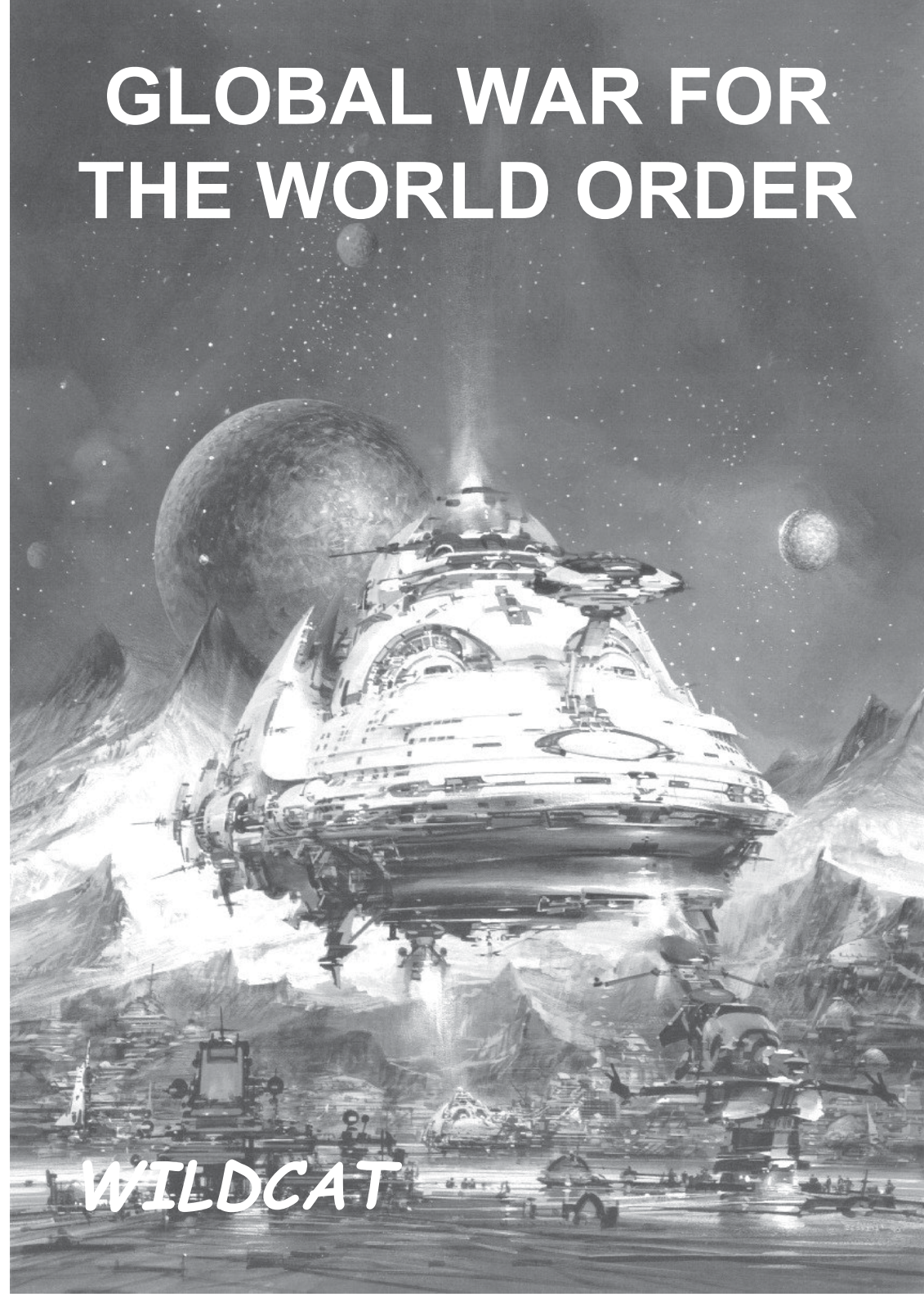


GLOBAL WAR FOR THE WORLD ORDER



A TREASON PRESS PAMPHLET

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WILDCAT

TREASON PRESS PAMPHLETS

'Anti-Capitalism' as Ideology...and as Movement?

From the 2001 issue of the excellent annual communist journal from Britain, *Aufheben*, a critique of the anti-summit movement.

Behind the Twenty-First Century Intifada

Also from the 2001 issue of *Aufheben* a look at the proletarian elements of the Palestinian revolt in opposition to the usual presentation of it as a purely nationalist, state-building affair.

Class Struggle in Iraq

Three articles about war, mutiny and near-revolution in Iraq.

Globalisation: Origins-History-Analysis-Resistance

An article from the 1999 issue of British eco-anarchist/communist journal *Do Or Die*.

Mutinies: A Historical Reader

A collection of articles on mutinies against the Vietnam, Bosnia and Kosovo wars.

Outside and Against the Unions

A communist critique of trade unions focusing on the 1984-5 miners strike in Britain from British group *Wildcat*.

'Picket and Pot-banger Together': Class Re-composition in Argentina

A long article on the proletarian revolts in Argentina from the 2002 issue of *Aufheben* along with two shorter articles on the situation there.

Society of the Spectacle

The classic 1967 critique of spectacular capitalism by Guy Debord of *The Situationist International*.

The Neoliberal Wars

Articles on the wars in Yugoslavia, Somalia, Chechnya and Afghanistan as well as a theoretical discussion of how neo-liberalism leads to civil war.

Whither the World

Co-author of the classic *Eclipse and Re-emergence of the communist Movement* Gilles Dauve and Karl Nestic discuss the current malaise of both capital and proletariat in this piece from early 2002.

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INTRODUCTION

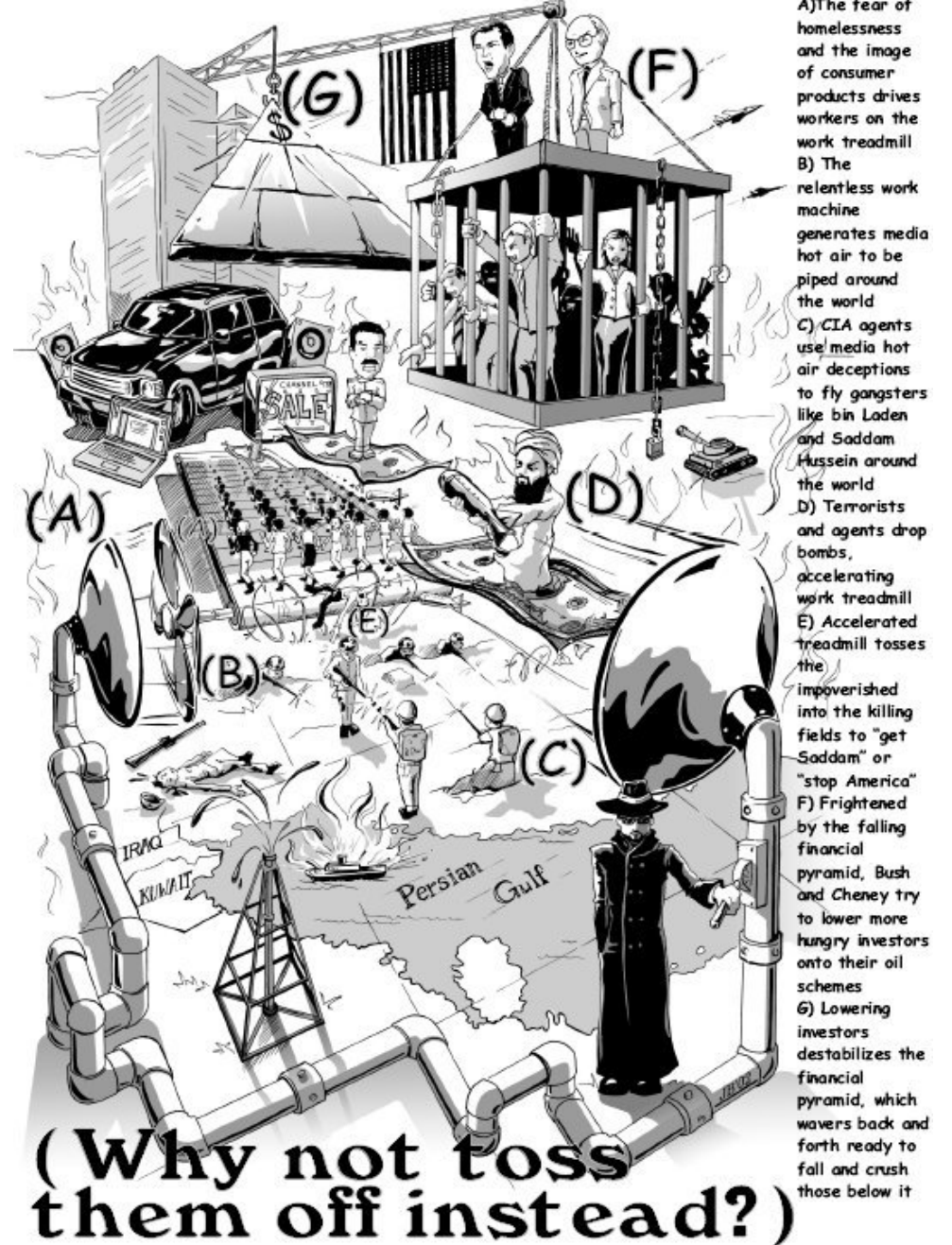
The articles in this pamphlet are all translations of articles originally written in German by the communist group *Wildcat* and deal with various aspects of the ‘‘War on Terror’’. Despite the sometimes mediocre translations they are well worth making the effort to read because they are some of the best articles about capitalism’s current war spree available.

The essence of the argument that runs through all these articles is that the capitalist world order is in crisis and in desperation the response is war, first against Afghanistan and then Iraq. The ‘‘War on Terror’’ is thus an expression of capitalist weakness not strength. Perhaps the NATO attack on Yugoslavia in 1999 should be considered as a precursor to the ‘‘War on Terror’’. While all of these wars have resulted in quick victories to the forces of the US and its allies the ensuing occupations have been far from successful. From Iraq we get almost daily reports of another US soldier or three being killed by guerrillas, much of Afghanistan remains outside the control of the occupying forces and the most successful of these occupations, Kosovo, is hardly an advertisement for the peace and prosperity that occupation was supposed to bring with continuing low-level ethnic violence and an economy largely based on the smuggling of guns, drugs, illegal immigrants and sex slaves. All of these wars have been followed by another more disastrous than the preceding one and we should not be surprised if the US embarks on another military adventure to maintain its credibility in the face of its disaster in Iraq.

Other writings by *Wildcat* are available at the English language section of their website: <http://www.wildcat-www.de/en/eindex.htm>

Canberra, Australia
March 2 2004

Off To ^(Their) War!



A) The fear of homelessness and the image of consumer products drives workers on the work treadmill
 B) The relentless work machine generates media hot air to be piped around the world
 C) CIA agents use media hot air deceptions to fly gangsters like bin Laden and Saddam Hussein around the world
 D) Terrorists and agents drop bombs, accelerating work treadmill
 E) Accelerated treadmill tosses the impoverished into the killing fields to ‘‘get Saddam’’ or ‘‘stop America’’
 F) Frightened by the falling financial pyramid, Bush and Cheney try to lower more hungry investors onto their oil schemes
 G) Lowering investors destabilizes the financial pyramid, which wavers back and forth ready to fall and crush those below it

NOTE

¹ **No Gun Ri:** In the Korean War, in July 1950, American troops shot up to 400 civilian refugees at No Gun Ri in South Korea, because they thought that Communists had hidden themselves among them. **My Lai:** During the Vietnam War, in March 1968, over 100 villagers were shot by American troops. **Panama City:** In December 1989, American troops, ostensibly on a search for dictator Noriega, who they had earlier supported, now wanting to arrest him as a drug baron, marched into Panama and in a few days killed many thousands of people in the key cities of Panama City and Colon. **Mutla Ridge:** At Mutla Ridge in February 1991, troops of the allies blasted out of the air thousands of Iraqi soldiers fleeing out of Kuwait in the direction of Basra, who represented no military threat.



CRISIS OF WAR AND LIMITS OF CAPITALISM

The impending bombardment of a small country of 23 million inhabitants has become a stress test of the international state system, in which framework the world has developed for the past sixty years. In the debates over the pros and cons, and the reasons for the bombs on Baghdad, it's no longer just about the Middle East. It's about the question of how the world should be ruled and controlled in the future. Whose power is up to the game? And why must Iraq, flat on the ground after 23 years of war, be the excuse for the goal of a political and military demonstration of power?

THE WORLD GETS OUT OF JOINT

As the rejection of war by the German government was more radical than it was originally meant to be, as the Paris-Berlin-Moscow axis stepped out in front of the headlights..., there it dawned on us that we are living through an epochal break – the end of a world order as we know it. That was also the talk in 1989-90 when, with the decline of “really existing socialism”, the cold war was acknowledged to be at an end. But now it becomes obvious that it wasn't only the United States' competitor that had dissolved into thin air. The whole framework broke away, in which – against all expectations! – capitalism, after the first horrifying half of the twentieth century, had been able to bloom again.

In order to explain the course of war of the United States, the first, trusty frameworks the left debate reaches for are: the struggle for oil, the competition of economic blocs, euro against dollar, the imperialistic circle of states seeking world power, the flight of a government out of “domestic” crisis into warlike “foreign policy”. Or it attempts a comparison with the decline of the British Empire in the beginning of the last century, to which the current decline of the USA seems doomed. None of this is false, and it captures particular moments of the contemporary changes. They are the jigsaw pieces out of which the odd mixture of recklessness and hesitation in the bombardment of Baghdad is composed. But does it reach down into an understanding of what's new in the situation, out of which new possibilities for action might also arise?

END OR BEGINNING OF AN “AMERICAN CENTURY”

In their opposition to the war many share an image of the United States as a superpower against whose decisions only moral or symbolic protest is possible. Ironically, it's precisely the hawks, the military agitators, who are not so certain about that. In 1997 the project “The New American Century” was founded to support Bush's election campaign against Clinton. Already the name expresses the problem: There *was* an American century, but it's highly doubtful whether there *will be* another one. The basic idea of the project is “full-spectrum dominance” of the United States in all areas worldwide. One of the primary enemies of the realization of a “new American century” is China, which they intend to surround with military bases and keep weak – or, like one of its enthusiasts said in all seriousness: “After Baghdad, Peking.” The project is no group of screwballs, but the core of the present government belongs to its founders: Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, Jeb Bush, Richard Perle, and Zalmay Khalilzad, who Bush made special envoy first to Afghanistan and now to Iraq.

These people have indeed understood that a further “American century” is extremely questionable. But they think in the trusted categories of state hegemony and a given organization of the global economy, trade system, and interstate power relations. Like in the left debate, these relations are taken for solid ground, on which then political changes like the supersession of one superpower by another can take place. Could it not be that this ground gets shaky over time? That the oh-so-natural-seeming

forms of social coexistence on this planet – like states, money, or enterprises and wage labor – can find themselves in crisis?

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY – CAPITALISM RESCUED

In the first half of the twentieth century, things weren't going so good for capitalism. Not only left critics but also conservative thinkers foresaw its end and the transition to another form of society – which was then most often called “socialism.” After a bloody thirty-year phase of horror, however, this social form once more embarked upon an unprecedented upswing, and could shake up and dominate life across the whole planet. Politically and militarily, this upswing stood under the leadership of a new power, the USA. It replaced the British Empire which in the nineteenth century – on the basis of its special mode of production, its military dominance, and its control of international trade routes and the international currency had put the conflict-ridden and contradictory development of capitalism into a global straitjacket.

From a New Mode of Production...

England had reached the apex of its industrial superiority over the rest of the world by 1880. Then its industrial production accounted for about 23 percent on a world scale, followed by the USA with scarcely 15, China with 12.5, and Germany with 8.5 percent. Twenty years later, these proportions had been inverted: The USA led with about 24 percent above England's 18.5, and increased its share up until the outbreak of WWI to 32 percent. By 1913, Germany had easily overtaken the stagnating motherland of the industrial revolution (at 14 percent) with 15 percent, which, however, also represented the absolute highest value in its history – China's share had fallen back to barely 4 percent. In the first half of the twentieth century, the USA increased its share to its absolutely highest point, about 45 percent in 1953 (double what England had ever reached), only to fall back to about 30 percent in the 1980s. The primary reason for this lay not in Europe's growing share of world production, which stagnated at about 25 percent, but in the growth of industrial production in Japan and the “Third World” (according to Bairoch, 1982). From the 80s on, the US fell ever further behind global development industrially – which meant an actual deindustrialization for some of the former industrial centers in the USA.

Behind the government numbers hides the imposition and subsequent crisis of a new mode of production in the USA, which was superior to the English system, above all in the organization of the labor process and the control of social labor. Under the shortened labels “Taylorism” and “Fordism,” this American production system attained worldwide fame and spread beyond the USA, but its origin lies earlier.

In the 1860s and '70s, the textile industry in the USA expanded. It adopted the most technologically advanced machinery from England, but not, however, English labor organization, which set limits to the control of the employer over the labor process. In the American factories, an expanded power of management was imposed on labor power, which came in large part from immigrants from Europe and Asia, and, after the Civil War, from former slaves from the Southern states. Through this expansion of management's authority in the factories, the collective labor power of thousands of workers could be organized in a production process of much greater dimensions, in distinction to England, which created a significant leap in productivity.

and others declared at the UN General Assembly in September 1999, shortly after the NATO war in ex-Yugoslavia, will quite quickly become reality: “General Secretary Kofi Annan has correctly called for developing a ‘culture of prevention,’ in order effectively to hinder the outbreak of future war and natural catastrophes. Noninterference in ‘internal affairs’ can no longer be permitted to be misused as a shield for dictators and murders. Everyone knows how difficult the transition from a ‘culture of reaction’ to a ‘culture of prevention’ will be. It demands great persuasive powers, in order to produce the political and economic will to prevent something that hopefully will never come to pass.”

9. WHAT TO DO?

The war-propaganda machine is running at high speed - its success is, however, not as effective as it would like to represent; in the USA itself, the invited storm of youth into the recruiting stations is absent. Perhaps the attack has really brought people to thought, or the devastations and the “collateral damage” of innocent deaths in the past war in the Gulf or in Kosovo have heightened the critical ability of the population against military insertions.

There will be various reactions: One part will be painfully resolved to put itself on the side of war, in order to defend that which they have here (during the Gulf War of 1991, the protests, as became clear, allowed that the bombs fall “only” in the Near East). On the other side a debate about capitalism and the possibility of the global emancipation of humanity could begin again. This debate must relate itself actually and anew to worldwide struggles, in that it must, first, perceive them, and grasp them as the true motor of history. Finally, on this foundation, it's important to mobilize struggles against the partner of the worldwide war game. If the “movement against globalization” develops a discussion in this direction and seizes this task, a wholly new perspective can develop.

We can become capable of action on three levels:

A. In a mobilization, not against this war, but against war - everywhere in the world. Peace movements as a cover for protecting their own wealthy biotopes have an unseemly tradition in Germany. Any international mobilization against war in the world must come to the point of marking, in its content and in its methods, a break with all that which defends global exploitation, and that which calls general class war “peace.” To this break belongs support of the widely practiced refusal of war through flight and migration.

B. The attacks in the USA and the menacing long war lead, on the one side, to authoritarian reactions and a general rightward shift; they have created a climate, however, in which can be raised many more fundamental questions than before - in what type of world we live, and how we six billion people want to live together in the future. So far, the left in this situation is split between a call for the USA as the last military savior of “civilization,” the fatal resurrection of a traditional antiimperialism, and new debate on the possibility, necessity, and actuality of world revolution. This debate today must not only be led, but also organized.

C. The function of war as a means of ruling insurance is always in repelling people in their powerlessness before the “great events” of world history, and in robbing them of any perspective of their own organization of their history. Against a debate, which now wants to mix it up with the states (i.e., degrade itself in appealing to the rulers), we must radically pose the self-activity of the exploited - even when they might appear small in the face of great world politics. Only in this do we take these struggles seriously, support them, and grasp them in their inherent emancipatory potential, only in this can we work against this general self-disempowerment, that is supposed to lead to war and fear of war. To this belongs revolutionary defeatism against the war, which defeats all the parties to war.

As the airplanes flew into the towers of the WTC and the Pentagon, the world economy found itself in a beginning stage of one of its most thoroughly difficult crises in the history of capitalism. After the financial crises in Asia, Russia, and Brazil, the flight to the exchanges and the apparent boom of a “new economy” that flight spat up, and the debt-financed consumption boom in the USA, the world economy could still defend against the crash. But even before September 11 it had become clear that this must lead to an even more drastic break. The drama is in the fact that this time all three centers of the world economy - the USA, Japan, and Europe - simultaneously enter into crisis, and all the financial-policy fiscal instruments are long exhausted. We thus have a constellation, finally, like that in the middle of the 1960s - the phase in which the USA began to escalate the war in Vietnam.

In view of the attacks, one could almost detect relief among the economists and administrative bosses, that the attacks now presented an excuse for the capitalist crisis and thereby could ground all the unpopular measures, like layoffs, labor-intensification, or tax increases.

From the many cases of ethnically- or religiously-colored self-lacerations of the losers to the uprisings of urban masses in Africa and farmers in Latin America, to the numberless strikes in Indonesia, the workers struggles in Iran, the proletarian riots against austerity in Argentina, and, not least, the growing unrest in new WTO member China: Bush also knows that the USA has too few thumbs to stop the thousand leaks in the dam, which defends the new world order against the expression of the indefensible circumstances of the pyramid of world-exploitation.

With the attacks it is now possible for him to take the Europeans into the boat, and set NATO up for global containment. Important for this is the Bundesrepublik Deutschland (BRD), which contains one of the largest armies in the world and now, finally, will be drawn into a world war. In spite of this, they work out of a situation of global weaknesses of the social system, which they must assiduously defend everywhere - on the three continents as in their own backyards.

8.

On the lee-side of the external war-waging, that which it's really all about will develop: the worldwide waging of internal war. To this belongs also the overcoming of the persistent split between the external and the internal realms, as BRD Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer formulated it.

The deployment of military “special units,” more “internal security,” state stimulus-expenditures, tax hikes, reconstruction of the social state, and pressure on the unemployed, tightening of the migration regime - thus, all that which has already been declared should now be put in place without reservation. With the new “villains,” these measures could be wholly completed according to the old model of external war, which conceals and justifies the internal measures. More weakly, this will also be the case in Europe. The war outside will represent itself differently here than in the past decade: The enemy is diffuse, unexplained, unrecognized, everywhere, under many masks. And it exploits poverty. The multiple-year war against international terrorism will thus develop into a more direct war against the worldwide working class(es) - by all means, on all planes, internal and external. For that, the Western community of values has already signed the check. The EU Commission is now ramming through a new, broadened and EU-wide definition of “terrorism.” In this definition, just about everything connected with struggles which move outside of accepted methods like unions, parties, etc., is determined: from “urban violence” to “sit-ins” all the way to infrastructure and Internet disturbances.

But the opponent will also shrink from nothing. The difference between state and non- or semi-state terror will be obliterated more thoroughly than before - above all, there where religious fundis have a certain strength, as in the Middle East, Pakistan, or in Indonesia. And, completing that, what Fischer

...to Social Stability...

The imposition of this mode of production is a bloody history of class struggle, proletarian uprisings and their repression. It was decisive for the industrial primacy of the USA that through WWII and its aftermath, this mode of production could be made into the foundation of a “worker-friendly” check against class conflict, which, along with domestic political repression (McCarthy, etc.), offered the workers a perspective of social integration and increasing consumption. This social model shined forth abroad as the “American way of life” and became a beacon for other countries. The Marshall Plan aid and capital export of the 50s was taken as proof that the USA was ready to take other countries, especially the defeated countries Germany and Japan, under its wing so that they could participate in this “progressive” social model.

A mode of production is itself a process, a historical development – in which changes in social reproduction (of wealth as well as of class relations) fulfil themselves according to a determinate pattern. The fundamental pattern of all capitalist development is the expansion of urban wage labor as *the* proletarian mode of reproduction. Mode of production means a phase of this expansion, in which capital succeeds in combining a certain type of machinery, labor organization and labor power, so that capital valorizes itself and the class antagonism is under control.

The American system of mass industry was based on tying immigrant and agricultural labor power to a thoroughly organized and planned production process. Social stability arises out of the dynamic whereby capital can tie proletarians to itself, by means of the hope that things will go better for their children. The “golden age” after WWII consisted of the expansion of labor’s consumption, refrigerators, washing machines and, above all, the car, as much as of the ability to bring new migrating proletarians from the South or from other countries into the factory. The phenomenon that large parts of the working class think of themselves as “middle class” and act accordingly is based on this dynamic.

...and International Hegemony...

Industrial production is based on raw materials being worked up into new production and consumer goods. Its success is also based on how and at what cost one can get raw materials, which are central to this mode of production. At the center of the English industrial revolution, there were three raw materials: cotton, coal, and iron. They still remain important, but the superiority of US industry was bound up with new materials – in which the replacement of coal by petroleum played a special role. Oil would become the foundation of the production on which the internal combustion engine was based, and a whole century would be stamped by it: It revolutionized transportation and thus also the waging of war, and created, with automobilism in the second half of the century, a new model of workers’ consumption.

To insure the raw materials for their industrial expansion, the great European powers had appropriated and subordinated overseas areas as colonies. The USA developed similar imperial relations in its backyard, Latin America – but already after WWI with the Wilson doctrine (“self-determination of peoples”), a new form of rule over the raw-material providing countries was introduced, which was intended to undermine the old European form of colonialism. With the concept of state “sovereignty” and a copycat economic “development,” it could hold off and neutralize the class struggle in these countries in the process of decolonization. The “American way of life,” however, wasn’t on the cards – they were charged with another function in the international division of labor. Through decolonization the British Empire and others lost their exclusive hold on the raw materials resources – for example, in the oilfields of the Middle East. The Suez Canal Crisis of 1956 was the rearguard action of this power struggle, which was decided by the military superiority of the USA in WWII: When England, France

and Israel attempted to roll back the Nasser-led nationalization of the Suez Canal, they were called out of bounds by the USA (and the Soviet Union). In the “Third World” this created a reasonable success, and the image of a civilized hegemon against the mean brutality of the old colonial rulers – and it finally made clear to the European powers that their proceedings in *every* part of the world were dependent on the USA. This politics was successful and accepted because the USA did not simply impose its national special interests *against* other special interests, but with its power and strength insured the general conditions of capitalist development – in this region above all, it insured unhindered access to oil, and worldwide the insurance of state power against unrest and proletarian revolt (e.g., the Korean War).

In other words: the USA was not hegemonic because it stepped out as the special state, but because it was, for the worldwide capitalist class, the embodiment of the new boom of the capitalist mode of production in the 50s and 60s. It was the renewed material expansion of the capitalist mode of production and its class relations on which the political supremacy of the USA was based – and on which it was therefore also dependent.

...Through Military Superiority and Secure World Money

This shows itself most obviously in the two pillars of its power, which remain today but are increasingly shaky (see the contribution of André Gunder Frank in this issue): their military superiority and their control of the international means of payment, world money. In both world wars the USA brought to bear a military strength based in the first place on the superiority of its industrial production and its gigantic production reserves (in the final phase of the war, in 1944, the USA alone produced 90,000 airplanes, more than the German Wehrmacht would have even been able to shoot down). The role of industrial production for the waging of war under capitalism was first demonstrated in the American Civil War of 1861-65, in which half a million people were killed. In this, history’s first-ever industrial bloodbath, industrial weapons production in the North had become the decisive factor. By the end of WWII the new modern industrial technology represented a new dimension of automatized bloodbath, instantaneous atomic annihilation.

Modern war not only lives on industrial production; both world wars also gave it an enormous boost. Between 1941 and 1945 the gross domestic product of the USA increased by 50 percent – more than ever before – which above all was based on the armaments industry, whose share of the total economy jumped from 2 to 40 percent between 1939 and 1943. After the war the USA had command of an immense industrial potential, which was lacking demand. The Marshall Plan aid and capital export created for this potential a demand for producer goods in the war-devastated economies of Europe and Japan.

The second pillar of US strength is also based on industrial production: control of the international currency flows. The export surplus of the United States flowed as tons of gold into the treasury of their banking system. Their control of great quantities of the recognized international means of payment formed the basis of their initiative toward a new regulation of the global financial system for the postwar period. The establishment of the tightly gold-linked US dollar (Bretton Woods 1944) was intended to prevent crises like that of 1929-32 and make a stable international monetary system possible. In the space of this money and credit framework the international division of labor could further expand itself again, while in wartime, 1914-45, it had stagnated or regressed. This framework was not, like it is claimed today by the advocates of capital market regulation (Tobin, ATTAC etc.), the basis for the unique upswing of the prosperity phase of 1947-63 – on the contrary, its stability was itself the result of production and of the stability of exploitation, like the beginning of the 70s should show.

Africa, first became a hero in the Arab lands; or just like Saddam Hussein would not have politically survived the crisis in Iraq without the 1991 Gulf War.

5.

Showing the USA to be a paper tiger has nothing to do with showing the worldwide masses a way out of their powerlessness. It has to do with their own ruling interests using and exploiting that powerlessness.

The “holy warriors” do not want to do away with oppression and exploitation. They want to come into the role of oppressors themselves, and if they cannot have this, then they want at least to have participated in power. For the impoverished, ignored, mocked, hungry, and lacking an emancipatory perspective of the world, the attack on a symbol of capitalism can present itself as an expression of their own cries for justice. In this sense, the attack was politically very well directed. The masses of the world (“mass support” was also important to the fascists) have taken note of the vulnerability of the world police with more or less healthy cheer. It will depend on the way the USA and worldwide capitalism take up this bid for world war, how strong the influence of the jihad-fighters and their chiefs in Africa and Asia, and perhaps elsewhere, will grow.

6.

Actually, the attacks hit the whole breadth of the worldwide proletariat: not only the high-earning bankers, but equally the international service-sector proletariat working in the WTC: secretaries, cleaning staff, people from Bangladesh, “illegals” from Colombia. In spite of this, the attacks have succeeded in building up a confrontation inside the global proletariat, between the poor masses and the winners of capital development - the corresponding occupational groups, like media people, brokers, government staff, pilots (“information workers” in the broadest sense), have immediately taken up the war solution and see “their civilization” threatened by the “fanaticism of the excluded.”

With this, two extreme poles of the world proletariat will be opposed to one another as enemy subjects. Behind this, the global structure of capitalist exploitation, capital and class relations - only existing globally and mediated by a world market since the beginning of capitalism - disappear.

The “antiglobalization” mobilizations in the past years have brought this global relation and the general unpleasantness of the capitalist order strongly to expression - but in a false manner. Instead of taking the worldwide unity of this only diffusely formulated unpleasantness to its origins, and bringing it to bear in all social struggles, they have set tricontinental mass poverty against international finance capital (and its personified bearers), and sought opponents there where finance capital shows itself to be a “neoliberal” monster. The “antiglobalization movement” has not yet recovered from the shock of consequently being immediately put into an intellectual coherence with the attacks. It appears decided, however, that they must change their terrain, if they want to retain their - till now only limited - moments of critique of capitalism.

7.

Just as the Islamist reactionaries want to rebuttress their disappearing power position with the war, the capitalism of the “free West,” which today has become the “civilized North,” needs war and terror in order to be able to deal with the danger of a revolutionary upheaval in a time of a collapsing world economy.

With the attacks, the assailants know they have placed themselves on the level of war leaders like Madeleine Albright, and are following the logic of war, which was already directed openly against the proletariat in the Gulf War. On the surface, wars establish the impression of an opposition between the war-leading parties; in essence, however, they are for both sides the general means of preempting the proletarian revolt, the struggle for a better life, the revolution as the movement of emancipation of humanity.

In the worldwide struggle over the distribution of wealth, the assailants have the strong sympathy and support of the excluded, the oppressed, the exploited. To them, the assailants promise the reattainment of dignity and a larger piece of the pie, in the space of an authoritarian-hierarchical social order: a deeply fascistic fundamental perspective, which has its roots not only in the evermore-intense division of the world into “poor and rich.” It is also and above all a reaction to the actual eclipse of inherited feudal structures, which were first partially installed by colonialism, but which, above all though, have passed over into capitalism, and which were modernized, extended and used by imperialism.

4.

The attacks (or their use, which is the same thing) by radical-Islamic powers are not the expression of their political strength, but rather a reaction to their own crisis. They need the attacks, in order to put themselves back in the game.

At the end of the 1960s in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and other Islamic countries, strikes, the women’s movement, and strong left class organizations had beaten back the influence of religious groups. This balance of power was recorrected by the systematic support of Islamist groups by the CIA and “imperialistic powers.” With the revolution in Iran, the armed actions in Algeria, etc., the social question and militant Islamism appeared to bind themselves together.

In the last decade millions of people have been drawn into the cities, and have simply left the half-feudal, religious structures on the land. In the cities, religiously (in no way always Islamic) decorated fascism finds its mass basis with them, because proletarianization-urbanization means misery, plain and simple, because they have not (yet) become a working class.

The local elites and middle strata feel themselves to be passed over in their claim to leadership by the “West,” to have lost their “dignity.” Out of these strata, the cadres and leaders of this movement recruit themselves. Precisely because this movement can, on the one hand, represent itself as oppressed, and on the other hand, appropriate the “social question” as the international, indeed global advocate of the cheated, they are dangerous opponents of any sort of emancipation or revolution generally.

With that, the radical-Islamic reaction was actually already on the decline - not only in the historic sense, by the disappearance of its base through proletarianization, urbanization, and the migration of millions in Asia and parts of Africa, but rather also actually; the “Islamic Republic” in Iran had outlived itself, and sought - against modernization and workers’ struggles - survival strategies; in Algeria it has been shown in the uprisings of this year that the FIS can pose no alternative for humanity; in Indonesia Islamic fundamentalists could indeed attack unionists, the left, and isolated strikes, and destabilize the whole society with assassination and homicide - winning, however, in spite of restraining economic and political crises, only a narrow mass influence. As is so often the case, these attacks are also the manifestation of the eclipse of a movement. Through the (certainly calculated) reaction of the USA and the “Western world” to the attacks, they now experience the striven - for revalorization - just as bin Laden, above all through the cruise missiles with which the USA reacted to the embassy attacks in

Bombs and Money – synonyms for deadly annihilation and abstract wealth – are the undeniable linchpins of this social order, which can only develop itself by way of contradiction: between poor and rich, between starvation and surplus, between the loss of life through labor and the satisfaction of the products of labor. The “golden age” of post-war capitalism did not supersede these contradictions – it merely offered the perspective that the conditions of proletarians across the world could be bettered through wage labor, industrialization and development. It was however, simultaneously stamped by a fiercely waged war. With the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which played no military role in the course of the war in the Pacific, the USA demonstrated its military superiority. With the division into West and East arose a war situation between the two blocs, for each of which the other served for stabilization of social and government order in their sphere of influence. Only on the basis of the cold war could military strength be practiced and held out as the general interest and common protection of the western industrial countries. NATO served to insure the USA’s hegemonic position over Western Europe, but it was intended by agreement to be a defense against the East. For its worldwide military bases the “communist enemy” and its “containment” was the most important legitimation. Since this linchpin, which had allowed US dominance to present itself as the legitimate leadership of the “free world,” fell out after 1990, the USA has an acute need for an “enemy of freedom.”

THE “ENEMY OF FREEDOM” IN YOUR OWN COUNTRY

The opposition of power blocs and the rivalry between nation-states has always masked throughout the whole history of capitalism the fact that the content of interstate competition was the ruling class’s collective control of class conflict. It was decisive for the imposition of the USA as the hegemonic power that the new mode of production also functioned as a superior model of preventing class conflict. The oppositional movements, which arose out of the struggles of the proletarians, also participated in this prevention, because their perspectives of change were always, over and over again, linked to the state – as the workers’ movement in the form of unions and parties or as the national-liberation movements in the so-called “Third World.” The revolutionary meaning of the worldwide cycle of struggles and the global economic crisis in the 70s lies in the fact that they simultaneously contained a profit crisis and a turn of “anti-system movements” away from the state (see Wallerstein, *Utopistics*). Global capitalism has not yet lifted itself out of this crisis – it has only been able to draw out its acute outbreak, ever longer, ever further, and ever bloodier.

THE “NEW ROME” – EMPIRE OR “FAILING STATE”?

After 9/11, the world’s remaining superpower has been described by right-wing historians and politicians in the USA as the “new Rome,” and as the answer to the breakdown of the international system of nation-states, a new imperialism and colonialism has openly been proposed, like the wheel of time could be turned back one hundred years just like that. The Gulf War of 1991, the bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999 and Afghanistan in 2001 were all attempts to maintain the position of the United States and thus the state order of international capitalism with military means. In these debates and wars however, the crisis and the decline of this order in the 1980s and 1990s are revealed.

All those proposals – protectorate, colonial status, the good side of imperialism (“the rich man’s burden”) or even “nation-building” still mindful of “sovereignty” – contain no perspective at all for development, prosperity or for preventing class conflict through a new push for industrialization, as one can see in Kosovo or Afghanistan. The concept of “failing states”, introduced at the beginning of the 90s, serves on the one hand to justify strengthened military power for the control of the proletariat in the “South” – it is however simultaneously the attempt to hold a fundamental truth at bay by means

of projection: the global failure of statism that both the USA and the remaining industrial countries confront.

The contemporary situation of change isn't about the fact that in an intact system of nation-states particular marginal ones are failing, or that a hegemon has to be replaced by another – it's about that fact that the form of states themselves, the powerful vice around a class-conflict-ridden society, finds itself in crisis. The crisis of the USA as the hegemonic power of the state system is simultaneously the crisis of the system and statism generally.

PHASE-OUT MODEL CAPITALISM

With the crisis of the mode of production, which had created a new boom time for capitalism and a hegemonic position for the USA, the material basis for the stability of this world order fell apart. The 80s and 90s were therefore marked by compensating for this absent productive basis with bombs and money. With the suppression of the dollar's link to gold in 1971 and the floating of currency exchanges in 1973, the USA created the precondition for replacing its long-past industrial predominance with control of the international financial markets. Material production expanded further, above all in Asia, but this did not lead to any improvement in the rates of profit. The economic yardstick for the success of capitalistic valorization, profit, stagnated even further in the 80s and 90s. Into its place stepped an explosion of the international credit supply, i.e., money whose value is a speculation on successful future exploitation.

But this future has not materialized. In the 90s, the beginning of a new mode of production was twice loudly proclaimed: in the crisis at the beginning of the 90s the model of "lean production", of "teamwork" and of flexible supplier chains. After this hype about "Toyotism" came the second half of the 90s with the hype of the Internet and the "New Economy." But both models led to no improvement in the profit rates of the non-financial sectors. First of all, the attractiveness of the Japanese production model had been based on the fortunate position of the yen compared to the dollar and the cheapness of transportation because of uniquely low oil prices. The Internet made no profit, but rather turned out to be a technological vision, which was driven by the stock market fever.

Against the working class, these models functioned as a defensive answer for capital. They destroyed old structures and created a new ideology of "creative labor" and "performance," with which the old collective assurances of wage labor were beaten back. Through the inversion of the international currency flows, the international division between rich and poor deepened, between booming regions in Asia and the immiseration of Africa and parts of Latin America. They were destructive strategies that didn't help capitalism to any new upswing and further damaged its legitimacy.

The historical novelty of the crisis of the 70s was based on the active role of the worldwide proletariat in it. In the cycle of struggle from 1968-73, the worldwide youth revolt, the struggle of the factory workers in the North and the uprising of the proletariat in the South blocked capitalist valorization. The flow of capital into fictitious valorization on the financial markets was also a retreat from the renewed threat of revolution. With the expansion of the money supply and the volume of credit, governments avoided letting the crisis hit the working class in its full force. The increased crisis of the state debt and the always-larger share of the gross social product going to social spending were results of this evasion of class conflict.

ON THE ATTACKS IN THE USA AND THE WAR

1.

The attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon are expressions of the worldwide economic, social, and military politics of the past decades. They are to be understood as expressions of global barbarism, as much as reactions to the brutality and inhumanity which are bound up worldwide with the capitalist order. And they have been understood in this sense all over the world. For that very reason, it is, finally, unimportant who actually committed these attacks and for what motives (supposing we will ever find out). Through this understanding and the following reactions, the assaults have been made, objectively and from all sides, into an expression of the "North/South opposition" in the world, which has, materially, enormously intensified itself in the past twenty years.

The attack had the brutality of which humans are capable, no new level, nor even a new place: In the United States of America, the imposition of capitalism in this part of the world, has from the beginning meant war: the slaughter of the original "Indian" population, slavery, civil war, the war for Texas, etc.

Actually, the greater wonder is not the fact that World Power No. 1 has been caught off guard by box-cutter-armed determination, but rather that something did not happen much earlier - after all the damage and the terror with which the repression and exploitation of the world has been accomplished, organized, and defended by the American state and its troops: No Gun Ri, My Lai, Panama City, Mutla Ridge/Basra¹, the organization of mass murder in Indonesia, the support of the regimes of the Shah in Iran/Persia, of Pinochet, Saddam Hussein, the Taliban in Afghanistan, the continuing bombing of Iraq, and so on and so forth. And - above all - it has to do with the cold cynicism, the pretensions of absolute power, the mockery of the victim. This cynicism had found its expression in Madeleine Albright's answer to the question of the death of tens of thousands of children as a result of the economic sanctions against Iraq: "That's the price we have to pay." Now, a first bill has been delivered and collected.

2.

The attacks have not hit capitalism in its heart. On the contrary - they serve uniquely and only to preserve and strengthen the worldwide order of exploitation and domination.

The attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon have brought forth a clammy, secret joy in some people. The New York skyline concealed in smoke, the WTC in flames, and finally erased fully from the landscape, the Pentagon burning, the symbols - economic as well as military - of capitalistic power destroyed, these were pictures that conjured up a smile on some people's face.

The world has not fundamentally changed with the collapse of the World Trade Center. It is, after as well as before, a global order of exploitation and oppression. Even more: The attacks serve both sides - the assailants and the would-be confronted state, or capitalism - to attempt an extension and reinforcement of their crumbling power.

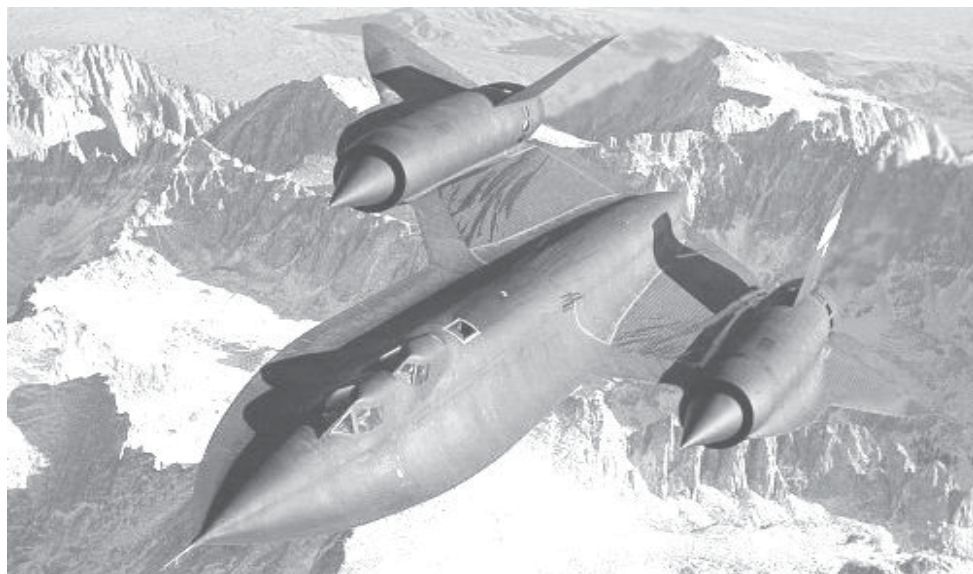
3.

Wars are never only the confrontation between the parties, but rather, in essence, the general struggle of the war-leading parties to insure their domination. For the suicide pilots as much as the Bush Administration, it is in this sense that they go to war.

In the 90s, he revised his thesis with respect to the unprecedented boom in the US economy. He overlooked the problems with this boom, which, above all, was one of US capital and goods imports, which fed the stock market boom and the “New Economy,” both built on sand. In the past couple of months, the capital inflows to the United States have clearly slowed, and government economists declare themselves furious that, in spite of their good data, the dollar keeps slipping further. Even if it were to come to a new conjunctural upswing and not to the much-feared “double dip,” i.e., a short rise followed by a deepened collapse, the balance of trade and the state debt would still worsen. Nothing points to a renewed attractiveness of US stock and bond markets, like at the end of the 90s, which is necessary to finance planned armaments and war.

“Enronitis” and the continuing stream of new swindle-companies are in the foreground, which holds back the stock markets – but Enron as much as Argentina is only an expression of the absolute absence of profitable investment possibilities. The comparison with the world-power Spain or England is therefore inappropriate, because in the course of the crisis since the mid-70s, it hasn’t had anything to do with the replacement of one hegemonic power by another – the economic downturn in the United States is a moment of the crisis of the world economy. Now the Bush Administration appears to move in a protectionist direction (steel tariffs, agricultural subsidies), in order to strengthen their own economy and also, in arms-production (steel!), not to be so dependent on foreigners – there are similar fears about too great a US industrial dependence on computer-component production from Taiwan and China. Dilemma of globalization!

Without a new model of accumulation and a new push for industrialization, there can be neither a US nor any other sort of empire. The contemporary tendency toward war and increased armament since 1998 are expressions of the global crisis, but they contain no solution for this crisis. War only functions as a political solution when the proletariat lets itself be drawn into the social logic of destruction and subordination to force. For the rulers, it is an unsolved and possibly insoluble problem to make war manageable again, and with that, to impose the social restrictions and subordination to capital that they require and for which they strive. But precisely on account of this, we should fear that they will attempt, with their whole high-tech arsenal of bombs and destructive forces, to reorganize a relation of power and exploitation for which the material and social basis is increasingly absent.



CROSSROADS BAGHDAD

This dilemma of world capitalism cannot be solved militarily, but bombs are the only means of counterrevolution left for them. And for the USA they are the last means of holding together a world of states, in which there is no unity about how this dilemma could be solved. Since the beginning of the 1990s, Iraq has been at the center of a militarily-waged struggle for a “new world order,” because the different moments of the crisis are concentrated there. After the revolution in Iran, Iraq was heavily armed in order to suppress the revolutionary strivings in the region by war. Next to Saudi Arabia, to which the USA would like to be able to extend the war in case the regime collapses, Iraq serves as the best possibility of controlling the international oil market, on which, again, the value of the dollar depends. Geopolitically the US hopes that from Iraq it will win back its influence in the Middle East and thereby be able to proclaim itself guarantor of the worldwide energy supply.

And the announcements thus far on the course of an attack on Iraq make it obvious that it’s also about showing off their newest high-tech weapons without danger of loss. Like the inventor of the strategy of “shock and awe,” which is intended to be tested in Iraq, signifies, the destructive potential of these new weapons is supposed to be so large and so precisely effective that the line between conventional and nuclear weapons will disappear. It’s clear why this is so important. The military superiority of the USA has the unfortunate defect that it is based in large part on technology that has not been able to be used since 1945: atom bombs. The development of so called “tactical nuclear weapons,” the scrapping of the ABM treaty last June, and the always-reiterated possibility of the use of nuclear weapons in Iraq – all these are dubious attempts to play the last card of a system that finds itself in decline. And here’s another problem: Since its defeat in the Vietnam War, the USA is no longer in a position to wage a “real war.” With the hasty retreat from Lebanon in 1983 and the debacle in Somalia they have continued to disgrace themselves in the role of world policeman. The quick victory in Afghanistan is turning into a similar long-term defeat right before the eyes of world public opinion. Fatally, it is precisely these defeats, in the power logic of a declining superpower, that require ever newer “victories.”

While we write this, both sides prepare themselves for war, and one knows that on both sides it’s a war against the proletariat. While the US troops together with the NGOs secure the borders against the flood of refugees that the war and poverty will bring about, the Iraqi Ba’ath regime digs ditches around the edges of the large slums of Baghdad – Saddam City with more than 2 million inhabitants (but many more in reality) – in order to stop the proletarians from plundering the rich districts of the city or engaging in social upheaval. Saddam Hussein knows all too well that in 1991 his power was endangered less by American bombs than by social uprisings after the war.

A NEW SUPERPOWER?

After the large demonstrations on the worldwide day of action in the middle of February, the *New York Times* (February 17, 2003, p. A1, column 5, Patrick E. Tyler) commented that “the fracturing of the Western alliance over Iraq and the huge antiwar demonstrations around the world this weekend are reminders that there may still be two superpowers on the planet: the United States and world public opinion.” We shouldn’t give too much to “public opinion,” but in the broad turn of governments around the world against this war a social opposition against war and power comes to expression. Wars are not only unwinnable on military grounds, but also if they no longer function for the legitimation of power, nationalism and chauvinism. It’s becoming obvious that it’s only about the defense of a world order that has nothing more to offer and to which no one connects the perspective of a better life anymore.

It is quite apparent that in the next weeks some governments with their backs against the wall will order their soldiers to bomb Baghdad. But with that they will undermine the legitimacy of this world order and have the *real* second superpower, the global proletariat, on whom all their wealth and power is dependent, against them.

A COUPLE OF TIPS FOR FURTHER READING

Robert Brenner: “Towards the Precipice”, http://www.lrb.co.uk/v25/n03/bren01_.html; and his book *The Boom and the Bubble*, Verso 2002.

Immanuel Wallerstein: “The Eagle Has Crash Landed”, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/issue_julyaug_2002/wallerstein.html; and his book *Utopistics: Or Historical Choices of the Twenty-First Century*, The New Press 1998.

Giovanni Arrighi, “The Global Market”, http://csf.colorado.edu/jwsr/archive/vol5/vol5_number2/v5n2_split/jwsr_v5n2_arrighi.pdf

André Gunder Frank: “Paper Tiger, Fiery Dragon”, http://csf.colorado.edu/agfrank/paper_tiger.html

Fred Moseley: “The United States Economy at the Turn of the Century: Entering a New Era of Prosperity”, *Capital & Class* No. 67, and an update to this article: “Goldilocks Meets a Bear: How Bad Will the U.S. Recession Be?”, <http://www.monthlyreview.org/0402moseley.htm>



ON THE WAY TO A NEW COLONIALISM?

The intellectual conflict around a new order for the world turns, not on theoretical problems, but on objective contradictions.

Independent of the fashionable left debate over Hardt and Negri’s *Empire*, since 9/11, rightist circles in the United States have been having a debate on imperialism and empire. In this debate, a positive understanding of imperialism is put forth, whereby, among other things, historical reinterpretations of past imperialisms turn them into the necessary defensive measures of civilized countries against the encroaching piracy around them. Historians and political scientists propose that the United States positively recognize its role as the only “imperial” power or empire, and they refer to the fact that the United States today, in its military dominance, is much more of an empire than Rome or England ever was. All that remains is to make the proper adjustment in government and public attitudes in order to derive a consistent politics from it.

The rightist debate proceeds on the assumption that methods like development aid and international diplomacy (“nation building”) no longer serve to keep certain regions of the world in order. In countries like Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, Angola or Somalia, therefore, a direct takeover of power in country – even colonialism (or a “protectorate” or a “mandate”) – is required. And only the United States has the military capacity to do such a thing. In this it has been revealed that the UN or other international organizations, due to their “democratic” procedures, are not the appropriate instruments for what is required. Here they work up the legitimation for new forms of imperial or direct colonial control by the United States.

(Additionally: The arguments are in essence the same as those, which are used in the local provincial debates of the anti-Germans to defend the worldwide “civilizing mission” of the United States. Also similar is the fearmongering propaganda of images of decline into the chaos of the uncivilized hordes, which are flooding over us – at bottom this regressive “left” is nostalgic for the cold war, which represented the only order in their minds. Elements of the specific American task can also be found in Negri’s postmodern *Empire*, and in his hymns of praise for the specialness of the American constitution [not a reference to the document but to the “polity,” the structure of this particular civil society – translator].)

“IMPERIAL OVERSTRETCH”

What substance does this perspective of a US-run world empire have to offer? From the anti-imperialist side, the rightist debate is eagerly attacked and taken as further proof for their critique of US imperialism. Certainly, the United States today is militarily dominant on a scale like no nation ever was on a world scale – measured in terms of weapons and their technological possibilities. But if today, the largest opposition against an attack on Iraq is based on the fact that it would take half a year to replace the weapons used up in Afghanistan, the limits of this power also become visible. In the 90s US military strategy conceived its greatest goal to be able to fight two wars like the Gulf war simultaneously. That has little to do with the image of an empire.

Modern capitalist war is a war of industrial production, of replacement of industrial, and specifically capitalist productivity by means of the destructiveness of war technologies. The military dominance of a country is connected in the end to its industrial capacity. At the end of the 80s the historian Paul Kennedy prophesied the same destiny for the United States as for Spain in 1600 or England in 1900: Its economy would not be able to keep pace with its imperial ambitions – “imperial overstretch.”

wholly unreal “reconstruction” of Afghanistan. This was limited to just-for-show projects in Kabul – where the international press is – and pure simulation. The director of the UN special commission to Afghanistan went straight to the point: “We are trying to create the impression that things are under control. Symbolism is important.” To this symbolism also belongs the large numbers of returning refugees from Pakistan and Iran, whose return is primarily because each family gets “greetings money” of \$20 per head. The organizer of that policy, the UNHCR, is clear that most will have to leave Afghanistan again before next winter, because there is no possibility of survival in the country. After farmer unrest in April, the Karzai administration refused to impose the previously declared ban on opium poppy cultivation. The government had offered them compensation of \$350 per acre (0.4 hectares), whereas opium cultivation on such an area brings about ten times that amount. The only concrete plans for “reconstruction” relate to the construction of a pipeline, which would create perhaps 10,000 jobs – in a country of 27 million people.

A “RELUCTANT IMPERIALIST” AND THE CRISIS OF CAPITAL

The type of war fought in Afghanistan has parallels on a world-political level: the nixing of the ABM treaty, the publication of a new nuclear strategy with atomic tactical weapons, the “first strike” doctrine presented by Bush, and a nuclear armaments program that could send the US portion of the worldwide armaments budget from 36 to 40 percent (the \$48 billion increase in the arms budget for the next year is equivalent to about double the Italian or about one and a half times the German military budget). The most recent and perhaps most grotesque expression of this bid for supremacy in the world system is the conflict around the International Criminal Court. In order to underline its disapproval of such an international institution, a law was passed making military intervention in the Netherlands (the seat of the court) possible in case an American citizen was brought before it.

Does the United States find itself on the way to being an imperialist world power, or do its world politics arise, on the contrary, from its crisis-prone decline as the hegemonic power of the capitalist world system? The “cold war” is indeed at an end, but the “new world order” that Bush rashly called for in 1991 is nowhere in sight.

The course of the United States stands in ever more obvious contradiction to the representation that national state power is being more and more relinquished to supranational organizations like the WTO, IMF, UN or NATO. In the “globalization” concept, states represent themselves to the working class as victims of an overpowering process, in order to be able to pose their own attacks as the result of practical constraints. There are two true aspects of this picture, though: States are not “sovereign” in themselves, but in the context of a worldwide state system, in which there is an obvious pecking order. And, second, states, as the political level of capitalist society, can never be “sovereign” in the sense supposed by the globalization critics’ call for a “primacy of politics” over the economy. They can only insure and modify a valorization process whose development lies outside the reach of the wealth of potential taxes. But “sovereignty” in the limited statist sense is, in the final analysis, bound to the state’s monopoly on the use of force, even if this has often been forgotten in the globalization discourse of the 90s, with its illusions in market economy and civil society. Organs like the IMF or the WTO are purely contractual agreements between states, which thereby relinquish nothing of their monopoly on the use of force. With that, they themselves are dependent on the power relations obtaining among the states that create them. The initial formation of organizations like the IMF or WTO shows in detail how they are the instruments of the more powerful states, in the imposition of their valorization interests.

THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION’S FEAR OF WAR...AND WHAT FORCES THEM TO WAGE IT

In Italy, France, but above all in the United States and England, many hundreds of thousands of people go in the streets in order to protest against the United States’ forthcoming war against Iraq. They do this on different grounds and with varying ideas of *why* the Bush-Cheney-Rice clique wants this war no matter what.

In order to be against war, we don’t need to know anything about their respective backgrounds. Wars are always massacres in the interests of the rulers. Whether Bush or Saddam Hussein, whether Schröder or Bin Laden, whether Sharon or Arafat – war and terrorist attacks serve them in the securing of their power and maintenance of the conditions on which their power rests. War is the sharpest form and demonstration of the force on which the capitalist order, the daily prison of labor and the power of money are based (see *Global War for the World Order* in this pamphlet).

But in order to be able to proceed effectively against the war, we must be able to understand its (back)grounds and political meaning, and publicly explain them. We cannot underestimate our enemies, even if they come in the form of a nincompoop US president from the oil business (see *Midnight Notes: The First Rule of Peace: Respect Your Enemy*¹) – we should also, however, not overestimate them.

A general tendency among the contemporary antiwar protesters appears to be the feeling of impotence against the plans of a world power (Opting out on Iraq²) that can’t be stopped. In Germany, where, at the worldwide day of action against the war on October 26, 2002, very few people went into the streets, this sense of impotence paired itself with the dangerous tendency to delegate the opposition to the war to their own capitalist state.

In the antiwar movement different reasons for the planned attacks on Iraq are discussed and compared to one another. But we cannot understand the present rush to war if we only observe isolated snippets of the capitalist totality, and play those different aspects against one another – instead of understanding how the moments of this worldwide system hang together.

“*The New Empire*”: The United States today is the exclusive superpower in the world, with by far the strongest military and economic power. *In all wars of the United States, it has to do with securing this imperial position.* In the United States there is a broad discussion about “the new Rome” (see for example *American Primacy in Perspective*³ or *Rome, AD ... Rome, DC?*⁴), and imperialism and colonialism are being rehabilitated and recommended as goals of American foreign policy.

“*The Competition of Nation-States*”: In the struggle for world mastery, the United States negotiates with other states: the Euro-bloc in Western Europe, the ex-superpower Russia, the possibly arriving China. Many areas of tension, e.g., the wrangling over a UN resolution against Iraq, the trade war between the USA and the EU, or the fear of US economists of the euro as a second world currency, fit only so well into the traditional image of “imperialist competition.” *A war of the United States against Iraq is a war against its imperialist adversaries: China, Russia, the EU (above all Germany and France), or Japan.*

“*Geostrategic Goals*”: In the struggle for world mastery “space” counts. With the division of the world into two power blocs after World War II, “geopolitics” was pushed into the background. Today, it is again broadly discussed. Afghanistan is indeed an insignificant country, but its bombing opened

a new possibility for the United States to entrench itself in Central Asia. As *“geostrategic space” this region is very important, because it lies right in the middle of the great powers of Western Europe, China, Russia and India.*

“War for Oil”: Since oil has become the central energy-bearer of capitalist production and the most important raw material of every war effort, oil discovery, production and transport play a central role. The attack on Iraq should assure the United States the influence that it could lose with the breakaway of its strategic ally Saudi Arabia. Military presence in Central Asia creates for them an influence on the oil from the Caspian Sea. The new military-strategic interest of the USA in Africa turns on the strong growth in oil production there. On the other hand, here lie worries for China, France, Russia, etc.: Through the seizure of the Iraqi oilfields (and possibly also those of Saudi Arabia) they could be forced out of business and the USA would then have made itself into the single controller of global oil resources.

“Domestic Political Imperatives”: An administration of the United States, which only came to power through electoral fraud, which is deeply implicated in the Enron scandal and other manipulations, which must submit to inquiries about how much it knew about the attacks before 9/11, and which is confronted with a dramatic economic crisis and gigantic foreign debts... *This US administration has sufficient reason to compensate for domestic weaknesses with a demonstration of foreign power.*

Many of these arguments are understood in the sense that states confront one another as independent subjects. Especially when war is at issue, this false image imposes itself. But capitalism and its reproduction are from the beginning based on an international division of labor, on chains of production and exploitation, which are bound together by the world market. The particular nation-states could only exist on this basis. Simultaneously, they are the most effective form of making the global productive apparatus, i.e., the global connection of humanity to itself, disappear behind the competition of nation-states. The emergence of nations means, above all, binding the proletariat to “their” state, which competes with other states.

The particular states could only exist within a state system in which they mutually recognize one another’s statehood – what is called “sovereignty.” What connects them and what they are based on is the worldwide maintenance of exploitation, which is based on a supranational apparatus of production and the world market. In the historic development of this apparatus lies the key to understanding international relations – not the reverse. With the bourgeois division into “domestic” and “foreign” policy, the essence of statehood as a powerful assurance of class relations is masked.

The image of competing nation-states finds its confirmation in the fact that there is a dramatic hierarchy in the worldwide state system, where the weaker states are ruled by the stronger. From the beginning, however, the capitalist world market is based on the fact that the state system is dominated by a hegemonic power. Venice, Genoa, the Netherlands, the British Kingdom and the United States succeeded one another in this role, in which the phases of dominance grew ever shorter. The respective dominance of each power was always both: the expression of its interests and its economic superiority, and simultaneously a condition of the functioning of the whole global exploitation and valorization apparatus. They were succeeded by one another when they could no longer rise to this task and when a superior method of production had developed on another state’s territory, thus when another great power could better fulfil the job of worldwide maintenance of class relations, and this superiority over its competitors permeated the situation (Arrighi has presented the remarkable parallels between the decline of the British empire and the decline of the United States as hegemonic power: *The Global Market*⁵).

how to wage war with only paid soldiers. For the United States in Afghanistan, the Northern Alliance fulfilled this function. The war against the Taliban or Al Qaeda combatants and their demonstrated cruelty served also to further their monopoly of power over the “allied” militias. In the meantime the process has already been started with particular militias opposed by President Karzai being declared enemies of the new state, and handled accordingly by the US military.

All questions of humanitarian aid and the establishment of their own state have hitherto been rigorously subordinated to the military supremacy of the United States. For example, the military openly refused, before the arrival of this past winter, to assure safe passage for the food and aid convoys. The proposal to expand the operations area of the peacekeepers over Kabul was turned down. At the beginning, even the US-appointed President Karzai protested against the continuing bombardment, which also occasionally resulted in bad feelings among the other Western allies (French bomber pilots once refused to undertake a US military-ordered attack, on account of the obvious endangerment to the civilian population). In spite of such differences between the Western attackers of Afghanistan on the question of actions and the roles that would fall to each particular country, unity arose on the fact that military attacks must be made.

MAKING WAR MANAGEABLE

After the Gulf war of 1991 and the NATO bombardment of Yugoslavia in 1999, the Afghanistan campaign is the third large military operation to follow the new politics of “just” war and the representation of war as “police action.” After 1945 there was a general avoidance of war, and three large wars after 1945 proved above all that, because of the attitude of one’s own population, it was unmanageable: France’s Algerian war, the United States’ Vietnam war, and the USSR’s Afghanistan war. Since then, how war can again be made manageable has been and will be discussed: they should not concern any normal citizen of a warring country, but should rather be prosecuted by a paid army (the contemporary debate in Germany over conscription has mainly to do with the manageability of war – and whether it is expensive); they should be short, so that no great debates arise (remember: The NATO bombardment against Yugoslavia was originally supposed to last only two days!); and they should be able to be represented as targeted surgical strikes, sparing the civilian population – this presentation of war has become the primary task of the media division.

The course of the Afghanistan bombing shows the whole dilemma of these requirements. After a few weeks of apparently useless bombing, the use of cluster bombs against the civilian population, etc., came under more and more criticism. The United States had to grant the warlords of the Northern Alliance a much larger room for maneuver, just like they had intended, and it could no longer stop their march on Kabul.

Paradoxically, the humanitarian sentiments against the war, from within circles of the European political elite, after a month of “unsuccessful” bombing – from the critique of cluster bombs to the call for a ceasefire – led to the brutalization of the attacks. In order to work against antiwar opinion, quick “results” were called for, for which purpose there was increased bombing of civilian targets and infrastructure. “Public opinion” is always on the side of the “winner” – in the Vietnam War it was the military ineffectiveness and the number of dead GIs that broadened the antiwar movement.

SYMBOLIC “NATION BUILDING”

Only with the presentation of laughing women in “liberated” Kabul did the PR division of the war ministry have sufficient material to change public opinion. The country was accepted as “liberated” and further US warfighting, with the support of other NATO countries, fell into the shadow of the

Precisely for that reason there is no visible perspective for the world economy confronted by this crisis. With war and warlordization old structures that might have stood in the way of capital development can be destroyed – but can set no development process in motion. The comparison with Schumpeter’s “creative destruction” won’t do here, because he assumed that it would be in the course of a new accumulation dynamic.

BOMBS AS CLAIMS TO POWER – BY THE UNITED STATES AND CAPITAL

The bombing of Afghanistan that began on October 7, 2001 and has not yet ended was not a reaction to 9/11, but rather the resumption and facilitation of strategic priorities in Central Asia. The whole form of the war’s prosecution shows that it had no particular timetable in which to catch Bin Laden or to destroy the Al Qaeda network. Measured in terms of these goals, the United States lost the war in Afghanistan, just like the bourgeois opposition to the war often emphasizes.

Even in a strategic sense one can’t speak of a victory. The dilemma of military attacks in times of global crisis lies in the fact that each attempt to stabilize any locale brings forth further destabilization somewhere else. In the 1991 Gulf war, the United States wanted to insure its control in the Middle East, and announced it already to be a “new world order.” In the long run, however, it thereby undermined its exclusive strategic relations with the most important country in the region, Saudi Arabia, which is now obvious. With the bombing of Afghanistan, it attempted to set up a long-term presence in Central Asia – and thereby inevitably destabilized Pakistan, whose regime it could persuade into giving up the Taliban and participating in “the war on terror” only with much pressure and money.

There is intense competition between the United States and the Western European countries over how these countries and regions should be stabilized. While the European Union proposes diplomatic influence and development aid (“nation building”), the Bush Administration from the beginning declared itself for strong military action. As already happened in the Kosovo war of 1999, the bombardment of Afghanistan served to impose a US power claim founded more and more on military might alone. In Afghanistan, it was presented to the outside as a division of labor: The United States bombs, the Europeans invite them to Bonn and St. Petersburg, send police for Kabul, and build tents for celebratory functions. Thereby they remain, in spite of some diplomatic grumbling, the willful subordinates of US supremacy.

In the prosecution of the war, from the beginning till today, the United States took all control – over the “allied” Northern Alliance militias just as much as the participating European powers or the peacekeepers in Kabul. Although the NATO treaty had been invoked, the United States – unlike in Kosovo – consciously declined to make use of it, and rather held itself to be the supreme command and to determine the course of action.

Over and over again the US military hindered, in the face of violent protests by the militia leaders of the Northern Alliance, the usual practice in Afghanistan of capitulation and later release of the imprisoned (with the exception of the previously cited case of Kunduz, where the relationship to Pakistan and the internal stability of that country stood in question). Once, Rumsfeld let it slip that “we take no prisoners.” The massacre of prisoners at Mazar-i-Sharif goes back to this position and the conscious provocation of the US military – and it was simultaneously a signal to the Northern Alliance themselves.

Before that, the Bush Administration had first warned the Northern Alliance militias not to march on Kabul and not to take the city. Militarily, however, they were dependent on these ground troops, in order to avoid massive losses of their own – which, since Vietnam, doesn’t go over well as domestic policy. For a long time in the United States and Great Britain there have been loud discussions about

Such changes always occur in phases of general crisis of world capital and of the accumulation of capital – and we find ourselves in such a phase again today. Since the mid-1970s states have attempted, everywhere in the world, without success, to hold off the stagnation of profit and accumulation by means of an attack on the proletariat. In the 1990s, it succeeded once, above all in the United States, in simulating a boom. It was based on Internet and New Economy hype, on historically and uniquely low oil prices and on the inflation of a gigantic bubble on the stock markets. For two and a half years this “boom” has been collapsing. The whole extent of the swindle is more and more recognized, even by the “public,” but an end to the crisis is nowhere in sight, and we are living through a worldwide wave of layoffs.

In this crisis, the decline of the United States⁶ as a hegemonic power is combined with the social crisis of the whole capitalist world order. Thus, it has to do with two things: the attempt of the United States to maintain its position with war (to which all the above mentioned aspects belong: geostrategy, control of the oil economy, securing the dollar, etc.) is simultaneously a struggle for the assurance of the capitalist order.

But in war there lies no perspective for the development or the relegitimization of capitalism. It’s anybody’s guess whether the United States will be able to maintain its position through war, or whether this will simply hasten its demise – just like the British Empire finally lost its dominance in World War I. The strength of the US economy, which the ideologues of the “new Rome” call upon, has been based for more than twenty years on the United States’ ability to attract foreign capital. From creditor to the world the United States has become the greatest debtor to the world. War and military superiority is the last means by which they can assert the dependency of the world on their economic situation and their currency – and simultaneously, in the gigantic armaments program and its application lies the danger of unleashing a shocking outflow of capital. With the dollar’s weakness in the first half of 2002 and its renewed slip in November 2002 this perspective has grown obvious. The uncertainty of what a “shooting war” would mean for the role of the United States and global development is revealed in the military and diplomatic debates. From the beginning there were strong objections in the US military against an intervention in Iraq, momentarily being played out (now also in public) in terms of the problem of “urban warfare”⁷. With that the limits of military power show themselves, when it has to do with social control. And it also shows that the “Vietnam syndrome” has in no way been overcome. The war strategists have great worries – and inquiries confirm that – the overheated patriotism since 9/11 sags when a ground war requires massive casualties of US troops.

The Bush administration is determined to wage this war, not by their own free will, but because there hardly remains anything else: domestically, economically, geostrategically... The successful (!) demonstration of power is more important the more crisis-ridden capital becomes. In the phase from 1945 till the mid-1970s, capital could dampen the class struggle with the promise of rising wages and national development. With the end of the speculative simulated boom it has no further perspectives to offer. In this sense, wars are always reactions to threatening situations in the class struggle. Capital is today no longer confronted with a global upwelling of strikes and revolts like 1968-73, but in spite of all neoliberal propaganda, the governments of the capitalist states have not succeeded in shifting the crisis to the proletariat. In this situation, already, particular and as-yet-isolated conflicts like the revolt in Argentina, the struggle of the dockworkers on the US West Coast, or the strikes of the London Underground drivers and the firefighters in England become a threat. They show the rulers the limits of their crisis politics against the proletariat, and in them people can see new ideas arise, like how they can organize their own social arrangements beyond capitalist exploitation and state power.

Because it is so uncertain what their war politics could result in or trigger off, the Bush government is scared. It must secure itself on all sides, and can only laboriously win the support of allies, on which it is dependent.

The movement against the war can only grow strong when it doesn't accept the war as a given fact and doesn't understand itself as impotent protest. It must explain everywhere and also to itself that the contemporary war waging is an expression of a historically transitory system, whose perspectives are gone. It acts against an enemy that is weak, split, and uncertain of the possibilities of maintaining power. The enemy is, on that account, no less dangerous, but rather, because of its hopelessness, determined to do anything. But today it is everywhere bumping up against the limits of its power.

"Our enemy is here, it is those who command our lives. And it will therefore also have to do with the small things of daily life: Here we must act in resistance and attack everywhere we can." (Henri Simon, The Third Internationalist Camp)

NOTES

¹ <http://www.commoner.org.uk/02-7groundzero.htm>

² <http://www.spiked-online.com/printable/0000006DB09.htm>

³ <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20020701faessay8517/stephen-g-brooks-william-c-wohlforth/american-primacy-in-perspective.html>

⁴ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/usa/story/0,12271,794163,00.html>

⁵ http://csf.colorado.edu/jwsr/archive/vol5/vol5_number2/v5n2_split/jwsr_v5n2_arrighi.pdf

⁶ http://www.foreignpolicy.com/issue_julyaug_2002/wallerstein.html

⁷ <http://www.urbanoperations.com/doctrine.htm>



world. The highest growth rates in oil use are forecast for Asia, especially China and India. It is an open question which concerns can make business out of this increasing demand.

THE KEY POSITION OF AFGHANISTAN

The Afghanistan war of the 1980s had an important meaning in the attempt to gain control over Central Asia. In its sphere, the weapons trade in the region and the so-called ethnic or religiously motivated conflicts served to hold the situation open in order to set social transformation processes in motion. In the first years after 1990, the Central Asian states, in spite of formal independence, remained economically dependent on Russia, and partially on the presence of its troops for national security. The Central Asian countries sought to keep all their options open: old contacts in Russia, new cooperation with the United States, Turkey and Israel, Pakistan, India, China, Iran or the European Union. In the course of the Afghanistan war and with the strengthening of the Taliban, it was always a matter of shifting coalitions and influences.

The United States developed the concept of military advances into the region very early. In 1991 after the Gulf War it was known that the United States was preparing a similar operation codenamed "Operation Stepchild." In 1997 US Special Forces organized general maneuvers with the then-contending forces in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. On the other side, Russia and China sought to solidify their role in Central Asia via the disaster scenario of the "Islamic danger" coming from Afghanistan. Against the US attempt to stabilize the region with military presence or direct interventions, Russia and China in June 2001 initiated the "Shanghai Organization for Cooperation" together with the four Central Asian states of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, to proceed in common against rebels and separatists. The bombing of Afghanistan by the United States, and the closely connected construction of military forward-deployments in the bordering countries or most recently in Georgia, has pre-empted this coalition.

Against this background of the war and the imminent confrontation between Arab countries like Saudi Arabia and the United States, Russia has attempted, through its support for "the war against terror" (which it itself has long practiced in Chechnya!) and its undermining of OPEC's oil-price politics, to bring itself into play as an alternative oil producer for the West – while not ceasing to try to open cooperation with China in the region.

Behind all these facets of the competition among the different powers and economic blocs stands the question of a perspective for capitalist valorization as a global process; this includes the safeguarding of oil as the central lubricant of worldwide accumulation (therefore Iraq as the next object of attack: on the grounds of the threatened breakaway of Saudi Arabia, a new, stable beachhead is becoming urgent) as much as the permeation of capitalist structures throughout Central Asia. Also, even if Central Asia shows itself to have the ideal social conditions for oil supply (an area the size of India with a population of merely 55 million people), oilfields and pipelines require stable relations. An example from the Caucasus clarifies the problem: The US-American electricity firm AES, which set up electricity plants and distribution networks in Georgia, stood on the edge of bankruptcy on account of strongly increased and widespread power theft, up to the point that for only 65 percent of the produced energy can payments be booked. That similar problems will be tied to work on a pipeline can be seen in countries like Nigeria.

The real problem is not ethnic conflict, which everywhere evokes comparison with the stone age and yet will be stirred up if necessary, but the as-yet-to-be-imposed validity of bourgeois property and money. Historically this has never been accomplished purely by means of force, but rather required the simultaneous development of wealth and the integration of the proletariat by means of the wage.

GLOBAL WAR FOR THE WORLD ORDER

INTRODUCTION

incursions. For example, in Herat, women demonstrated against the closure of public baths. Here the Taliban troops quite openly committed ethnic massacres, plundered the cities and raped women—by which they lost their self-cultivated image as a “clean” army in distinction to the remaining warlords. But even in their “Pashtun” heartland, in the region around Kandahar, they encountered opposition. During press-gang recruitment in the countryside Taliban functionaries were attacked and several times shot dead. The Taliban’s attempt to impose, on a very culturally and religiously heterogeneous country, a unitary religious domination made it impossible for them finally to fulfill their assigned task of stabilization.

ACCESS TO CENTRAL ASIA

“I can remember no time in which any region has so quickly become so strategically important as the Caspian...” When the present-day Vice President Cheney said this in 1998 he was still the CEO of Halliburton. In this capacity, he was concerned above all with the strategic interests in the oil and gas reserves of the region. Central Asia became the center of attention after the collapse of the USSR. In his book *The Grand Chessboard*, 1997 former National Security Adviser [for President Jimmy Carter] Zbigniew Brzezinski put at the center of the equation the question, who would rule the enormous and populous continent of Eurasia? If a unified power bloc were to develop on this landmass (out of the European Union, Russia and China), it would be the end of US supremacy over the world. This is also the sense in which world-systems theorist Wallerstein interprets the efforts of the United States for a quick eastward expansion of NATO, as an intended weakening of the European Union in economic competition with the United States. If the acceptance of these countries into NATO must inevitably soon lead to acceptance into the EU, then the European Union can be weakened economically. The European Union, just like China, is strongly dependent on oil and gas imports, and thus has a strong interest in the development of the Caspian reserves, whose connection to the Russian-European pipeline network is already a given. The United States however, wants to create access independent of Russia and Iran, in order to be able to participate in their control. This is only possible through Turkey (the pipeline project through Kurdish areas to the Mediterranean port of Ceyan) or the technically easier Afghanistan.

Books like Brzezinski’s or Huntington’s (*Clash of Civilizations*) came about as briefs for the CIA. The interesting thing about them is not their “scientific content” but their meaning as directions and handbooks for politics. Just like Huntington threw up a new scare scenario for the one that had been lost to capitalism with the end of the “cold war,” Brzezinski formulates geostrategic goals for the maintenance of US power.

Central Asia comes back into the middle of strategic considerations because the political connections remain open there after 1990, and the region, together with the Caucasus, offers possibilities for oil and gas requirements. The danger of an increasing US dependence on Middle Eastern oil have been discussed since the 90s; simultaneously, the Gulf War of 1990–91 showed how problematic too large an exertion of influence over the region is. The Bin Laden phenomenon is finally a product of the Gulf War, which called forth internal political opposition to the cooperation of Saudi Arabia with the United States. There is no more talk today of how the oil and gas reserves of the Caspian Sea represent an alternative to the world’s largest and cheapest exploitable oil reserves in the Middle East. So, all over the world, new supply sources are sought – in Alaska as well as in West Africa or Central America. But in Central Asia general geostrategic goals still overlap with the desperate search for a territory to replace the still-increasing dependence on Arab oil.

The (for now) dead Enron deal in India makes something else clear: It’s not just about the dependence of the United States on oil imports, but also about the valorization chain of petroleum around the

Behind the attacks of September 11 weren’t the pauperized and exploited of this world, and the bombing of Afghanistan isn’t aimed at the alleged masterminds of the attacks. Both incidents belong to the strategy of worldwide control of labor power and protection of the global valorization of capital. So it does not have to do simply with profit making in the economic sense, but rather with the protection and penetration of capitalistic relations, i.e., of a specific class relationship. This class relationship, as the core of a historic form of society, finds itself in crisis, and must today be defended with war.

In discussions over the past weeks, a whole series of background information has been gathered together, on the attacks just as much as on the war in Afghanistan, which, taken for themselves, are all correct, but which, however, account only for facets of a global class struggle: the role of petroleum in the Caspian Sea and the pipelines, the geopolitical wrangling for the Central Asian territory, the instability of the regimes of the Middle East, the religious and ethnic fissuring of society, the international migratory currents, the dramatic crisis of the capitalist world economy, crisis phenomena in the industrial countries themselves, the world market for drugs, the contradictions of so-called globalization, the new orientation of US and NATO war politics, the transformation of democracies into security states. But instead of supplying the connections among these particular aspects in the capitalist character of the contemporary world, in the antagonistic form of social relations, in discussions they are isolated, counterposed, and therefore mystify more than they explain.

In part one, we observe the character of war and the social content of the twenty-year war in Afghanistan, and explain the meaning of the Central Asian region by means of the role of petroleum for class relations in capitalist industry and by means of the political dilemma of the oil regimes of the Middle East, from which also the attacks of September 11 arose. In part two we want to examine the meaning of the Taliban, the decision for military attacks on Afghanistan and the concrete course of the bombings, and to situate this in the military, political and economic perspectives of the world order.

GLOBAL WAR FOR THE WORLD ORDER PART I: THE PROLETARIANIZATION OF THE WORLD AND THE (OIL) MACHINE OF CAPITAL

As the city of New York, in the middle of December, put the number of victims of 9/11 at 2922, an unknown professor at the University of New Hampshire presented a meticulously worked out examination of the number of civilian dead in Afghanistan, in which no one had otherwise shown any interest. For the eight and a half weeks after the beginning of the bombing, he came up with 3767 civilian dead, from which he excluded all those who only later succumbed to their injuries or died of other results of the war.¹ There are no comparable estimates of the number of dead soldiers or prisoners, although about 10000 are spoken of.

Many have become outraged over this high number of civilian victims, reproached the USA for waging war inhumanly, or advised against the use of certain weapons like the notorious cluster bomb. In spite of or precisely because of such appeals, the notion is maintained that war is simply a means for some determined political goal: overthrow of the Taliban regime, elimination of Al Qaeda terrorists, or also access to petroleum, or for geostrategic purposes.

WAR AS SOCIAL POLITICS

War is never simply a means for something else. It itself is a determinate social relation that expresses in an extreme way what the role of proletarians is supposed to be: impotent objects of events occurring over their heads. In the Washington Post, on December 16, military-psychological considerations on the role of massive bombings from the air were taken into account, based on experiences in the Gulf War of 1991 and the bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999, but also based on knowledge of World War II²: It's not only about physical destruction, but the total demoralization of the attacked. Especially effective were bombings from such a height that no airplane could even be seen. These bombs, which, for the bombed, seemed to come out of nothing, and against which there was no possibility of defense nor escape, created not only the feeling of fear, but of a total senselessness and impotence; superhuman abilities were attributed to the enemy. These feelings were further strengthened through isolation and the lack of water and food. (We can add that the attackers of 9/11 also could have been privy to such knowledge: Their bombs came just as much out of nothing, and allowed of no defense; their putative causer was just as much furnished with superhuman powers, that were supposed to leave those threatened by such attacks no other choice than to submit themselves to a higher power.)

Marc Herold put the high number of civilian dead down, not to the imprecision or failure of the weapons system, but to this manner of war waging. Like already in the Gulf and Kosovo wars, it is the highest goal of war waging to avoid all losses. Thus the bombing from heights unreachable for the Stinger rockets always at hand in Afghanistan.³

High-intelligence weapons that only hit the bad guys are pure fairytales: They often enough land right next to them, but because of cost factors they make up only a small part of bombings. A cruise missile costs 1 up to 1.5 million dollars, a cluster bomb a laughable \$5 000. So, nonmilitary targets were aimed at, like waterworks and dams; the telephone system was taken out of commission, the broadcast system destroyed. Several times, aid warehouses were bombed and employees of aid organizations were killed – after the third time not even the Red Cross took it for an accident anymore.

financiers of the Bush campaign, and as late as mid-2001 it was clear to the heads of Enron that the collapse of the pyramid scheme was near. The oil price, Enron, social conflict, the perspective of a heightened dependence on Middle East oil over the next decades, the Bush Administration's own interests, and the situation of the stock exchanges and the Internet economy – all this put Central Asia and its oil and gas reserves back in the center of things.

Vice President Cheney, onetime CEO of the international pipeline-construction firm Halliburton, which would have participated in the construction of the Afghan pipeline, met many times during the year with Enron CEO Kenneth Lay – after the firm's bankruptcy, the subject of these talks was thrown into the shredder, which momentarily occupied the attention of most of the American public. Parallel to the negotiations with the Taliban, the Bush Administration sent a working group to Dabhol, which was supposed to help Enron in the collection of its debts, e.g., prepping Cheney before his trip to India in June 2001. Enron offered to sell the power plant for \$2.3 billion, which could have been the firm's last chance, a postponement, and it again put pressure on the Indians, with the backing of the Bush Administration, to accept the price. Nothing came of the sale. On November 8 Enron's collapse began, as the firm had to admit millions and millions of dollars of false turnover – on December 2 it declared bankruptcy.

THE CRIME OF THE TALIBAN – ITS FAILURE AS A STATE

The real problem the United States and other Western countries had with the Taliban wasn't the presence of Bin Laden, nor the *Shariah*, nor the oppression of women, nor the cutting off of hands and feet – international oil firms and Western governments from all over the world managed to cope with all that, as long as the oil supply was insured and the profits alright. The Taliban's mistake was that they could not achieve the necessary stabilization of the whole country and also could not enter into direct collaboration with other countries in order to do so.

In 1991 the United States knew to abstain from destroying the regime in Baghdad. While umpteen thousand simple Iraqi soldiers were massacred while in retreat, they let Saddam Hussein keep his elite troops so he could smash the revolting Shiites and Kurds. The maintenance of central state power was more important to the United States than who ran it. With all the competition among states, assuring that a state exists, as the elementary framework of capitalist development and control, is a concern common to the ruling classes of all countries. The United States wanted to prevent Iraq from becoming a "failing state" (this concept would first be discovered two years later). Afghanistan was a "failed state," and the Taliban had not fulfilled its assigned task of "nation building (a euphemism for the imposition of a capitalist state). Even administratively they had not risen to the task, which showed itself perhaps most flagrantly in their inability to establish their own currency. The Taliban continued to draw banknotes from their military opponent Massoud.

The Taliban could also call on no mass basis in the population. Their military strength did not turn on any ideological consensus, but rather hung on the mobilization of the *madrassahs*, and the financial means to pay the soldiers was supported by "volunteers" (sometimes paid volunteers) from other countries. Moreover, they were supported by a not inconsiderable number of Pakistani soldiers and military advisers. In November 2001 this was obvious, as Pakistan airlifted thousands of "its people" from the city of Kunduz, under fire by the troops of the Northern Alliance and the United States. The United States objected in public, but had to allow it, so as not to further weaken the regime in Pakistan.

The attitude of the population is difficult to assess as there is only sparse information available. In the western part of the country, near the Iranian border, where the Taliban came across as foreign rulers on the grounds of their different language, they confronted a hostile population, which opposed their

only because in 1995, with the help of the Pakistani domestic intelligence agency, the ISI, they reorganized and received vehicles and weapons from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

By 1996–97, after they had brought a great deal of the country under their control, they became attractive to international oil firms, who sought transport routes for oil and gas from Central Asia, which was now independent of Russian control – and who, if at all possible, did not want to go through Iran. The Argentine oil concern Bidas and the Texan Unocal negotiated intensely with the Taliban on this pipeline project. Unocal hired the American energy company Enron, which had a special interest in cheap gas from Central Asia, to do a feasibility study. Bush’s post-9/11 Afghanistan representative, Zalmay Khalilzad, who recently directed the farcical *loya jirga* a bit too obviously, worked up a risk analysis for a gas pipeline through Afghanistan in June 1997 and mediated the negotiations with the Taliban for Unocal.

TWO THWARTED ATTEMPTS – “THE ENRON-TALIBAN-CHENEY CONNECTION”

Enron began the construction of a gas-powered electricity plant in Dabhol, India, in the vicinity of Bombay, in 1992. The \$3 billion project was supposed to supply a fifth of India’s power needs by 1997. The Indian authorities were not happy that the power created there would cost from three to seven times more than power from other sources. Even the World Bank had warned against the high cost before the project began. Enron enlisted US statesmen and diplomats in 1994 and 1995 to pressure the Indian government to continue the project – which they then did – while the company itself paid bribes. Over the long term, the project can only be profitable if Dabhol has a cheap connection to Central Asian gas. In November 1997 the Taliban was in Houston at the invitation of oil firm Unocal, and the project of a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan and Pakistan to India appeared to be a done deal.

But the negotiations dragged on and on. Their failure, in most accounts, goes back to the attacks on August 7, 1998, on the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, and the Clinton Administration’s rocket attacks on the Bin Laden camps in Afghanistan afterward. But two other aspects are thereby hidden. In the construction of the pipeline through Afghanistan, there was heavy competition between the Argentine firm Bidas and the American Unocal. The Taliban demanded during negotiations not only license fees for the throughput but also development of infrastructure and the possibility of using the pipeline for Afghan energy requirements. Bidas wanted to give these concessions, but Unocal refused the Taliban’s demands and insisted on a pure transport deal. The second aspect is the development of the oil price: In 1998 it had fallen, on account of the Asian crisis, to a historic low of \$13 a barrel, with which the concern for cheap substitutes lessened somewhat. Moreover, Saudi Arabian influence, or, that of certain circles of the ruling family, played an important role: The easier path to the Central Asian oil and gas reserves would have further undermined the already-broken dominance of Saudi oil production on the world market.

Unocal dropped the pipeline project in 1998. Enron produced more energy in Dabhol, but in May 2001 the regional Indian electricity authorities ceased payment on account of the prices being too high. Enron countered with a demand for \$64 million more in outstanding payments.

Second attempt: When Bush came to power with a complete staff from the oil business, talks with the Taliban on the pipeline would be taken up again – the last meeting occurred four weeks before 9/11. At that meeting, the US side is supposed to have made a statement that has become famous in the meantime, that the Taliban could choose between a red carpet or a carpet of bombs. The oil price had dramatically increased in the meantime, and had led to big social struggles in Europe and the United States in summer 2001 (see *Wildcat Circular* 58). Besides that, Enron had been one of the main

*“When US AC-130 gunships shot up the village of Chowkar-Karez, 25 miles north of Kandahar, on October 22-23 and killed at least 93 civilians, an officer at the Pentagon said “the people there are dead because we wanted to have them dead.” The reason? They sympathized with the Taliban.”*⁴

There is an officer that at least once let the truth slip out. The civilian deaths are no regrettable collateral damage but intentional. To all – the Taliban, the civilian population, and above all the militia of the Northern Alliance it should be made clear that they have to follow the dictate of this power; that this power can deliver death unto all. Statehood arises only in the recognition of a power monopoly – in this sense Afghanistan is practically being bombed into statehood. The massacres that the militias or Taliban committed over the years before do not distinguish themselves in the number of dead from the massacre of this bombing campaign but the latter has another meaning; it mediates the existence of a pre-eminent power. Like when, after the liberation of the cities in the middle of December, fighting broke out in the north between two militias of the Northern Alliance, and the USA didn’t hesitate to end the battle with bombs from the sky.

WAR AS BUSINESS AND TRANSFORMATION OF SOCIETY

The USA has waged no war, but thrown bombs. The ground struggle it has left to the militias of the Northern Alliance. They have waged war for many years: against the Soviet Union and the regime in Kabul, together, and amongst themselves; and then against the Taliban, but always also amongst themselves. In the media, the chaos in Afghanistan becomes insoluble, and the constant failure of the peace negotiations is always lamented. But, in this case, who ever wanted peace?

To explain the twenty-year war in Afghanistan, to which at least 1.5 million people have fallen victim and by which more millions were made refugees, ethnic and religious conflicts as much as the competition of the interested states bordering the region, have been cited. All this has hindered a solution. Which solution? War was for a long time the solution. It was in no way total chaos, but rather a stable economy for those actively participating, on which their profits turned, and it was a process that radically rearranged the social relations in spite of all opposition.⁵

This war had in twenty years the effects that earlier development dictatorships and reform programs had not succeeded in achieving. The war in Afghanistan can be described as an almost textbook example of “primitive accumulation”, i.e., the ripping of humanity from its subsistence relations and the establishment of capitalistic relations. The ethnicization was only a means of holding the war in place. It had its basis not in the populations (see article from NZZ, quoted below), but rather served the militias in the legitimation of constant war waging. The warlords have nothing to do with the old “tribal leaders” but rather represent a new political and economic elite.

THE ETHNIC CONSTRUCT IN AFGHANISTAN

“In opposition to the general representation that ethnic groups already existed for an indeterminate time, most of the ethnicities in Afghanistan were only created in the course of the twentieth century. Driven by scientific enthusiasm to classify people on the grounds of cultural qualities, ethnologists created a whole series of ethnic groups: Thus the Nuristani, Paschai, Aimaq, or Farsiwan. The concept of “Tadjik” originally came from residents who would not let themselves be ethnically classified. Therefore today we speak of the ethnic group of “Tadjiks”. Because of the various scientific claims, its unclear how many ethnic groups there are in Afghanistan today. While a German treatment comes to about 50 ethnicities, the Russian counts 200.

There are no concepts that say how an Uzbek, a Hazara, or a Pashtun has to be. Whoever claims that all Pashtuns are Sunnis errs grossly, where there are in the territory of Kandahar and in the Afghan-Pakistani border region also Shiite Pashtuns. Whoever claims that all Pashtuns speak Pashtu errs as well. Thus Tajiks in Jalalabad or Hazara in Ghazni also speak Pashtu. In opposition to the governing Kabulers, who insist on their Pashtun identity but sometimes speak not a single word of Pashtun. The fallacy of Western politics, however, is to equate the ethnic groups with the military-political movements, and to interpret them as a unified bloc. In the contemporary debate it goes unnoticed that in spite of the ethnicization of the war, an ethnicization of the masses is nowhere to be found. Because to most Afghans all the war parties are equally hated. Also the ethnic problematic for them is of no importance. Thus it goes wholly into oblivion that for the Afghani population, not the ethnic group, but rather, as before, the family, the clan and the village create the essential identity reference. Even the relevance of ethnicity as a military-political peg remains limited in the Afghan war: Innumerable commanders and battle units change fronts out of political opportunism and economic incentives independent of ethnic category”.⁶

The social transformations of the twenty-year war in Afghanistan can be gathered together as follows:⁷

* The previous agrarian subsistence economy and the nomad-grazing economy were permanently destroyed, beginning with the clearing of the fruit farms by the Soviet Army as a counterinsurgency tactic, up to the prevention of the grazing economy through the division of the land into militarily controlled areas and the mining of the countryside.

* Afghanistan experienced a rapid *urbanization*, in large part through the formation of refugee camps in Pakistan, which developed into proper cities; with 3.5 million refugees, the Afghans count as the largest single refugee group internationally, as this always forms one of the first stages of *proletarianization*.

* The militias just as much as the urban population became dependent on foreign deliveries and payments; the arms deliveries just as much as the international food aid are an income source for the many middlemen who enrich themselves and become “entrepreneurs”.

* For the first time, the economy, which previously stood 50 percent outside of money relations, has been wholly *monetarized*.

* Where agricultural production can be taken up at times, it is arranged around *cash crops* (i.e., products that can be sold on the world market) – here, above all, poppies for opium and heroin production.

* Transport and smuggling of commodities, above all from the duty-free harbors of Dubai (United Arab Emirates) to Pakistan and into the Central Asian states, has become an important source of income; here also arises an economic sector based on wage labor and profit.

In the subsistence economy and the social and political order based on it, there is nothing to beautify. The power inside the clan- and village-structured order turns on a feudal-like rent system, on which different attempts at land reform have broken their teeth in vain. These patriarchal structures oppose themselves to development models from above equally whether from a Western or a Soviet orientation.

With the transition toward the war economy up came a new elite, whose power was no longer based on disposal over earth and water, nor in any respect on the local population. The customary description in the press of warlords as “tribal leaders” or “clan chief” is totally misleading. The permeation of the

of the United States and who in the 90s was not only a CIA asset but also an adviser to Texan oil firm Unocal, which had been working on the pipeline – together with Enron! After the last demonstrations of grief for the victims of 9/11 had concluded, the press again spoke clearly. A May 2002 issue of *Business Week*, under the title “The Next Oil Frontier,” brought a lead story on the front of “American soldiers, oilmen and diplomats to Central Asia and beyond.” The magazine described how short a time it took the United States to expand its influence in this disputed region after 9/11. In 1991 the same magazine warned against rash hopes. The Taliban itself was only a means in this geostrategic game and belonged in the meantime also to its past history.

The phenomenon of the Taliban itself, as well as of its climb to power, are no product of social developments in that country. The newfangled reactionary form of its Islamism arose under conditions of massive expulsions and of life in the refugee camps of Pakistan. The local Koran schools, the *madrassahs*, have a material function for the poor, where they often present their only possibility to give their male children regular meals, a roof over their heads, and some sort of education. For refugees from Afghanistan, the dependence on this possibility of reproduction, for lack of anything better, was stronger than for the Pakistani population.

The *madrassahs* were financed by (oil) rich Islamic circles, above all from Saudi Arabia. So, the schools were dependent on them, and instruments for their goals and interests. What the *madrassahs* meant to the political ascent of the Taliban is immediately legible in the events of the war. Before decisive battles or in precarious situations, the Taliban militias persisted through thousands of new soldiers, simply due to the fact that a large *madrassah* was closed and the “students” were sent to the front. Among them were not only Afghans, but also youth from the Pakistani population. In addition, this process of sending students to the front was a welcome safety valve for the Pakistani government, with the social pressure in its own country. The expansion of the *madrassahs* and their use as a recruiting instrument was not only tolerated by the Pakistani regime, but furthered as a goal of its own interests.

The special religious ideology of the Taliban would not be important in itself but rather would represent only one of many Islamic sects – moreover, one of an orientation that has never played an important role in Afghanistan. But its reversion to a putatively historical strict *Shariah*, its propagation of holy war and its uncompromising attitude toward other ideologies or foreign organizations created an identity and legitimation with which the remaining, hated warlords in Afghanistan could distinguish themselves from foreign intervening powers. This would hardly have sufficed for them to establish themselves politically in Afghanistan. In the first two years after their appearance in 1994 it remained a constant question whether they would be able to entrench themselves.

From the beginning, the accession to power of the Taliban turned on the fact that they were assisted by other powers as a possible enforcer of order. The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the independence of the five Central Asian countries with their now-open markets and accessible resources created an interest in stability. Afghanistan was now, in the eyes of many, no longer the battlefield on which the USSR was driven out and worn down, and on which simultaneously the social relations were radically transformed (see Part I), but it became a key position for the transport routes to Central Asia. The first promoter and supporter of the Taliban was the transport mafia of LKW Enterprises in Quetta (Pakistan) and Kandahar (Afghanistan), which wanted to get a secure transit route to Turkmenistan. The Taliban’s first military actions were on behalf of this local enterprise, to clear the roads and secure the LKW convoys.

Isolated, the “student army” of the Taliban would have been able to maintain itself neither financially, organizationally nor militarily in Afghanistan over the long term. They got through the first big battles

on this planet – a totality of relations, which are fragmented by the dominant relations into “political,” “cultural,” “technical,” etc., moments, in order to be able to govern them individually.

Because today this totality stands in question, this crisis cannot be grasped within the familiar schema of “imperialist competition,” even if this, before and after, forms a moment in the developments. The question of a “new world order” stands in the foreground, in the space in which the old order of the “cold war” has dissolved, without presenting any successors. The leftist discussions of imperialism and “Empire” are expressions of a lack of clarity, just like the rightist calls for a self-consciously new imperialism or colonialism, increasingly floated since the attacks. This lack of clarity arises not only on the question of which constellation of powers could form the future world order, but on whether any global order of capital, in general, has any perspective to offer.

EXCURSUS: IMPERIALISTIC COMPETITION OR CLASS ANTAGONISM

In the first part of this article it was stressed that the war in Afghanistan is a moment of the imposition of class relations and that oil is not simply some noncontroversial use value but the principal lubricant of the contemporary valorization process. The question of the distinct interests of the United States, of the European economic bloc or other countries, and of competition among diverse oil firms was thus given short shrift. On the left, the conjuncture, the course of the world, must be explained with reference to competition, e.g., out of the economic rivalry between the dollar and the euro-zone. Competition, with respect to “capital,” will be opposed as a determinate historical class relation. But competition and class relations are two united moments of the capital relation that determines our way of life. Capital, as an antagonistic relation between producers and their own objectified relations of production, is not a tangible object, like a government or a firm. It is a historically transitory structure in which the competing subjects move, with their own respective interests. That means, inversely, that this structure only maintains and develops itself in that movement of competition.

The Afghan warlords, national governments or international oil companies may think they are following only their own special interests. They don’t have to know that they, with their murders and their expulsions, create the preconditions of a capitalist economy. A government can imagine that it follows only national goals, but as capitalist state power it will always simultaneously be driven to safeguard capitalist relations. The representation of competition doesn’t reach far enough and explains nothing if it doesn’t go all the way down to the general conditions for the reproduction of capital as a class relation. The development of capitalist relations is fulfilled constantly by competition, and it needs competition. The essential result is, however, not the attainment of this or that interest, but the simultaneously broader permeation of capitalist relations – or not.

Otherwise, this general content is not nearly so unknown to most of the members of the ruling class as one might believe from the often-cited image of their predecessors that Marx used in an ironic borrowing of Adam Smith’s “invisible hand”: the one about the process fulfilling itself “behind the backs of the participants.” They know all too well that their own luxury of continued existence is wholly bound up with determinate social relations, and their “hand” in events is all too visible. But what they can’t know is where the limits of their power lie. Because this turns not on their own activity or subjectivity, but on historical relations in which the mass of humanity confronts its own collective power as something external and alien.

THE TALIBAN AS AN INSTRUMENT OF POWER POLITICS

In Afghanistan, the first contracts for the construction of a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to Pakistan were concluded at the end of May 2002 – by an Afghan president who came to office with the support

new economy was above all unavoidable because of the fact that a new power structure arose that was no longer based on traditional relations. This change was furthered by the decision of the USA, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to support not the traditional landowning elite in the struggle against the Soviet Union, but rather only the Islamist parties. In the same scale and manner in which the militias and their agents were based on weapons and money deliveries from foreign countries, they were autonomous from the local communities, out of which they perhaps had arisen. For the farming population, whose subsistence foundations had been destroyed, the militias formed the next-best form of wage labor: soldiering – often only as a transitional halfproletarianization, as can be read in the firm ritual of summer offensives and the cessation of fighting for the harvest time, along with the opposition to forced recruitment in the villages.

Only in their independence did the militias discover their “ethnic” ascriptions as Tadjiks, Pashtuns, or Hazaris, in order to be able to possess their own “tradition” and naturalistic identity⁸ – these identities were practiced and demonstrated in downright massacres in the style of ethnic cleansing. Everybody participated in them: Dostum’s troops against the Taliban (already by then a container being used as brutal means of mass death, as has now occurred again in November at Mazar-i-Sharif), the Taliban against the Hazaris, or Massud against the Hazaris in Kabul.

The constant shifting of coalitions, groups, and fronts in this war – that goes just as much for the warlords as for the influence-grabbing states – seems irrational only to those believing in the warlords’ ethnic, religious or tribal camouflages. The whole time it has had to do with maintaining this war as a period of transformation and as an income source, and it was literally that which the apostles of globalization preach: insertion into the world market.

THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN AS A CATALYST FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF CENTRAL ASIA

The participating great powers – above all, the USA and Russia, but also Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and India, and Iran and China – are there in order to maintain their access to the Central Asian territory. Of significance are not only the transport routes to the Caspian Sea and its oilfields, but also the whole political-military and economic orientation of the five states having become independent since 1991: Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tadjikistan, and Kyrgyzstan (together these form an area about 10 times that of today’s Germany, with 55 million inhabitants). The Afghanistan of the warlords forms the operative base for Islamist groups in those countries and forced their regimes to insure themselves of the support of either Russia or NATO.

The constant war in Afghanistan was thereby simultaneously a moment of destabilization and social change in these countries, and narrowly tied together with similar wars in Chechnya, Tadjikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. In that the Afghanistan war was supported by all sides with money and weapons, it stabilized the instability of all Central Asia, which was its purpose. The usual description of this and similar wars as “proxy wars”, in which the different great powers of the region haggle over their influence, is superficial, and overlooks the class-forming and thereby capitalizing dimension of military conflicts as such.

“The Taliban will probably develop like the Saudis. There’ll be Aramco, pipelines, an emir, no parliament, and lots of Shariah. We can live with that”. A US diplomat, on January 20, 1997.⁹

Only in the middle of the 1990s did considerations ripen to come to a stabilization regarding Afghanistan, in order to harvest the fruit of the preceding social destruction – the first hope were the now-ostracized Taliban. Already in the Kosovo war it was made clear that NATO’s aims lay in the East, in the

Caucasus and the Central Asian region.¹⁰ During the 1990s the interests in the oilfields and gas reserves in the Caspian Sea moved ever more strongly into the forefront. The political shakeup in the region in 1990/91 had triggered high expectations of a new income source in the oil branch, which also looked just as much to Siberia. Chevron has been active since 1997 in the Caspian Sea, and cooperated from the beginning with Tenghiz Field, the biggest development project. In spite of that, the oil world remains skeptical.¹¹

For the strategic interests of the USA and the NATO states in these oil sources, their meaning as a possible alternative or complement to oil exports out of the Middle East became decisive – not because the exhaustion of the oilfields was feared, but because the prime oil producer, Saudi Arabia, and the other regimes on the Arabia peninsula could withstand less and less pressure from the proletariat. Wars are not led on the grounds of geological predictions for the next thirty, forty or fifty years, but on the grounds of immediately tangible problems. One such pain threshold was the OPEC decision of March 1999 to cut back crude production after a long phase of low prices, in order to drive the price back up. This was Saudi Arabia's most obvious renunciation of its previous role in oil price regulation in the sense of the capitalist world conjuncture – and simultaneously it was clear to everyone that it could not be handled otherwise, because of class pressure.¹² Around this time, fundamental decisions for a greater military operation in Afghanistan and a more direct presence in Central Asia may have been made.

THE SPECIAL COMMODITY PETROLEUM

*“Even an idiot understands the principle. We need the oil. It's nice to talk about freedom, but Kuwait and Saudi Arabia are hardly democracies, and if their main export was oranges we would have chucked the whole thing in August over in Washington”.*¹³

In the debate on the war in Afghanistan, the role of petroleum is especially controversial. The project of a pipeline from the Caspian Sea through Afghanistan, that the competing oil firms Bidas, out of Argentina, and Unocal, out of the USA, have striven for since the mid-1990s and then began to put into action in 1998, moved to the center of interest, and the “great game” for the Caspian oil reserves is in everyone's mouth. It will be objected that such a military action cannot be explained simply by the fact that Bush, because of his participation in the oil business, wants to bomb his way into a pipeline. But it actually doesn't have to do with this special pipeline – although we shouldn't underestimate the influence of private interests in government policy. Only the democratic illusion has it that government actors represent some sort of embodiment of the general will. But the interest of the oil industry from the beginning has been in a “high number of pipelines”, in order to be dependent on no single route.¹⁴ Not only is the USA interested in the Caspian oil but also, just as much, the west European states, Japan, and the two most populous nations on the planet, China and India, whose oil needs are increasing terrifically fast, and who both border the Central Asian region. This general interest is based on the meaning of oil for the circulation of capital. Oil is the central component of the capitalist machinery and of all reproduction in contemporary capitalism. Energy can be won from thousands of other sources, but oil is today the basis of valorization of capital. The run on the Caspian Sea has nothing to do with the steadily exhausted reserves or other “limits to growth”. There are “limits to profits”, which have bound the oil interests so tightly to war and bloodbaths since its establishment as the central energy source.

The whole technological organization of production, and the composition of the working class, is today bound up with the fact that petroleum began to replace coal as the central energy source at the beginning of the last century. Both world wars were the decisive break for this gigantic technological reorganization, with the introduction of tanks and airplanes. And by driving back coal, capital

GLOBAL WAR FOR THE WORLD ORDER PART II: THE WAY TO WAR AND THE SEARCH FOR EMPIRE

September 11 did not change the world and marked no change in era. It becomes more and more obvious that it was a crystallization point and catalyst for developments which had started long before. While the media present a struggle between “good” and “evil,” around capitalist civilization and Islam, or the much-denounced anti-Semitism, in reality it has to do with the perspective of a global system hitting its limits in crisis; limits arising in the fact that in the worldwide struggles against the prison of work glimmer the possibilities of another world. For the rulers and exploiters these limits mean that they search ever more desperately for a “new world order,” and, for that purpose, they hold open all the powerful, military means of coercion at their disposal.

Since the first part, in *Wildcat Circular* 61, half a year has passed. New developments have put interest in the attacks and Afghanistan in the background: Israel's occupation politics and the United States's strained relations to the Arab states; the escalation of the Kashmir conflict between Pakistan and India, and the closely connected massacre of Muslims in the Indian province of Gujarat; almost simultaneously the fall of the energy giant Enron and the uprising in the model neoliberal country, Argentina – with all its ramifications on global capital valorization; the announcement of a new nuclear strategy and pre-emptive strike doctrine by the United States. Behind all these political issues lurks the uneasy question whether the boisterously proclaimed upswing in the US economy is real, or whether the dollar will further dramatically break down, and thereby drive the already-troubled world economy over the edge.

Through these developments, however, it has also become obvious how these pieces of a very confusing puzzle fit together. The interesting thing about the “Enron scandal” was not only the extent of the balance-sheet falsifications and the involvement of a great part of the Bush Administration in this firm, but its connections to the oil business in Central Asia and India – which meant that, suddenly, critical questions about 9/11 were posed. How much did the president know beforehand? *Some* of this must be addressed by an investigatory committee. And what was served by the bombing of Afghanistan? With that, there were critical questions about the brutality of the war in Afghanistan, which had been taboo in the American public.

It also becomes ever more obvious that Enron (see *Wildcat Circular* 62) is no isolated scandal, but more like a crystal ball that brought the collected facets of the fictitious upswing of the “new economy” to light. The fairytale boom in the United States, which, after the Asian crisis of 1997–98 became the motor of the world economy, has turned out to be a fraud of simulated growth, after the long, drawn-out crash of the financial markets since March 2000. It hangs on the silk thread of enormous capital exports to the United States (see *Wildcat Circular* 55 and 56/57), which become more and more questionable with the start of the collapse of the dollar. The Bush-Cheney Administration, from the oil business and Enron, was clearly aware of the precariousness of this situation in summer 2001, and permitted it a great role in their “foreign policy” observations. Now Bush and his finance minister stress almost desperately that they are holding fast to a strong dollar – without thereby being able to impress capital investors.

This has nothing to do with purely “economic” questions. The traditional left divisions of “economic,” “political,” “military,” etc., reintroduce the reifications that this social system brings forth ideologically and that it needs for its stability. The “economic” decline, a phenomenon legible in terms of money and value relations, is only the isolated and abstract side of a crisis of all life and the mode of reproduction

¹³ A George H.W. Bush adviser in August 1990, during the preparations for war against Iraq, according to Ferruccio Gambino: “Migranti nella tempesta: flussi di lavoratori senza diritti e di petrodollari del Golfo Persico”, in: *Altreragioni*, no. 1, 1992 – German translation in *Thekla* No. 17.

¹⁴ “Why the West May Come Up Empty in the World’s Biggest Oil Patch”, *Business Week*, May 30, 1994. The route through Afghanistan doesn’t merit a single mention in this article.

¹⁵ See *TheKla* 14, 17; *Wildcat* 54, 55 and 57.

¹⁶ Between 1970 and 1998 the component of petroleum and gas in world energy consumption has gone down a little, still, however, amounting to 60.7% (35% oil, 25.7% gas) with numbers growing again today – in comparison to 64.8 (45.3 oil and 19.5 gas) in 1970. This decline is based almost exclusively on the increase of nuclear energy, from 0.1% in 1970 to 7.4% in 1998, whose share is now decreasing; coal’s share has further gone back from 32.9 to 28.7%; a slight increase has been given to alternative energy sources like water, etc., from 2.2 to 3.2% (*Yearbook of World Energy Statistics*, United Nations).

¹⁷ For example see, “Der Energiesektor als Strategischer Sektor im Klassenkampf”, Autonomie NF, No. 11, in *TheKla* 14.

¹⁸ Theoretically observed, commodities embody value only because they are moments of the capital circuit, and thus are bearers of surplus value; the value form of the commodity entails its function as a capital particle.

¹⁹ “Big Oil’s Priority: Pump Up the Stock Prices”, *Business Week*, September 25, 2000.

²⁰ See *Wildcat-Zirkular* 58, December 2000. In English the section: “Struggles over oil prices in summer 2000” on our website,

<http://www.wildcat-www.de/en/eindex.htm>

²¹ Michael T. Klare, “The Geopolitics of War”, *The Nation*, November 22, 2001.

²² Gregory Gause III, op cit.

²³ Or of referring to such attacks, which we might never learn who committed, in an affirmative way.



disempowered that part of the working class that since the second half of the nineteenth century had symbolized the revolutionary threat: the miners. The so-called “Fordist” phase of capitalism – car production, mass transit, assembly lines – was based on the nearly inexhaustible availability of oil at low prices. In distinction to the demand for coal, the petroleum-driven capitalist industries were based on an extremely large geographical division between the petroleum and the industrial workers of the world.

After 1973, and in connection with the ecology debate, many alternatives were argued over – not least because into the position of the miners a petroleum-producing proletariat had stepped, whose combativity was increasingly felt.¹⁵ But as long as oil let itself be used in an adequate quantity as a component of the capital circuit, it would remain in the center¹⁶ – especially as a greater part of the total fixed capital (machinery, transportation vehicles, electricity and heat production) that is supposed to be valorized is bound to this energy form and is based on precisely this strategy of dispersal of production segments to supplier firms, and the scattering of production with heavy transport vehicles.

But *how* does oil form a center of the capital circuit? In capitalism, commodities are not simply commodities, but moments of the total circuit of capital, which fulfills itself through the chain of exchanges between particular capitalists and between capitalists and labor powers. Not only is the availability of cheap oil important, but also the ability to be able to influence the price of this central commodity. So, the first “oil price shock” of 1973 was no pressure maneuver of the oil sheiks, who wanted to stick it to the West, but rather a component of an international crisis strategy against the working class – a brake on growth and simultaneously a gigantic diversion of proletarian income to profit.¹⁷

The price of the commodity oil appears in all capitalist accounts: Oil itself is a capitalistically produced commodity; it doesn’t only come out of the ground, but is just as much pressed out of the labor power of the petroleum-producing proletariat (in this we indicate the totality of the proletariat, which is necessary for oil production, inclusive of the service, transportation, and construction workers); it embodies not only value, but also first and foremost surplus value.¹⁸ Besides that, it contains a component of the (fixed) capital that was first invested in the form of explorations, drilling machines, pipelines, etc., and which through the sale of the commodity must flow back again, thus succeeding in the valorization of these capitals – today, in essence, a couple of huge multinationals. The oil price increases of 1999 were in the compelling interest of these capitals, whose profits and investments had sunk dramatically in the phase of cheap oil in the 1990s.¹⁹ They stood, however, in opposition to the valorization possibilities of the remaining capital, for which oil is a cost factor that determines its composition: If oil is cheaper, then with constant technological relations of oil, raw materials, machinery, and labor power, relatively more of these other “ingredients” can be bought; it mostly has to do with labor power, out of which alone surplus value can be pressed. Cheap oil eases accumulation in these sectors; price increases slow it down. For that matter, oil forms a large component of the reproduction costs of labor power itself – transport, heating and petrochemical products make up a large part of proletarian expenses today. Summer 2000 showed the world how high oil prices lead to massive wage pressure on the working class – in Europe the governments were confronted with the frightening perspective of a Europe-wide struggle movement.²⁰ On the other hand, the national budget and social-state insurance of the living standard in countries like Saudi Arabia and Russia, for example, depend on the fact that the oil price does not fall too far.

The meaning of oil and its price for capitalistic development therefore moves by means of contradictions. Oil should not be sold “too expensive” or “too cheap”, i.e., it should be able to suit the needs of the conjunctural cycles of the world economy. Oil and its price can change nothing about the crisis-prone nature of capital, but on the grounds of its centrality, it offers an important lever to intervene to change

things in the course of crisis and class struggle. Therein lies the distinction between oil and oranges, so self-explanatorily assumed in the opening quote: in its meaning for the global class struggle.

But what does all this have to do with Afghanistan, where there's no oil yet? Or we can ask: What about Chechnya? What with bin Laden?

THE SAUDI ARABIAN OIL PRICE BUFFER NO LONGER WORKS

The strategic alliance of the USA with Saudi Arabia since the end of the Second World War²¹ was based on the fact that it was made out to be the ideal deliverer of petroleum for the appropriate conditions: a low-population country with enormous oil reserves, under strict control of a feudal kingdom, that the local population, in largest part still Bedouin, was content with, and which could exploit and control the above all immigrant population in oil production. Like no other country, Saudi Arabia could increase or decrease its oil production and thereby influence the global oil market. The enormous wealth that the country achieved, mainly after the oil price increase of 1973, was in no way used against the USA – on the contrary, it was the major financier of the USA, supporting its policy. It bought the most modern weapons systems of the US American military contractors and helped out all over the world as a donor to US foreign policy: for the Afghan mujahedeen, the contras in Nicaragua, the armament of Iraq against Iran after 1979, the 1991 Gulf War of the USA against Iraq. Furthermore, the petrodollars from the oil sales became the most important driving force of the international financial markets. Saudi Arabia became a “swing producer” on the world oil market, which could, with extreme production movements (from a maximum of 10 million barrels per day in 1981 to 3.5 million in 1985), influence the oil price.²²

Since the end of the 1980s, what is now an unalterable certainty at the end of the 1990s, has become more and more visible: Because of changed class relations, Saudi Arabia is becoming unable to play this role any more. Therefore the military hunt for another oil source, which expresses itself in the bombing of Afghanistan just as much as already in the massacres of the Russian military in Chechnya.

Saudi Arabia could play this role as a “swing producer”, because, in distinction to other countries, on account of its financial reserves (\$100 billion in 1981), it could handle losses of income. It could change its output and export quantities to influence the price on the world market and in the sense of the world conjuncture, even when this entailed a diminished income. This situation has turned into its opposite today: In 2000, Saudi Arabia was over \$150 billion in debt, which surpasses its gross domestic product. Saudi oil politics based class relations on a “social pact”, which promised to the local proletariat a nearly work-free income, and proceeded with repression in production and oil output against the extremely disfranchised and exploited immigrant workers and against any form of opposition. But the oil income combined with high “special expenditures” (e.g., \$26 billion for Iraq in the war against Iran, and \$55 billion for the bombing of the same Iraq by the USA and England) did not keep up with the cost of this “social pact”. Saudi Arabia had an extremely high population growth of three to five percent yearly. At the beginning of the 1970s, as the “social pact” began to develop on the basis of the oil billions, about 5 million people lived in the country; today there are over 20 million, of which 28 percent are foreigners.

As the oil price fell to a historic level in 1998, Saudi Arabia was on the verge of a difficult financial crisis. The regime was forced to drive the oil price back up, with no regard to the world conjuncture of capital. In March 1999, OPEC decided on a production cut of 2 million barrels per day (for which Saudi Arabia was responsible for a fourth), which, together with the unexpectedly quick increase in demand from Asia after the 1997/98 crisis led to a strong increase in the oil price and which allowed the Saudi regime slight breathing room.

But the social crisis in Saudi Arabia sharpened further and led to a heavy struggle inside the ruling elite – of which the bin Laden faction is only one expression. With the politics of terror acts against US-American targets²³ (on August 7, 1998, embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, on September 11, 2001, the attacks on the WTC and the Pentagon), they aimed at internal Saudi power politics: via the aggravation of a confrontation between the “Islamic” and the “Western” world, the now-ruling clique is to be deprived of its most important allies and its support from the USA. The local proletariat is thereby promised the reinstatement of the previous “social pact”, which was supposedly only endangered by giving away the oil too cheaply.

The people who were the victims of the attacks on 9/11 were “collateral damage” in this Saudi Arabian power poker (which also similarly occurs in the other oil-producing lands of the Middle East) just as much as the Afghanistan civilians bombed to death were victims of the opening up of the Caspian Sea oil reserves and the stabilization of the Saudi regime.

NOTES

¹ Marc Herold's examination can be found at pubpages.unh.edu/~mwherold.

² “Impact of US Bombing Is Felt in Many Ways”, *Washington Post*, December 16, 2001.

³ In the 1980s the USA gave the mujahedeen several hundred Stinger rockets for their war against the Soviet Union. After 1992 the CIA sought unsuccessfully to buy back the unused rockets.

⁴ According to Marc Herold. This is in fact the same logic that bin Laden uses, in order to justify his attacks on civilians: in the opposition between “Islam” and “the West”, all are soldiers. And who's to deny that from time to time they “sympathize” with their government.

⁵ In the discussion about 9/11 and the war in Afghanistan, this moment has only been emphasized by “Materialien für einen neuen Anti-Imperialismus”. See “Antiterrorismus – die Politik sozialer Feinderklärung” and “Ökonomie des Krieges? Krieg der Ökonomie” at www.materialien.org.

⁶ Conrad Schetter, “The Chimera of Ethnicity in Afghanistan”, *Die Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, October 26, 2001.

⁷ One of the few representations of the social process in Afghanistan is found in Barnett R. Rubin: “The Political Economy of War and Peace in Afghanistan”, Sweden, June 21, 1999 (www.institute-for-afghan-studies.org).

⁸ These modern forms of war economy are in no way limited to Afghanistan, but rather find themselves everywhere that, out of a strategy of “low-intensity warfare” as containment policy, warlords arose, whose power is based above all on their contact with the world market for weapons, petroleum, precious minerals or drugs. See Michael Böllig, “Zur Ökonomie des Krieges: Die Gewalt und die Geschäfte der Afrikanischen Warlords”, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, January 9, 2001.

⁹ Ahmed Rashid: *Taliban. Oil, War and the New Great Game in Central Asia*, London, 2000.

¹⁰ See Sean Gervasi, “Why Is NATO in Yugoslavia?” (1996) and “Geopolitische Aspekte des Kriegs in Jugoslawien”, *Wildcat Zirkular* No. 50/51, May/June 1999. In the background, there already stood a pipeline project for the transportation of oil from the Caspian over the Balkans to Western Europe.

¹¹ From the beginning it was clear that a time would come when the oil multinationals would be able to stake their claim: to the one, no quick solution was expected to the question of security of property, to withdrawal of profits and to social stability, ie., to the regulation of the class struggle; to the other, the question of transportation in the Caspian just as much as in Siberia remained open. “That's a marathon and no sprint”, as an oil manager put it. “Why Soviet Oil Wells Won't Be Gushing Soon”, *Business Week*, September 9, 1991.

¹² See Gregory Gause III, “Saudi Arabia: Over a Barrel”, *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2000, and George Caffentzis, “An Essay on the Events of September 11, 2001 – Addressed to the Antiglobalization Movement.” <http://www.commoner.org.uk/02-1groundzero.htm>