

# Cracks in the American world order

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Theses on the World Situation, January 2007

Since the summer of 2006, when the congress of the League for the Fifth International agreed its international perspectives, there have been a series of dramatic events in the world political situation. These have included a humiliating defeat for Israel at the hands of Hezbollah resistance fighters in Lebanon; an intensification of the crisis in Iraq and promises of more troops by the US government; and the huge mass movement that challenged the right's stolen election in Mexico, only to be lead to defeat by its leaders.

The League has characterised the current period as one in which a major offensive of imperialism- economically, politically and militarily- was taking place against the world's people and sparking increasing and co-ordinated resistance. The United States, as the world's pre-eminent imperial power, has been central to this offensive. How do the events of the last six months, which have included important defeats for its project, such as Lebanon, and increasing concern surrounding the state of its economy effect its imperial project? What are the prospects and the dangers in the class struggle ahead of us? And, crucially, how must Marxists intervene into this situation? These are the questions the League's International Executive considered at the beginning of January when it agreed this theses on the world situation.

1. Since the summer of 2006 we have seen a turning point in the world situation. US imperialism has suffered a series of major setbacks at home and abroad. Its occupation of Iraq is a total disaster. Over three thousand American troops have lost their lives there since 2003. As a direct result, a growing majority of US citizens is opposed to the continued occupation. In addition, Bush's domestic agenda, so openly favouring the super rich, has also come under fire, since hurricane Katrina and the movement of millions of migrant workers in Spring 2006 revealed the extent of poverty in the USA. Katrina also revealed the reality of the threat of climate change to the eco-system of the planet, which Bush had resolutely denied in the interests of Big Oil and other corporate polluters. The media debate changed from whether an ecological catastrophe was looming in the decades ahead to what should be done about it. Thus, it was only the scale of the ruling Republican Party's humiliation in the Congressional mid-term elections in November 2006 that caused any surprise.

2. In Lebanon, Israel, Washington's regional gendarme in the Middle East, suffered the first clear military defeat in its history. Add to all this the landslide electoral victory of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela and his promise to launch a 'socialist revolution', the progress on the initiative to form a bloc of Latin American states hostile to the USA, thanks to the election of two more left populist presidents in Ecuador and Nicaragua, and the decline of US hegemony in the western hemisphere cannot be ignored. It is this decline of the world's super-power in areas key to its 'Empire', and the increasingly self defeating attempts by its ruling class to halt this, that will define the world political situation in the coming period.

3. This crisis of the neo-con imperialist project goes alongside a discernable ideological shift to the left

amongst the vanguard of workers, youth and social movements around the world. In Latin America, this finds expression in the tremendous pan-continental support for Hugo Chavez amongst workers and youth, the election or near election of left populists from Mexico to Bolivia, the revolutionary situation in Mexico, culminating in the Oaxaca Commune and the protests against the stolen election. In the Middle East, the triumph of Hizbollah and the US quagmire in Iraq, allied to enormous dissatisfaction with the corrupt and weak Arab regimes, have revived anti-imperialist sentiments. The Beirut and Cairo conferences indicate the rise of a new generation of fighters for democracy ?at home? as well as for driving the imperialists out of the region. In Europe, too, this radicalisation can be seen in the polarisation in the workers? and social movements, for example, in Germany and Italy, and the emergence of a vanguard consciously opposed to the class collaborationist policy of the European Left Party whose member parties are participating in, or seeking to join, neoliberal governments. At the Athens ESF and the Beirut Conference we have also seen the emergence of a more co-ordinated anti-imperialist left.

4. However, these radicalising elements have not ?solved? the crisis of leadership, as is witnessed by defeats such as Oaxaca, the spread of reactionary communalism in Iraq and the dangerous Hamas-Fatah impasse in Palestine which Israel is exploiting in order to foment civil war. The anticapitalist-anti-war-anti-imperialist movement remains completely paralysed by its leadership which has been able to postpone the World and European Social Forums for two years or more in order to cover the actions of reformist parties like the Workers? Party (PT) in Brazil, or the Italian Rifondazione Comunista (RC) which have hitherto sponsored the forums but are now in government and engaged in pro-neoliberal and pro-imperialist actions.

5. In Europe and North America, and, indeed, in semi-colonial countries like Mexico too, the trade union bureaucracies still have great powers to sabotage and fragment struggles. The ?new parties?, such as the German Linkspartei, or movements for new parties, rapidly fell under left reformist and bureaucratic control that is blocking their progressive development. Centrist forces, like the Fourth International (FI) and the International Socialist Tendency (IST) seem totally unwilling to expose and denounce these betrayals. Indeed, the latter have even acted as attorneys-cum-security guards for the bureaucracy in the Linkspartei. They are unable to offer a clear strategic alternative to reformism, still less to rally forces to replace the reformist leaders. Thus, despite the shift leftwards by the vanguard and the radicalisation of broader masses, the crisis of leadership within the campaigns, movements, parties and trade unions still seriously holds back the revolutionary development of the class struggle on each terrain.

6. The more radical leaderships that are encouraging the resistance to imperialism and neoliberalism, Chavez himself, the Anti-Imperialist Network, COBAS in Italy, resistance movements in Iraq and Lebanon, are looked to by a growing vanguard of militant workers and youth on a global scale. Nevertheless, despite their radical language, they express dangerously wrong programmes and perspectives, such as bonapartism, populism, Stalinism and Maoism, syndicalism, and Islamism. Therefore, the crisis of leadership is far from resolved; indeed it is sharpened by the rise of these forces. It expresses itself in the debates over whether to struggle for power and, if so, for what sort of state, whether to form new parties and, if so, whether they can be revolutionary or must remain reformist, whether international gatherings must remain nothing more than forums for networking and discussion, what ?socialism? and the working class mean in the 21st century.

7. The revolutionary response must be neither an uncritical tailing of these forces as the embodiment of the revolutionary process nor sectarian abstention from the struggles and debates they are stimulating; rather it must be the systematic use of the workers? united front and the anti-imperialist united front, combined with clear and unsparing criticism of these leaderships whenever they hold back or mislead the struggle.

8. It is the combined dynamic of the crisis of the neoliberal and imperialist project, leading to heightened levels of class struggle and political ferment, and a real re-composition of forces to the left of the existing leaderships of the mass working class organisations (the bigger unions, reformist parties, national liberation movements) that defines the current post-Lebanon, post-Oaxaca conjuncture. This situation is rich with opportunities for revolutionary communist intervention, including:

- a. agitation for militant action to throw back the neo-liberal offensive on the social gains, wages, job security of the working class and the 'war on terrorism', that is, the attempt to control or, where necessary, occupy, the key resources of the semi-colonial world
- b. the fight for the forms of organisation needed to mobilise this action and, closely connected to these,
- c. criticism of the failure of the various reformist, populist and Stalinist forces to take the necessary action; their blockage and sabotage of the first steps taken to do this.

9. Above all, there is a real potential for taking steps towards the formation of a new international coordination of struggles. This is no less true because forces like the FI and the IST repeatedly block and abort these tendencies, claiming that, while they themselves are, of course, in favour of such a development, it is too soon, that to take such steps now would split and fragment the movement. For them it will always be too soon ? until it is too late! Forces formally to their right, from within the Stalinist/Maoist tradition or from syndicalism, seem more aware of the urgency of taking steps forward, less terrified of the trade union bureaucracy and the big left-reformist parties. In this situation, the League will fight to raise the slogan of the Fifth International, an issue already being raised in debate in the ESF/WSF milieu by figures like Samir Amin.

## World Economy

10. These important developments in the world situation have to be seen against the fundamental tendencies that are at work beneath the surface of capitalist society. The imperialist epoch's general tendency towards decline express itself in the present period by over-accumulation of capital and the profit rate's tendency to decline, its weakening power to develop the productive forces and, in general, an increasing decomposition of the bourgeois society. To halt its decline, the imperialist ruling class attacks its enemies both in the semi-colonial world and at home with increasing brutality. As a result, both national liberation struggles and class struggle are on the rise. In this context, the peculiarity of the imperialist world order since World War II, and particularly since 1989-91, the global dominance of US imperialism, which acts as the guardian of the capitalist world order, is coming under increasing stress. In this sense we can speak about cracks in the American world order.

11. The present business cycle of the world economy seems to be at its peak or has already passed it. The world economy grew by 3.4% in 2005 and the World Bank predicts GDP growth in 2006 of 3.9% and 3.2% in 2007. The slowdown has already begun in the world's strongest economy, the United States. As a result of the bursting of the housing bubble, declining productivity growth etc., overall GDP growth has fallen back sharply. Other economies, like the EU, are somewhat behind in the cycle and are approaching the peak of the cycle just now. Contrary to the claims of the bourgeois globalisation enthusiasts (plus their left-wing stooges) the present cycle in no way express a new 'long wave' of economic upswing of global capitalism but rather a continuation of its crisis and declining growth rates.

12. The present cycle has been accompanied by the deepening of several contradictions of globalisation such as the growing imbalances between capitalist countries symbolised by the US current account deficit reaching the record height of 6.8% of GDP. This reflects the difficulties that US imperialism has in halting the decline of its economic absolute dominance. As a result, there is increasing pressure on foreign countries to end their sole reliance on the US-Dollar as the only foreign currency reserve. Indeed, there

has been an accelerating transfer of foreign currency reserve away from the US-Dollar and into the Euro.

13. There has also been a massive wave of monopolisation of capital. Merger and acquisition activity has accelerated remarkably and is reported to have reached 2 trillion US dollars in the last calendar year. Although bourgeois pundits are celebrating the huge profits that the various bankers and lawyers are making from this capitalist feeding frenzy, a few of the more serious ones are quietly pointing out the more important fact that such activity is usually seen to peak towards the end of the cycle.

#### Crisis of US imperialist hegemony

14. The threat to the hegemonic position of US imperialism is not only threatened on the economic front. In addition, the US administration is also being pushed onto the defensive politically. In the last few months there has been a breakthrough in public recognition that the occupation of Iraq is a disaster, US troops had their highest toll in December since 2004. This played an important role in the ruling Republican Party's humiliating defeat at the congress elections in November. Similarly, Israel's failure to defeat Hezbollah in Lebanon was also a huge defeat for US imperialism in general and the neo-conservative White House in particular. To this can be added the decisive electoral victory of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, a sworn enemy of 'the devil' Bush.

15. As a result, we see deepening divisions inside the US ruling class about its foreign policy. One wing, which expressed its opinion in the Baker Report, favours a softening of the aggressive militaristic foreign policy and more diplomatic gestures including towards old enemies like Syria and Iran. However, the ruling wing of the US bourgeoisie has come to the conclusion that any softening would be seen as weakness and would encourage anti-imperialist liberation movements and 'rogue states' around the globe in their resistance to US world hegemony. It would also strengthen competing imperialist powers' desire for a foreign policy independent of Washington's wishes. The White House's continuation of its unilateralist foreign policy, against the background of its increasing difficulties, will provoke massive protests and increasingly open resistance from other states.

16. We can, therefore, expect increasing contradictions inside the American ruling class and growing resistance around the globe. Iran and Syria will be less prepared to give in to US imperialist pressure and the same will be true for North Korea. The European Union, as the main imperialist rival, will pursue attempts at an increasingly independent foreign policy.

17. The political defensive of the Bush administration will be also reflected in domestic political developments. While the Democrats' victory at the Congress was, of course, a victory for an alternative bourgeois party of the ruling class, it nevertheless reflected an important shift amongst sectors of the middle class and the labour-aristocratic layers of the working class against the unilateral militaristic foreign policy and against the super-neoliberal policy. This change in the political climate could also encourage trade union, social and anti-war movements to fight back, as the immigrants already have.

#### European Union ? Attacks and Class Struggle

18. To increase its economic and political global influence, the ruling classes in the European Union have still to overcome major obstacles. They are still far away from their 'Lisbon Agenda', set in 2000, which proclaimed the task to make the EU 'the world's most competitive area by the year 2010'. Added to this is the fact that they are still far away from forming a unified and operative pan-European political leadership and state apparatus.

19. The German EU presidency, in the first half of 2007, could play an important role in a new offensive of the European ruling class since it is the most powerful national bourgeoisie. For this reason, we can expect

a renewed push to drive forward neoliberal attacks on the working class (e.g. port package II). Secondly, it is likely that there will be a renewed effort to revive the EU constitution, possibly in a slightly different version. Thirdly, the EU will continue its push towards an independent militaristic foreign policy, for example, in Congo.

20. In France, the next period will be dominated by the presidential and parliamentary elections and the battle between Sarkozy and Royal. Since the PCF has decided to run its own candidate, the centrists will most likely also put forward their own candidate(s).

21. Italy is of particular importance in the present period because it is the only major country with a popular frontist government involving a 'Communist' party, the RC, which also happens to be a leading force in the European Social Forum (ESF) and the leading force in the European Left Party (ELP). The successful day of action in November 2006, organised by COBAS and supported by FIOM, shows that the working class is starting to fight back against 'its' government. Related to this are deepening rifts inside the CGIL. Major issues there will be the unions' independence from the government and the question of a new workers' party to organise the political fight against the popular frontist government.

22. In general the 'left' reformist bureaucrats of the ELP will continue their move towards the right, concretely towards electoral gains and 'government responsibilities'. In France there are the elections, in Italy and Berlin they are already in government and in Germany they will also focus on swallowing the Electoral Alternative for Social Justice (WASG) and liquidating left-wing elements. This, on the other hand, opens up possibilities for radical developments to the left of the ELP.

23. An important culmination of international mass protests against the imperialist Great Powers by the strengthened anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist movement could be the Anti-G8 protests in June 2007 in Germany.

#### War, Occupation and Resistance in the Middle East

24. In Iraq, both the resistance against the occupation and the sectarian rift between the Sunnis and Shi'ites intensify. The Baker report signalled the emergence of major rifts within the American ruling class on how to respond to the deep crisis the occupation faces. The White House has chosen to reject the report's two main findings; for a timetable for withdrawal and a rapprochement with Iran and Syria aimed at pacifying their Shi'ite allies. Instead, it plans to respond aggressively with 21,500 US troops tasked with 'taking back Baghdad and the surrounding areas' with new rules of engagement reflecting this aggressive turn.

25. This is likely to spark a major conflict not only with the sectarian Shi'ite death squads, who have been involved in tit for tat fighting with Sunni forces, but also with Moqtada al-Sadr and his Mehdi-Army forces, particularly in their Sadr City stronghold. The support of al-Sadr has been essential to upholding what stability the Iraqi government has; its withdrawal will mean a major intensification of the fighting and make the complete unravelling of the Iraq state a real possibility.

26. The problem for the US is that the execution of Saddam Hussein makes more difficult any form of reconciliation with the Sunni insurgency. However, despite this, the US has reportedly been in secret negotiations with the Sunni insurgency for some time. This reflects the fact that, for the White House, the biggest danger in the Middle East is an emboldened Iran, possibly with a nuclear capability, and with dependent Shi'ite allies in the Iraqi government.

27. There will certainly be an intensification of the Iraq crisis in the short term. This could lead to greater

sectarian fighting or a more unified national liberation struggle. In addition, the US may increasingly seek to transform, or actually depose, the present Iraqi government, if forces within it, such as Al Sadr, are thrown into opposition.

28. The Israeli defeat by the Lebanese resistance has had two major consequences. First it weakened the pro-imperialist Siniora government in Beirut. Its downfall by the mass protests organised by Hezbollah and its allies is a real possibility and would be a further major blow against the USA and Israel. Secondly, it opened up a political crisis in Israel and discredited the governing coalition.

29. As with the American ruling class, there is a real possibility that the Zionists might take the road of a 'liberating' strike forward if they are on the defensive. Hence, the new slogan, 'War 2007?', in Israel's public debate, that is, the undisguised threats by government circles that 2007 might be the year of war against Syria and/or Iran. Obviously, this would have incalculable consequences in the powder keg that is the Middle East.

30. Adding to this crisis are the continued problems the Israeli state has in exercising power over the Palestinian population. It has launched a brutal offensive against Gaza, partly as a revenge for the defeat in Lebanon, but also as a part of the strategy to politically disconnect the Gaza strip from the West Bank so that it can complete its expansion of the West Bank settlements and the apartheid wall. This offensive serves to de-stabilise the region even more in order to further undermine support for the elected Hamas government.

31. The other side of the strategy is Israel's close collaboration with Mahmoud Abbas, including the delivery of heavy arms equipment to his armed forces and the invitation to his allies in the Jordan based PLO associated militia, the Badr brigade. Behind the slogan of calling for 'a government of unity?', a project that is supported by all the imperialist powers, Israel is consciously trying to assist a coup to install Abbas, who has declared his readiness to compromise away any kind of progressive future of the Palestinians. In doing so, Israel is, at the same time, provoking a civil war among the Palestinians. It sees this as the only way to break up the resistance towards its utterly reactionary solution. This dramatically de-stabilises the situation in Palestine and also adds to the explosive situation in the whole of the Middle East.

## China

32. Despite government efforts to rein-in investment in new fixed capital, economic growth, in terms of reported GDP, has remained above the 10% mark. It has been fuelled by continued high demand for Chinese imports by the US that is, in part, maintained by low US interest rates that themselves reflect Chinese purchase of US Treasury bonds and other forms of debt. The relationship between these two economies is now of central importance to the global economy. The relationship is a far from equal one; the US is the dominant partner and this will remain the case for the foreseeable future. Although China is undoubtedly anxious to develop strong economic links in Latin America and Africa, primarily to secure access to raw materials, and will continue to encourage these via economic, diplomatic and even military agreements, there will be no open confrontations which might endanger China's all-important export market or foreign direct investment. On the other hand, any significant decline in the US economy could be expected to have an immediate impact on China's export-oriented industries. A fall in the value of the dollar would also increase pressure on Beijing to rebalance its foreign exchange holdings or risk holding declining assets.

33. Internally, Beijing will pursue policies intended to increase central governmental control over the economy. The first major concern is to try to redress the widely recognised imbalance of the economy that has seen not only over investment in the production of the means of production as compared to

consumption, but also a dangerous disparity between the coastal provinces and most of the interior. In addition, 2007 will see the implementation of the final clauses of the WTO Accession Treaty, including in the area of financial services and retail banking, which is likely to encourage predatory advances by multinational capital. In response, Beijing can be expected to develop protectionist policies in all but name. Beijing's need to gain increased control over the domestic economy also brings the party leadership into conflict both with provincial authorities and with some elements within the developing capitalist class. The ongoing "anti-corruption campaign" is driven partly by the need to crack down on collaboration between government and party cadre at provincial and sub-provincial levels and speculative developers, which flourished under the regime of Jiang Zemin, in advance of the party congress in the autumn. At the same time, the leadership also needs to try to revive the government and party image after years of increasing numbers of open clashes with protesters. It is also likely to be a prelude to increased political repression in advance of the 2008 Olympic Games.

34. The coming year, therefore, will see, at the very least, the continued deepening of contradictions both within China itself and in China's role within globalisation.

Latin America ? the shift to the Left continues

35. 2006 was the year of a major shift to the reformist or left-bonapartist camp at the governmental level in Latin America: Bolivia, Nicaragua, Ecuador, and Venezuela. Added to this was the stolen electoral victory of López Obrador in Mexico and the mass resistance it provoked. This resulted in the emergence of a revolutionary situation and the uprising of the teachers, other workers and youth to form the Commune of Oaxaca. There, a proto-soviet type of body exercised a duality of power with the state for five months. Despite the eventual defeat it suffered against the military forces of the Mexican state, which brought the end of the revolutionary situation, it was a clear harbinger of revolutionary developments in the future.

36. The crisis clearly demonstrated the incapacity of populism in either its radical bourgeois nationalist form (Obrador and the PRD) or its semi-anarchist and indigenist form (the Zapatistas) to tackle, let alone solve, the question of power. Another reflection of the shift to the left is the pressure on nearly all Latin American regimes to abandon the US backed Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) which is intended to open up Latin America to North American monopoly capital. The alternative of a Latin or South American economic and political community has, in contrast, made headway in terms of its wide discussion.

37. In Venezuela, Chavez's victory and his push to form a "Socialist Unity Party", his rhetoric of "socialism of the 21st century", of an ongoing "socialist revolution" and the new programme of nationalisations promised in advance of his Inaugural address, both express the revolutionary spirit of the masses but also channel it into support for him as caudillo. Chavez is an example of the phenomenon Trotsky analysed in 1930s Mexico in the person of Lázaro Cárdenas: bonapartism sui generis (i.e. of a special type). Motivated by a nationalist indignation against imperialism and its agents in the Latin American elite, such figures arise amongst the lower more plebeian strata of the officer corps of the armed forces. Their desire to see their people escape poverty, their countries develop, become independent of the tutelage of imperialism, drives them to a controlled mobilisation of the workers, peasants, oppressed indigenous masses. It drives them to revolutionary, populist and socialist rhetoric.

38. But genuine communists, Trotskyists, should not mistake the social reforms, the land reform, the nationalisations, for a victorious socialist revolution. They occur in a revolutionary situation and to the extent that the masses are mobilised an actual revolution can unfold. But the key point is that a socialist revolution has not yet triumphed. A social revolution necessitates not the reform of the bourgeois state but its smashing by a mass proletarian and poor peasant uprising. It necessitates not just the nationalisation of

certain industries or creating workers cooperatives in a few dozen bankrupt factories, but the expropriation of the whole of the big bourgeoisie so that it is destroyed as a ruling and exploiting class. It requires not just popular assemblies or municipal councils to mobilise support for a 'socialist president' but as instruments of the revolution and the sovereign basis of a new power, a workers state. Because the working class needs to adopt this strategy to fully realise the potential of the revolutionary situation class independence, both at a party and a trade union level, is critical. The Venezuelan masses need a revolutionary working class party: they need trade unions independent of the state, even of a 'Bolivarian state' carrying out nationalisations and major social reforms. Dependence on or subordination to Chavez in any of these spheres would be fatal.

39. However though we have to frankly expose the limits of Chavez' populist-bonapartist rhetoric, we also have to understand the ideological shift it reflects among the masses in Venezuela and, indeed, in many other countries. It creates an opening for a major debate on what a programme for the transition to socialism means and what forms of organisation is needed to carry it out. It is very likely that the class struggle will sharpen in Venezuela in the coming year as a result of the new nationalisations and the resistance of the Venezuelan bourgeoisie and its North American backers. Any decline in the oil price, caused by the slackening of the expansionary phase of the economic cycle or the onset of recession will reduce Chavez room for manoeuvre, intensify class contradictions and open important divisions inside the Bolivarian movement.

40. In Bolivia, Morales, after using mass pressure to get the nationalisation of gas and oil resources through the Constituent Assembly, eventually succeeded in forcing the big international oil companies to pay higher prices. November saw large-scale mobilisations by the peasants' and landless workers' movement to force a significant land reform through the Senate, where the right wing have a narrow majority, allowing the takeover of uncultivated and neglected land. However, more than a land reform is needed in Bolivia. A super-rich five percent of the population owns seventy percent of the productive land in Bolivia; it needs an agrarian revolution, the expropriation of all the big landowners, to remedy this.

41. In the neoliberal 1990s, small farmers' credits were slashed and much land was sold off to foreign owners or the existing latifundists. ' Cattle ranching, the expansion of the soy industry, and mineral exploration restricted the indigenous communities' land rights. The wrangle over the Constituent Assembly's power to pass a radical new constitution on the Venezuelan model continues, as do the threats of the Santa Cruz bourgeoisie to secede if the Assembly passes a constitution that does not give them autonomy. The location of the mineral and agrarian wealth of the country in the departments where the right is strong will make this a crucial test for Morales and necessitate revolutionary mobilisation of the masses. In Ecuador, with its mass indigenist movement, the new populist president, Rafael Correa, who has much weaker links to this movement than Morales and a Chavez, has yet to prove himself.

## Africa

42. The civil war in Somalia is another expression of the increasing contradictions in the world situation. The USA has major strategic interests in the Horn of Africa. In late 2002, the US established a 1,800-strong Combined Joint Task Force for the Horn of Africa, based at Camp Lemonier in Djibouti. The tiny former French colony also hosts a large French air base and ground forces as well as a German naval base. The US gives more aid to Djibouti than to any other country in Sub-Saharan Africa. The defeat of the US-backed warlord forces, the Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter Terrorism (ARPCT) by the Islamist forces of the Somalia Islamic Courts Council (SICC) in June 2006, caused US imperialism to encourage and back a full-scale Ethiopian invasion of Somalia in late December which it backed up by aerial attacks in early January.

43. Of course Ethiopia has its own objectives. It has a large Muslim minority of 40% of the population living in the south, an area that Somalia tried to detach in the 1980s. While Ethiopia is a much larger country and is militarily massively superior in terms of arms, equipment and training, a long-lasting guerrilla war is likely. The Transitional Federal Government is really little more than a puppet of the US and its Ethiopian gendarmes. This is likely to make it hated and despised as a tool of the invaders. The global antiwar movements should fight for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the Ethiopian forces and give unconditional support to the resistance to occupation. They should campaign against the huge EU and US military base in Djibouti. At the same time, revolutionaries give no political support to the project of an Islamic regime.

## Conclusion

44. The world perspectives are characterised by cracks in the American world order. A weakened and increasingly discredited guardian of global capitalism, US imperialism, will be forced to try to halt its decline by any means necessary and this will again provoke more resistance. Parallel to this, all imperialist ruling classes have to intensify their attacks abroad and at home to position themselves better in the global (dis)order. There exists a sharpening crisis of leadership within the working class and anti-imperialist vanguard where the issues of programme and party are increasingly posed and debated. All this means an intensification of class struggles and opportunities for Marxist revolutionaries to intervene and to build.

45. Our tasks, therefore, centre on mobilising for a renewed offensive by the global anti-war and anti-imperialist movement against the increased deployment of US and Allied forces in Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia etc. and for their immediate and unconditional withdrawal. The demonstrations planned from late January to mid-March must be only the beginning of such an offensive. They should also serve as a forum at which to win the participants to the perspective of continuous and escalating direct action to force the warmongers out of the countries they have occupied, prevent them from launching any new attacks and to drive them from power. Any attempts at economic sanctions or coup mongering aimed at countries like Venezuela, Cuba or Bolivia in reprisal for nationalisations must become key issues as well.

46. Equally, we must focus on all actions of trade union and social movement resistance to the neoliberal offensive against social services and public utilities in health, education, transport, power supply, telecommunication etc. We will fight to win the trade unions to a new strategy of militant resistance to attacks on wages, jobs, working conditions and the legal crippling of effective trade unionism. Trade unions need to fight on an international level against multinational corporations. But instead of leaving it to the union bureaucracy to create international mega-unions (for example the ongoing amalgamation of IG Metall, Amicus, United Steelworkers) militants and activists need to build an international movement of democratic rank and file trade unionists, focussed on the battles against the employers and their neo-liberal governments. This must include breaking free of support for "grand coalitions" that involve reformist workers' parties and their allied trade unions such as in Italy, Germany and Austria, and preventing the formation of such coalitions in the future. The struggle to save the planet from environmental catastrophe, the fight against racism, the struggles of women and youth, will all intersect with these issues and all urgently need international coordination.

47. Within the World and European Social Forums, the bourgeois NGOs, the 'left' reformist parties and the trade union bureaucracies all act to block such coordination and their obstruction must be overcome. This can only be done by organising the anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist and anti bureaucratic left. A major step forward would be to create a conference or assembly of the left forces to agree a strategy for doing just this. This will be the critical task at the WSF in Nairobi at the end of January. It will be the critical task at the Anti-G8 gatherings in Rostock in June. Its representatives should meet at every European

Preparatory Assembly and intervene in as many of the international conferences ? such as those in Beirut and Cairo - as is possible. It is the overarching task to which the League for the Fifth International dedicates itself in the coming year.

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