

**Extracts from
Stefan Engel,
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**II. The Strategy and Tactics of International Finance
Capital in the
Class Struggle Against the International Proletariat
and Its Allies**

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**II.6 Imperialist Promotion of Religious-Fanatic Fundamentalism
as a New Form of Fascism**

Two Forms of Rule of Imperialism

Capitalism at the stage of imperialism knows two forms of rule:

1. *bourgeois democracy*, in which those in power rule mainly by means of deception of the masses, but also by repressive means and open oppression; and
2. *fascism and open military dictatorship*, in which those in power rule mainly by means of terror against the masses, but also by means of deception.

While military dictatorship basically rests on its armed power, fascism provides a mass basis and uses its social-fascist demagoguery for that purpose. In the book, *State-Monopoly Capitalism in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG)*, Willi Dickhut characterizes the fascist Hitler regime in Germany from 1933 to 1945:

Fascism in power – this is cruelest barbarity as a system of state rule: elimination of the last vestiges of bourgeois democracy, dissolution of parliament, *Gleichschaltung* (bringing into line) and censorship of the mass media, complete deprivation of rights, outlawing of all other parties, dissolution of the trade unions and introduction of organizations with compulsory membership, such as the *Deutsche Arbeitsfront* (German Labor Front), or DAF; Reich Labor Service and general conscription, intimidation, the omnipresent spying and surveillance of the GESTAPO, the Secret State Police; all-round terror, torture, persecution, prison, concentration camp, murder, including the extermination of entire sections of the population – this is darkest reaction penetrating all fibers of social life. (Vol. II, pp. 276-277)

Fascism is no "accident of history," no demonic malice of individual criminals, as bourgeois historiography wants to make people believe. It is an expression of the ruthless striving of imperialism to defend and extend its economic and political power. Thus, before Hitlerite fascism was established in Germany, on January 27, 1932, in the Industry Club of Düsseldorf, Hitler reached agreement with the innermost circles of German monopoly capital on a *fascist-imperialist program*. In his speech he declared:

- The "white race" can only maintain its privileged position if the aspiration of the masses in the colonies to higher standards of living is suppressed.
- The German economy needs "new lebensraum with the expansion of a great domestic market."

- The main danger for these plans consists in the fact that the communist world outlook, that communist organizations and the socialist Soviet Union are gaining more and more mass influence nationally and internationally.
- Therefore, a party like the NSDAP is necessary, which has "relentlessly resolved to eradicate Marxism in Germany to the last root." (*Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung* [History of the German Working-Class Movement], Vol. 4, pp. 564-565)

Extreme anticommunism and the justification of open terror for the liquidation of the revolutionary working-class movement represent the *essence of the world outlook of fascism*. In order to lay the most stable possible foundation for the fascist dictatorship and organize its mass basis, further ideological justifications were required.

Racism and *chauvinism* are therefore always integral components of fascist ideology. In demagogic ways these ideologies seek to make the exploiters and exploited, rulers and ruled of one country appear superior and to reconcile the class contradictions by discriminating against other peoples, religions or nationalities and depicting them as inferior. Such hatemongering also aims at splitting the masses. Besides that, fascism attempts to corrupt certain strata of the home people by material means. For this purpose, projects like the construction of owner-occupied homes were supported, the *Kraft durch Freude* (strength through joy) organization offered opportunities for leisure and vacation activities, and donations were collected for the "winter relief organization."

The ideology of the "Aryan superrace" discriminated against other nationalities and races as "subhumans" as well as against disabled persons and homosexuals as inferior; they had to knuckle under to the superrace or otherwise be liquidated. Anti-Semitism played a central role and resulted in the systematic genocide of millions of European Jews. The propagandists of Hitlerite fascism utilized the centuries-old prejudices stirred up by the Christian churches. They fueled the hatred against the Jews: Jews were the "class enemies" who supposedly exploited and cheated ordinary Germans. On the other hand, capitalists, workers and salaried employees, petty proprietors and farmers were supposed to form a "national community" completely devoid of class contradictions and class struggle. At the same time, anti-Semitism was designed to separate the working people from the revolutionary working-class movement, which was defamed as "Jewish Bolshevism."

Stalin fundamentally condemned anti-Semitism. He wrote:

Anti-semitism is of advantage to the exploiters as a lightning conductor that deflects the blows aimed by the working people at capitalism.... Hence Communists, as consistent internationalists, cannot but be irreconcilable, sworn enemies of anti-semitism. ("Anti-Semitism," Stalin, *Works*, Vol. 13, p. 30)

State-supporting bourgeois antifascism disguises the essence of fascism by reducing it to anti-Semitism and war of conquest and denying its main purpose: open terrorist suppression of the revolutionary working-class movement. After the reunification of Germany almost all state memorials that deal with the history or the victims of fascism were reorganized under the guideline of *bourgeois antifascism*. This equates communism with fascism and so spreads a monstrous historical lie. Bourgeois antifascism as advocated by state institutions thus becomes a *variety of anticommunism*. This assessment, of course, is not directed against bourgeois and petty-bourgeois antifascists who are willing to participate in a unity of action without anticommunist blackballing.

Under the hypocritical flag of "reparation" for the crimes that the German fascists committed against the Jewish people, those in power today misuse the legitimate rejection of anti-Semitism to justify the imperialist policy of the State of Israel. Cynically, the genocide against the Jews is used to justify the brutal oppression of the Palestinian people.

Violating international law, the Israeli regime occupies the largest part of Palestine and harasses, expropriates, displaces and kills its people. The Palestinian workers in Israel are subjected to special exploitation; Gaza has been transformed into an "open-air prison." Reactionary Zionists

justify the politics of the State of Israel with the racist ideology that the Jews are "God's chosen people."

Even though the communists cannot be exonerated from blame because they share responsibility for the failure of the antifascist united front against Hitlerite fascism, the bourgeois theory of "collective guilt" must be categorically rejected. It equates culprits and victims, takes finance capital as wire-pullers of Hitlerite fascism out of the line of fire, and denies and defames the courageous and self-sacrificing resistance of countless communists, social-democrats and Christians.

It is an internationalist, anti-imperialist obligation of the revolutionary working-class movement to oppose the aggression of the Israeli state and the Zionist terror.

US Imperialism and Christian Fundamentalism

In the USA the fascist and racist ideology has always had strong roots in religious fanaticism. The concept of "fundamentalism" originally referred to the teachings of the evangelical churches of American Protestantism. Their metaphysical-idealistic philosophy of life insisted that the Bible is the "only source of absolute truth... – literal, complete and infallible ... not only with respect to theological and moral statements, but also historical and scientific." (Siegfried Haas et al., *Religiöser Fundamentalismus*, p. 71)

With respect to world outlook the reactionary character of fundamentalism today finds expression especially in *creationism*¹, which in recent years has been spread aggressively in the USA and in Islamic countries and has found a partly alarmingly wide following particularly among petty-bourgeois masses.

In August 2005 the former US President George W. Bush declared in front of journalists that the doctrine of "intelligent design" should be taught in the schools on a par with Darwin's theory of evolution. In some US states it was in fact forbidden since 1999 to present Darwinism as the only scientific theory in universities and schools. Since 2008 the state of Kansas obligates teachers to include instruction about allegedly "considerable scientific doubt about Darwin's theory of the development of species."

In its struggle against "terrorism" the Bush Administration utilized the method of *religious demonization* of Islam and launched a virulent global campaign against the Islamic-fundamentalist "terror network al Qaeda."

President G.W. Bush furthermore divided the world into good and bad countries. All countries that did not subjugate themselves to the arbitrariness of US imperialism found themselves on the "axis of evil." Bush counted among these countries in particular the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Cuba as well as Iran and Iraq. Every means of taking action against these states was justified, including the armed aggression in violation of international law as practiced by the USA in the cases of Yugoslavia, Iraq and Afghanistan. Because the USA was only executing the "will of God," it was entitled to lead the campaign against the "evil." This way religious fanaticism became a central justification for the claim of the imperialist superpower USA for dominance in the world.

US Imperialism and the Islamism-Based Form of Fascism

Zbigniew Brzezinski was security adviser to US President Carter and worked for the Center for Strategic and International Studies. As early as in 1993 he stated in his book, *Out of Control*.

¹ From the Latin word *creare* = create. Creationism teaches that the universe and Earth, life and human beings were created exactly as it is said in the Bible: by immediate intervention of a god. With the concept of "intelligent design" creationism tries to make scientific pretenses. However, it continues to directly oppose Darwin's materialist theory of evolution.

Global Turmoil on the Eve of the Twenty-First Century, that the US American superpower finds itself "superimposed on a world that increasingly resembles a volcano of repressed aspirations and of an intensifying awareness of fundamental inequities" (p. 146). He lamented the "massive collapse, especially in the advanced parts of the world, of almost all established values" (*ibid.*, Introduction, p. x) and argued for supporting a religious revival particularly of Christianity and Islam.

This recourse to religious idealism is an expression of *bourgeois ideology's decadence, reactionary character and lack of visions for the future* and reflects the rottenness of imperialism, the decay not only of its economic and political strength, but also of the power of its world outlook.

The *abuse of religion* has a long tradition. Particularly the *deployment of religion as a weapon of imperialism* to suppress and divide the national and social liberation struggle of the masses must rigorously be opposed.

The separation of church and state was one of the most significant achievements of the bourgeois emancipation movements of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Frederick Engels acknowledged the struggles against the feudal nobility and against the theological justification of noble rule. In the introduction to his writing, *Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science*, he stated:

Religion, natural science, society, political institutions – everything was subjected to the most unsparing criticism; everything must justify its existence before the judgment-seat of reason or give up existence.... Every form of society and government then existing, every old traditional notion was flung into the lumber-room as irrational; ... henceforth superstition, injustice, privilege, oppression, were to be superseded.... (Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, pp. 16 and 19)

However, when the bourgeoisie had conquered feudalism and gained political power, the class contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat came to the fore and the bourgeoisie increasingly dissociated itself from the progressive ideas of the Enlightenment. Since imperialism developed, the bourgeoisie attempted to exploit religion anew for its reactionary power-political objectives.

Marxist-Leninists always have demanded respect for personal religious beliefs. This enabled even religious people to find access to the working-class movement, to national liberation movements and to revolutionary social movements – despite fundamental differences in world outlook.

In *Afghanistan*, since 1979 the US intelligence agency CIA afforded organizational and logistical support to reactionary forces, often still rooted in traditional clan structures, against the invasion of the social-imperialist Soviet Union. Furthermore, mercenaries organized by Bin Laden² were sent to Afghanistan in order to offer resistance there – by military means and also by terrorist means. For that, individual fighters were trained in camps in the USA, while most got their training in Pakistan and Afghanistan. In January 1998, Zbigniew Brzezinski admitted in an interview with the French magazine *Le Nouvel Observateur* that the US support for Islamic-fundamentalist forces started on July 3, 1979, almost half a year ahead of the social-imperialist invasion in Afghanistan. This was the day President Carter signed the first directive on concealed support. Brzezinski's comment:

That secret operation was an excellent idea. It had the effect of drawing the Russians into the Afghan trap.... The day that the Soviets officially crossed the border, I wrote to President Carter: We now have the opportunity of giving to the USSR its Vietnam War. Indeed, for ten years, Moscow had to carry on a war unsupportable by the government, a conflict that brought about the demoralization and finally the

² Osama Bin Laden is son of a billionaire from Saudi Arabia. He cooperated with US intelligence, helped to train tens of thousands of "Freedom Fighters" against the Soviet troops in Afghanistan. They finally succeeded and the Soviet Union had to withdraw. When the USA, Britain and other imperialists then occupied Afghanistan, Bin Laden led the same fighters to turn against the new occupying forces with the same means. Since then, in the propaganda of the US and its allies he was a "terrorist."

breakup of the Soviet empire. (*Le Nouvel Observateur*, No. 1732, 15-21 January 1998, p. 76; translated from the German)

The book, *Twilight of the Gods – Götterdämmerung over the "New World Order,"* states with regard to this covert operation:

The initial encouragement of reactionary fundamentalist forces was supposed to check the liberation struggle of the peoples and create a barrier against a new upswing in the struggle for genuine socialism. The reactionary Taliban in Afghanistan were wards of the CIA just like the notorious general Noriega in Panama, the dictator Saddam Hussein in Iraq, Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines or the mass murderer Pinochet in Chile. (pp. 486-487)

At the end of the 1970s the social struggles picked up in the *Middle East*, resulting in the destabilization of different states. In Iran this development culminated in the revolution against the reactionary Shah Regime in 1979. The Iranian people brought down one of the most important governors of imperialism in this region, which is of strategic importance because of its oil resources. And so the counterrevolution spurred on by the imperialists was all the bloodier. They resorted to reactionary Islamist forces in order to strike down the revolutionary development. With the aid of Western media they built up Ayatollah Khomeini, who lived near Paris in exile and previously had refrained from political activities, as leader of the Iranian opposition. In order to oppress the revolutionary and working-class movement in Iran, they created a counterrevolutionary terror organization which relied on a mass basis of reactionary petty bourgeois and capitalized on the hierarchical structures of Islamic religious communities. This organization cooperated with the US intelligence services and liquidated thousands of revolutionaries.

The counterrevolutionary terror crushed the revolutionary working-class and people's movement; a *fascist dictatorship* was established in Iran. Within the first ten years of its rule, the Iranian regime executed more than 20,000 political prisoners, among them the majority of revolutionary leaders and activists of the revolution of 1979. The organizations of the working-class movement were prohibited; through today, workers' struggles and people's protests are brutally suppressed. The regime abuses religious traditions of Islam and promotes the revival of medieval customs of "Islamic Law," turning them into a component of state terror. The special oppression of women is extremely intensified; forced marriages, stonings, "honor killings" are increasing. This development at the beginning of the twenty-first century illustrates the tendency of imperialism to pass into barbarism. Meanwhile, US imperialism indeed opposes its pupils in Iran, but only because they opposed its claim for hegemony and refused to open their country to international finance capital. But fascist terror could not break the resistance of the Iranian people.

Regimes like the so-called "State of God" (theocracy) in present-day Iran are commonly described as "political Islam" or "Islamism." These designations are misleading, however, because they veil the true causes and political driving forces of the *religious-fundamentalist form of fascist terror*. Not the religiousness of large sections of the masses or even the political involvement of religious people is the essential aspect; the biggest enemy of the masses also in Iran is fascism because it is the ruling system of the most reactionary forces of monopoly capital. It has its particular class basis in an alliance of reactionary sections of the bourgeoisie with big landowners and religious leaders of Islam. This rule directly turns against the striving of the peoples for national and social liberation; it particularly aims to build up a dam against the socialist revolution and the progress of mankind onward to a liberated society. Here the interests of the fascist Iranian regime and imperialism become identical.