

Imperialist war, the “war on terror” and the end of democracy

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Those horrified by the gunning down of *Charlie Hebdo*’s staff and the subsequent murder of hostages must not allow the blanket media coverage and hypocritical denunciations of “senseless evil” to blunt their critical faculties.

Since the January 7 terror attack, the government of French President François Hollande has utilised the confusion and disorientation produced by the killings to deploy 10,000 troops and thousands of police. Prime Minister Manuel Valls has declared that France is at war “against terrorism, against jihadism, against radical Islam.” *Le Monde* headlined its January 8 edition, “France’s September 11.”

That the terror attacks in Paris are being used to expand neocolonial wars abroad as well as repression at home was underscored by Tuesday’s 488 to 1 vote in France’s National Assembly to extend French air strikes against ISIS forces in Iraq.

Across the Channel in Britain, the government of Prime Minister David Cameron has pledged a further expansion of state surveillance and new measures to curtail free speech and privacy rights, including a ban on the use of Internet encryption. Similar demands, including the reintroduction of European border controls, are being raised by governments across the continent.

It is not credible to claim that such sweeping measures are being implemented simply in response to the killing of 17 people one week ago. They were in preparation long before January 7. They build on a vast array of antidemocratic actions previously taken in the name of the “war on terror.”

The purpose of this “war,” in both its international and domestic manifestations, is to provide a political rationale for the re-division of the world between the major imperialist powers. After more than 13 years, it

is clear that the “war on terror” is the pretext and political framework for the reestablishment of colonial-style domination and subordination of the world’s peoples to the dictates of finance capital.

Military interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria and elsewhere have been conducted to install puppet regimes so as to secure control of oil, gas and other geostrategic resources—at the cost of millions of lives and untold human suffering. In the course of these bloody and one-sided conflicts, the US, France and other imperialist powers have rained down bombs on defenceless civilians, carried out torture and assassination, and committed war crimes. Entire countries have been ravaged.

No one can seriously believe that such actions do not have a profound impact on domestic political life. In a globalised world economy, where populations have become more ethnically and nationally diverse, the indignation created by imperialism’s crimes knows no borders. This is especially the case within the minority and immigrant communities that have borne the brunt of attacks on workers’ living conditions, leaving millions without work and faced with conditions of desperate poverty.

Adding to this toxic mixture is the fact that the old social democratic and Stalinist parties have become open tools of big business, while the trade unions function as arms of management and the various pseudo-left groups repudiate socialism and line up in support of imperialist wars.

These forces have devoted all their efforts to preventing the working class from mobilising against the ruling elite and denying it a progressive socialist alternative. This has created conditions in which the most disoriented and desperate elements can be steered toward terrorism as a way of protesting the social,

political and cultural oppression they face.

The state apparatuses in France, the United States, Britain and other countries have themselves colluded in terror attacks in order to justify the strengthening of their repressive arsenal and advance their designs on the world's resources.

It is in order to legitimise this offensive that Islamophobia is being stoked up. *Charlie Hebdo* has long played a deeply reactionary role in support of this campaign, establishing itself as an anti-Muslim hate sheet specialising in noxious and stupid cartoons denigrating Muslims and the Prophet Mohammed. It has published a series of racist caricatures.

Its most notorious edition was the November 3, 2011 "*Charia Hebdo*," supposedly "guest-edited" by Mohammed and published in the aftermath of France's participation in the US-led regime-change operation in Libya.

The publication of today's commemorative edition, featuring yet another degrading caricature of Mohammed, is a political provocation by the French state, which has funded, to the tune of €1 million, its 3 million-print run and worldwide distribution in 16 languages. Millions in additional funds have been contributed by Google, the Guardian Media Group, *Le Monde*, Canal Plus, Mail International and other media corporations. *Charlie Hebdo* is only one cog in a much larger ideological apparatus designed to whip up racist and nationalist sentiment. The aim is to provide the necessary breeding ground for far-right movements—the National Front in France, Pegida in Germany, the UK Independence Party in Britain—to be deployed as shock troops against the working class.

The fundamental conclusion to be drawn from the ever more open and frequent resort to military/police measures and the relentless assault on democratic rights is that imperialist wars of conquest abroad and the accompanying offensive against the working class at home are incompatible with democracy. France is only one of the more developed expressions of a turn to police-state forms of rule.

It would be a fundamental political error to believe that the vast repressive apparatus being assembled is to be used against only one section of the population. Everywhere, the working class is being reduced to penury as jobs are destroyed, wages slashed, exploitation ramped up and vital social services

destroyed. The ruling class understands very well that this is leading to an eruption of class struggle and is preparing accordingly.

The next stage of the class struggle will develop under conditions of brutal state repression. Workers must organise themselves based on the recognition that they will be involved in a revolutionary conflict—a struggle for power.

For almost a quarter of a century, world imperialism has been seeking to take advantage of the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the reintroduction of capitalism in Russia and China to bring about what President George Bush senior proclaimed in 1991 to be the "new world order." The order Bush spoke of was shrouded in the language of universal progress. The 1991 Gulf War, he said, would herald a world "where diverse nations are drawn together in common cause to achieve the universal aspirations of mankind—peace and security, freedom, and the rule of law."

The reality is what we see today. Imperialism has dragged humanity backwards and plunged the entire world into a living nightmare.

The answer is to be found in the political struggle for socialism, under the leadership of the International Committee of the Fourth International. The cutting edge of the struggle against capitalism is opposition to imperialist militarism and war. The ICFI is pledged to lead that offensive and become the international centre of revolutionary opposition to the resurgence of imperialist violence and militarism.



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