

Speech

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Disraeli, the British statesman and Prime Minister of Great Britain in the 1860's, in spite of being an imperialist, said in 1852, "The colonies are millstones around our necks." But Cecil Rhodes, a leader of British finance, and the man who was mainly responsible for the Anglo-Boer war, said in 1895, "The empire as I have always said, is a bread and butter question. If you want to avoid civil war, you have to become imperialists."

The reason of this transformation in the thinking of imperialists can be found in the words of Cecil Rhodes himself: "I was in the East End of London (working class quarter) yesterday and attended a meeting of the unemployed. I listened to the wild speeches, which were just a cry for 'bread', 'bread', and so on my way home I pondered over the scene and I became more than ever convinced of the importance of imperialism." (Lenin, Selected Works, Vol. I, Part I, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow 1950, p. 413-14)

Thus the British capitalists began to surrender a little fraction of their profit, the surplus, which they brought from India and other colonies, to their own workers and raise their wages.

On this Lenin wrote the following in his book on imperialism: "The receipt of high monopoly profits by the capitalists in one of numerous branches of industry, in one of the numerous countries etc. makes it economically possible for them to bribe certain sections of workers and for a time a fairly considerable minority of them, and win them to the side of the bourgeoisie of a given industry or given nation against all the others. And so there is created that bond between imperialism and opportunism, which revealed itself first and most in England." (Lenin, Imperialism the Highest Stages of Capitalism, Selected Works, Vol. I, Part 2, p. 565)

The history of British trade unionism in the twentieth century generally demonstrates the truth of this observation of Lenin.

Workers in the imperialist countries still get higher wages than the workers of the backward and under-developed countries, but the situation is not the same as it was through most of the twentieth century. This is because the imperialist countries, particularly the US, are now closing down factories, forcing the workers out of employment and reducing their wages in order to maintain and increase profits, not by production, but by financial operations and trade. In Germany, France and other European countries as well as Japan, Australia etc. millions of people now remain unemployed and their number is steadily increasing.

Financial operations and trade are the two most important means by which the imperialist countries appropriate the surplus of the backward and dependent countries of the world. Institutions like the WB, the IMF and the ADB operate in the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America as usurers and, while doing so, they interfere in the internal affairs of these countries in a manner in which the decisions of these financial institutions quite often override the decisions of the national governments.

In this the imperialist countries, particularly the US, works hand in hand with these global financial institutions and enable these institutions to interfere openly, and in a blatant manner, in the internal affairs of the loan-receiving nations. In the name of developing the economy they, in fact, create condition for further underdevelopment of their economies, and increase unemployment and add to the miseries of the working people. They put pressure for lowering wages, for shutting down industries and for adopting agricultural policies, which harm agricultural development and the economy as a whole.

In the name of globalisation imperialist trade is now institutionally organised in a manner, which was never seen before. The WTO, NAFTA, GATT etc. have been formed basically to

serve imperialist interests and, consistent with this objective they twist the terms of trade, and create conditions for mopping up surplus from the underdeveloped countries.

In order to promote globalisation and market economy the WB, IMF etc. formulate and impose import export, taxation policies on underdeveloped countries in such a way that local markets are flooded by multinational corporation products which sell cheaper and price out the local products thereby liquidating domestic industries.

In order to avoid confrontation among themselves the leading imperialist countries have formed the G8 group. They now present a common front as enemies of the backward countries and nations, as well as the working peoples of their own countries. They have two basic objectives. First, to exploit and mop up the surplus of dependent countries and secondly, to contain the opposition of the working classes of their own countries and other countries of the world to the rule of capital.

In spite of its common front, the inherent contradictions of capitalism are increasingly creating divisions in the imperialist camp. Competitions between the major imperialist countries like the US, European Union and Japan and Russia, China and India and others are growing and generating diplomatic and political conflicts at the international level. The European Union is an important and significant development which aims to consolidate and strengthen economic, political and military power of the European imperialist and capitalist countries, thwart or retard socialist movements and revolutions in Europe and other parts of the world and to put a brake on the aggressive advancements of the US for appropriating oil and other resources and surplus of the underdeveloped countries at the exclusion of others.

The size of the European Union economy is comparable with that of the USA though its development is comparatively slow because of uneven and unequal developments of its member states as well as differences in their cultural and historical backgrounds.

The replacement of sterling by the dollar as the medium of international exchange was done by an agreement between the major world powers in 1945 and it was a smooth transition. Now Euro, the currency floated by the EU, is gaining ground fast and it has started replacing dollar as a medium of international exchange. The predominance of dollar as a currency for the denomination of the oil bill is facing a challenge from the Euro and it is creating tension between the two imperialist power blocks.

The oil market plays a crucial role in maintaining the dominance of dollar, as oil is sold in the international market in exchange of dollar. Other commodities are also sold in dollar and all countries have to maintain a dollar reserve for buying goods from the international market. In the late 1990's 80% currency transactions of the world and half of import export payments were made in dollar. To protect the dollar from the onslaughts of any other currency is thus a very important concern of the US, as its position of dominance greatly depends on this.

The US has a massive deficit and huge credit liability, and as such the high price of dollar cannot be maintained only by its economic strength. For that military power has now become for them a decisive factor.

In October 2000 Iraq decided to sell her oil in Euro instead of in dollar, and converted \$10 billion in their UN account of food for oil fund to Euro. At that time the price of Euro was \$0.82, but soon at the end of 2001, its price went up and the price of dollar depreciated by 17%. In 2002 Iran converted more than half of her foreign reserve fund into Euro. There is no doubt that at an opportune moment they would decide to sell oil for Euro. In December 2002 North Korea abandoned dollar and went over to Euro. There is no wonder that President George W Bush of the United States branded Iraq, Iran and North Korea as the axis of evil. They struck at the very basis of the economic power of the US and showed the way to others.

Venezuela is trying to come out of the dollar framework, and they have already introduced a system of barter in their exchange relation with 13 Latin American countries including Cuba. Other oil producing countries have indicated their wish to change over to

Euro and they are likely to do so as soon as it is politically feasible.

This is a dangerous development for the United States, because the present strength of the dollar is not derived basically from the financial operations and trade of the US, but from its military superiority. Now the rising power of Euro is posing a threat to the supremacy of the dollar, a threat arising from the use of Euro in the oil market. It has not yet created a big crisis for the US, but by all indications eventually it will create a threatening crisis for them. Strains are already noticeable in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, and a deterioration of relationship between the US and the EU is likely to render this military alliance ineffective. Thus in spite of the unity of G8, the rapid developments of contradictions in the imperialist camp is no longer a matter of speculation. The rift created between them during the Iraq war signified its development. It was a rift related to the US attempt to establish monopoly control over oil in the Middle East.

The US is the largest and the most powerful economy in the world, but at the same time it is the world's biggest debtor nation. Surplus is flowing into the US mainly from Japan, China, Taiwan, Singapore etc. who have hundreds of billions of dollars of trade surplus. US actually constitute 20% of the world's total import. In future when Euro will begin to replace dollar as medium of exchange in the oil market and international trade in general, dollar's supremacy will disappear and create a very serious crisis for the US economy as a whole. There is no doubt that it will also affect their military expenditures and weaken their military capabilities.

It is for this reason that the US interest in the Middle East is not confined only to oil. Protecting the supremacy of the dollar is also a matter of great concern for them.

Internally the US imperialist system is fraught with numerous problems. The way the administration has to deal with domestic and foreign affairs in order to handle the home situation and pursue their imperial policies and aggressions abroad is causing an erosion in the constitutionally established powers of the Congress. This is manifested very clearly in the way the federal budget usurps decisions on spending that under US constitutional procedures are reserved to Congress and not to the executive branch.

This usurpation is taking place very crudely and recklessly under the Bush administration, but it is not a new practice. This has been going on for some time. Financing the Nicaraguan Counter-revolution by President Reagan in a fraudulent and clandestine manner is an example of this practice.

The Bush administration has consistently refused to incorporate war expenditures into its regular budget. Instead they make use of supplemental appropriation bills passed in the Congress with demagogic exhortations for supporting the troops and the war expenditure. Not only in regard to military expenditures, in matters of various domestic policies the Congress is being undermined in the same manner. Social security costs are not included in this year's budget and the budget includes many other Presidential proposals, which have not been submitted to the Congress. There are many budget numbers, which are nothing short of fraud. In the first week of February 2005, Washington Post published an account of White House budget director Joshua Bolten's press conference in which it said, "The White House left out a lot of expenses the government is likely to have, while including savings the government is unlikely ever to see."

House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi, while denouncing the budget, said, "The President's budget is a hoax on the American people. The two issues that dominated the President's State of the Union address—Iraq and Social Security—are nowhere to be found in this budget."

The budgetary practices of President Bush indicate how the imperial needs and imperatives are causing decay of American democracy and badly undermining the American constitution. The control over budget is the principal means by which Congress holds the executive branch to account. According to the US Constitution, Congress exercises final

authority over public policy through its control of government expenditure. The way Congress is being bypassed in many important matters relating to expenditure amounts to gross violation of the US constitution. This violation is now done by the head of the executive branch, the President, in order to pursue their imperialist policy. This decay in American democracy is a reflection of the decay of US capitalism and of the imperialist system.

For plundering oil and for protecting the dollar the United States, in collaboration with Britain, made a massive military aggression against Iraq under the false pretext of the presence of WMD in that country and occupied it. This direct colonial occupation took place at a stage when it has become historically obsolete. After the Second World War Britain, France and other colonial powers gave up their colonies as that kind of direct occupation became an obstacle in smoothly carrying out imperialist exploitation. It was replaced by exploitation through trade, financial operations and control of technology, which came to be known as neo-colonialism. The US occupation of Iraq indicates that the neo-colonial form of control and exploitation is becoming unworkable and is beginning to collapse due to contradictions among the imperialist powers, contradiction of imperialism with less or underdeveloped countries and nations and rising opposition and antagonism of people in the imperialist countries themselves against capitalist and imperialist exploitations. Imperialism's downfall on a world scale is not imminent, but this backward move by the most highly developed capitalist and imperialist country is a pointer to that.

The US is trying to establish a viable municipal government in Iraq through a supervised national election. It may continue to somehow survive under American tutelage and military control, but the US has no easy way of getting out of Iraq. They have now been miserably bogged down in that country.

In the mean time, political and armed resistance against US occupation is continuing. This resistance, powerful as it is, is not yet properly integrated as a liberation struggle with a strategic programme. But its potential as an anti-imperialist struggle is very high and it is likely to deal heavy blows to American military capability rendering it useless for further armed aggression against any other Middle Eastern country. The US has already reached a stage when it is not possible for them to launch a full-scale military aggression against Iran. They are now conspiring to use Israel to bomb Iran's nuclear installations.

In 1947 Great Britain conspiratorially created conditions for perpetual hostilities between India and Pakistan by leaving the question of Kashmir's accession unresolved. It paid both Britain and America well for more than half a century. Now the situation in the vast region from Middle East to Far East has changed and it has become necessary for them to settle peace between the two most important South Asian states—India and Pakistan. They need Pakistan as an imperialist instrument of their policy in Afghanistan, Central Asia and the Middle East. They need India to contain the anti-US developments in Nepal and Bangladesh and China, which is developing fast as a rival imperialist state.

The development of revolutionary struggles in India is another very important concern. In the coming years, in order to confront and contain that struggle, peace with Pakistan is a necessity. US imperialism's need for two hostile neighbours in South Asia seems to be over. Thus they are now brokering peace between India and Pakistan and the two erstwhile hostile neighbours are trying to develop good neighbourly relations. How far and to what extent this will succeed is a matter for the future to decide.

A revolutionary political and armed struggle is developing fast and gaining strength in Nepal. Maoist revolutionaries, on the basis of Marxism, Leninism and Maoism, have organised themselves as a powerful organisation and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) now control more than half of Nepal's land area, where they have introduced land reforms, improved health and education facilities and established their own civil administration. They also have mentionable political influence in the urban areas and as such they have emerged as

the most important national political factor in Nepal.

This has pushed the right wing bourgeois and left political parties in a state of disarray and they are being continuously marginalised as political factors. All these developments show that Nepal today is divided into two states with two separate armies and administrations. Faced with this situation, the King has dismissed elected government, dissolved the parliament, abrogated the 1990 constitution and arrested leaders of parliamentary parties including those of the Nepali Congress and the United Marxist Leninist Party (UPL).

This act of the King was quickly denounced by the governments of India and the US, giving the impression that both these countries on whom Nepal's monarchy depends absolutely for finance, arms and technical assistance, had no prior knowledge of this. Strange are the ways of imperialist conspiracies, and it would not be a matter of surprise if in the not very distant future, these two governments come forward to help the King in introducing a new constitution, which will somehow accommodate the parliamentary parties and will give sufficient autocratic power in the hands of the King to fight the growing strength of the Maoist revolutionaries. Not only India and the US, but also China is now too eager to render military and other assistance to the Nepali monarchy to suppress what they call the Maoist insurgency.

Bangladesh, a client state of the US, is now in a serious crisis. The ruling classes of the country are almost united in maintaining this client status, but at the same time their two major political parties, the Awami League and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) are locked in political enmity without any basic, or even significant, difference in matters of principle. Their enmity and opposition is so complete that they are not in a position even to sit together and discuss any issue whatsoever, not even extremely serious matters, which concern the basic interests of the country and the people. Their only concern is grabbing power and to use that power for plundering the resources of the country. However harmful this rivalry may be for the country it gives the US and other imperialist countries definite advantage in playing their divide and rule game in Bangladesh.

The new ruling classes of Bangladesh were formed quite fast since 1972 through wanton plunder and also by smuggling, black marketing, and indenting and eventually people connected with trade and commerce constituted themselves as the core of the ruling class. They now dominate the political parties, the National Assembly and government and manipulate all state policies, including financial, trade, agriculture and foreign policies in the interest of this dominant faction of the ruling classes at the expense of the working peoples and the national economy as a whole.

What is particularly noticeable is that the lumpen character of this ruling class overwhelmingly dominates the intellectuals, of whom only a small section remains out of it. The Awami League, in spite of being in opposition at present, is the basic political body of the ruling classes and as such they use the more influential section of these intellectuals to serve their political objectives.

Set, as they are, against the interests of the working peoples, they serve the ruling classes as well as imperialism in an abject manner, the like of which can hardly be found in any other country of the world. Apart from the political parties and the trading community, these are the people through whom imperialism, particularly US imperialism, operates in Bangladesh. In the teaching profession, especially in the universities, the press, the performing arts and the literary circles imperialism holds sway.

The US operates in Bangladesh, as in many countries of the world, through the World Bank, the IMF, as well as bilaterally and exercises control over the economy and other sectors of the country. But in Bangladesh the degree of their control is quite disproportionate to their actual financial and economic involvement. This is made possible by the fact that almost the entire ruling class of Bangladesh is tied to them by the bond of self-interest in the

most servile manner and do not hesitate to act as their lackeys and flunkies.

During the Awami League rule after 1996 the US tried to have a military agreement called Status Of Forces Agreement (SOFA), but in the face of large scale opposition of the people it could not be signed. But they pursued the matter and in 1998 another military pact called Humanitarian Assistance Needs Assessment (HANA) was signed secretly and in a very disgraceful manner. In the same year the Awami League government also signed the Peace Corp Agreement. Later in 2003 the BNP government signed the Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement with the US, which gives the right to the latter to have access to secret papers and documents and interfere in technological and other matters. In 2003 the BNP government signed an agreement with the US called US Serviceman Protection Agreement, which provides impunity to US nationals within Bangladesh's territory if a warrant of arrest or surrender has been issued against them by the ICC on grounds of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed anywhere. The Bangladesh government has not yet ratified the Rome Statute of the ICC. In 2004 the BNP government signed a Memorandum of Intent (MOI) with the US government, which says that any harmful act against the US committed by any Bangladeshi will be punishable in Bangladesh. None of these agreements was ever placed or discussed in the National Assembly, and their provisions have never been fully revealed to the press. What other humiliating and harmful provisions are contained in the above-mentioned agreements is anybody's guess.

Any country, which can sign these agreements with a foreign country, cannot be described other than as a kind of dependency. In this capacity the imperialists and particularly the United States, takes Bangladesh for granted. In her recent tour of Pakistan and India, US foreign secretary Condoleezza Rice declared in New Delhi on March 18 in a meeting with the Indian Prime Minister that the US and India would jointly handle law and order situation in Bangladesh. So far the government of Bangladesh has not made any protest against this aggressive and audacious declaration, a declaration which is absolutely humiliating for Bangladesh.

The US has gone for this declaration basically to send this message to Bangladesh that apart from the US, India will henceforth act as the regional big power and Bangladesh will have to submit to India's diktats and concede to their demands. This means that Bangladesh will have to permit the gas pipeline from Myanmar to pass through its territory to India without the latter providing Bangladesh access to Nepali market by direct land route, that India will construct a dam at Tipaimukh in Manipur without paying any heed to the responsibilities of an upper riparian country and damage to the river system in Bangladesh, as they did during the construction of the dam at Farakka and concede whatever other demands are put forward by India.

The US now openly wants India to play the strategic role of a regional great power, because in their perception it is only India which can handle the developing situation in Nepal and the future political developments in Bangladesh and at the same time confront China in South and South East Asia.

In Bangladesh the US is trying to destabilize the situation by acts of terrorism through their religious and non-religious agents in various parts of the country. Their main interest in this is to thwart revolutionary developments for which conditions are getting ripe quite fast in spite of the apparent bad shape of the working class and peasant movements. By maintaining and worsening an already disturbed situation, and by raising the bogey of Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism, they are trying to divert the attention of the working people as well as the students and the youth in other directions. But the situation, as it is developing in Bangladesh, is resulting in the continuous breakdown of the Constitutional mechanisms and organs of the state like the bureaucracy, the police, the judiciary and the elected National Assembly as well as political parties. It means that the agencies and the institutions which run the state and through which imperialism operates in a foreign country are crumbling in

Bangladesh. The revolutionary forces are weak, but the enemies of the revolution are also weak. The former constitutes the rising forces and their crisis is the crisis of growth. The latter are breaking down, and their crisis is the crisis of a dying force. The US is quite aware of this equation of development and so it is operating not only with an eye to the present, but is also working out a plan for the future. History will certainly take care of the American plan as well as the revolutionary developments not only in Bangladesh, but in the entire region of South Asia, and in the whole world.

The parasitism and ferocity as well as the scale and magnitude of the operations of the United States has reached a point when it can be described as the highest stage of imperialism, a stage from which imperialism's downward journey has already begun. US imperialism, in its drive for the control of world oil and for exploiting the resources of other nations, has stretched its power beyond its span of control. This is creating and developing conditions and conflicts of the US with their European allies and various nations of the world. The war in Iraq further strained their relationship with France and Germany. Spain has withdrawn their troops from Iraq. Even the East European states like Bulgaria, Rumania, Poland etc. which initially extended strong support to them, have begun to withdraw or have declared their decision to do so in the near future. Even their strongest ally in the continent, Italy, under tremendous pressure of the Italian people has been forced to declare their decision to withdraw troops from Iraq in September 2005. These are the political reflections of what is actually happening in economic and other areas in the inter-imperialist relationships.

What is being called international terrorism is nothing but a direct reaction to what the US is doing to the backward and underdeveloped nations of the world. Since their existing governments are tied to the US, the resistance against the latter is being organised by various political groups and forces and are taking a terrorist line. Thus the terrorism, which is being practiced now is actually nothing but primary stages of armed national resistance against the exploitations, repressions and plunders of the imperialists, especially the United States. Since most of these countries in the oil rich region of the Middle East are at present the worst victims of imperialist economic and military aggressions, so-called terrorism is found at its highest form in that region. And since the countries of this region are mostly populated by Muslims, they have emerged, at this historical stage, as the most powerful anti-imperialist force in the world. The fact that there is no progressive and socialist movement in the region, the anti-imperialist forces are falling back on Islam for ideological support. In this sense it is not proper to characterise Osama bin Laden simply as a terrorist Islamic fundamentalist. He, now, represents the not-yet properly organised and consolidated anti-imperialist resistance, especially in the strategically very important regions of Middle East, Afghanistan and Central Asia.

These developments in the oil-rich countries are not limited to the Middle East. It is also happening in Venezuela, where the national resistance against US exploitation and intervention is being led by President Hugo Chavez. In Latin America, even the pro-US regimes are now getting set for an opportunity to form a Latin American alliance against US exploitation, hand twisting and interference in their internal affairs.

As was manifested first in the anti-WTO demonstrations in Seattle, public opinion in the world, including the US, is turning against imperialist exploitation, repression, intimidation and occupation throughout the world. Time is fast approaching when the grip of US imperialism, and imperialism in general, will be loosened, national liberation and socialist movements will get powerfully organised in the backward and less developed countries of the world, and one after another nations will become truly independent and free from imperialist exploitation, leading to the downfall of imperialism as a world system.

21 March, 2005