

## Editorial

# Is a Multi-Polar Imperialist World Preferable to a Uni-Polar Imperialist World?

The victory over Nazism and fascism during World War Two created conditions for the resurgence of the revolutionary movement around the world. Many countries declared their intention to build socialism and a wave of national liberation struggles also linked their futures to the socialist and communist movement. Revolution was in flow and the imperialist system of states, led by U.S. imperialism, felt seriously threatened.

The response of the U.S. imperialists and their European imperialist allies was the adoption of the politics of division. They divided the world into “Them” and “Us”, between socialism and capitalism, and ushered in the Cold War.

The U.S. used the Cold War and the “Soviet Threat” to force its European imperialist allies into a subordinate position to itself, to establish itself as the undisputed leader of the imperialist world. During the early 1950s in the Soviet Union, following the death of J.V. Stalin, a faction came to power that was determined to restore a form of capitalism within the USSR. This pro-capitalist faction also had ambitions to restore Russia as a major imperialist power and they used the U.S.-NATO threat to subjugate the People’s Democracies of Eastern Europe and establish their own bloc with the USSR at the centre. In 1955 with the creation of the Warsaw Pact, the

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## Israeli Violence in Gaza Escalates

On the heels of a much-hyped visit from U.S. President George Bush, Israel has escalated its attacks on the Gaza Strip, killing dozens of civilians and wounding hundreds more in indiscriminate bombings and armoured assaults.

While in Israel, Bush backtracked on comments he had made during his first term in which he had described the illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and (at the time) the Gaza Strip as “facts on the ground” which could not be ignored. By contrast, during this recent visit he sternly advised the Israelis that they would have to end the occupation of the West Bank and accept the reality of a Palestinian state.

The Israeli incursions in Gaza began almost immediately after Bush’s departure and seem to underscore what kind of end to the occupation and Palestinian state Israel envisions. Although the

Israeli settlements in Gaza were dismantled in the summer of 2005 the area remains under complete Israeli military control, effectively turning the 1.5 million residents into inmates in the world’s largest open-air prison.

In September 2007, the Israeli government declared Gaza a “hostile entity” after democratically-elected Hamas took over the area and forced Fatah supporters out. Since then numerous human rights and aid agencies have documented the deteriorating conditions in Gaza, with humanitarian aid deliveries into the area being severely restricted by the Israeli military. Not surprisingly, this situation has led to increased resistance from Palestinian fighters who regularly launch rockets and fire shells into southern Israel.

As in the past, Israel has used this resistance as the

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Soviet Union and its allies officially adopted the bi-polar division of the world between the U.S. and the USSR. The 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia revealed the truth about the imperialist nature of the Warsaw Pact. It also established that the bi-polar division of the world was not a division between imperialism and socialism, but rather a division between two competing imperialist powers and their allies; in other words a bi-polar division of the imperialist system of states.

The collapse of the bi-polar division of the world in the late 1980s created a new situation within the imperialist system of states. On the one hand, the U.S. emerged as the sole military superpower and it used this status to bully its allies and strive for a uni-polar imperialist world under its hegemony. On the other hand, the removal of the "Soviet threat" freed various secondary imperialist powers, such as Germany and France, to reduce their dependency on U.S. imperialism and to pursue their own imperialist interests more openly. At the same time the massive amounts on new capital circulating in the imperialist system as a result of the plunder of Russia and the other formerly socialist countries not only contributed to an investment "bubble" in various stock exchanges but also created pressures for increased investment in less industrialized countries, especially China and India, but also Brazil, Indonesia and elsewhere.

The changes in investment patterns within the imperialist world have also created a new political situation. While the U.S. has been steadily declining in economic power over the past several decades other centres of capital have been strengthening. The European Union has become one such centre, while China and Russia have also emerged as rival centres within the imperialist system of states. India and Brazil are also growing as economic and political regional powers. Thus, while the U.S. imperialists have been seeking a uni-polar imperialist world under their control, both their former allies and their former enemies continue to strive for a multi-polar imperialist world in which they all share domination with U.S. imperialism.

At the same time, there is division on this issue within the ranks of the U.S. imperialists. The section roughly identified with the Republican Party and

George Bush is determined to impose its unilateral dictate on the entire world. Others, roughly identified with the Democrats, are concerned about over-extending American military forces and are eager to come to a power-sharing arrangement with the other imperialist powers - albeit an arrangement that favours U.S. imperialism.

Within this complex situation, there are those who are suggesting that a bi-polar or multi-polar imperialist world favours the forces of revolution and socialism. They harken back to the Cold War era when concessions could be wrung out of either one superpower or the other in exchange for a pledge of loyalty. Of course, on a short-term basis, they may be correct. It is easier for small countries to manoeuvre if there are several imperialist powers vying for markets and sources of raw materials. However, the price of such manoeuvring is invariably the independence of the small country, whether it is dealing with one imperialist power or many. Furthermore, while the danger of imperialist aggression against one or another small country may be lessened if it can convince another power to defend it, the danger of a worldwide inter-imperialist war is increased when there are several imperialist centres jockeying for position.

Within the present circumstances, in which U.S. imperialism is running amok, it is understandable that smaller countries intent on pursuing an independent course may look favourably on a multi-polar division of the imperialist system of states. It is even understandable if a particular state is forced to make concessions to one imperialist power in order to stave off the aggression of another. However, it is important for communists and revolutionaries to keep in mind that imperialism is imperialism, regardless of whether it is young or old imperialism, aggressive or "democratic" imperialism. Wars of aggression and the subjugation of small and weak nations by large and powerful nations will persist so long as the imperialist system remains, regardless of the relative position of U.S. imperialism or any other imperialist power.

It is vitally important for revolutionaries everywhere to support the efforts of small nations to gain and maintain their independence, even if that

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## For Your Information

# Harper Conservatives Intensify Efforts to Destroy Canadian Wheat Board

Dismantling the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) has been a priority for the Harper government since it was elected two years ago. The difficulty in accomplishing this goal has been extremely frustrating for Stephen Harper, who first set his sights on the CWB when he was president of the National Citizens Coalition. Over the last couple of months, both Harper and his agriculture minister Gerry Ritz have made it clear that they want the CWB's single desk eliminated before their minority government falls.

In a baffling news release issued by Ritz's office on January 17, he ordered the CWB to attend a January 29 meeting with representatives of the malting barley industry, grain elevators and undisclosed "producer groups" to discuss privatizing the North American barley market. The release is baffling in part because the CWB is already meeting regularly with industry representatives about a new plan it has developed which would substantially change the way farmers are paid for their malting barley, without destroying the single desk.

Despite the fact that this CWB plan addresses every operational issue the industry has raised, it continues to steadfastly oppose it. Industry groups went to the extent of issuing three news releases condemning the plan before it had been announced and while they were still in negotiations with the CWB. Ritz's office also issued an opinion piece dismissing the plan as not going far enough before it was released and then, immediately following its

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means exploiting contradictions within the imperialist camp. However, it is equally important for revolutionaries to educate the working class and people on the dangers inherent in the system of imperialist states and not to create illusions that one imperialist power is more "progressive" or less predatory than another. As in all aspects of life, it is the enemy that we fail to be vigilant about who will kill us in the end. Ultimately the independence of small nations cannot be guaranteed by either a uni-polar or multi-polar imperialist world, but only by socialism as a world system.

January 9 publication, put out a news release denouncing it.

The reality is that the barley industry companies want to make a profit, and the easiest way for them to make a profit is to buy as cheaply as possible from the farmer and sell their product for as much as possible to buyers. This basic economic reality seems to have escaped the Agriculture Minister, whose office claims that the January 29 meeting is being organized to "serve farmers' and industry interests," despite the fact that these interests are diametrically opposed.

Instead of inviting representatives of all 12,000 Prairie malting barley farmers to the meeting, Ritz is expected to invite members of the Western Barley Growers Association (WBGA). The WBGA, according to documents it has filed with the federal court, has 130 paid members. An extreme-right fringe organization, the WBGA is reported to receive funding from the railways, grain companies and maltsters. As such it certainly cannot be called representative of most farmers.

Nevertheless, whatever comes of this January 29 meeting, the Conservative government still has another card up its sleeve. It has been 13 months since it fired Adrian Measner, the CWB's internationally respected president and CEO. Measner, who had worked for the CWB for over 30 years, was fired for refusing to support the government's plan to abolish the single desk. The Conservatives have stacked the CEO selection committee with their own political appointees and have taken the unprecedented step of having a staff person from the Prime Minister's Office on the official selection committee. They are rumoured to have chosen a new President and CEO from Australia, one who has experience dismantling the single marketing desk that Australian cotton producers had built up over decades.

Whatever else the government may be planning, though, it has been apparent that farmers are not as ready to give up the CWB as the Conservatives had hoped. The next six months will be critical for the organization. In order for it to survive, the farmers on the board of directors and farmers across the Prairies will have to take a stand in defence of the single desk.

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pretext to justify renewed military attacks against Gaza in the last week. Beginning on January 15, Israeli armoured vehicles moved into the centre of Gaza City, opening fire and killing 17 Palestinians, including five civilians, and wounding dozens more. Residential and agricultural areas were also attacked, where another three civilians were killed as they worked on their land. Ambulances were only allowed to enter the area and tend to the wounded when the Israeli vehicles withdrew, four and a half hours after the attack began.

The Palestinian Committee for Human Rights (PCHR) issued a statement pointing out that the attack constituted a form of collective punishment against the Palestinian civilian population, in violation of Article 33 of the Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Times of War. The PCHR also called on the international community to immediately intervene to put an end to Israel's attacks, a call which, to date, has been completely ignored.

The Israeli incursion continued with several air strikes. On January 16 a vehicle driving in a neighbourhood east of Gaza City was bombed. One of Israel's routine attempts at extra-judicial killings of Palestinian military or political personalities, this attack missed its target, killing instead the three civilian occupants of the car, including a five-year-old boy, and wounding three more civilian bystanders.

On January 19 Israeli warplanes bombed the former Interior Ministry building in Gaza City, killing one civilian and wounding another 30. The building, which had been sitting empty for several months and was located in the middle of a residential neighbourhood, was completely destroyed. Several nearby houses and apartment buildings were also damaged and a guest at a wedding party was killed. Israeli warplanes also bombed the marine police headquarters. Later the same day, another air strike in the northern Gaza Strip killed one resistance fighter and a teenage boy. Despite the civilian casualties, a spokesperson for the Israeli Defence Forces called these attacks "successful" and said that the Israeli military "will strive to ensure the safety of Israeli citizens by all means necessary."

In addition to these overt military attacks, on

January 19 Israel began preventing imports of diesel into Gaza, tightening the fuel import restrictions first imposed in October 2007. These restrictions come in the middle of what has been an unprecedented cold snap through parts of the Middle East, including Gaza, where temperatures have dropped below zero for the first time in decades. The Israeli Defence Ministry also closed all border crossings into Gaza, preventing the delivery of a UN aid shipment. Furthermore, from now on all humanitarian shipments into Gaza will need the personal approval of Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak. A ministry spokesperson said, "if milk is low in Gaza, the minister will be asked to approve a milk shipment, and it will enter."

In response to these most recent Israeli actions, a spokesperson for the UN Relief and Works Agency, whose aid shipment was blocked, declared: "Gaza is completely shut down. This will only add to an already dire situation". John Holmes, UN undersecretary-general for humanitarian affairs, said "the Israeli reaction is not justified," describing it as the imposition of illegal collective punishment.

The nature of these attacks in Gaza – opening fire in residential neighbourhoods, bombing empty buildings, targeting agricultural areas – all yet again reinforce that Israeli actions are not really about ending rocket attacks on Israel. Rather, they are part of a longstanding and well-organized, albeit illegal, Israeli campaign of collective punishment of the Palestinian people.

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