



9-11 ? what we think

Fri, 14/09/2001 - 22:00

The terror attacks on New York have ushered in a new era. But why did it happen?

Before 11 September, George W Bush was struggling to find legitimacy as president of the United States. His approval ratings since last November's stolen election barely reached 55%. Outside his own country he was considered a standing joke: more a chimp-like moron than leader of the free world.

Corporate America, of which Bush was CEO, was reviled across the world and had spawned a growing mass anti-capitalist movement. It reached new heights in Europe in Genoa in July and was set to do the same in Washington in late September.

Then 19 Middle Eastern hijackers reshaped the New York skyline. Embittered by the reactionary results of US foreign policy in Iraq, Palestine, Saudi Arabia they brought their own brand of reactionary solution, killing several thousand ordinary New Yorkers.

Bush seized the opportunity created by the shock and revulsion at the terrible loss of life at the World Trade Centre to use military force and diplomacy to tighten the USA's political grip on the world.

Just as the US has sought ? through the IMF and the WTO ? to force the economies of the world to open their banks and multinational corporations, so the USA is now exercising the right to take military action anywhere on the globe to force what it defines as rogue states to bow to its will.

The Bush administration has engineered a huge shift to the right. He unleashed a massive rally to the flag among US citizens and has seen his poll ratings soar above 80 per cent and stay there. At least for now he has disoriented and reduced the impact of the anti-capitalist movement in the US. It has made it easier for him to get Congress to hand over billions of taxpayers' money to his friends in failing businesses hit hard by the recession.

At the same time, the top level trade union bureaucracy has signed up to Bush's war drive and dampened down prospects of working class fightback against the massive job cull that is underway. American racism has become more respectable and active. And having already arrested and detained indefinitely without charge and in places unknown 900 people in connection with 11 September, Congress pushed through the Patriot Act. This is biggest erosion of civil liberties since the McCarthyite witch-hunts against communists and radicals in the 1950s. The Patriot Act will be used to hound and terrorise anti-capitalists opposed to corporate power.

In foreign policy Bush asked for and was given unprecedented war making powers from the US Congress. He has openly warned of the need for ground actions by US troops and the possibility of significant casualties and thus overcome the decades long Vietnam syndrome that has constrained US military strategy. He has got Congress to reverse its 25-year ban on political assassinations of the USA's enemies abroad.

Perhaps the most immediate political gain for Bush outside the USA has been the 25-member coalition he has put together to fight his war against terrorism. He easily increased the USA's leverage over its European and Japanese imperialist allies. Article 5 of the Nato charter (an attack on one member is an attack on all) has been invoked for the first time in its 50 year history. Japan amended its constitution after 11 September to allow more military assistance to the USA. France, normally a Nato critic of the USA, moved swiftly to offer naval help.

China and Russia have abandoned their normal practice of vetoing any UN Security Council resolutions that give the go-ahead to US unilateral actions. The USA has strong-armed Pakistan to let the American use its airspace and bases for the attack on a country whose regime is sympathetic to Pakistan and originally created by it. Several of the southern Asian republics of the ex-USSR, traditionally in Russias's backyard, have made airbases and communication lines available to the USA.

Economically, the events of 11 September also provide the US administration an opportunity to revive an old project ? if and when the Taliban are removed ? to construct pipelines from Central Asian gas and oil reserves to the Arabian Sea off Pakistan.

Bush's coalition also strengthens those states who have jumped aboard the war on terrorism bandwagon, like China, Indonesia and Russia they receive thereby silent consent for their brutal terror against their own oppressed national minorities (Chechnya, Aceh, Tibet and Uighers). In Israel, the Sharon government is using the cover of the war to provoke and destroy the Palestinian National Authority.

Bush ? and his lapdog Tony Blair ? are determined to use this war to free themselves of the constraints , hesitations, half-measures which marked the various attempts to impose a New World Order after the downfall of Stalinism. In the Gulf War, in Somalia, in the Balkans from Bosnia to Kosova, the US was often indecisive. It proved unable to follow through, hemmed in by its allies, blocked by its former Cold War foes and haunted by the Vietnam factor.

Bush hopes to put all that behind the US. His first post-Taliban ambition would be to further isolate Iraq. But after Saddam's regime it will be open season on all the obstacles to global corporate power: the Mahathir regime in Malaysia, the anti-capitalist movement, unions and workers parties in the developing world. We will all be in the crosshairs of the imperialist attack.

This is why Bush and Blair must not succeed. This is why imperialism is the main danger. This is why its defeat at the hands of the masses of the Middle East and central south Asia ? even when they are led by reactionary political Islamist forces like the Taliban or Hamas ? is preferable to the victory of the self-appointed champions of civilisation, freedom, democracy and human rights.

Bush and Blair and their allies are in reality fighting for none of these things. What they are after is unhindered super-exploitation of these naturally rich but economically impoverished regions and a bloody retribution for anyone who resists this.

A military withdrawal, without having achieved the imposition of a client regime in Afghanistan, or the capture or murder of bin Laden, would be major reverse and humiliation for US imperialism and its allies. It could have enormous implications for a crisis of the imperialist world order. It could encourage a world wide resistance in the semi-colonial world and an enormous strengthening of anti-capitalist forces in the imperialist heartlands.

The US and British attack on Afghanistan has provoked a storm of opposition across the world, from street protests, riots in Pakistan and Palestine to large antiwar marches in Indonesia, Nigeria, Latin America, USA, Italy, Germany France and Britain.

There is mass anti-war mood across Europe among a broad spectrum of people. Barring a swift victory for the USA this movement is likely to grow to major proportions. A protracted war would give a stimulus to upheavals in surrounding states and even the overthrow of Musharraf by pro-Islamist faction of the army. Even the Saudi monarchy could see a palace coup -ushering in a more hardline anti-US faction.

If on the other hand the US attack succeeds quickly ? producing a splintering of the Taliban or rout for their forces at the hands of the Northern Alliance and the installation of a pro-imperialist coalition government this will encourage the USA to proceed further with the agenda of global domination.

The present war demands that all socialists and radicals unite to build the anti-war movement. We must strengthen the

open and courageous forces of revolutionary communism ? those fighting for the defeat of US imperialism and its allies.

It needs voices who are prepared to say clearly and courageously ? despite the unpopularity of the message that terrorism cannot be removed by the very causes of its existence. The "war against terrorism" is a war for the causes of terrorism ? the economic super-exploitation and military coercion of semi colonial countries.

Source URL: <https://fifthinternational.org/content/9-11-%E2%80%93-what-we-think>