Without achieving this, the unity and support of the ruling class cannot be certain.

At the same time the sectors of society that carried Obama to the presidency have become disillusioned by his delivery. The "hope" and enthusiastic support have disappeared. We can see how the previous illusions in the promises Obama made, within the sectors of the masses that carried him to the presidency, have been lost, constantly lowering his credibility and enthusiastic support.

An increasingly frustrated, unhappy and noisy petite bourgeoisie is organizing to recover the "large imperialist power" through ultra right organizations like the Tea Party. The previous bipartisan solutions are insufficient to solve the current problems of this empire.

WHY IS IT FALLING?

The empire is falling because its ruling class, seeking to increase profits, has inflicted on itself a mortal blow. It is falling, because during the past four decades the country lost millions of jobs as businesses relocated their centers of production to other interior geographical areas

and countries with lower costs of production and more relaxed environmental standards. At the same time the rulers initiated a process of world economic restructuring that is now demanding that they pay for their choices.

The United States has experienced serious economic and political crises in the past; however, today things are different. The relocation of its production centers has triggered the rapid development of those countries that are rising today as the main competitors to the US: China, India and Brazil. Today, nations that not too long ago were orbiting around US and European imperialism have begun to revolve around the new giants, developing new relationships of economic interdependence and political subjugation. Something similar happened after World War II when the US invested in Germany and Japan to ensure US influence over the markets of these two countries. The US did this under the guise of reconstruction and in just three decades both countries became main US competitors.

That is to say: the natural drive of the bourgeoisie in its search for supremacy and maximum profits is what leads it to its destruction. This historic premise has been understood perfectly since the origin of the *Communist Manifesto*, but today this premise will determine the fate of the largest bourgeoisie empire that the world has ever known. The displacement of the centers of production produced greater profits for the bourgeoisie, but at the same time caused the loss of jobs and of productivity within the empire. Its domestic market is collapsing under the burden of its debt and the destruction of the planet has been hastened by relocating factories to areas with less stringent environmental regulations.

We have seen many empires throughout history go through stages of creation, development, decline and decay all in correspondence with predetermined historical laws. The specter of imperial disintegration has devastated various geographical, political and economic formations such as multinational, colonial and imperial structures throughout history. It has been economic crisis, political fragmentation, monumental historical events and above all acute class struggle, which have finished off these empires.

The fall of the US Empire places us today in the context of a world capitalist system that is in mortal agony. It is a global system of exploitation that is historically exhausted and cannot guarantee our survival or the survival of the planet and must use all of its strength chaotically struggling not to disappear. These forces create brutal super exploitation in the new key areas of the world economy and restrict the existing gains of workers in order to prepare for increasingly undemocratic controlling regimes.

EMPIRES DO NOT FALL BY THEMSELVES

Despite the situation we have described and the underlying reasons as to why we believe in the future we will see the death of US imperialism, the accumulated wealth in this country over its many years of domination is vast. It will take some time for the existing infrastructure to reach the level of deterioration seen in "third world" countries or former colonies. Yet in a short time it will reach the level of its European counterparts.

The same infrastructure in the hands of the workers would shake the world. However, since the 1990's we have not seen large mobilizations of large sectors of the labor movement. The struggles we have seen have been defensive, isolated and rarely combined with political analysis and action. The percentage of labor that is unionized has been falling for years. The existing



worker's organizations are completely useless, especially because of their reliance on the state through their relationship with the Democratic Party. No independent labor unions currently exist.

Since the crisis of 2008, all labor contract negotiations have resulted only in the reduction of employee benefits because of the fear of more layoffs. The response of workers and the US masses that are still benefiting from the privileges of living in the empire have been minimal (with notable and promising exceptions like the workers in Wisconsin recently). Workers have been brainwashed into accepting the blows inflicted by their employers and the loss of their benefits, one after another, all in the interest of job preservation.

Latino workers, especially Mexicans, in the United States will definitely play an important role in the direction of the future. In fact, it has been these workers who have been most receptive to unionization and the unions with the highest membership of these workers have for several decades been the most militant. However the decisive struggles of Latino workers, as seen in their continued protests, especially in the impressive national strike of 2006, are most successful outside of these unions, through collective organizations in the community or through the potential creation of alternative trade unions that are independent and truly combative.

In historical terms, these workers, who number in the millions, could be one of the weapons that inflict fatal blows on US imperialism. This is because, despite their massive struggles for integration, for political and human rights, imperialism is unable in this time of total decay and crisis to absorb them or concede to their demands. This situation may leave them no other option than reclaiming the stolen Mexican territories and building a national liberation movement.

The deeply imbedded ideology of US imperialism, of fierce individualism, has taken root in the American people, and a relentless struggle will be necessary to get rid of this ideology in order to enable full participation and solidarity among workers. The possibilities for workers in this country are enormous, while simultaneously, the consequences of not acting and waiting for everything to fall will be fatal.

Fatal, because if workers don't take up the struggle, the frustrations of the petit bourgeoisie and other sectors outside of the production process will increase and promote movements of a fascist character. Groups like the Tea Party are growing and gaining threatening power in national politics. They have the potential to create crises like that produced by domestic terrorist attacks associated with right-wing groups such as the 1995 federal building bombing in Oklahoma City.

There are huge possibilities precisely because the vast infrastructure of this country, in terms of technology, industry and natural resources, would give US workers an unprecedented basis for social transformation that could nourish a revolutionary process towards socialism. For this to happen, a relentless ideological struggle is necessary for workers to gain control of this infrastructure and not drown in the whirlpool created by the current owners of this empire.●

MOCTEZUMA'S REVENGE

FROM IMMIGRANT RIGHTS TO NATIONAL LIBERATION

By Carlos Petroni

When empires arise throughout history, people who succumb to their ruling classes are “shackled,” “colonized,” “civilized” and “protected” from themselves and their own “weaknesses” by the tyrants of the time. There is one law, to which all of us in this world are subject, which is that we cannot be dominated if we are not subjugated by force. A ruling class must seize *our* countries, *our* markets, *our* labor power as *their* property and force us to spill *our* blood and that of other workers and the oppressed during wars of conquest in order to maximize the extraction of all possible wealth possible.

When empires decline, rebellions inevitably begin, and with the ousting of rulers the oppressed can reclaim and rebuild their own land. The prisons and jails are opened; people flow into the streets and break the barricades that until then were invisible. They ignite the fires of liberation in order to be rulers in their own land, revive their culture and take pride in who they are.

There are 50 million Latinos in the United States. A huge majority of them are Mexicanos and their brothers and sisters in history, the Central Americans, and their cousins, the South Americans. They are the sons, heirs and hostages of “Manifest Destiny,” the plan for a US empire that plundered the still young, inexperienced, weak and semi-unpopulated nations and peoples of Old Mexico and everywhere south of the USA.

The American empire swept from the Atlantic to the Pacific, killing native people along the way, burying them “alive” on reservations, stealing land from Mexico, buying land from France (Louisiana Purchase) and negotiating other agreements with Spain. “Manifest Destiny” was a policy of bloody conquest and was justified through an ideology where the “inferiority” of the conquered was not limited to the color of their skin, but also to the origin of their culture.

“Remember the Alamo!” was the slogan (a commemorative slogan of the conquest’s “martyrs” in Texas) used during several invasions and land grabs in order to disguise those acts of piracy and massacre as moments of revenge. With this phrase the conquerors guided by “Manifest Destiny” alleged “self-determination” in order to disguise their invasion of foreign lands. They claimed Texas and other western territory which eventually become southwestern states. It was also on the lips of the hundreds of thousands of people who came west in search of gold and stole California.

The United States grew from a colony to a country, then into a colonial empire and later into a hegemonic imperial empire. There have been a hundred and fifty years of Marines disembarking for “The halls of Montezuma to the shores of Tripoli.” They have propped up puppet dictators throughout the South American continent that they considered their “back porch.” It has been a similar story in the neighborhoods, cities, and countries of Europe, North Africa, Asia and the Middle East after the First and Second World Wars. With wars in Korea, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan, the USA is now once again on the shores of Tripoli, or in the air over the shores.

For the last one hundred and fifty years, the subjugated Mexicanos, their children, their descendants, their relatives in the rest of the Americas and other indigenous people have generously shared their territory while they lost rebellion after rebellion, fighting against the unstoppable rise of US imperialism. Then when they tried to assimilate into society, to achieve some level of equality that would allow them to live, work, and survive, they have always been rejected, though sometimes given minimal concessions.

This is a recorded history of one hundred and fifty years of being suppressed, discriminated against, buried in the worst jobs, pursued by La Migra (once the INS, now ICE), with their existence denied in statistics, dying in wars that were not theirs, being hunted as “greasers,” shot at from trains like buffalo, being slaughtered as “pachucos” in Los Angeles during World



War II, being chased by helicopters in the desert and raided when working in factories. As for going to the Middle East to kill Arabs or be killed in order to get a laminated document of citizenship ... nothing reeks more strongly of oppression.

Meanwhile wave after wave of immigrants from Europe have been slowly, progressively incorporated, assimilated and semi-accepted, increasingly so when they participated in the oppression of later generations of immigrants. White immigrants with blue, brown and green eyes, were shipped from so far away that they

“Through the self-determination of nations the state separation of the communities of other nations is understood, the formation of an independent national state is understood.”

– Lenin

had nothing on their arrival to claim, nothing to recover. They could adapt and if possible submit passively to oppression. However their experience in Europe with anarchism, socialism, trade unions and other social struggles influenced their participation in similar movements which arose on this continent. They soon faced anti-Semitism, internment during US wars against their countries of origin, anti-communist raids, deportations and eventually McCarthyism. The cost of this immigrant assimilation was paid to a government which systematically picked off the rebels and nonconformists.

White immigrants came to the USA to face their only feasible option. They became pawns in the forcible colonization of America. Sometimes they were compensated with a piece of land, a mule and a place among the oppressors. Most but not all disappeared into the crowds that later marched West. Many of the earliest immigrants came here as “indentured servants,” essentially temporary white slaves. Their situation was different from that of the black slaves brought to the US in the same time period. If they managed to survive and work their way out of indenture they were set free, which did not happen at all to black slaves.

The people of Africa, “engillados,” were brought to America chained in ships, starved during the cross-Atlantic middle passage and traumatized by the whips of “civilization.” So many people were brought over

from the central parts of Africa that some nations of that continent have no demographic representation other than their descendants in the Americas. They were brought to several parts of the Americas including Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean and in the largest numbers to Brazil and the USA.

For them, there was no justice in the USA until the great struggles of the US Civil War and the later Civil Rights Movement were won. Even today, apart from a small black bourgeoisie and middle class, most working class and poor black people live in ghettos and will not realize their full potential. There has never been any compensation for the beatings, hangings, rapes, humiliation and dispossession of everything, everything but the one thing that could not be taken away, the color of their skin. The promises of reparations from the North’s victory in the US Civil War, by which the freed slaves were to be compensated for the tremendous wealth they had created for the rulers of this country, were never fulfilled. All the freed slaves got was segregation and the Ku Klux Klan.

All of these people came from far away. Many former slaves wanted to return to Africa and some did. They founded Liberia and soon encountered centuries of imperialist exploitation on the African continent by the Europeans and Americans.

The Mexicanos, the Central Americans and the South Americans are different. They are here but they are also there, only one step away, across porous borders, with a memory of lands that were once theirs, that their ancestors walked on. Scratch a little on the conscience of any Latino, especially a Mexicano and the question will arise: if it is our land, why can we not govern here? Why is it not still ours?

No one can say that Latinos, particularly Mexicanos and Central Americans, have not tried to integrate themselves into US society. They have demanded, year after year, more democratic rights as immigrants: amnesty for undocumented immigrants, participation in trade unions, the end of persecution by the INS (ICE) on the border; the right to vote in local elections, etc. They were the focus in 2006 of the new May Day masses, waving US flags, with hundreds of thousands marching throughout the country. With each subsequent May Day, the conservatives strongly and the liberals timidly, have denied every need, every grito – every call for justice.

Again and again they have been driven out, pushed into new ghettos or granted meager concessions that in the next breath were taken back. The ruling class, using their well-oiled bourgeois media machine, has used each new incident of economic crisis to scapegoat Latinos.

The media machine said it was not the large banks that burst the speculation bubble; it was the “illegal workers who are an unbearable burden for the state.” It was not the real estate scams and irresponsibility of the bourgeoisie that caused the financial collapse of the construction and sale of property, it was “those who take advantage of the rights and services that are not theirs.” The media did not mention that it was the state, government and political system of the Democratic and Republican parties which pushed for the transfer of production to other countries, seeking poverty wages and greater profits, that caused rising unemployment, but rather “those who come to the USA to steal jobs from real Americans!”

The media lies and lies and lies some more, saying it is not the policies of the state and its ruling parties which has embezzled and ruined Social Security but rather, “Illegal immigrants who use our healthcare and social services, preventing them from being available for citizens and legal residents.”

Numbers are distorted, statistics manipulated and the news is hidden that 75% of undocumented immigrants

Continued on next page

THE THEFT OF MEXICAN TERRITORIES, US IMPERIALISM IS BORN

By Jorge Suárez

Monroe Doctrine: “America for Americans.” Americans means citizens of the USA, of course.

Manifest Destiny: the ideology that the US is destined to extend from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast; attacking and destroying the indigenous people of this land and stealing the Mexican territories was just part of the process.



1817-1829 – The colonization of Texas by settlers from the US began during the Mexican war of independence and at the expense of and against the wishes of those to the East (1817).

1821 – After independence, Mexico suffers widespread economic destruction and a commercial blockade enforced by defeated Spain. The US begins to weave its plans of conquest.

1823 – The US recognizes Mexico’s independence in exchange for agreements allowing further expansion of the USA.

1824 – Fall of the self proclaimed emperor Iturbide in Mexico and proclamation of the Federal Republic.

1824-1829 – Guadalupe Victory; First President of Mexico

1825 – Mexican Congress authorizes the settlement of US colonizers (mainly English or Anglo-Saxons) in the state of Texas. These 300 slave-owning families were originally allowed to establish themselves in a specific limited area, but quickly expanded their plantations taking up ever more Mexican land. This soon

turned into a full-scale invasion with the creation of landholders owning huge areas, alarming the Mexican government with the rapid escalation.

1825 – Mexico abolishes slavery.

1829 – Mexico expedites the decree of abolition. The Mexican government (under President Vicente Guerrero) attempts to implement the decree abolishing slavery effective in Texas and tries to stop US colonization there. The USA itself would not abolish slavery until 1865, as part of the conclusion of the US Civil War.

1830 – President Anastasio Bustamante prohibits the entry of more US colonizers and expels the US ambassador Poinsett for interfering in the internal affairs of Mexico. The same ambassador was involved later in “buying” Texas from Mexico.

1835 – The independence and the subsequent US annexation of Texas is on the horizon. Mexico votes in a new constitution and becomes consumed with political chaos due to division between

contending political forces there. The Texas colonizers form a militia and stage an armed uprising against the government of Santa Ana under the pretext that the federal system had become too centralized.

The Conservative Party/Centralists (feudal landlords, upper clergy, older existing military caste) battles politically with the Liberal Party/Federalists (the rising bourgeoisie of liberal landlords, public officials, younger military officers, and advanced intellectuals).

The colonizers’ militia is financed directly by the US with weapons, money, ammunition and even gunboats, while the US publicly claims neutrality.

1836 – The US government militarily defeats the Mexican army in the battle of the Rio San Jacinto, proclaiming Texas as an “independent” country. Mexico does not recognize the independence of Texas.

1838-1839 – First French intervention in Mexico (War of the Pastries). This intervention helps the North Americans in their plans for annexation.

1843 – The Mexican government declares that they consider the annexation of Texas an act of war against Mexico.

1845 – Texas annexed as a US state.

1846 – President Polk sends troops toward the Mexican territory and declares war on Mexico through the first armed conflicts with Mexican troops.

1847 – The US occupies the territories of “Alta California” and “Nuevo Mexico.” These territories are now known as the states of New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, Nevada and California. In March of 1847 the US invades Mexico through the Port of Vera Cruz and on September 14th they occupy Mexico City.

1848 – February, with the US flag waving in the Zocalo (main square) of Mexico City, the US forces Mexico to sign the “Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo” by which the US appropriates more than a

million square miles of Mexican territory.

To conceal this historic theft of Mexican territory and portray it for history as an economic transaction, the US pays Mexico the insignificant sum of 15 million dollars. The land stolen from Mexico constitutes almost one third of the current USA and more than half of what was then Mexico. US history books claim the territories were “transferred.”

1848 - 1855 – The California Gold Rush helps complete the Westward expansion. At the time the US concern was to repopulate that vast territory with US settlers. The Gold Rush helped solve this problem. 300,000 people come to California during these years from other parts of the US and other countries.

1862 - 1867 – The Second French intervention in Mexico sees the installation of Emperor Maximilian from France under the reign and with the support of Napoleon III.

1865 – Slavery is abolished in the USA at the conclusion of the US Civil War (1861-1865) between the North and the slavery-supporting South (the Confederacy), which included Texas. The maintenance of slavery in Texas was one of the key factors in the previous theft of Mexican lands. Texas had been a key state in the decision of the South to secede from the US, separating themselves from the Northern states.

1867 – The French invasion is defeated on Cinco de Mayo (The Battle of May 5th), but the war with France continues for several more years. The US celebrates this French defeat as a victory against European imperialism, notwithstanding its own conquest under the Monroe Doctrine still being enforced. For Mexicanos, Cinco de Mayo is not a celebration sponsored by Budweiser, but rather the beginning of a period of re-composition of their country that continues to this day.●

MOCTEZUMA’S REVENGE

Continued from page 12

pay taxes that are not returned to them in services of any kind. The media hides the fact that millions of false “Social Security Numbers” are a conduit for contributions used to subsidize the system for the benefit of those who do have papers. In this way the media vilifies the massive immigrant community, which constitutes the majority of people in dozens of large cities, medium-size towns and states. These immigrants have created an economy of consumption, jobs, investment and culture through which moves an estimated hundreds of billions of dollars.

There are Spanish-speaking radio and television stations (vast networks of them!) having the largest audiences in the country, newspapers that are read in greater numbers than many of their English counterparts, factories, workshops, restaurants, cinemas, theaters, sports centers, civic associations, non-profits, cultural centers, writers, playwrights, actors and actresses ... all of which shows that within the belly of US imperialism has been created a virtual Latino republic, about which the CIA continues to write documents alleging that “after terrorism, illegal immigration is the biggest internal security problem.”

Now the empire is falling; its end is in sight. The Anglo ruling classes have lost their industrial, commercial and financial hegemony and will soon lose the military conquests of “Manifest Destiny” as well. The Republic of Latin Americans is emerging, more so every day, as a real possibility. Does this mean renouncing the fight for civil and democratic rights for all? That’s not the solution. A different perspective is necessary. We must work for a national conscience of the Latin American people that wants to build a movement for national liberation.

For decades, community leaders have urged people to trust the promises of the Democrats, the promises the Democrats have made but have not kept. It is clear these leaders who ask us to believe lies need to be replaced. It is not a matter of having faith. Faith has been exhausted. During the existential crisis of this empire there is no solution even for the emperors (the growth of the situation in Wisconsin has shown this clearly) and even less will there be solutions based on justice or equality for those whom the system fears and has always scorned.

In recent decades there was a perspective that mass uprisings in Mexico and Latin America could exacerbate Latino struggles on the US side of the border. Now, between the drug trafficking and the betrayal of Latin American leaders, the immigrants on the US side of the border are rising up not only to free themselves but to light the path for the struggles in Latin America.

In order to succeed in this they must do what they do best: organize, but instead of hiding their demands they must expose them to the fullest. This means building union and community leadership that challenges the previous weak strategies of compromise, and creating political organizations prepared to survive the fall of the empire.

Latinos can only rely on their own strength and from that position of strength appeal to potential allies. Massive marches are fine, they expose our struggle to others and allow us to raise our banners, but they are not enough. Strikes, mobilization, protests in the streets, all forms of direct action and even the use of elections to define ourselves, propaganda, agitation and education are all weapons we can carry to the barricades as we fight for freedom.

Will there be a reaction on the right in light of our demands for freedom? Those who ask this question should be aware that such a reaction, called right-wing

religious fundamentalism, the Tea Party or fascism, has already arisen and will continue to grow, not so much because of what we do but because of how much they want our submission. All we can do is face them when and where they raise their heads and speak the first insult.

Who should lead? The people who work and produce, the workers in the fields and cities, those who have the power to shut down the workplaces, towns, cities, states and organize the rest of the people.

Are there no potential allies? Of course there are. There are White, Asian and Black workers who can decide to fight against and get rid of the union bureaucrats. There are those who oppose capitulation to the political parties of the empire, the Democrats and Republicans. Those that take those stands and more are our potential allies. Those that remain on the side of the ruling class are our enemies, although we hope that they will only stay in this category temporarily. There is nothing to gain by the permanence of our oppression.

A republic of equals, of workers and oppressed peoples, on this side of the border can erase that border. It can join a vast continent wide movement to break the chains of oppression and cause them to fall, along with imperialism, into the abyss. It is this international class struggle that is ours.

There exists no reason nor should there exist any claim to subjugate others. That would only be repeating the cycle of imperialist oppression by changing some factors and would cause the next rebellion. On the contrary, the objective of our struggle must be the elimination of all racial and ethnic prejudice, the end of discrimination of all kinds, the abolition of the exploitation of some by others, full participatory democracy of the workers, and the unity of the consumers, producers and the oppressed. Socialism is the only salvation of the people and the world. There is no other way.●

COLLAPSE OF US INDUSTRIES MAY BRING THE EMPIRE TO ITS KNEES

By Carmen Lampago

The United States is at the end of its cycle as the world's hegemonic power and one step away from its collapse as an imperialist power. Its future will be determined to a certain degree by its ability to delay the collapse of major branches of its industry, now heavily subsidized and under overwhelming pressure from competition abroad. This is not, however, due solely to foreign enemies and competitors as much as it is of its own making.

People in the United States are used to enjoying the benefits of being in the largest economy in the world, based on a huge industrial and financial base and surrounded by the most powerful domestic market in history. These benefits have been eroding and the material base which made them possible are disappearing as the US is losing ground to a number of fast-developing economies, many of which – if not all – were nurtured and initially developed by US capital.

Germany and Japan, reconstructed by the US in the post World War II period, became its strongest competitors. Europe as a whole followed suit. Now China, India, Brazil and a number of other countries are undercutting the US economy from all sides. Well before the recent earthquake and tsunami, China had advanced past Japan to become the world's number two economy.

While its overall size still favors the US, a close look would reveal a scenario in which critical US industries are surrendering to the international momentum of their Chinese counterparts in textiles, machinery, tools, light weapons, steel, home appliances and more. In terms of economic power, China offers a tremendous challenge to US hegemony.

China's is not the only economy making gains on the US. While China is taking over much of the manufacturing that used to be done in the US, India is taking over many of the service sector jobs. Initially restricted to lower-skilled service jobs like those in call centers, recent work moving to India now includes more skilled white-collar jobs. Tax returns, financial services and analysis, and engineering are increasingly being handled in India. And in the Western hemisphere, Brazil is making solid gains in economic and political power.

With loss of economic power comes a related loss in political power. The US used to hold a lot of political sway due to its capability as the buyer of last resort. Historically, the US was able to support the economies of allies by propping up the value of the dollar relative to foreign currencies and granting access to the most powerful consumer base in the world. That's no longer the case. The decline in the value of the dollar will continue in lock step with the over printing of paper money by the US Federal Reserve Bank.

Between shipping much of the country's job base to other countries and the 2009 economic crash, US unemployment has increased and consumer confidence and spending have decreased, ergo the domestic market has taken a big hit. Increased spending on wars and decreased spending on education have further weakened the US economy.

Since the political future of the country is tied to the unemployment rate, the remaining industries which provide jobs are highly valued both politically and economically. These industries (textiles, auto) are heavily subsidized by the US government. Otherwise they could not withstand global competition. Now China is preparing

to become a major automobile exporter. Millions of cars, and more every month, are sold in China's domestic market every year.

The economic crisis and the bailouts of financial institutions and the automakers – policies shared by both Democrats and Republicans to save them from bankruptcy and foreign competition from China – is endangering the life expectancy of major branches of US industry. Money for subsidies has limits. Subsidies cannot be sustained over long periods.

If China overtakes the US in auto exports, that will mean the collapse of the already threatened capitol of the automakers in Detroit and a dozen other cities based on auto production in the US. Manufacturing growth in China, Brazil and other countries is threatening other



industries, and US agricultural production is only maintained artificially by government subsidy.

An estimated 30% to 40% of the entire US industrial working class is threatened by this somber future. It is useful here to remember that the industrial working class in the US declined progressively from about 50% of the private sector nonsupervisory workforce in the 1960s to 29% in 1992. Now it is estimated at 25%. In absolute terms, the industrial workforce peaked in the late 1970s at about 22 million and is now at the same level as in the 1960s or slightly more than 20 million production workers. (*Department of Commerce Statistics*)

This gradual loss of jobs, a decline over decades, which in itself has been disastrous for many workers, is now threatening to become a rapid loss of millions of jobs if critical branches of industry collapse or go bankrupt.

American manufacturing is bleeding lost jobs, which

also represents a massive drop in products that once were made in America. According to one economist, the country currently doesn't produce any television sets. Computer manufacturing in the U.S. employs about 166,000 people; in 1975, it employed almost 300,000. Meanwhile, Asia's computer manufacturing sector has about 1.5 million workers and a single tech manufacturer, Fox Conn, employs more than 800,000 people. (*Daily Finance, 10/17/2010*)

"Other numbers illuminate the impact of this massive job drain. At the end of 2009, 15.7 million people were unemployed, while 12.6 million – 20% fewer – worked in manufacturing. This represented only 9% of the American working populace; at manufacturing's height in 1960, 29% of Americans were employed in the sector." (*Daily Finance, 10/17/2010*). These are outdated figures. The reality today, a year later, is much worse.

The collapse of a couple of branches of US industry, let's say manufacturing and auto, will multiply these figures geometrically. Just do the math. The loss of manufacturing alone could mean the loss of 10 million jobs and the ratio of the employed and unemployed could end up as 2.7 million employed to 25 million unemployed!

Add in losses in the auto, petrochemical, and machinery industries and the emerging picture is a total collapse of the US economy, the shutting down of business. With that goes government, the political regime and the state. In sum, social relations would most likely collapse.

Meanwhile in the government jobs and administration spheres, the decline has been slower over the years. What is happening in Wisconsin and now spreading throughout the country is an indication of the rapidly deteriorating situation there as well. Besides, with the disappearance of industrial branches of the economy will come the collapse of public administration.

After attempting to push for short-term gains and profits over sustainable growth, US business interests are now reaping what they have sown. The recent nationwide campaign against public sector unions, highlighted by the battle in Wisconsin, is making this push, and the results, more apparent. Now that the private sector has been reduced to less than 7% unionized, the public sector, at 36% unionized is the next target.

The plan is to extract as much surplus value from a declining workforce with the least resistance possible while the US bourgeoisie shifts its interests more rapidly into preserving their investments abroad. They are looking for a dominant worldwide finance structure to supply them with the profits of declining domestic industry and manufacturing – with bad results so far – and to try to dismantle every attempt at worker organization domestically to avoid the inevitable social explosion that a collapse will bring.

To put an end to this situation, the tactics of "Buy American" and simple demonstrations and protests are as useless as fighting a lion with a fork. The US union bureaucracy can not be reformed and will not move a finger. Therefore workers need to throw them out of the existing unions or to create new unions and confederations that take up the fights with methods not seen since the 1930s like occupations, militant strikes and electoral action independent and in opposition to the Democrats and Republicans. ●

EUROPE

The Fall of Rome, Constantinople and the Holy Empire: Brussels Trembles

By Nicolás Barros

Europe is not transiting smoothly through what appears to be its final decline.

The BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India and China) are acting as its official gravediggers. Germany and France are benefiting in the short run while the rest of Europe is hurting and sinking deeper into crisis. The past centuries of environmental destruction in Europe, as well as globally, are taking their toll on the environment and natural resources. Workers and the population at large are watching the degradation of their living standard before their eyes, as they lose the global position of privilege that they historically held as a product of semi-colonial exploitation in other parts of the world.

After World War II and the creation of the European Union, the European bourgeoisie thought that they would be reborn as a global empire, overcoming past defeats; however, the barbarians are already at the gates. The fascism of Hitler, Mussolini and Franco in the 20th century foreshadowed this decline, and had shown the barbaric extent to which the ruling class, terrified by the ghosts of Marx and Engels, would go to try to save itself.

Europe and the United States are two empires, both in historical retreat, both have passed their peak and now both are in precipitous decline. However, they will not necessarily disappear quickly of their own accord or in a linear way.

The outstanding feature of Europe is that it is the home of all the original capitalist powers, each having run its full course from dominance to descent, succeeding each other in history as the most prominent at a regional or global scale (this includes Austria, Hungary, Portugal, Russia, Holland, Spain, France, Germany, England, and Belgium).

Aside from the economic and political relevance of each individual country, Europe consists of nation-states consolidated by centuries of historical power and cultural dominance, built upon structures of production more advanced than those in other parts of the world. Also important is the strong secular tradition of Europe. The current regional confederation was born and consolidated as a defensive mechanism against both the emergence and the consequences of the fall of the surrounding worker states.

The current precipitous fall of both Europe and the United States is partially due to the emergence of China, India and Brazil. The new emerging empires will not be like the old ones and as a result of their internal contradictions they will be much less stable.

It is important to highlight that there has been no quantitative growth in the global productive apparatus as a whole (in terms of means of production and

exchange) and what we have seen as a result of the movement of the centers of production from their previous locations in Europe and the US to new areas, including continental Asia and Latin America (in principle).

Europe is a net exporter of capital. Some of the enormous profits obtained by European companies have ended up invested in companies outside of the European Union. Thus some German and French productivity does not return to those countries (at least not as capital assets) while in the rest of Europe this capital simply does not exist. Therefore future productivity will fall irreparably along with this decline in investment. In each country this will manifest itself in a different way.

The issue of regional debt is completely irrational. Italy owes 1.4 trillion US dollars, 115.8% of its Gross Domestic Product, (GDP) to France, which is Italy's main creditor! Spain's total debt is 1.1 trillion US dollars, with the following amounts owed to these countries: 238 billion to Germany, 220 billion to France and 114 billion dollars to England.

Germany took a different economic path than its neighbors, responding to stagnation with anti-inflation measures, which have only deepened its recession. This was done even though the country has a fiscal deficit of only 3% of their GDP and currently a 12% unemployment rate. Germany has raised sales taxes from 16% to 19% and progressively increased the retirement age from 60 to 65 years since 2006.

If we take into account that two thirds of the economic growth of Germany between 2000 and 2008 was due to exports, we can understand why it is the world's second largest exporter, which allows it to maintain a commercial market surplus. One way this is demonstrated is that 40% of its sales are to other European countries, nine times greater than its sales to China.

The European Union has collectively lowered the price of exports in order to be competitive in the new economic climate, which in turn has stopped the growth of its industrial apparatus of manufacturing and distribution. This has allowed for its control over the centrifugal European markets. The German government utilizes a market strategy that severely limits domestic consumption by freezing salaries in Germany. As a result, the German economy grew very little, only 14%, between 1995 and 2010. It had the smallest and slowest growth rate in Europe for that period except for Italy. It exported the capital of its multinational corporations instead of re-investing it in its domestic economy.

The Greek case is paradigmatic. It had already received a second loan installment of 10.5 billion US dollars, which it used only to build up a currency fund

for the purpose of preventing an attack from major global investors in sovereign debt. From those loans, not a single cent went to addressing any of the problems of the Greek population. The problems of the Greek economy "are being resolved" by meeting the demands of their creditors, including the lowering of the fiscal deficit from the current 13.6% to 8.1% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for 2011. The Greek Parliament approved an initiative to sell the state owned railroad system (OSE), the nickel production company named Larco, the state gas industry (DEPA), Athens International Airport, 20% of the assets of the telecommunication company of the Balkans (OTE) and all public lands (including several islands). The recipe followed was, mass worker layoffs (private and public), raising the retirement age and privatizations, etc. Sound familiar?

There are other emblematic examples like the country of Romania. Political leaders there propagandized for the need to enter the European Union as a mechanism to overcome Romanian backwardness. Notwithstanding that the remittances that workers outside the country send back to Romania are the fourth largest part of its Gross Domestic Product, similar to the situation when Nicolai Ceausescu was in power. Adding injury to insult is the situation that Romanian seasonal migratory workers are detained, beaten, jailed and deported from the surrounding "sister" European Union nations of Italy, Spain, Switzerland and Belgium.

Behind the debacle of the Euro Zone and the massive bailouts for Greece, Spain and Portugal is actually the rescue of the European banks that hold the huge debts owed by these three countries and by Italy, which only owes 3 trillion dollars. When one speaks of a European setback this includes the loss of the dominance of its commercial enterprises and above all its industrial power. This does not impede the gross concentration of wealth of many European multinationals, which continue to be global leaders in their lines of industry. Yet, every year this concentration diminishes. Of the 50 largest corporations in the world, 22 are European. Ten of these belong to the industrial sector while the remaining 12 belong to the financial, insurance and distribution sectors.

Another crucial issue is that European natural resources are substantially depleted. Asia, Latin America and even the United States have much larger reserves of natural resources than Europe. Without a source of cheap labor and available natural resources the future is inescapably dim, again not necessarily in a linear way. Europe is being confronted by the growing cost of preventing environmental disasters in vulnerable ecosystems after centuries of uncontrolled human destruction such as pollution of potable water, pasture lands made non-arable, and unsafe disposal of solid and liquid human waste as well as waste from industrial and nuclear plants.

All of the current rehabilitation efforts do not even begin to transform the careless processes that created this destruction. The costs would be enormous just to create partial and localized solutions to some of the most pressing concrete environmental problems. Centuries of mining, mainly of coal and non-metal minerals, have created a serious degradation of the natural landscape, destroying forests, hills, grasslands, etc.

A sector of the bourgeoisie and some of its political allies have been working, since the middle of the last century, to consolidate a transnational capitalist ruling class throughout Europe. This group believed that the American model was a clear indicator of the effectiveness of this plan. History has shown the flaws in this plan. Europe, unlike the United States, cannot carry out that design due to its different stage of development. The unique characteristics of this period in capitalism do not, in any way, support this desire.

The great European arrogance has led to a situation where only France and Germany can maintain their imperial domination, supported by the oppression of other states. The rest of the European countries are on their way to becoming semi-colonies (some clearly already are) of France and Germany or at least are considering that sooner or later they will abandon the European Union. The rest of the countries see an irresistible necessity to break away from the European Union soon, more specifically from Germany and France.

In short, what has the European Union, along with the associated individual governments, done to mitigate the problems? It has at all costs lowered costs (at least since 2006), increased the layoffs of public employees, outsourced companies to Asia and the Pacific, and





increased the permanent reserve army of labor by 15% in some countries and by 25% in others. A classic measure used to serve this purpose has been the expansion in every way no permanent lifetime employment: contracting out some activities of the companies or sub-contracting to third parties, reducing hours of work to one third full-time or increasing part time work, paying piecework rates, establishing false but legal employment arrangements (like false front companies), pseudo-cooperatives, etc. Today, the main European countries have included on their menu of operations these different measures that were in part copied from the USA and in the past only utilized in semi-colonial countries.

Salary cuts have been applied to public employees in Romania, Greece, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Great Britain, Hungary, Malta, Slovakia, Poland, Bulgaria and Lithuania. Job security has decreased to unprecedented levels. 45% of workers in Spain between the ages of 25 and 29 have only short-term employment contracts. At the same time, labor conditions have worsened, workplace abuse and workplace accidents have increased, and salaries continue to decrease. From 1980 to the present, the working class share of the wealth that they produced has decreased from 70% to 58%; in Spain it is only 54.5%, while percentages in Italy, Luxemburg, Ireland and Finland are even lower. This decline happened during times of economic growth both globally and in the European Union.

Another problem for the workforce is that people can't make their mortgage payments because of rising interest rates, layoffs or decreased income, all of which are becoming the norm in Ireland, Hungary, Belgium, Poland and Spain. The anti-crisis formulas always include the increase in the workweek to 60 hours. Great Britain, Hungary, Estonia, and Spain are some of the countries that have already opted for this solution.

The French and German plans have exploded; there will soon no longer be a European Union, only a heterogeneous amalgamation of countries in a state of confrontation, some maintaining their current role as semi-colonies while others are in transition to that status and still others will simply distance themselves from the European Union. Regimes like those in Italy, Poland, Belgium and the Balkans are still frozen in the past, and have not been able to effectively respond in any way to this crisis.

The new Russian bourgeoisie, born simultaneously with the new Chinese bourgeoisie during this late stage of capitalism, is particularly vicious, shows no restraint and has a uniquely immoral and cynical conscience about taking advantage of the era it finds itself in. Born in and sitting on the remnants of the cadaver of the most important revolution in history, these opportunists see themselves propelled by a new "Manifest Destiny" that supposedly justifies their imperial ambitions. They keep watch on the movements of the French-German axis, which they respect, and respond by acting accordingly, like the well-behaved children that they are.

Turkey is also in a good position in relation to Europe. The country has abundant natural and energy resources

and a history with traditions built on the conjoined Maghreb, Arab and Persian bourgeoisie. Of course, there are internal problems. The future of the European economic diaspora will also be an event that will influence Turkish reality.

It is possible that Europe and the United States could form a bloc after the crisis, even though this would definitely be to the detriment of US imperialism. However, an alliance between the European Union and Russia would put the US at an even greater disadvantage and would raise the spectre of a more brutal inter-imperialist competition.

The social superstructure can only reflect the regression, in this case the shift to the right, of the political spectrum. A shift that involves social and political issues like sexism connected to gender violence, xenophobia and the growth of the ultra-right wing, as well as the suppression of the left, both in its electoral actions and in its structural integration into the struggles of the working class and the oppressed instead.

The growing importance of fundamentalist churches in defining the bourgeois agenda is another variable that is spreading all over Europe with greater or lesser degrees of renewed virulence. This is seen especially in relation to social issues such as abortion, divorce and issues of the full spectrum of the queer community. These are signs of fundamentalist church political actions with a renewed strategy in order to influence bourgeois governments and regimes by pushing them to the right.

In every European country there are new ultra-right wing political parties emerging and growing. In some cases they already have a strong electoral presence while others are gaining influence. In the Netherlands there is the PVV (Liberty Party), in Denmark, the Party of the Dane People, in England, the English Defense League (EDL) and in Hungary the Jobbik, etc.

Germany has built right wing citizen's armies twice before in history. Could what is coming be a repetition of the past, possibly a 4th Reich? In the November 2010 elections in Austria, the ultra-right Freedom Party (FPÖ) won 15% of the April, 2010 vote for its candidate for president and 27% of the vote in the 2011 Vienna municipal elections. This probably has to do with the widespread fear within the middle class of Turkish immigrants, who represent 16% of the population and 25% of elementary and high school students.

The events taking place in North Africa and the Middle East will also have an immediate impact on Europe, where the large numbers of immigrants from those countries could use the tactics learned from the North African struggles to fight the oppression that they are victims of in Europe. The previous struggles of immigrants in Europe surely had an influence on the uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East. Now the European immigrants may reproduce them in the near future. New contingents of immigrants may also look towards Europe's shores and contribute to creating important political movements.

In economic terms there will also be consequences. In the short run this will result in an increased price of oil, an essential commodity that comes in large quantities from North African and Middle Eastern states. It could be replaced quickly by oil from Russia and the former

Soviet block countries or even Latin America. In terms of commerce we will see serious challenges to some European imports of industrial and intermediate goods if the changes lead to new international realignments.

Europe has many possible future scenarios. We may not know exactly what will happen, but none of the foreseeable options will maintain or strengthen the current European Union. Confrontations will be inevitable and will come with the violence that always occurs with inter-imperialist confrontations that have to do with gaining hegemony over the markets or making others pay for self-created crises.

The key to the situation, of course, is in the hands of the working class movement. From within the productive apparatus it could emerge as the backbone and muscle of a wider movement for social change, connected to their co-workers, the immigrants and other super-exploited sectors of society. Such a movement should raise a program proposing to make the still formidable industrial apparatus work for the actual needs of the working class and the oppressed instead of for the convenience of the big multinationals. Although workers have represented an important source of resistance, they have not yet succeeded in moving past addressing the issues of economic gains (such as union struggles around working conditions and wages) and advancing to represent a political challenge to the regime.

A program for such a political challenge in Europe should be based on concepts like:

- Full employment and jobs for all, including immigrants, at union wages.
- The right to political and union organization for all unemployed workers and immigrants, including the right of immigrants to vote and run for office.
- Compulsory repayment of financial capital from large companies to maintain job producing and environmentally sound investments which have been transferred from manufacturing to financial services or shifted to outsourcing of jobs. Increasing corporate taxes and maintenance of capital to maintain jobs and services and funding for public services.
- Massive investment under community and workers control in projects related to the treatment of industrial, hospital, home and radioactive waste and rehabilitation of environmental disaster areas.
- Full rights and social benefits to all minorities and immigrant communities including the preservation of their languages and cultures. Eliminate all forms of racism, racial discrimination, gender discrimination and discrimination based on sexual preference and orientation.
- Full funding for free education and training for youth from pre-school, for apprenticeships and to graduate school levels.
- Immediate repatriation to countries for all military invasions made anywhere in the world.
- Drastic reduction of budget allocations for security and military spending.
- Support for a Socialist Confederation of Europe, based on national self-determination.

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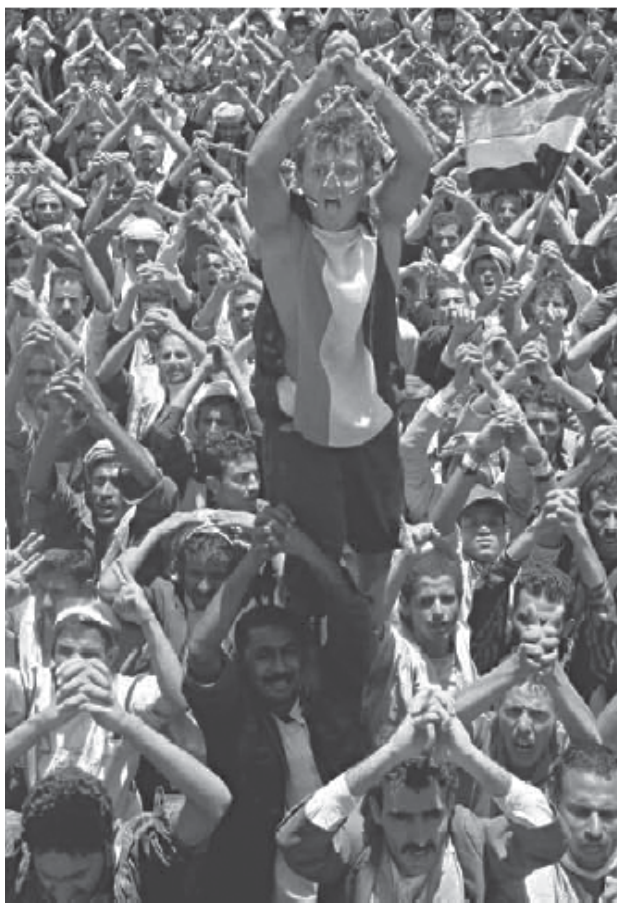
NORTH AFRICAN AND ARABIC PEOPLE THE ONGOING REVOLUTIONS, IMPERIALIST INTERVENTION AND TASKS OF THE LEFT

The article titled *The Solution: Secular Governments of Workers and the Oppressed* published on the next page of our magazine was written at the beginning of the uprisings in North Africa, particularly those that happened in Tunisia and Egypt and those that had already begun in other countries in early February. A lot has happened since then that is important to report on and analyze.

The Tunisian revolution continues to advance replacing provisional governments one after another and forming "self-management" committees. The Egyptian revolution ousted Mubarak, but the military, filling the governmental vacuum, seems to have made some concessions and temporarily slowed down the momentum of the masses. Still, the protests continue.

Protests began in Bahrain, where the American fleet is stationed, but the Sultan of Bahrain received military support and troops from Saudi Arabia and police contingents from Qatar in order to help control the situation. In Yemen, fierce repression failed to prevent a partial political rupture between the armed forces and the government; the future is uncertain. In Syria, demonstrations have begun against the current Assad regime that, combined with that of his father, has been in power for decades.

There is virtually no country in the region that has not been affected. The situation that currently exists in Libya also began with protests, against Muammar Muhammad al-Gaddafi, followed by a break with part of the regular army, and is now in a state of civil war.



Imperialist military intervention has also begun in Libya. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization mercilessly bombed regime-controlled military targets to prevent the defeat of rebel forces and to help them prevail. This intervention was a turning point.

The US and Europe, as well as Israel, are in a growing panic about the spread of revolutionary movements against regimes in the region. These regimes have, until now, been bastions of stability and strong protectors of Israel – key elements for US geopolitical strategy and European stability. All of that is in danger. The Libyan revolt allows the imperialist forces to intervene militarily while they

try to influence the situation throughout the whole region.

Imperialist military intervention should be strongly rejected. It is intended to ensure the two main components of imperial policy in the area – the interests of the US, France, Britain and Israel, especially in terms of oil (Libya is one of the large oil producing powers), but also geopolitically in terms of protecting Israel against any imbalance.

Imperialism seeks to send a strong message to all the revolutionary and democratic processes in the area: either they are stabilized ensuring imperial interests in the area, or unrestrained military force will be used. It's a message that essentially works with the remains of the Tunisian regime, the armed forces of Egypt, the Sultan of Bahrain and reflects the goal of imposing a government in Libya that is dependent on imperialism.

This opposition to the imperialist intervention should not in any way come at the expense of relentless struggle against the autocratic, dictatorial and pro-NATO forces in North Africa, especially since the progress of the revolution could otherwise accelerate the efforts of the empires to control them. Not for one second can we give respite to the murderers of the governments of Libya, Bahrain, Syria and Yemen. Doing so would be acquiescing to the replacement of the current regimes by others who would eventually commit the same atrocities, again supporting imperial dominance.

We are well aware there are no easy solutions or positions. In most of these countries there are no revolutionary workers' organizations, and where they do exist they are small. Such organizations cannot be created overnight. So, rather than issue abstract statements from outside of North Africa, our task is solidarity with the existing organizations, both materially and through propaganda. We support mass opposition to imperial intervention and the fight against the forces that, although in opposition to dictatorial governments, aim to bring these revolutions to the dead end of religious fundamentalism, as has happened in Iran, Afghanistan, and Lebanon, and surely will happen in some other country like Yemen.

In that sense, while the details of the situation may have changed, the essence of our statement several months ago retains its original political validity. ●

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UPRISING OF THE MASSES IN NORTH AFRICA AND THE ARAB PEOPLE

THE SOLUTION: SECULAR GOVERNMENTS OF WORKERS AND THE OPPRESSED

The recent uprisings and massive protests, in some cases with insurrectional characteristics that started in Tunisia, continued in Algeria, Yemen, Morocco, Jordan and caused the overthrow of Mubarak in Egypt, the most important country in the region, do not seem to have an end in sight, geographically or politically. Currently Gadhafi is causing a bloodbath in Libya in his attempt to hold on to power.

Different analysts have speculated that these social explosions are a product of the economic crisis in Europe, particularly in France, England, Belgium and Italy. And they are correct in that the intensification of poverty, unemployment and lack of housing in the region have acted as an impetus to the present situation. However their analysis is incomplete. Equally important is the political/ideological and cultural development in the region.

The persistence of corrupt dictatorial governments, which have sold out the people and resources of the Middle East to allow for the growth of US, European, and Israeli colonialism coupled with the Western aggression in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as Western support for Israeli policy in Gaza and Palestine, have created mass frustration. These are some of the issues that have a deep impact on the consciousness of the masses and are as important as the economic causes. The governments of Tunisia, Algeria and Egypt, and many others, have built their regimes on the armed forces and on a continuous struggle against Fundamentalist Islamism which all of them see as an immediate and substantial danger.

The military regime in Algeria and the dictatorship of Mubarak in Egypt have been able to survive, until recently, Muslim uprisings and in the case of Algeria, a civil war.

In the case of Egypt, Mubarak was the vice-president of Anwar El Sadat when Sadat was assassinated in 1981 by radical Islamists for his role in the peace treaty with Israel and for his repression of Islamist fundamentalists. Since then Mubarak has survived various Islamist political rebellions that were suppressed by force and many assassination attempts.

These were not isolated exceptions; this has been the general tendency of events in all Middle Eastern and African countries in the last decades. The secular leadership of a dozen Arab and African countries, with nationalist bourgeoisie governments since World War II, which considered themselves independent, were confronted by the full weight of imperialism and Israel, and each one was destroyed. These governments were then transformed into repressive regimes.

The overthrow of Ben Bella in Algeria, the assassination of Patrice Lumumba in the Congo, the downfall of Nasser and the United Arab Republic are only a few of the historic overthrows of governments and nationalist bourgeoisie projects that have followed after anti-colonial revolutions on the continent.

As part of their imperialist strategy, Israel and the United States supported the strengthening of fundamentalist groups in order to undermine the post-colonial secular regimes and governments of the



Middle East-and in the case of Afghanistan to eliminate the Soviet influence.

From these groups, new leadership emerged in a number of countries, still secular, generally based around the armed forces, and friendly with imperialism in order to guarantee their existence and survival. But increasingly fundamentalist Islamism has turned against their former imperial sponsors and responded to the anti-Israeli demands of the masses in the Middle East, not in order to end imperialism but in order to impose governments of a reactionary nature and to become a player in world politics.

Fundamentalism, although it utilizes the economic and democratic demands of the people in these regions, once it becomes the ruling power, attempts to create Islamic republics that are reactionary and antidemocratic by definition, like all the sectarian religious governments of that kind. For example the regime in Iran, the Taliban in Afghanistan, which also, ironically mirror the Jewish Zionist State.

The current reactionary, imperialist governments of North Africa and the Middle East which are based on repressive force continue to contain a highly progressive contradiction, which

is that they maintain to some extent a nationalist, secular character in their governments and regimes. This aspect legitimates their existence.

However, this secularism sometimes had to be implemented by force because, having been modeled on the values and culture of imperialist countries and societies, it was often rejected by Arab culture.

This is the moment in history where new rebellions are taking place. In addition, Islamic fundamentalism

These two forces are necessary to complete the struggle for democratic and social transformations in the context of secular and worker run governments. These transformations would include: employment for all, housing, nationalization of big business, transportation, exports, etc, under the workers control.

These changes will also include the urgent resolution of the environmental demands in the face of the devastating exploitation of minerals and agricultural resources, destruction of the jungles, pollution, etc. Changes must also include the provision of clean water (a critical necessity of the North and Central region of Africa and also in the whole Arab world) and sanitation services for everyone.

For this it is necessary that the secular revolutionary forces are the vanguard of the overthrow of these dictatorial governments. They must appeal to the masses by fighting for a program that takes back from Islamic fundamentalism, the flags of the struggle for the improvement of life conditions for workers and the people, the defeat of imperialism and its regional ally, the Zionist government of Israel.

In the course of these struggles the unity of action in the protests and strikes is necessary and obligatory against the governments in the regions. This unity of action with all of the social classes, organizations, and with the secular and democratic leaders is necessary in order to guarantee the definitive and lasting separation of church and state. Additionally, it is crucial that the movement, of workers, peasants and soldiers who oppose these governments and regimes, organized through their own democratic methods and coordinators, will take over the government.

The formation of a front of the workers and the left is a strategic objective in order to achieve this end and to stand as a real alternative to the imperialist forces or fundamentalist Islamism, who will compete for power.

This front would call for the centrality of the working class and the workers in the process of transformation, in direct alliance with the peasant and popular masses, the dissolution of the armed forces in these countries, and the preparation for all of the possible and necessary forms of struggle.

From all of the countries of the world, the working class, the left and the democratic and secular sectors must support those organizations that struggle on the only path that guarantees the true economic and social liberation of the Arab people, of North Africa and of the Middle East: that of secular, socialist, democratic and working class governments, based on new institutions created by the masses in the struggle against the old order.●

The Main Threat is the Anarchy of Capitalist Production

JAPAN'S NUCLEAR CATASTROPHE

Por Carlos Petroni

In the hands of capitalists: Japan and the World as we know it approaches its end. Under capitalism, nuclear energy is collective suicide. The disaster at the Fukushima nuclear complex is currently demonstrating this: six reactors are seriously damaged and emitting clouds of radiation and leaking radioactive water that threatens the lives of millions. Fukushima is the active reminder of Chernobyl (Pripyat, Ukraine), Three Mile Island (Pennsylvania, USA) and dozens of other "nuclear accidents."

Fukushima is an obsolete nuclear plant dating from the 1960s. Built like a giant Russian roulette wheel on known earthquake fault lines, it is just a short distance from the ocean with its potential for tsunamis and in the midst of millions of people.

Now, in the wake of this disaster, the facts are emerging that the Japanese government, along with domestic and foreign companies, have not reported previous accidents at this plant and have been negligent about necessary maintenance. They built and expanded the plant exclusively for the potential profits of its capitalist owners.

Nature, in her powerful manner, exposed in one day the fragility of nuclear technology, further weakened by cost cutting and the taking of unnecessary risks, all mainly to be used to provide electric power to big Japanese industries. It also exposed the dangers of a technology whose operators lack the resources, know-how or ability to repair damage in the case of an "accident" like at the Fukushima nuclear complex.

There is nothing that science or the Japanese government can do to resolve this catastrophe. Once the plant melts down, all we can do is watch hundreds of thousands, maybe millions, of deaths and economic destruction of the country. Meanwhile the Japanese working class and the rest of the world watches and waits in shock as the bourgeoisie of Japan and the rest of the world shows its indifference via inconsequential criticism and ineffective symbolic actions.

As a result of this catastrophe, Germany has decided to close its seven most obsolete nuclear power plants and the French government has harshly criticized the Japanese for allowing the circumstances that made this crisis possible. U.S. imperialism is attempting to hide its own potential nuclear disasters. Even "progressive" Hugo Chavez must now freeze his plans for the construction and development of nuclear power plants because it was "discovered," during the planning and construction stage, that the planned facilities have all the potential dangers unleashed in the Japanese Fukushima tragedy.



All of this is evidence of the criminal intentions of the international bourgeoisie. They shed false tears now and wait patiently for enough time to pass for us the public to forget this new mass murder. This has happened before, at Chernobyl (Ukraine) and Three Mile Island (Pennsylvania, USA) and in many other instances. Soon they will return, if they can, to operating in the same way.

Capitalism must guarantee sufficient profits to the energy industry in order for them to build and operate the nuclear power plants. Everything else is subservient to this profit margin, including lives, homes, jobs and safety for all the inhabitants of the planet. In order to guarantee these profits regulations are weakened, loopholes are found, accidents are hidden, inferior materials are used, maintenance costs are cut, and workers salaries are curtailed.

The plant operators economize on technological research related to handling disasters, plants are kept operating beyond their initial life expectancy, and nuclear waste disposal is left to chance and political maneuvering. It has been undeniably demonstrated, most recently in Japan, that the specific areas where these plants are built and operated are under constant risk of nuclear genocide.

Governments collaborate with business to expand business profits by turning a deaf ear to the complaints of scientists and researchers, by not implementing existing laws or watering them down, and by extending permits to keep plants open beyond their original life expectancy. Companies have reached the point where they do not even inform their governments, much less the public, when disasters occur. This is how we arrived at the situation where the Japanese Prime Minister heard about the latest explosion in the reactors at Fukushima through the public media. Such is the impunity felt by these businesses.

Like during Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans or the devastating tsunami in Asia in 2004 that left more than 300,000 people dead in a dozen countries, the coastal defenses, advanced warnings of the path of the disasters, evacuation plans and immediate assistance to victims simply did not exist or evaporated in the early stages. Governments were missing beforehand in prevention efforts. As a result they were overwhelmed and inadequate in their relief efforts and other assistance.

In Japan, this nuclear disaster has exposed these failures of the bourgeoisie government. An ocean with a record of earthquakes, seaquakes and tsunamis, sent towering 30 foot waves over hundreds of kilometers of land that should not have been inhabited. The tsunami smashed through concrete and steel protective barriers and other infrastructure as if they were made of paper and flooded nuclear and petrochemical plants that should never have been built where they were.

Of course, this situation is not limited to nuclear plants.

This happens in all industries. Do you recall Bhopal and the petrochemical disaster of Union Carbide in 1984 in India? Do you remember the oil spill in Alaska and more recently the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico as well as hundreds of other catastrophes that have occurred in the last decade alone? The airplanes that crash, the trains that derail, buses and rail vehicles that crash because regulations have been eliminated or maintenance has been cut back, the industrial plants that have been used beyond life expectancy all are examples of every way profits have been prioritized over safety.

Bhopal Disaster: Between 6,000 and 8,000 people died in the immediate aftermath and more than 12,000 have died of related illnesses. Today the effects of that toxic cloud that affected 600,000 people is still impacting 150,000 of their lives.

The disaster at Fukushima is massive and deadly, is at the level of a capitalist genocide and as a result, it shakes the conscience of the world. However capitalism and the bourgeoisie apply the same practices, to a greater or lesser extent, in all these disasters. In the end, the numbers may be bigger or smaller, but the result is always multiple deaths and the gradual death of our planet.

The growth of consumption, above all in the industrialized world and by the dominant and privileged social classes, is putting excessive pressure on natural resources and creating extreme exploitation that upsets nature's balance and aggravates her response. Thus, floods, tsunamis, earthquakes and hurricanes strike at human society in ways it has not previously experienced. This destiny could be avoided through global planning around resources and geographical location. It is necessary to eliminate unnecessary consumption and the anarchy of capitalist production.

Capitalism, as a world system, is exhausted. Capitalism is living through a period of its mortal agony and for this reason has become a lot more dangerous. It has mobilized all its defenses in order to survive the inevitable, by reinforcing the strength of its political states, cutting the democratic benefits of the masses, and increasing the devastation of natural resources, both non-renewable and those that are renewable that it does not know how to grow sustainably. It is time to end capitalism or it will put an end to the planet and to human civilization as we know it.

The people of the world see their own reflection in the mirror of Africa (mutilated resources, the violations wrought by wars and invasions, tribal struggles, and illnesses and pandemics that are liquidating national states one after the other). We can also see our reflection in the devastating tragedy under way in Japan which is causing Japan as we know it to disappear and become a ruin of its former self. This is the future of all of us in the hands of the capitalists. •

The names Hugo Chavez, Evo Morales and Rafael Correa have become synonymous with controversy. Right wing, conservative and moderate political pundits and political actors from the ruling class and middle class vilify them while moderates, liberals and self-styled leftists have installed the three of them on altars as highly anticipated messiahs. Despite the differences in the political paths they followed to leadership, their different national circumstances and their own styles of speaking, these three figureheads have many peculiarities and points in common. Paradoxically, all three proclaim the urgency of promoting “liberation democracies” in Latin America while simultaneously working to increase the strength and centrality of their own power. Even considering their differences Hugo, Rafael and Evo share one major thing in common, their populist politics within the limiting framework of bourgeoisie nationalism.

While in many ways their visions coincide, the three emerged into their respective political arenas and work in different national contexts, which influences their independent projects. When Chavez was elected as president of Venezuela for the first time in 1999, the progressive sectors there and the worldwide left had high expectations for him. Chavez fashioned his campaign on an agenda of Latin American unity and anti-imperialist and anti-oligarchic rhetoric that resonated with the oppressed, sectors of the middle class and most of the working class. These people constituted the 60% of the popular vote, which legitimized his campaign against the failure of the old bipartisanship.

Chavez’s opposition in Venezuela is diverse: Important sectors of the bourgeoisie, the middle class, students and even some privileged sectors of workers. However the attacks of the “escualidos” (the most right wing and reactionary opposition to Chavez in the country) launching racist and class biased attacks against him and his supporters, have until now fueled the red waves of Chavistas to respond bravely after each incident with slogans like “*¡Nos quieren tumbar a nuestro Negro, pero no los vamos a dejar!*” (They want us to take our negro down, but we will not let that happen!)

Since taking office in 2006, Morales in Bolivia and Correa in Ecuador have declared their support for Chavez and his proposals for the continent. Their elections had been similar to that of Chavez in Venezuela, in terms of creating a legitimate response and resistance to a decade of destructive neo-liberal attacks on workers and the indigenous populace in South America. In both countries, there has been a rebirth of strong national independence movements that include indigenous groups, who are also part of the working class. The clearest example of that conjecture is the miners in Bolivia.

Morales has promoted the self-employed and small producers on the margins of the national and international bourgeoisie, mainly the cocaleros (coca leaf farmers) proclaiming them as an example of unique “Andean capitalism”. The exaltation of the Aymaran president Evo and his indigenous roots contrasts with the collapse of his support and popularity among the indigenous peoples, like the miners, who seem to be organizing opposition to him, when Morales has failed to follow through on his promises.

On the other hand, Correa is a leftist politician educated abroad, whose speeches are high-minded, challenging, and emotional but attuned to the rhythm of bourgeois society in Ecuador. Unlike the Chavez and Morales in Venezuela and Bolivia, Correa came to power without a political party like the Movimiento al Socialismo in Bolivia or like the coalition of parties in Venezuela. His political rise happened with the support of the Patria Altiva y Soberana alliance, PAIS, where he led a participatory process that incorporated major commonly ignored social issues including environmental conservation.

In the case of both Morales and Correa, the euphoria generated by their electoral success was pronounced. Around both of them debate emerged within the left as to whether or not they lead bourgeois governments and about how they responded to workers’ struggles. The leftist debaters did not want to duplicate the virulent and xenophobic attacks of the reactionary right.

Both presidents, like Chavez, have facilitated the redistribution of wealth and have granted benefits to communities that previously had none, staying strictly within the limits of the bourgeois order of the capitalist world. This explains their commitment to elections and referendums. Their progressive measures have won them

SHALLOW POPULISM

VENEZUELA, ECUADOR AND BOLIVIA

Por Pili Rosales



denunciations as “communists, leftists and socialists” among the right wing, ruling class and US imperialist opposition. On the other hand, forces on the left ignore the impact of their programs and focus on the charismatic charm of these populist leaders. There is no denying that these measures have contributed to improving the lives of down-trodden sectors of society but it is also true that all these actions are still only “band-aid solutions” and remain within boundaries that respect bourgeois property rights and institutions.

What is Chavismo?

Chavismo emerged as a reaction against neo-liberalism in the 90’s and was one of the first voices of protest against US imperialism after a decade in which the US declared absolute victory over communism. Chavez’s defiance of the United States quickly enhanced his popularity. Simultaneously, he was able to increase social welfare benefits thanks to an oil boom. New measurable improvements are now rare due to the severe impact of the US and European economic crises which have affected Venezuela directly and harshly.

Here we see clearly the exact nature of these particular regimes: they are bourgeois nationalist regimes with populist hot sauce, in an era of the global crisis of capitalism and unstable relationships between countries. This situation, the actions and the personas of the leaders, in no way resemble Cardenas in 1930s Mexico nor Peron in post-World War II Argentina. This is populism in a time of crisis, confronting an imperialism that does not resemble ascendant US imperialism at the end of the World War II. Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador are facing the emergence of Brazil as an imperialist power that dominates their natural resources as well as their imports and exports. The three governments have done little or nothing to confront the regional influence of Brazil and instead see it as an ally, so much so that Chavez has called former Brazilian Prime Minister Lula his “big brother.”

It is undeniable that the Chavez’s government has implemented programs that benefit the poor, especially in the areas of housing and food. Despite the now more frequent blackouts and an economic crisis that undermines the promises of the celebrated “socialism of the 21st century”, the “red shirts”, Chavez’s followers, still listen with almost religious adulation to the Sunday program “Hello President”. On the show Hugo Chávez answers calls, makes fun of the “escualidos”, expropriates some properties and punishes government officials who he accuses of distorting his political agenda.

A Populism Mispronounced Socialism of the 21st Century

“Socialism of the 21st century” is nothing more than populism and pure reverence built on the backs of those that are excluded from the distribution of the taxes and the democratic networks. The love-hate relationship that

Chávez, Morales and Correa have with leftists and progressives of the world perfectly fills a void in the existing political community.

These South American governments have carried out social programs such as assistance to families without incomes, returned land to indigenous communities, health and education programs, subsidized basic food staples, made nationalizations and expropriations and investments in infrastructure as a way of responding to the current political crisis and at the same time fortifying their own respective positions of power.

Obviously, in spite of the fact that are branded as socialists and speak of the establishment of a “Socialism of the 21st century” or even of “Andean and Bolivariano” socialism, real socialism does not exist there yet. Even if nationalizations, some expropriations and other measures have taken place in Venezuela, Ecuador and Bolivia, the bourgeoisie continues to own and control the majority of the means of production. Actually, a larger and more extensive number of these actions and measures happened in Mexico when the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) was in power. No one thought at the time that the PRI was a revolutionary regime or that its actions were socialist.

The nationalizations in these three countries have only been the state’s small participatory steps in the income stream without touching the interests and the proprietary rights of the imperialist petroleum companies that continue exploiting the resources of these countries. There have not been expropriations nor has the working class gained power. Instead, the income of the state has increased and the state has attempted, with limited success, to gain greater administrative control.

These leaders have maintained the contradiction of remaining independent while advancing social reforms without upsetting the capitalist state. However this has cost them dearly. The *gasolinazo* in Bolivia may at first seem surprising, but it should have been expected. Morales has been playing with fire for years. He wanted to please everyone and eventually he had to take sides, and he chose the side with the most power. Correa made the same kind of choice when he ordered the suppression of demonstrations of indigenous people. Even without the economic stability that Venezuela had for a short period, both Bolivia and Ecuador built bourgeois/petit-bourgeois nationalist regimes. They are trying to preserve their independence from imperialism while giving concessions to the impoverished masses, yet without disrupting the capitalist structures of both countries.

The timing is bad for the populist politics of Hugo, Evo and Rafael in this period of world crisis. Their politics seem silly in a world where a wild and voracious capitalist system does not allow them the room to maneuver that they had until now. Meanwhile the “revolutionary” measures of these governments are used to promote the personality cults of these leaders and to build more extensive bureaucracies without generating worker’s power. “Socialism of the 21st century” is fake... a parody, not even of socialism but of populism. •

ARGENTINA

Tango & Rock 'n Roll

By Nicolás Barros

In the next few years the international economic and political situation will continue to benefit Argentina. However, there has been no new investment in productive infrastructure in the country. The country's largest businesses understand the current situation. It favors them, and – aside from some minor criticism – they strongly support the Kirchner (CFK) government. The working class along with other oppressed sectors of the masses have staged a number of struggles and raised their demands. However, this has not resulted in a substantial political challenge to the government and regime mostly because within the working class there is no structure and leadership willing to confront them. There are alarming signs surrounding the actions of the sinister Peronist union bureaucracy (essentially the Hugo Moyano led CGT), the Armed Forces, the police and security forces, which remain violent, ruthless and powerful mafia like organizations.

The international economy continues to favor Argentina. The worldwide destruction of the environment has resulted in the depletion of resources such as raw materials, potable drinking water, arable land, fossil fuels, in atmospheric pollution, desertification, pollution from untreated sewage flowing into open waters, etc. In contrast to this worldwide situation, Argentina has a great advantage in terms of abundant unused natural resources.

First, food production in Argentina is a major asset. The country has a population of only 40 million and its resources could feed up to 560 million.

Secondly, there is a large reserve of skilled labor, another capacity accumulated at a relatively low cost. This is still the case despite the decrease of skilled labor that characterized Argentina after the 1970's and the decades of general impoverishment that followed.

Thirdly, the balance of imports and exports is under control. Since 2001 the foreign debt has grown vegetatively. In order to normalize relations in the financial markets, the Kirchner administration negotiated an exchange of foreign debt for state issued bonds, which managed to extend the timeline of payments. In the process: unpaid interest was capitalized, and capital was reduced. Interest rates, contractual obligations, type of currency for payments and the mass of debt remained about the same. The end result is a debt that, provided there is a growing economy and no new indebtedness, can be paid. It won't be a legitimate or beneficial debt, just a debt that is payable within its current terms.

It is important to mention that in recent months several provinces in Argentina, among them Buenos Aires, Neuquén, Córdoba, Río Negro, Chubut and the city of Buenos Aires, have each received loans in amounts of between 85 and 450 million US dollars, with interest rates between 9.75% and 15.25%, which will be applied to current expenses. Although these are still low figures, the tendency is disturbing.

The only source of foreign income for the country is its trade surplus. The Kirchner administration uses these resources for:

a. The maintenance of a fund to protect itself against foreign exchange risks. Foreign exchange reserves are close to 60 billion US dollars, and are used in part to stabilize the value of the peso, the domestic currency, assuring a supply of enough resources in case of a surge in the demand for dollars. This is the policy advocated for decades by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), even more so after the collapse of Iceland, Greece, Ireland and Portugal.

b. The repayment of the foreign debt and payments of capital and interest on public foreign debt.

c. The remission of royalties, utilities, the flight of capital and payments for the license over trade names or products registered with foreign owners; repatriation of utilities

(earnings after taxes) obtained by subsidiaries of transnational corporations; and payment of dividends to actionists outside of the country.

Many corporations are subsidiaries that send payments to their parent company abroad for credits they received, however many of these or similar transactions are fraudulent maneuvers used to send money out of the country.

d. Subsidizing national and international businesses and other economic sectors. The state provides subventions to a variety of entities, from private corporations like General Motors or FIAT, to entire economic sectors like oil, energy and transportation. A fourth aspect of the Argentinean economy is actually its weakest: the lack of productive investment. Although scarce investment in capital goods is a global phenomenon (except for Brazil, Russia, India and China), that does not make it any less harmful for several reasons:

1) The over utilization of existing capacity produces inflation. When existing factories, in the absence of expansion projects or adequate maintenance, are working at the limit of their capacity, the entrepreneurs react to their own decision not to increase investment and production with price increases.

2) The trade surplus based on the production of finished commodities has deepened economic dependence by requiring higher imports of intermediate goods (materials that become part of another product) to sustain consumption. Some agricultural necessities are imported. For example in the automotive industry, 60% of parts used on the assembly line are imported. In the auto parts industry many of the components also come from abroad. This is repeated to a greater or lesser degree in electronics, chemicals, agricultural machinery, appliances, medicines and so on.

3) The maintenance cost also increases with the gradual obsolescence of capital goods, plant facilities, machinery, etc.

4) The difference obtained by the growth of sectoral productivity of exportable items does not return as physical capital goods.

5) Social training of workers is degraded as successive generations abandon formal education and, most importantly, are not engaged in formal, permanent employment at a young age. In this way they lose contact with changing work methods and practices that qualify the workers and influence their culture.

6) It results in environmental deterioration

7) It increases stress on the resources of the extractive industry, both renewable and non-renewable. It results in the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species and forests as a sub product of the activity of industries like mining, petroleum, chemical, agriculture and forestry. It causes pollution of the coasts and watercourses, increases the emission of greenhouse gases due to intensive farming and the amount of monocultures production. Tragically, indigenous peoples are murdered by the destruction of the ecosystems that sustain them.

Despite the lack of investment, the economic situation is still relatively beneficial and, together with the social stability reached by the policies of the Kirchners, are the main reasons why the government has such strong support from the bourgeoisie. Even the arbitrary actions related to trade issues by Guillermo Moreno*, Interior Commerce Minister, or the reactions of Hugo Moyano**, leader of the CGT, howling against judicial problems of his own making, or the suggestions of price control, or the relationship with Hugo Chávez, do not become major issues and do not diminish the main contention point: business profits have been maintained and have even increased year after year. Even in the critical years of 2008 and 2009 the Argentinean bourgeoisie clearly maintained their profits.

In general the working class also has a favorable disposition towards the current government. It is true that opinions differ from sector to sector, but the most favorable opinions are found among the most exploited. The urban petite bourgeoisie is fragmented between those who are fiercely anti-Kirchner and others who have more recently come to support the government. The reason for this is tangle: unemployment remains stable, neither increasing nor decreasing, and underemployment shows only a vegetative growth. (Watch out if it grows like zucchini though!) While inflation is an important adverse factor, the cycle of negotiations of collective bargaining agreements and wage increases helps to keep the calm, particularly among the privileged sectors of the organized labor movement, those who have salaries above \$5000 Argentinean pesos. For them, the main demands are tax brackets set to avoid their payment of income tax and to continue their access to good consumer credit.

From the perspective of other parts of the working class and the oppressed masses, the situation is more complex. There have been a number of important union struggles, such as those involving food processors (Kraft), oil workers, teachers, railroad and subway workers, state employees in Córdoba, together with struggles for land and housing, and protests against police brutality, etc. but none of these struggles has been able to advance beyond an elementary level. There is not a single force, more or less organized, within the working class movement (mainly industrial) that is capable of channeling sectoral demands into a broader political struggle to challenge the regime. Despite all this, these recent struggles and their results have enriched the experience of the workers, paving the way for a renewed and more militant struggle in 2011.

The most striking social consequences of the existing inequality are to be found in the conditions of extreme poverty suffered by the original ethnic population, aliens in their own land, vastly reduced in numbers, their habitats, and subsistence sustaining ecosystems stolen, and prominent only as the basis for the statistics reporting rates of death due to malnourishment.

The small towns of the interior have been reduced to ghostly railway stations and just too many old good memories. Future archaeological excavations of these places would reveal geological layer after layer of accumulated misery. They reveal the oppression of the indigenous Araucanians/Mapuches, Wichis, Tufas, of the ethnic populations of the Bolivians, Paraguayans, Peruvians, etc. and also the special oppression of women whose work is inadequately compensated and whose needs are greater, all of which is nailed to a crucifix that Argentines pay for with their taxes.

Although Kirchnerism appears to be strong, it represents only the progressive leg of the three-legged governing coalition formed with the reactionary Peronist union bureaucracy, the same characters who once were, literally, executioners of progressive forces, and with elected Peronist officials, including the quasi-mafioso Mayors of greater Buenos Aires and the semi-feudal governors of the interior provinces. The unprincipled arrangement cementing this government has proven to be very useful (but not without contradictions) in the process leading to a gradual return to a state of a more or less peaceful normalcy after the social revolt of 2001. To this effect the government counted on the full support of all the right wing political currents in the opposition, including the ancient Union Cívica Radical; the so-called Federal Peronism; PRO, the party of Mauricio Macri, Mayor of Buenos Aires; the Civic Coalition, etc. All these forces attempted to organize an alternative to Kirchnerism, but never achieved their goal.

Another defining aspect of Argentina is its position as a country dependent on imperialism, which the current government has been unable to change. This can be illustrated by the participation of Argentina in the military forces invading Haiti. Argentina has collaborated as a

Continued on page 14

* Guillermo Moreno: Secretario de Comercio Interior del gobierno de Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, conocido por sus métodos poco convencionales de imponer controles de precios en productos o apretar burgueses opositores en sus negocios, además de utilizar patotas para reprimir a los trabajadores del Instituto de estadísticas (Indec) para ocultar la realidad de las mismas.

** Hugo Moyano: Secretario General de la Confederación General de Trabajadores (CGT) y titular del sindicato de camioneros. Proviene de la derecha peronista de la burocracia sindical que en los 70 denunciaba y asesinaba activistas de izquierda y de la izquierda peronista. Es aliado del gobierno al que, sin embargo, aprieta de vez en vez para fortalecer su ala burocrática.

BRAZIL

Born to be Empire

By Gino Pepi

There is no doubt Brazil is an emerging imperialist power. It dominates the Latin America economy, exports capital, is a major factor in markets around the world, is expanding its military capacity and intervenes politically to assert its growing influence, gaining on the decaying US Empire.

In terms of gross domestic product (GDP), Brazil's economy is the largest in Latin America and the second largest in the continental Americas, after the USA. In relation to the world's few *growing* economic powers, Brazil is among the top four. Brazil economically and politically dominates South America and is the main competitor of the USA in the Americas. It is clear that President Obama's March, 2011 visit to Brazil was not to take post Carnival samba lessons, but to open discussions with an equal to preserve the economic and political position of the USA. Obama was late on both counts.

Only the Brazilian ruling class – no other is in a similar position – can take the initiative to resist the growing tendency of the US, through its present military/political offensive, to undermine the last vestiges of relative independence of the other national bourgeoisies on the North and South American continents.

Brazil has one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. Its economy is growing at a time when most other global capitalists are in decline and crisis. Brazil has had an average annual GDP growth rate of over 5 percent since the early 2000s. Brazil's GDP was estimated as at least US \$800 billion in 2009 and has increased since then. It will soon move from being the eighth to fifth largest national economy in the world, even though this would give only a distorted and diminished picture of its overall power.

The *Miami Herald* of October 7, 2010 says, "The IMF (International Monetary Fund) forecast(s) ... Brazil's economy is expected to chug along at 7.5 percent this year (2010) before slowing to 4.1 percent growth in 2011 ... Meanwhile, the IMF predicts 2.6 percent growth this year for the United States — a weak performance coming after a recession — and 2.3 percent growth in 2011 ... Growth is expected to be even slower in the Euro Zone where the IMF forecasts the average economic growth among the 16 nations that use the Euro as their currency will be 1.7 percent this year and 1.5 percent next year."

Brazil is the largest and fastest growing producer and distributor of most of the important market commodities in the world. These include iron ore, several important industrial minerals and industrial diamonds, soybeans, corn, chicken, beef, orange juice, coffee, sugar and tobacco.

Brazil is the first country to bring together the ten largest car assembly companies inside its national borders. Brazil also has the world's third largest aircraft manufacturer, Embraer, which

supplies most of US regional airlines with mid-size air transport – on that line is not third, but first in the world – and is expanding rapidly into military aircraft production. It ranks fourth in terms of world military weapons and vehicle production.

Brazil has an increasing capacity for space exploration, internal based missile

launch sites and has been part of the construction team of the International Space Station. Part of Obama's visit to Brazil was to discuss US use of its missile launch sites.

With its huge bio-fuels (ethanol) industry, Brazil has the "greenest" economy in the world; while at the same time it is the source of the rise of agricultural commodities in the world's markets.

Its offshore petroleum industry is so large, that it has to hire most of its oil platform welders from other countries like

the United States. Petrobras (the nationalized oil company) has a recent gross product of US \$67 billion. 150 miles off the Brazilian coast, Petrobras has plans to build offshore platforms that will reach 20,000 feet down to the sea floor just to start drilling.

Anywhere in South America you stop for gasoline or natural gas fuel, you'll most likely be at a Petrobras station. Soon, Petrobras will unify the oil production capacity of Argentina, Uruguay and Venezuela with that of Brazil to become a major oil conglomerate – totaling ~11% of US oil imports, almost as much as Saudi Arabia. Brazil plays a leading role in natural gas extraction and distribution in Bolivia and Ecuador. It plays a similar role in the hydroelectric industry of Paraguay. It is also a major partner with Venezuela in the exploitation of the natural resources potential of the Orinoco river basin.

Most of its iron ore exports go to China. North of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil is building a huge shipping port complex, with Chinese financing, to speed delivery of this commodity to China. In February of 2011, US National Public Radio reported that Brazil is building a cross-country railroad system, to cross to Columbia's Pacific coast to further increase its shipping capacity to China.

Brazilian exports have tripled since 2003 on rising world demand for everything it produces. Brazil, once the world's largest emerging-market debtor, became a net foreign creditor for the first time in 2011 as international reserves swelled to a record \$171.6 billion from \$37.6 billion at the start of 2003. Brazil is the sole capital exporter in Latin America.

Brazil expanded into all this, in part, by

building Mercosur in the early 1990s with partners Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay. Brazil created this trading block before the USA created NAFTA. *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and the McClatchy newspaper group have reported that in every year since the founding of Mercosur, Brazil has lead serious attempts to expand it. However its development as an imperialist power comes from long history of military conquests and treaty deals.

Brazil has made Venezuela a soon to be full Mercosur partner, most other countries in South and Central America to be associate partners, attempted to expand the trading block to include South Africa and almost concluded a deal to ally the European Union (EU) in a joint Mercosur trade block.

Mercosur is now the third largest trade block in the world behind the EU and NAFTA and has played the major role in stopping the USA in its attempt to fulfill its goals for completing a trade block in South and Central America, the Free Trade of the Americas Act.

Brazil is an outspoken critic of US foreign policy, mostly in preserving its own influence in other Latin America countries and thus "defending" its pawns against the US pac-man geopolitical game. For example it opposed the US policy in relation to the 2009 coup in Honduras, defends Argentina's claim to the Malvinas, collaborated with Turkey on attempting to negotiate a deal with Iran on its nuclear program and is fighting to become the next permanent member to the UN Security Council. Everything it does is to consolidate its dominant role in the region and expand elsewhere.

Brazil is a major military force in the Americas. The Brazilian military, a longtime a participant in UN "peacekeeping" forces, lead the UN forces into Haiti, in August of 2003. As of 2010 there are about 11,000 US troops and 11,000 other foreign troops and police in Haiti of which Brazil supplies about half and Brazilian generals command all of those forces. Brazil has major capacity for the manufacture of land, air and naval vehicles and weaponry and last but not

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TO IMPERIALISM BORN

Brazil, under Portuguese colonial rule and after its independence had a long tradition of conquests and deals that started in 1494 when Portugal made agreements with Spain to limit Spanish South American expansion and to grant land to Portugal to acquire large parts of what is now southern Brazil.

Starting in 1680, the Portuguese colony of Brazil made military incursions south waging a long series of bloody battles with Spanish colonists and creating a stronghold across the Rio de la Plata from Buenos Aires. In 1777 Brazil traded this stronghold for large areas of what became states in Amazonian northeastern Brazil.

In 1816 the Portuguese monarchy, after it relocated itself to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil as a result of being defeated by Napoleon's French armies in Portugal. A militarily campaign occupied more territory just to the south of Brazil and across from Argentina. In a complicated series of wars and political struggles this territory was transformed into Uruguay, as an "independent" buffer state between Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay.

In 1822 the Brazilian Empire 'established' itself independent of Portugal. It launched more bloody wars, invading Uruguay and Paraguay. The "War of the Triple Alliance" (1865-70) with the united action of Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina against Paraguay, resulted in Brazil taking over much of Paraguayan territory.

Early 20th Century governments of Brazil faced Brazilian Amazon frontier incursions by Peru and Colombia to extract rubber and other raw materials. Brazil retaliated with armed raids and trade controls. In 1942 Brazil, prompted by the ambitions of its armed forces, declared war on Germany and Italy and sent troops and supplied large amounts of war material to the Allies.

In a 1945 coup, the Brazilian military got rid a government it had put in power in 1930. After a succession of military coups and civilian governments, the military decided in 1964 to establish a military dictatorship to facilitate greater industrialization of the country under US imperialism, laying the groundwork for greater Brazilian presence on the continent. The resulting so-called "Brazilian Miracle" was big business for US multinationals and also strengthened the Brazilian national bourgeoisie. In the long run, however, that building of the Brazilian Industrial base and reinforcement of the national bourgeoisie turned on the US when Brazil became a competitor rather than a semi colonial enclave.

By 1984 the forces of the CUT, PT and the MST - (the rural landless movement) - participated in the struggle to overthrow the military dictatorship. None the less they fell for the bourgeoisie policy of gradual replacement of the military government with a civilian one, which preserved the Armed Forces as the arbiters of the national political arena, a role they still play today.●

Continued from the previous page

least, it is also building its own nuclear submarine fleet, in co-operation with France who is also trading Brazil the technology and engineering know how to continue to expand this nuclear fleet on its own.

IMPERIALISTS WITH FEET OF CLAY

The total sum of all the above leaves no doubt that the Brazilian ruling class has already become an imperialist force in the world and gets stronger every day. However this spectacle of economic might exists side by side with wealth for a few and poverty for many. Is an imperialist martial power, stomping through the world on feet of clay.

In 2008, 22.6% or 34.9 million Brazilians lived below the official national poverty line. Brazil has one of the highest disparity rates of poverty versus wealth in the world. The richest 10% of Brazilians control 42.7% of the nation's income, while the poorest 10% have less than 1.2%. Brazil's poverty rate is clearly displayed by the urban slums surrounding its cities, the favelas, where one half of Brazil's poor live.

In the favelas the poverty rate increases with the number of dependents in the household, 52% of the populace is not connected to potable water distribution, 68% have no garbage collection and 78% are not connected to sanitary sewage disposal or septic tanks.

Add to that 25% do not have electricity and 74% live in households where the head of the household has less than four years of schooling. These appalling conditions are the subtext for high rates of criminal activity, inequality and the frustrating inability of the poor to develop their human potential. For women this all goes double. Brazilian military is now



stamping out criminal control of these areas and the government is planning to urbanize and integrate the favelas.

For the rural poor the conditions are the same or worse. In the countryside they struggle for land, particularly under utilized but arable and potentially productive land, which leads to the murder of organizers of all sectors of the landless and at times reaches the level of small civil wars. Add these conditions to the racial discrimination against the indigenous populace and against the descendents of the four million slaves brought to Brazil from Africa. Although slavery was abolished in Brazil over a hundred years ago, access to education, land, health care, rights to their land titles and employment are still problems for slave descendents. Racism is a big part of the Brazilian economic miracle.

The working class and its union organizations are active in all sectors and parts of the Brazilian economy and politics. The **Central Única dos Trabalhadores** (Unified Workers' Central, known by the acronym CUT), is the main union confederation in Brazil. The CUT was formed in 1983 based on the auto and metal workers unions organized in the manufacturing suburbs around Sao

Paulo. It is the main base of the Workers' Party (PT).

The CUT is the largest and most powerful trade union federation in Brazil and Latin America, representing over 7.4 million workers in all sectors of the Brazilian economy. It is the fifth largest trade union confederation in the world. It faces ongoing obstacles to union organizing because of Brazilian laws curtailing workers' rights to organize.

It is from the CUT and the PT from which Inácio Lula da Silva (Lula), a former metal workers union leader and leader of the CUT, rose from impoverished shoeshine boy to be an extremely popular prime minister and world figure. The workers that formed the CUT paid with their blood, sweat and tears to be a large component of the forces that overthrew the Brazilian military dictatorship.

Lula and the PT however lead a government of class conciliation designed to introduce just enough reforms to win the critical loyalty of the Brazilian working class for the imperialist project of the ruling class. In this way the working class of Brazil advances its own living standard at the cost of the workers and oppressed of all the other countries Brazil already or will in the future dominate.

It is the same process by which the trade unions in the USA and the British Labour Party for example won their roles in their national political systems as labor aristocrats or privileged workers. The PT and the CUT are following the same or similar paths in Brazil.

It was with the consent of the Brazilian bourgeoisie that Lula led the government and chose his successor, the first woman prime minister of Brazil, Dilma Rousseff. Lula held office from 2003 to 2010, leading a government that made some small steps to solve the poverty problems of Brazil. As Lula was formally leaving his elected office he established a research institute to facilitate Brazilian investments in Africa.●

ARGENTINA Tango & Rock 'n Roll

Continued from page 12

supporting player in the invasion and genocide of the Haitian people under the military leadership of the USA, France and Brazil. We also have to point to the complete alignment of the government with the emerging Brazilian empire, which already, through its businesses, controls two thirds of the Argentinean economy.

We see two warning signals for Argentina in the immediate future: first the Peronist union bureaucracy and secondly the state security apparatus and its mirror in the armed forces. In the first case it is not only about the CGT as the key institution that helped the government to sail through a smooth transition, but about the leadership at the helm today - the set of unions in the CGT led by Hugo Moyano - that portray themselves as the political and ideological heirs of Peron's legacy: my only heir is the people.

The Moyano-led unions have candidates for deputy governor, mayors, representatives, senators, councilmen and officials in the three branches of government and are establishing a new national structure called the Peronist National Trade Union Current (Corriente Nacional Sindical Peronista or CNSP).

The other warning signal is coming from the police, security and armed forces. They have gradually permeated all layers of society. They organize crime and drug trafficking, something particularly dangerous in poor neighborhoods and marginalized sectors of society. They also get involved in the coordination of private security, the "patovicas" (night club guards), or with "barras bravas" (hooligans around soccer teams) or other similar layers of repressive bodies and get involved in running of illegal gambling, prostitution rings, etc. This is a caste-like layer of society that constantly generates semiautonomous sectors seeking new businesses. It is also a tool of social control and a source of political pressure to be afraid of.

The country will most likely move in the direction of greater struggles and conflicts. Sooner or later the situation in other parts of the world will reach Argentina, the pending contradictions within the regime will explode into the open and rumblings will again be heard in the streets.

The electoral season this year could turn into a catalyst to amplify the struggles. It could offer a political opportunity for large sectors of the masses to express their disgust with the promises of the current pseudo progressive government and its sinister right-wing opposition. For this to happen, it would be necessary to build an electoral front between the left, which still remains a marginal force, and a very weak center left. This would be a highly visible response to the need for political representation of important and advanced sectors of the working class and oppressed masses.

On the agenda for the near future, we see the need for building of mass rank-and-file union organizations combined with a sustained political struggle against the union bureaucracy. The fight to weaken and dismantle the omnipresent police and security forces will also be high on the list. Add to this the struggle to stop the attacks against indigenous peoples and the destruction of the environment, not to mention the long overdue battles of the agrarian revolution. All of these issues will be resolved as part of the historic struggle for a socialist transformation of Argentina and world society.●

INTERNATIONAL LEFT

Who are we

International Left is a new project aimed at developing a revolutionary socialist organization of workers, the oppressed and youth.

We believe that a revolution that does not result in greater democratic guarantees for the oppressed sectors of society is doomed. That is why we place extremely high value on the principle of internal democracy, as well as the principle of organic solidarity with the mass movement in other countries. (Capitalism and imperialism must be replaced by a more advanced economic and political system. Bourgeois rule must be replaced by the rule of the working class and the oppressed. If we do not shortly inaugurate a new epoch of growth for social justice with technological, political and economic advancement for the entire human race, the present system will drag all of us backwards to barbarism.

The rule of capitalism is dragging the planet into an ecological crisis. The productive forces unleashed by nature are now in question. Peak oil, global warming, the disputes over everyday needs such as water, the systematic destruction of vast forests, the approaching danger of melting polar ice caps, disasters created by profit motivated enterprises such as at Bhopal, Three Mile Island, Chernobyl and now Fukushima are just some of the most well known destructive events resulting from the recklessness of the ruling class. Without breathable air, sanitary water, arable land, co-operation between human beings and more, we will be left without a planet to live on.

This economic system that is destroying the planet cannot be reformed. It must be replaced. Ruling classes and economic and political systems do not fall. They are overthrown. This is no easy task. A mass movement must be active in the streets and workplaces alike. A program must be developed to address the necessary changes in society. An organization must be built to effectively confront the power of the ruling class.

The question of what kind of organization we need is very much a question of strategy. We need a new type of left organization. We need one based on the working class, which will promote the mobilization of the mass movement, that will not aspire to impose its own rule, but the rule of the working class and the oppressed through their own democratic institutions of direct representation and power. (

This organization can neither limit its work to the electoral nor to extra-parliamentarian activities. It must see all forms of struggle as tactics useful in increasing the education, mobilization and organization of the working class and its allies. Agitating in parliament, demonstrating on the streets, striking in the workplace... all of these forms of activity and more must be combined.

This organization can have no interest apart from the interests of the international working class and the oppressed, no objective other than those that contribute to the organization and continuing mobilization of these sectors of society and the construction of their institutions. This organization is not the end product of its work, but simply a tool to help move vast resources against capitalism and for a new, democratic socialist society. (We understand that the organization is not the embryo of a new society, but an instrument of revolutionary politics, a transitory tool, not an end in itself. The party must wither away with the state when capitalism and imperialism are overcome.

The questions of war and peace; fascism and revolution; racism or full equality; colonialism, imperialism and national liberation; class struggle or class collaboration; revolution or counter-revolution; capitalism or socialism; socialism or barbarism ... continue to be the central points, the choices of human civilization, the theoretical challenges of the left, the center of every practical activity of revolutionaries.●