

September 11 and the Paris terrorist attacks

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Many media outlets have compared the recent terrorist attacks in Paris with the September 11, 2001 attacks that destroyed the twin towers in New York City and a wing of the Pentagon in Washington. Considered from the standpoint of the scale of the attacks, the comparison is clearly exaggerated. However, if one observes the reactions of the ruling class, the comparison is entirely appropriate.

The ruling class in the US responded to 9/11 with fifteen years of uninterrupted war, massive violations of international law and the erection of the framework of a police state.

Although the background to 9/11 was never clarified, the attacks served as a pretext to implement plans prepared long beforehand. The real reason for the explosion of US militarism after 9/11 was the crisis of US imperialism on a global scale and growing class tensions within the US itself. The military build-up was aimed at maintaining US hegemony over its rivals and directing class tensions outwards against an external foe.

The same applies to the response to the Paris attacks. Although the attackers were well known to the security agencies, they were able to act virtually unhindered. Their alleged mastermind, 27-year-old Abdulhamid Abaaoud, had been sentenced to twenty years imprisonment in absentia in Belgium but was nevertheless able to travel in and out of France on several occasions.

The security agencies only struck with full force after the attacks. After a three-hour siege, during which the police fired 5,000 rounds, Abaaoud was killed in a densely populated Paris suburb. Parliament approved the lengthening of the state of emergency from the previous ten days to three months almost unanimously. Police broke into apartments across France without search warrants, arbitrarily arresting suspects and placing them under house arrest.

The Belgian capital of Brussels, where some of the attackers came from, was also virtually shut down for several days by the Belgian government.

François Hollande, for a long time the French president with the lowest approval ratings in history, has recast himself as a war president. With the arrival of the Charles de Gaulle aircraft carrier in the eastern Mediterranean, France has deployed over 30 fighter jets over Syria. Hollande is currently traveling the world trying to cobble together an international coalition for war.

The escalation of violence both domestically and abroad can only be understood in the context of deepening social tensions. For years, particularly since the 2008 economic crisis, the living standards of large swathes of the population have been in decline, while a tiny minority has enriched itself. The social and political gulf that separates the vast majority of the population from the establishment political parties is unbridgeable.

Pseudo-left forces like Syriza, which promised an end to the social crisis without touching the fundamentals of capitalist society, have moved sharply to the right and have largely discredited themselves.

The arrival of hundreds of thousands of refugees in Europe from Syria and other war-ravaged countries has further polarized society. While the refugees have been embraced by broad sections of the population with a wave of sympathy and support, the ruling elite has responded by strengthening and sealing off the borders and arming the state for intervention domestically as well as abroad.

Seventy years after the end of World War II, European and international capitalism once again finds itself in a similar impasse to that in 1914 and 1939, on the eve of the First and Second World Wars. The ruling capitalist elites have nothing to offer but social oppression, national exclusion and war. Everything

depends on the building of new revolutionary parties that impart to the resistance of the working population an international socialist orientation.



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