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Afghanistan

An act of vengeance against a whole people

- IV Online magazine - 2001 - IV336 - December 2001 -

Publication date: Monday 10 December 2001

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1) The imperialist aggression launched by the United States as a supposed retaliation for the attacks of 11 September 2001 - which struck the very heart of their territory for the first time - is not an act of legitimate self-defence. It is an act of military vengeance against a whole people, that is being subjected to bombardment on the pretext of punishing their rulers - like the Serb people yesterday and the Iraqi people from 1991 up to the present. Nor is this aggression a means of eradicating 'terrorism'.

On the contrary, in responding to terrorism with imperialist state terrorism, it is increasing feelings of resentment and hatred among oppressed peoples. It is feeding the terrorist blindness of those who share with the oppressors the same contempt for any human life that does not belong to their own camp.

This third aggression is taking place at a time when US military spending has once more been on the rise since 1999, after having stabilized for a few years at a level equivalent to the average level of the so-called 'Cold War' period. For the third time in eleven years, the US has thrown itself into a new, large-scale imperialist aggression, thus confirming its choice of a hegemonic and interventionist course in the post-Cold War period. A major new step has been taken, after the step taken with the Kosovo war, in transforming NATO into an interventionist military alliance without any geographical limitation.

2) However vile and abominable the dealings of the oppressor powers may be, they in no way justify massacring non-combatant civilians, and still less a mass murder as horrible as the one that took place on 11 September 2001.

What is in question here is not only revolutionary humanism, the basis of the moral superiority of the socialist and internationalist struggle against all oppressions. It is also an awareness of the nature of the struggle and its strategic preconditions.

Imperialist domination can only be defeated on two preconditions: mass mobilization of oppressed people in the dominated countries, and the pressure of a mass movement within the dominant countries themselves against the imperialist war their governments are waging.

From this point of view, vile attacks like those that took place on 11 September 2001 are doubly nefarious. 1) Carried out by conspiratorial networks, they reduce the people they claim to champion to the status of powerless observers of the confrontation between two logics of terror. 2) Killing indiscriminately people of the countries against which they are fighting, they rally these people to their governments and thus allow these governments to accentuate their warlike and repressive course.

These attacks have nothing to do with anti-imperialism, not even a twisted anti-imperialism. The use of mass terror is an expression of reactionary politics and movements that oppose the fundamental rights of peoples. Fundamentalists of the Bin Laden type support capitalism and defend it. They are or have been linked to bourgeois fractions and to sectors of several reactionary state apparatuses, like the Saudi monarchy and the Pakistani and Sudanese dictatorships. These groups want to impose a discourse on Muslim populations that is fanatically religious, anti-Western rather than anti-imperialist, and anti-Semitic rather than anti-Zionist. They want to impose ultra-reactionary theocratic political regimes like the Taliban regime, and they use the Palestinian cause to disguise these reactionary objectives.

3) Symmetrically, the terrorist practices of imperialist governments and of the bourgeois dictatorships in dependent countries, in the name of 'eradicating terrorism' and defending the civilian population in their own countries, only expose civilians to more and more serious risks. Violence in the service of political and social injustice engenders violence. The more crushing the means put to work by the oppressors, the more individuals will rise up among oppressed peoples who are ready to go to the worst extremes in order to inflict the most pain on the 'other side', necessarily targeting those who are most vulnerable, that is, the civilian population.

The true eradication of terrorism has as its indispensable precondition the eradication of all forms of terrorism, government terrorism as well as that of terrorist groups and networks. It can only be achieved on the condition that the political and social injustice perpetuated by physical violence be eliminated.

Conditions must be created everywhere that give their full meaning to peoples' right to self-determination: civil liberties and political democracy in every country, every people's right to self-determination, and reorganization of international relations on the basis of law and peace.

Respect for human life cannot be selective:

- The embargo against Iraq, which has caused the death of almost a million civilians in the last ten years, and continues to kill almost 100,000 people each year according to UN figures, half of them young children, must be lifted.
- The debt imposed by the banks and rich countries' governments on the dominated countries, which perpetuates famine and poverty and block development, must be cancelled.
- We must impose the massive production and distribution of medicine that can wipe out epidemics like AIDS, which are devastating entire populations in the world's poorest regions, particularly in Africa.

4) The terrorist fanaticism that struck the US on 11 September has its specific source in tendencies fostered and favoured by the US government. It and its oil bastion, the Saudi monarchy - the world's most obscurantist and reactionary state - have propagated and used Islamic fundamentalism in their struggle against progressive nationalism and 'communism'. This use reached its apogee in their common support for fundamentalist factions in Afghanistan for more than two decades. Acting as the sorcerer's apprentice, they contributed in this way to train those who today are turning against them the methods that they themselves inculcated.

The Western imperialist powers are constantly revealing their boundless cynicism and hypocrisy. Sworn enemies of Islamic fundamentalism in the name of democracy and women's rights when this fundamentalism puts on an anti-Western face, as in Iran, they do not have a word to say against the most total absolutism and the most vile oppression of women when Islamic fundamentalism wears the face of the Saudi monarchy, imperialism's privileged tool in exploiting the resources of the Arabian peninsula, the world's main reservoir of oil.

5) Oil - central sinew of the capitalist system and major cause of ecological disequilibria - has always been an essential moving force of imperialist policy in this part of the world. This fact is all the more prominent when administrations take office that are as directly representative of oil interests as the administrations of George Bush senior and junior.

This is how the 'fight against terrorism' has become the pretext for projects that have nothing to do with this pretension. The US has unilaterally appropriated the function of planetary judge, jury and executioner, seeking to impose its fiat on the rest of the world while placing itself above the law and outside any form of international jurisdiction. At the beginning it presented its aggression against Afghanistan as a military police operation aimed at the destruction of a network of a few thousand 'terrorists'.

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The operation's real objective emerged very quickly: to install another assortment of fundamentalists and reactionaries of all sorts in power in Kabul, docilely subject to the US government. In short, the operation's real goal today is to bring to its culmination the constant effort made by the US for over a quarter-century to strengthen its domination of the whole region and establish its domination of Afghanistan, as a platform for its geopolitical designs complementing the one it has next door in Pakistan. At first its main goal was to destabilize the USSR. After the USSR's collapse, the objective of US oil companies and their government is to secure the fossil fuel resources of Central Asia in their own hands.

Only these economic and political designs explain why not only the bases of the Al-Qaida network are being bombed. In order to take control of Afghanistan, cities and other civilian concentrations are being bombed by the US and British air forces, under the pretext of an 'anti-terrorist struggle'. Besides the many deaths already resulting directly from the bombing, it is creating the conditions for a true humanitarian disaster, which is likely to cause hundreds of thousands of victims. Besides, the nebulous character of imperialist objectives in the current 'war on terrorism' is such that it can lead to escalations of violence with incalculable consequences, notably through the use of nuclear weapons, which has already been discussed in US ruling circles. The Western powers' aggression is setting the match to several Muslim countries, of which Pakistan is the weakest link, thus creating conditions that could bring religious fanatics to power in this country, which has a nuclear capability.

6) The international radical left is facing today the urgent task of struggling on several fronts:

- to put an immediate stop to the barbarous bombardment of Afghanistan; to defend the rights of Afghan women and the Afghan people's right to self-determination;
- to urgently put an end to the murderous escalation of the permanent aggression and state terrorism carried out by the Israeli government against the Palestinian people; to defend the Palestinian people's legitimate rights;
- to lift the deadly embargo of Iraq;
- to impose on Putin's government in Russia the end of its murderous aggression against the Chechen people;
- to denounce the pressure exerted by the imperialist powers on the negotiations now under way over Palestine, Colombia and Ireland, by threatening to consider these countries as military objectives of the worldwide 'antiterrorist struggle';
- to fight against racism and defend the right of asylum, while condemning fundamentalist terror and struggling without concessions against all forms of fanaticism; to denounce discourses about so-called 'Western superiority' and the upsurge of racism that immigrant communities are bearing the brunt of in Western countries;
- to organize a fight back against the frontal attack on civil liberties and democratic rights in Western countries. It is no longer just immigrant communities that are targeted by the extension of police surveillance, but rather all social movements. The repressive escalation aimed at breaking the powerful upsurge of the movement against neo-liberal capitalist globalisation, from Seattle to Genoa by way of Prague and Göteborg, is thus being confirmed and reinforced;
- to fight against the massive layoffs, which the economic crisis is being used as a pretext for at the very moment that governments are increasingly spending public funds to make up for the falling revenues of certain capitalist sectors;
- to fight for nuclear disarmament and a radical reduction of military spending, replacing it with social spending and massive development aid;
- to fight against plans to open a new round of negotiations in the framework of the WTO, which are aimed at expanding the neoliberal offensive to agriculture and services, at great cost to the poorest inhabitants of the planet; and
- to demand the elimination of tax havens and money-laundering networks, along with control and taxation of capital flows.

While respecting the diversity of the mobilizations and motivations of those in struggle, the international radical left has a duty to push forward all the mass struggles against these different aspects of capital's global offensive.

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Adopted by the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International on October 29th, 2001