

# STRUGGLE

A MARXIST APPROACH TO AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND

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## ELECTION SPECIAL

# How Should the Left Vote in the General Election?

Every three years as the parliamentary elections come round many left-wingers get anxious. A victory of the National Party would inevitably bring open attacks on workers' rights, on Maori, beneficiaries, women, even large sections of the middle class, especially if National is in coalition with ACT. Yet the only currently serious alternative to National, Labour, has a history of betrayal of the interests of the people – just ask Maori.

### LABOUR - CAPITAL'S SECOND HOOK

Labour governments don't generally undertake open attacks on the working class; their existence hinges on being somewhat different from the natural party of the capitalist class by incorporating close links with parts of the trade unions. But their links are overwhelmingly with the most conservative sections of the trade union movement. Lenin called this group the 'labour aristocracy'; that part of the working class bribed or coopted by higher wages conceded by

the monopoly capitalists from the super-profits of their worldwide operations.

But Labour is fundamentally a capitalist party and is happy to attack working class interests if capitalist interests are weakened. Labour abandoned its original socialist goals in exchange for small farmer support in the 1930s; it sees no alternative to capitalism and sees its purpose to, at best, smooth the worst edges of naked capitalism. At other times, such as during the Lange-Douglas regime of the 1980s, Labour has been among the most enthusiastic insurgents against working class interests.

The Lange-Douglas regime was not an isolated event; the Fraser regime from 1943 to 1949 unleashed savage attacks on the left of the trade union movement. Nordmeyer's infamous 'black budget' of 1958 cut into working class living standards. The Kirk-Rowling regime from 1972-75 again cut workers living standards by unleashing rampant inflation.

Labour parties are forward defences of the capitalist class. When the natural parties of the capitalists (National and ACT) can no longer deceive the masses to the extent of providing a majority of votes, the capitalists are generally happy to concede a parliamentary majority to Labour. Some capitalists object, those most likely to suffer some minor limitation on rampant profiteering, but normally at least as many support Labour electorally and financially.

In 1987 arch corporate raider Alan Hawkins donated \$250,000 for Labour's reelection. In 1992 the Business Roundtable vice president came out in open support of Labour because of the prospect of a 'stable' parliamentary majority. A recent poll of Wellington capitalists showed support almost equally split between Labour and National.

### PARLIAMENT IS A CAPITALIST INSTITUTION

Parliaments are fundamental capitalist

### INSIDE: STRUGGLE ON...

<b>National and Labour Differences</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Globalisation and Poverty</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Student Loans</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Report from the Philippines</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Selling Schools</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>US Army Recruiting in Pacific</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Africas Wealth</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>China's Military Spending</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Not Making Poverty History</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Mumia abu Jamal od Sheean</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Gaza Disinformation</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>HT Lee Orbituary</b>	<b>17</b>

## COVER STORY CONT.

institutions. They were established by the capitalist class to consolidate their power following the defeat of feudalism. Collected representatives of property owners replaced the absolute rule of feudal lords.

In the face of growing working class rebellion, the capitalists gradually conceded entry to the electoral system. The franchise was gradually extended to the working classes, the US finally formally enfranchising blacks in the last state in 1970, although still employing an array of technicalities to deny the vote to a majority of blacks.

Access to the parliamentary system is carefully controlled. Outside parliament, the capitalists retain real power over society through their control of the economy. If governments get out of line the capitalists withdraw their investment.

Parliamentary elections are now used by the capitalists to periodically check their power over the masses. If the masses are outraged, they concede government to the Labour party. MMP has provided even finer measurement of the mood of the masses.

In this respect the election of Labour or more left wing parties reflect the power of the working class. But this is power within the strict limits allowed by the capitalists.

In the rare occasions that working class organisation has come close to challenge their power the capitalists have quickly abandoned their sacred support for the democratic system.

In Germany in the 1920s they threw their support behind the fascists. In Chile in 1974 they organized the military coup

that ousted Allende.

For the left, reaching and mobilising the people is far more important than which party they vote for. Does it matter if there are National party or ACT supporters on a 100,000 strong march against nuclear warship visits?

### PARLIAMENTARY VOTES ARE TACTICAL QUESTIONS

It is unwise for the left to become divided over parliamentary elections; it is not as if elections make much difference to the course of politics. The question of which capitalist party to vote for is much like the question of which capitalist shops to frequent or brands to purchase. Shopping at the Body Shop may make a difference, but it is pretty inconsequential in terms of capitalism as a whole.

So voting in parliamentary elections is largely a tactical question. Labour governments will generally cause more difficulties for the capitalist class than National governments and the election of MPs to the left of Labour will cause the capitalists more anxiety. Further, the success of social democratic MPs, whether right wing social democrats like Labour or left wing social democrats like the Alliance, provides a quick lesson to voters on the empty promises of parliament.

No matter how much parliamentary parties promise, they cannot deliver more than the capitalist class will concede. It is in this sense that Lenin called on workers in the West to support the Labour party "like a rope supports a hanging man".

The Clark regime, representing US imperialism and their local agents, is seeking a parliamentary majority, preferably in coalition with the Jim Anderton's leftovers

and supported by the reactionary United Future. Such an alliance will reduce our living standards further and boost profits for their imperialist masters.

The left will achieve a minor tactical victory if they can deprive the Clark regime and Anderton's gang of a majority. Victory of the National Party, Act, or NZ First would not provide such a victory as they would pursue the same policy, even more vigorously.

Sufficient electoral support for the Green Party or the Maori Party to deprive the Clark regime of a parliamentary majority may achieve this tactical goal. The best way to achieve this will depend largely on local conditions.

The Green Party has the greatest chance of electoral support in this regard, but their many commonalities with the Clark regime and their strong opportunist currents within, means they are do want to join a coalition with the Clark regime, with few conditions.

The Maori Party are likely to join a coalition with the Clark regime only with significant conditions, and they could be crucial to preventing further attacks on Maori.

Tactical voting along these lines would see a preferred party vote for the Greens in general. Because electorate votes can boost the representation of minor parties, there is tactical advantage in voting for the Maori Party in Maori electorates, for Labour against Anderton in Wigram, for Labour against NZ First in Tauranga, and for National against Act in Epsom. In other electorates the left would make a modest gain from a Labour victory over Anderton, National, Act, and NZ First.

**Do you want to  
contribute to Struggle?**

*All submissions welcome.*

**Send submissions to: PO Box 6724, Wellington.**

# What Choice for Workers?

As bourgeois commentators fall over themselves to tell us about the 'chasm' opening between the two options to lead the next government workers need not delude themselves: Labour and National are two sides of the same coin. Both represent capitalists against workers, both seek to run 'the economy' for the interest of capital, both are advocating policies that will increase private profits at the expense of workers.

Let's look at some of the policies we are told that Labour and National 'differ'.

## (1) TAXES

No doubt many ordinary workers and middle class people, whose real wages have scarcely advanced over the past decade. They will instinctively feel that the tax cut plan is yet another mechanism through which the wealthy elite is increasing its riches at their expense.

And such sentiments are correct. But in order to advance beyond instincts, however soundly based, and see precisely how this process of wealth transference is taking place, it is necessary to rise above the framework within which the "tax debate" has so far taken place. This involves consideration of some basic questions concerning the structure of the capitalist economy itself.

Let us take as the starting point the question of wages. What commodity does the worker sell to the employer through the wage contract? It appears that the worker has sold his or her labour or the product of that labour. But closer examination shows that this cannot be the case. When the wage contract is entered into, labour has yet to be performed, and when it is carried out, the product of that labour certainly does not belong to the worker who performed it. Rather it is the property of the employer—a myriad of laws confirm.

The commodity that the worker sells to the employer is not labour, or the product of labour, but rather the capacity to labour, or what Marx termed labour power. Like every other commodity, the price of this commodity, which takes the form of wages, is determined in the final analysis, by its value, that is the amount of time it takes to reproduce it. Accordingly the value of labour power is determined by the value of the commodities needed to sustain the individual worker according to the social conditions of the time and which enables the worker to raise a family, that is, produce a new generation of wage workers.

Having purchased this commodity in the labour market, the employer consumes it by setting the worker to work. In the first part of the working day, say for example two hours, the worker will reproduce the value of his or her labour power. But the labour process does not end there. The employer purchased the right to consume labour power not for just two hours—the time taken to reproduce its value—but for eight hours, the full length of the working day. In this second part of the working day, the worker continues to add new value, but receives no payment.

To put it another way: the worker receives payment not for eight hours labour (or whatever the working day happens to be) but for selling the sole commodity he or she owns—the capacity to work for eight hours. The fruits of the consumption of that commodity, realised when the worker gets to work, belong to the capitalist employer who purchased it.

It is this difference—between the value of the commodity that the employer purchases in the market, labour power, and the value that the consumption of that commodity yields through the performance of labour over the entire working day—which is the source of

surplus value.

The surplus value that arises from the consumption of the labour power of the working class by capital is appropriated by the various sections of the capitalist class in the form of profit, interest, rent and other forms of property income.

But this very distribution process serves to conceal the fact that the origin of profit, and other forms of property income, is the surplus value extracted from the working class.

The worker in the factory, the teller in the bank, person waiting tables in a restaurant and the corporate executive or high-paid corporate lawyer, all receive an income. But the source of that income is different. The wage received by the car worker or waitress is payment for the sale of labour power, the consumption of which gives rise to surplus value and profit.

The income received by the corporate executive or lawyer is not payment for the sale of labour power which then goes on to produce additional surplus value. Rather, it is the form through which already produced surplus value is distributed among different sections of the property-owning capitalist class and the most privileged sections of the middle class hired to defend their interests.

The distribution of the available surplus value among the different sections of the capitalist class takes place not according to any plan, but by means of a competitive struggle.

In other words, the services performed by these highly paid layers relate not to the production of surplus value but rather to the development of means by which a greater share of it can be appropriated.

The mass of surplus value extracted from the working class is not only the source of all profit and property-derived income but, in the final

## ANALYSIS

analysis, is the source of tax revenue for the government as well. Taxation is a deduction from the mass of surplus value which would otherwise be available for distribution among the different sections of the capitalist class. This is why the introduction of income tax has long been opposed as an attack on property rights—a position still adhered to today.

Insofar as income tax revenue is used to finance spending on social services, health, education etc., it involves a redistribution of surplus value back to the working class whose labour produced it in the first place. This reflects that although, as Marx noted, the 'executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie', that the state is also a site of conflict where struggle can reveal temporary gains for the working class.

### **National's 'Tax Cuts'**

A tax cut, is a completely different process. It involves an additional allocation of the available mass of surplus value to those already receiving it in the form of property-derived incomes. These layers are therefore "twice blessed." On the one hand their escalating incomes are themselves a distribution of surplus value, and on the other, they are to receive a further amount in the form of a tax cut.

Brash has presented his program as "tax relief for everyone" as if it involved some principle of equality. But it demonstrates that nothing works so effectively to create greater inequality than a system that treats as equal those who, in fact, are not.

The Bush plan treats all forms of income as "equal" and hence equally entitled to tax relief. However all incomes are not the same. The majority of incomes derive from the sale of labour power by workers whose labour produces surplus value, the ultimate source of tax revenue.

But the greatest beneficiaries of the tax cut will not be these workers, but rather those whose income is bound up with the appropriation of surplus value on behalf of property in its various forms.

### **Labour's 'Tax Relief'**

Under the current wages system, employers are supposed to pay a sufficient wage to feed, clothe and house

the wage earner. Under Labour's 'Working for Families', having been transformed into a beneficiary as well as a worker, the worker would receive two incomes from two different sources. But no one, especially, the employer, will support or condone the existence of two payments, each of which are calculated to provide for the same basic needs of the worker.

Working for Families infers that a State Agency will fix the level of a benefit payment which will be sufficient to meet the worker's basic needs. At the same time, since wage payments continue, trade union negotiators will be seeking the continuation of current wage levels which are also based on the costs of feeding, clothing and housing the worker. Both these income systems, when supposedly doing the same job, cannot continue side by side, as if nothing has changed. The introduction of Working for Families brings about a huge qualitative change in who pays the worker's income. The employer's responsibility to meet the full cost of feeding, clothing and housing the wage earner has been taken away.

Working for Families makes the employer a weekly lotto winner. Working for Families is actually relieving the employer of the responsibility to pay a living wage.

### **De-Coupling Income from Work is a Welfare Scheme for Big Corporations**

Working for Families de-couples income from work, the general taxpayers will eventually replace part of the wages paid by the employer. In effect, Working for Families is a state-controlled and managed welfare system for the large foreign and local corporations. They are the major beneficiaries of a scheme that crudely shackles wage earners to a business-friendly state.

This assessment identifies the UBI regime as favouring the monopoly capitalist class at the expense of working people. Despite the rhetoric of National and ACT, state control of the income of working people has more in common with Mussolini than early New Zealand socialists.

### **(2) STUDENT LOANS**

According to the New Zealand University Students' Association, the per EFTS funding to universities from

the government has declined in real terms by more than 20% since 1990. For Polytechnics and Colleges of Education, funding has declined by significantly greater amounts. Universities pass these funding declines directly to students in the form of massive fee hikes. Fees have risen from \$125 a year in 1989 to anywhere from \$3000 to \$25000 in now.

These are among the highest fees paid in any developed country in the world. In Scandinavia, France, Germany, and even Greece and Portugal, no fees at all are charged for the bulk of tertiary education and in the United States, where fees at some institutions are quite high, there is a much more comprehensive system of financial support and scholarships than is available in New Zealand.

Student allowances are more disincentives than tertiary incentives. Only about 20% of students get an allowance, a figure that has fallen under the Labour government, and how much a student gets depends on a number of seemingly unlikely factors, such as the student's age, marital status, income, and - for students under the age of 25 - even the income of parents is taken into account. The allowance does not take into consideration such factors as the childcare needs of student parents or the needs of students with disabilities. The unemployment benefit is much more simply decided; it is at least only based upon an individual's beneficiary's circumstances.

The last three governments have been thrown out of office in part because of their inability to face up to widespread dissatisfaction with funding and support for tertiary education. Now US-lackey Lockwood Smith toured campuses in 1989 promising to 'abolish Labour's fee', Steve Maharey, now safely away from tertiary education came into office in 1996 condemning National's policies as a 'mean-spirited attack on students' he kept them in place.

By far the most crippling component of student economic hardship is the Government Student Loans Scheme. In 2005, students owe nearly \$8 Billion in student loans. The threshold for loan repayments is just \$16,000 - Australians start paying if they earn above the average wage, \$or \$38500!

### **Both Parties**

Both National and Labour announced

interest write-off schemes during the election campaign. National's means that if you earn lots then you can claim the interest that you are charged against your tax. Labour's means that there will be no interest charged at all (see critique of National's lies about the write-off)..

It's important to recognise three things which have not been traversed in the discussion between National and Labour. First, no one is going to be better off under either scheme until their loan is actually paid off - the actual amount that people pay to the government in the interim is to be unchanged. The only benefit will be after a reduced time to repay the loan is completed, and consequently less money to be repaid in total. For many students the benefit is likely to be ten years, or fourteen years away (depending if they are an average man or an average woman). Of course this is better than the thirty years that the debt would take otherwise, but is hardly generous given that the fact that there are loans at all is hideous.

The second significant element is that the New Zealand public hates the student loans scheme. Even a student population increasingly drawn from wealthier families, as poorer students are dumped into lower quality courses, condemn the extortionate fees and that they have to borrow to live. There is no way that it would have been able to continue. What both National and Labour have attempted to do, although each dismissive of the other's efforts, is to change the student loans scheme in order to save it.

A third issue is that the 'costings' of the promises are completely illusory. Students have been charged an interest rate (and will continue under a National government after 17 September) of 7% - even though the cost of the money lent to students is probably less than 4%, given the interest rates on offer internationally where the government borrows its money. Students are also 'charged' \$50 for the 'administration cost' of the scheme so that's already covered. The government has been profiting from the scheme in addition to avoiding paying for tertiary education in the first place. Giving up this income is not the same as the cost of the promises. In addition, both Labour (especially) and National's schemes will mean that the capital students borrow will be repaid more quickly. Maharey has admitted that the purpose of the

low repayment threshold and the high proportion thereafter required (10%) is to generate capital itself - that money being repaid under the scheme will exceed that being lent. In which case the 'cost' of the money will be nothing.

Labour's promise, even more so than National's, despite its superficial attractiveness, is an attempt to keep the loans scheme in place. While students have delighted in the prospect that their loans will take ten years to repay instead of upwards of forty-five years they will soon come to realise that even that is an injustice. A progressive taxation system will mean that those who earn more as a result of their studies will pay more tax, as will others who benefit under capitalism, and allow for no fees and allowances for all - something the demand for will inevitably continue unabated.

**NATIONAL, LABOUR  
ALMOST EQUALLY SUPPORT-  
ED BY CAPITAL**

A poll by Sherwin, Chan and Walshe BRC of 298 businesses in the Wellington region found 45 per cent of businesses preferred the next government to be led by National, compared to 36 per cent who supported Labour.

Significantly, the poll found growing support for the Government's handling of the economy. The numbers satisfied or very satisfied leaped 15 per cent to 62 per cent. Those feeling neutral dropped 5 per cent to 10 per cent and the number dissatisfied or very dissatisfied fell to 26 per cent from 36 per cent.

Alongside this, support for Helen Clark also firmed, with the numbers satisfied or very satisfied with her performance as prime minister rising to 60 per cent from 52 per cent. The number of people dissatisfied or very dissatisfied dropped to 29 per cent from 36 per cent.

**FUNDING FOR PRIVATE  
PROFIT**

Finally, as the campaign pedal hits the metal, Labour's last promise is to give extra to private owners of early childhood businesses.

According to John Minto of the Quality Public Education Coalition 'Labour's decision to dramatically increase funding for private early childhood centres

is staggering'!

More than \$50 million is to be allocated to "for profit" Early Childhood Education Centres when the funding needs across public education are manifest.

Minto asks: What about our public schools crying out for Operations Grant funding to meet the real cost of schooling? What about our children with special education needs who are being daily "main-dumped" while schools lack the resources to ensure they can be effective learners in the classroom?

What about our public schools in low income communities which are now 25% behind in funding compared to public schools in high income communities? What about our universities and polytechs where staff are poorly paid and student fees are increasing by up to 10% per year?

The extra funding for private profit-making centres is as a result of a campaign by the Business Roundtable through its Education Forum. Labour's buckling to this pressure, while it ignores pleas from the public sector, reveals its class base.

The private early childhood and private tertiary education sectors have seen dramatic increases under Labour over the past 6 years. For example in the private tertiary sector government funding has increased from just \$17 million when Labour came to office to over \$150 million per year now! Similar increases have been recorded in the private early childhood sector.

Minto is quoted as saying 'This latest Labour announcement is not difficult to understand. It is impossible!' But only if you expect better from the Parliamentary Labour Party, if you are familiar with their history then it comes as no surprise at all!

# Bosses' Spokespeople Wrong on Interest Rate Write-Off

National, ACT and (foreign-owned) bank economists have fallen over themselves to condemn Labour's promise to write off debt. Ignoring that the loans should never have been incurred in the first place and would be written off immediately under socialism, the policy will clearly improve the lot of individual students with loans. However, it will not be sufficient to deflect student protest against fees and a lack of allowances and the drive to write-off the debt will continue.

Despite the inadequacy of the policy it has still been attacked. These attacks have no basis in reality and merely reflect that one of the crimes that the loans scheme stands accused is that rich people (such as those condemning Labour's promise as a 'bribe' that will 'blow the size of the debt') haven't had to borrow, and therefore not have to pay any interest, and have no idea how the scheme works at the moment.

## NO SPECULATIVE BORROWING

Assuming you don't get a student allowance you can borrow \$150 per week for living costs plus \$1,000 for course costs, which you need justification from the tertiary institution in order to get (or actually spend the money). That money can go into your pocket and you could, technically, invest it. But in order to get that money you also must borrow the money for fees - about \$4,000 - and you cannot put that money in your pocket. It has to go to the institution.

So in order to obtain about \$7,000 investable dollars, you would have to incur about \$11,000 in debt. Assuming average annual after tax returns of 5%, it would take between 9 and 10 years for you to reach \$11,000. And you'd be taking all the risks of an economic downturn, a policy reversal, etc. If you do get a student allowance, you can't borrow as much - the incentives are worse.

Speculative borrowing is not worth the

risk. Therefore no debt explosion.

## BANKERS REVEAL REAL PROBLEM

But what is really alarming has been the lies, and partiality, presented as 'independence' by private sector bank economists.

First was Westpac chief economist Brendan O'Donovan. He urged Labour not to implement the policy, predicting a cost blowout to around \$700 million a year. He later retracted his costings acknowledging that he didn't understand how the scheme worked.

Minister of Education Trevor Mallard told one of the few truths in the election campaign, by mistake, when he challenged O'Donovan's independence and accused Westpac of releasing its forecast for 'very selfish reasons': it stood to lose money. At issue was the bank's graduate package, where it buys out up to \$10,000 of student loans at discounted rates to secure future custom. Mallard slagged the "international company" for not declaring its conflict of interest.

The 'international' company is among a number of Australian-owned banks (although the Australian banking sector are subject to significant US ownership themselves) which are alleged to have avoided hundreds of millions of dollars in New Zealand taxes through structured finance deals. They have also been in the vanguard of moves to harmonise banking regulations (to the detriment of the ability of New Zealand authorities to control the New Zealand money supply) across the Tasman.

The National Bank chimed in as well, also having failed to listen to student leaders' careful explanation of how the scheme actually works.

Both the banks have made significant pitches for the 'student market' which increasingly relies on students being conditioned with a false consciousness to

borrow now for a utopian future where they will climb above their peers and live the life of opulence. Students need to reject such nonsense and also reject the anti-student banks. At the least act with their feet and move their business away to New Zealand-owned banks who significantly have not engaged in the anti-student rhetoric.

The issue exposes even more: just one of the problems with having the banking system overwhelming dominated by foreign-owned banks.

Nationalise the BNZ, drive the other foreign-owned banks back to their US masters.

# Selling Our Schools

by John Minto, National Chairperson, QPEC  
- Quality Public Education Coalition

(Published in Sunday Star Times 31 July 2005)

The new face of privatisation is staring at us. More particularly it is staring at our schools. However it looks different to the privatisations we are used to from the 1980's and 1990's whereby community assets were sold outright under Labour and then National governments.

A good example of what happened back then was our Post Office. Under Jonathan Hunt as Minister in the late 1980's it was firstly split into 3 separate sections – the telephone network, Post Office Savings Bank and postal services. These became State Owned Enterprises required to produce a profit for the government. This first stage was referred to as commercialisation. Once they were profitable they were then sold outright to private investors and became Telecom, Postbank and New Zealand Post respectively. This second stage is called privatisation.

This means that instead of the profits from these services going back to the community they now go into the back pockets of private investors. In the case of Telecom for example it was sold by the government for just over \$4 billion and over the succeeding 15 years it has returned close to \$15 billion in profits to its private shareholders. Were this community asset to be still in community hands it alone would be able to pay for fully government funded tertiary education. No student debt – what a novel idea! Alas not. The original investors sold Telecom just a few years ago for \$12 billion making a capital gain of some \$8 billion or 200% over 10 years. All this money – more than \$20 billion – went from the pockets of New Zealanders and into the pockets of wealthy private individuals – mostly foreign in Telecom's case.

These are staggering figures and represent the reason private investors are always pressuring governments to sell community assets so they can cream handsome profits for shareholders.

Occasionally these privatisations fail but it not the private investors who lose out. Instead they are bailed out by (guess who?) us who must spend more billions



of our money to clean up the mess as with Air New Zealand and Tranzrail for example. It's very much a case of "privatise the profits and socialise the losses" for these rapacious private sector investors.

After experiences like this communities around the world have developed resistance to government sell-offs of their assets. One response has been the use of management contracts. For example with water services companies are not interested in owning the pipes and dams. Instead they get lucrative "management contracts" for the assets and substantial profits are being made around the world where this is occurring.

## SO WHAT DOES THE NEW FACE OF PRIVATISATION LOOK LIKE?

It is represented by the current Vector share offer to electricity consumers in Auckland. To avoid community opposition to the outright sale of our electricity assets the National government put these assets into the hands of a community trust – the Auckland Energy Consumer Trust. This trust which owns Vector on our behalf is now beginning the privatisation process by issuing shares as a way of raising money to expand. (You need a minimum of \$500 which cuts out the 15% of families – according to the government's own figures – who need to borrow money to pay for basic necessities such as the power bill itself!)

So rather than the outright sale of these assets by the government as occurred in the 1980's and 1990's the assets are

placed instead in the hands of a "community trust" which then proceeds from this "half-way house" to issue shares and move to full privatisation.

This is precisely the process which the National Party is setting in place for the privatisation of our public schools.

National wants to establish "trust schools" whereby a school Board of Trustees would become a "community trust" and would hold title to all the assets of the school – including the land and buildings – to deal with as they see fit.

One can easily imagine a scenario whereby this "community trust" wants to upgrade their school buildings but can't get the money from government to do so. The answer will be to issue shares and bring in private investment just as the Auckland Energy Consumer Trust is currently doing.

The school will be gone from community ownership and community control in the blink of an eye.

The interests of shareholders then become the driving force. Private investors will salivate at the prospect of making money from the education of our children but the loss of parent power in dealing with schools which has been so heavily eroded under Tomorrow's Schools will be complete.

Don Brash says that as far as he is concerned he doesn't care who owns our schools. We do!

# The Wealth of the West was Built on Africa's Exploitation

## Britain Has Never Faced Up to the Dark Side of its Imperial History

by Richard Drayton  
originally published in the *Guardian*

Britain was the principal slaving nation of the modern world. In *The Empire Pays Back*, a documentary broadcast by Channel 4 on Monday, Robert Beckford called on the British to take stock of this past. Why, he asked, had Britain made no apology for African slavery, as it had done for the Irish potato famine? Why was there no substantial public monument of national contrition equivalent to Berlin's Holocaust Museum? Why, most crucially, was there no recognition of how wealth extracted from Africa and Africans made possible the vigour and prosperity of modern Britain? Was there not a case for Britain to pay reparations to the descendants of African slaves?

These are timely questions in a summer in which Blair and Bush, their hands still wet with Iraqi blood, sought to rebrand themselves as the saviours of Africa. The G8's debt-forgiveness initiative was spun successfully as an act of western altruism. The generous Massas never bothered to explain that, in order to benefit, governments must agree to "conditions", which included allowing profit-making companies to take over public services. This was no gift; it was what the merchant bankers would call a "debt-for-equity swap", the equity here being national sovereignty. The sweetest bit of the deal was that the money owed, already more than repaid in interest, had mostly gone to buy industrial imports from the west and Japan, and oil from nations who bank their profits in London and New York. Only in a bookkeeping sense had it ever left the rich world. No one considered that Africa's debt was trivial compared to what the west really owes Africa.

Beckford's experts estimated Britain's debt to Africans in the continent and diaspora to be in the trillions of pounds. While this was a useful benchmark, its basis was mistaken. Not because it was excessive, but because the real debt is incalculable. For without Africa and its Caribbean plantation extensions, the modern world as we know it would not exist.

Profits from slave trading and from sugar, coffee, cotton and tobacco are only a

small part of the story. What mattered was how the pull and push from these industries transformed western Europe's economies. English banking, insurance, shipbuilding, wool and cotton manufacture, copper and iron smelting, and the cities of Bristol, Liverpool and Glasgow, multiplied in response to the direct and indirect stimulus of the slave plantations.

The colonial Americas were more Africa's creation than Europe's: before 1800, far more Africans than Europeans crossed the Atlantic. New World slaves were vital too, strangely enough, for European trade in the east. For merchants needed precious metals to buy Asian luxuries, returning home with profits in the form of textiles; only through exchanging these cloths in Africa for slaves to be sold in the New World could Europe obtain new gold and silver to keep the system moving. East Indian companies led ultimately to Europe's domination of Asia and its 19th-century humiliation of China.

Africa not only underpinned Europe's earlier development. Its palm oil, petroleum, copper, chromium, platinum and in particular gold were and are crucial to the later world economy. Only South America, at the zenith of its silver mines, outranks Africa's contribution to the growth of the global bullion supply.

The guinea coin paid homage in its name to the west African origins of one flood of gold. By this standard, the British pound since 1880 should have been rechristened the rand, for Britain's prosperity and its currency stability depended on South Africa's mines. I would wager that a large share of that gold in the IMF's vaults which was supposed to pay for Africa's debt relief had originally been stolen from that continent.

There are many who like to blame Africa's weak governments and economies, famines and disease on its post-1960 leadership. But the fragility of contemporary Africa is a direct consequence of two centuries of slaving, followed by another of colonial despotism. Nor was "decolonisation" all it seemed: both Britain and France attempted to corrupt the whole project of political sovereignty.

It is remarkable that none of those in Britain who talk about African dictatorship and kleptocracy seem aware that Idi Amin came to power in Uganda through British covert action, and that Nigeria's generals were supported and manipulated from 1960 onwards in support of Britain's oil interests. It is amusing, too, to find the *Telegraph* and the *Daily Mail* - which just a generation ago supported Ian Smith's Rhodesia and South African apartheid - now so concerned about human rights in Zimbabwe. The real appetite of the west for democracy in Africa is less than it seems. We talk about the Congo tragedy without mentioning that it was a British statesman, Alec Douglas-Home, who agreed with the US president in 1960 that Patrice Lumumba, its elected leader, needed to "fall into a river of crocodiles".

African slavery and colonialism are not ancient or foreign history; the world they made is around us in Britain. It is not merely in economic terms that Africa underpins a modern experience of (white) British privilege. Had Africa's signature not been visible on the body of the Brazilian Jean Charles de Menezes, would he have been gunned down on a tube at Stockwell? The slight kink of the hair, his pale beige skin, broadcast something misread by police as foreign danger.

This universe of risk, part of the black experience, is the afterlife of slavery. The reverse of the medal is what WEB DuBois called the "wage of whiteness", the world of safety, trustworthiness, welcome that those with pale skins take for granted. The psychology of racism operates even among those who believe in human equality, shaping unequal outcomes in education, employment, criminal justice. By its light, such all-white clubs as the G8 continue to meet in comfort.

Early this year, Gordon Brown told journalists in Mozambique that Britain should stop apologising for colonialism. The truth is, though, that Britain has never even faced up to the dark side of its imperial history, let alone begun to apologise.



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# A New Agenda

## Electoral Programme of the Communist Party of Aotearoa

### What Can We Expect from the Election?

Parliamentary elections provide an opportunity for the capitalist class to test their ability to deceive the masses of the people. Every three years we are asked to choose between capitalist parties offering minor variations of the same diet of falling wages, reduced social services, poverty and desperation for many, and support for imperialist wars.

The working class has made repeated attempts to elect representatives to parliament but the capitalists have been adept at coopting and corrupting these. After all, parliamentary democracy is a fundamental capitalist institution; the capitalists created parliaments to secure their power after the defeat of feudalism centuries ago. They set the rules and know the game backwards.

Where workers' parties have come at all close to gaining significant power, as in Germany in the 1920s or Chile in the 1970s, the armed forces have stepped in. Even New Zealand in the 1930s saw the capitalists preparing for a military coup should Labour adopt extremist policies.

Workers have only forced reforms on the capitalist class when we have mobilised in great numbers around central demands, such as the welfare measures in the 1890s and 1930s or the social reforms of the 1970s.

### Balance of Forces

It is a very different picture today. There have been many impressive mobilisations against the attacks on our living standards in the past decade and a number of victories. But the peoples' organisations are still too weak to force a major change of direction on the capitalist class, let alone a comprehensive progressive agenda.

Until peoples' organisations can organise sustained mass mobilisations against the attacks on our living standards, we will be unable to undertake the more difficult task of mobilising thousands of votes for a comprehensive policy programme. Parliamentary elections are the home ground of the capitalists; their representatives are highly resourced, supported by scores of paid organisers, vast advertising budgets, and highly experienced and skilled in manipulation and deceit.

### Electoral Choices

In this context, many people feel obliged to support one of the capitalist parliamentary parties as "the lesser evil". This is mistaken, however, as it strengthens those forces that are trying to defeat us. For example, if the Labour Party gains a majority of seats in parliament, as it is aiming for, it will no longer have to make concessions the Alliance demanded, such as increasing the minimum wage or parental leave.

Others, wanting to wave the flag for socialism, will add to the handful of votes recorded by fringe left wing candidates. This too is mistaken as it weakens the forces of the left, adding to the impression that left-wingers are isolated from the real concerns of working people.

The Communist Party does not shy away from the electoral struggle, however. We do not seek salvation in the false promises of the capitalist parties nor offer false hope of a parliamentary road to socialism. We see the election as an opportunity to criticise capitalism, but not with empty phrases.

We thus offer the following electoral programme as a rallying point for the peoples' organisations. We draw these demands from the major problems facing the people of Aotearoa and offer them in a manner that would strengthen the position of the masses. This programme could be feasibly implemented by a parliamentary majority supported by sustained mobilisation of the people against the inevitable resistance of the foreign capitalists and their local agents.

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# A Programme for the People's Movements

## Higher Living Standards

- Legislate annual wage increases to exceed inflation rate
- Pay equity tribunals to order wage increases in female occupations
- Raise the minimum wage to \$10 for all ages
- Funding to enforce healthier & safer workplaces
- Four weeks annual leave
- Fourteen weeks paid parental leave
- Legislate employer provision of free childcare
- Reduce working week to 40 hours
- Abolish GST on food and social services
- Abolish income tax on gross incomes below \$20,000

## Deliver on Treaty Rights

- Fund Waitangi Tribunal to hear and address claims without further delay
- Dedicate TVNZ resources to establishing Maori TV until autonomous broadcasting is established
- Expand funding to increase capacity of Maori communities to participate in society
- Expand funding to increase the numbers of Maori in education and training

## Restore the Social Fabric

- Zero tolerance for unemployment – unemployment benefit to be replaced by fulltime permanent jobs in the state service
- End privatisation of local authority housing
- Expand stocks of high quality state housing
- Increase social worker numbers
- A large state investment in cultural activities, especially for young people
- Promote a culture of responsible alcohol and drug use, alongside cannabis decriminalisation

## Free Education

- Abolish fees on tertiary education
- Write off the student loan mountain
- Increase student allowances to standard benefit level, for all post-secondary training
- Increase teacher numbers to allow a maximum 1:20 teaching staff/student ratio

## Restore Public Health

- Boost funding for health to 8% GDP
- Increase nursing and doctor numbers
- Abolish charges for doctors visits

- Increased funding for youth mental health services

## A Clean Green Aotearoa

- Ban the commercial release of genetically engineered organisms in Aotearoa
- Renationalise and fund the railways as a real alternative to cars and road transport
- Support advanced research and development in organic farming
- Tax carbon emissions and imports

## Develop Advanced Industry

- Force productivity increases through full employment and rising real wages
- State regulation to reduce the costs and force the construction of a national broadband infrastructure.
- New state corporations to establish advanced industries.
- Increase funding for tertiary education.
- Prohibit foreign acquisition of local companies and lands.
- Expand the Reserve Bank's primary targets to include economic growth and exchange rate stability.

## Tax the Rich

- Tax on the value of financial transactions
- Capital gains tax excluding occupied homes
- Tax on foreign exchange transactions
- Tax on luxury consumer items
- Higher taxes on incomes above \$100,000

## A More Efficient and Democratic Government

- End the siphoning of taxes into the Superannuation Fund
- Reap the benefits of ending unemployment and social security with reduced policing and prison spending
- Expand revenue base through income from state owned corporations
- Introduce a democratically elected head of state
- Establishment of a workplace and hapu-based legislative council

## Withdraw from the US War Drive

- No participation in overseas military actions as 'peacekeepers' or otherwise
- Reduce military and security spending
- Speak out in international forums in support of the victims of US imperialist aggression

The political programme advanced by the Communist Party for this election will be fiercely resisted by US capital in New Zealand and their local agents. But the policies can be forced on them if the people of Aotearoa are mobilised in sufficient numbers. These policies will strengthen the position of the working class, the oppressed Maori nation, much of the middle class and some local capitalists against foreign capital. But while US capital and their local agents control the economy and run the state, there will be increasingly severe reaction to further encroachments on their power and profits.

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# For a Peoples' Republic of Aotearoa

Significant gains for the people of Aotearoa will only come with the ousting of US imperialism and their local agents. The overthrow of these parasites will be a national democratic revolution with a socialist orientation.

The revolution is nationalist in that its aim is the overthrow of the imperialist yoke. The revolution is democratic in that its aim is to defend the democratic rights of the people and to advance the incomplete democratic rights of the oppressed Maori nation, the incomplete democratic rights of women, and the incomplete democratic rights of national minorities. The revolution has a socialist orientation because it cannot be carried out except under the leadership of the working class, whose immediate interest in capitalist society, is socialism. The victory of the national democratic revolution will be immediately accompanied by the commencement of the construction of socialism.

## Political

The national democratic revolution will overthrow the dictatorship of foreign capital and their lackeys and replace it with a Peoples' Republic of the working class, the Maori nation, the small middle class and other anti-imperialists.

Peoples' Congresses at local and national levels, elected on the basis of universal suffrage, will govern Aotearoa. Because the imperialism profits from the oppression of the national minorities and women, the development of democracy in Aotearoa is incomplete and will not be carried through by the capitalist class. Because of the remaining need to win democratic equality for the national minorities and women, the new government in Aotearoa will have the form of a Peoples' Democratic Republic.

Recognition will be given to the sovereignty of the Maori over Aotearoa and the Treaty of Waitangi honoured. The peoples' government will work for the equality of all nationalities, the revival the languages and cultures of the national minorities. White chauvinism and racism will be actively fought.

The Peoples' Democratic Republic will also fulfil the incomplete democratic rights of women by ending obstacles to their equal participation in society. Comprehensive public child-care will be established. Paid parental leave, flexible working hours and a shorter working day will be legislated, as will the right to free contraception and safe legal abortion. Male supremacy would be vigorously combated.

The Peoples' Democratic Republic will prepare the way for the construction of socialist political institutions to unleash the full participation of the working class in society.

## Economic

The Peoples' Democratic Republic will rebuild the economy on the basis of self-reliance. The property of the imperialists, compradors, and big domestic monopolists will be confiscated; that unjustly appropriated from Maori will be immediately returned. The state sector will become the leading force in the economy. Small and medium capital will be allowed to continue accumulating, but under notice that the socialist state will buy them out in the future.

The Peoples' Democratic Republic will develop its own internal credit system and give a priority to developing heavy and advanced industry necessary for self-reliance. The Peoples' Democratic Republic will trade with other countries on the basis of equality and mutual benefit, most likely this will be mainly with other anti-imperialist nations.

Building an advanced self-reliant will pave the way for the socialisation of, first, the leading sectors of the economy and the fullest participation of workers in the day-to-day running of the economy.

## Cultural

A national, scientific and mass culture will replace the colonial, idealist, elitist culture of the reactionary ruling classes. Traditional national cultural forms will be integrated with the most modern internationalist insights. The revolutionary democratic culture will express the heroic struggles and aspirations of the masses.

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## **International**

The revolutionary struggle in Aotearoa contributes to the international struggle of against US imperialism under the principle of proletarian internationalism and as part of the international united front. Wherever possible, direct relations with fraternal parties will be established.

The Peoples' Democratic Republic will maintain diplomatic and trade relations with all countries that recognise the sovereignty of the people of Aotearoa and which engage in such relations for mutual benefit. All unequal treaties will be severed. The warmest relations will be developed with all communist parties and revolutionary movements fighting imperialism, revisionism, and reaction.

## **Socialist Orientation**

Immediately on the victory of the national democratic struggle, the working class under the leadership of the Communist Party will commence constructing the conditions for socialism and the transformation of the Peoples' Democratic Republic into a Socialist Peoples' Republic. The working class relies its own strength and on the basic alliance with the Māori nation for this transformation.

The state and cooperative sectors of the economy will be promoted and advanced by the working class to create the economic base for socialism. Workers will be called on to revolutionise society in line with the socialisation of production. Promotion of the democratic rights of Māori and women will be to the forefront of this great struggle. Particular attention will be given to raising the economic, social and cultural level of people who especially suffered under capitalism. More extensive and explicit rights for the working class, oppressed nationalities, women and other social groups would also be guaranteed. The right to be free of exploitation would be primary over any property rights. The right to a job, today denied for thousands of people, would be guaranteed. The right to education and health care would be raised as basic human rights and resources concentrated in these areas to make this a reality. A socialist society can give a great deal more attention and resources to arts, sports, education, sciences, humanities and popular entertainment. Cultural and political life will blossom outside the shadow of the dollar.

The socialist people's democracy will be the form of the political rule of the working class in Aotearoa, the specific form of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Democracy will be ensured for the vast majority and the national minorities and dictatorship exercised over a particular class - the former and would-be oppressors. As such, socialism will be the first stage of the development towards communism, a truly classless society. Communism is a long time off. It will be possible when worldwide economic, ideological and social development will allow the gradual amalgamation of peoples into one, making states themselves unnecessary. Communism will realise the ideal "from each according to one's ability, to each according to one's need." Classes will have largely disappeared, the state will "wither" away, and an exciting new era of human freedom and prosperity will arise.

## **Workers, Join Your Party**

Every political party defends the interest of one class or another in society. On all questions, in every battle, the Communist Party defends the interests of the working class, and works to prepare its victory over the capitalists. It is made up those men and women who are most conscious of the need to fight, the most determined to fight for the liberation of their whole class and of all the oppressed people and oppressed nationalities.

The Party's role is to educate, organise and mobilise the working class. The Party is the organisation that can orient the struggle of the entire class. It can bring an overall perspective to each branch of the workers' movement and unite all the isolated battles into one powerful revolutionary storm. The Party can raise the spontaneous anger of the workers to the level of conscious political struggle to put an end to this criminal system. In this sense, the revolutionary communist party is the vanguard of the working class.

**Published by the Communist Party of Aotearoa**

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# Neoliberalism in Aotearoa and the P3 – G8 Not Making Poverty History

by Maria Bargh

The G8 meeting at Gleneagles Scotland attracted a great deal of attention to those particular leaders, their horrific policies and their roles in global poverty and neoliberal globalisation. We should not forget however that these kinds of neoliberal practices and agendas continue here in Aotearoa.

The New Zealand government is involved in a range of neoliberal practices and agendas – extending the market mechanism in to areas of the community previously governed in other ways. One central avenue for extending the market is through ‘free’ trade agreements which more firmly entrench neoliberal policies here and in other countries.

The government has most recently signed a “Closer Economic Partnership” with Chile, Singapore, and Brunei. Despite the fact that these neoliberal trade and services deals are distinguished by the government as though they are all unique – “closer economic partnerships” or “free trade agreements” – they continue to have the same three fundamental elements of ‘most-favoured nation status’, ‘national treatment’ (which I describe as ‘no best friends’ and ‘can’t be best friends with yourself’ respectively) and progressive liberalisation. All three aspects particularly benefit and protect transnational corporations at the expense of the local environment and wages and working standards, whilst simultaneously ensuring neoliberal policies are increasingly difficult to undo.

The Chile, Singapore, Brunei New Zealand agreement was originally called a ‘P3’ (Pacific Three) which referred to Chile, Singapore and the New Zealand government. Although New Zealand can be described as a Pacific state it appears somewhat ironic that ‘Pacific’ did not in fact refer to any other Pacific island countries. In the final stages of signing the agreement off Brunei decided to join and the title was changed to the “Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership Agreement”.

The New Zealand government has already signed a ‘Closer Economic Partnership’ with Singapore therefore in the initial documentation the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) made much about the unique connections

between Chile and New Zealand – including economics, politics and history. More significant for opponents of neoliberal policies the connection between the countries rests with the description of New Zealand as “Chile without the gun” in reference to the initial implementation of neoliberal policies in Chile under the military dictatorship led by Pinochet, while in New Zealand it was led by the elected Labour Party.

Alongside the emphasis on the uniqueness of the connection with Chile, the government was also open that this Agreement was a stepping stone to a large P5/P6 agreement which would include Australia and the United States. It seems likely that this is one of the main reasons Chile and Singapore were interested, to use New Zealand as a stepping stone to ‘bigger and better’ things while the New Zealand government is aiming to advance a ‘free’ trade agreement with the US.

For Maori this Agreement was in many ways a reversion. MFAT has in recent years been paying a greater level of attention to ‘consulting’ with Maori when it comes to neoliberal agreements. It is questionable whether they take any account of the views expressed during consultation; however they make a show of consulting. For this Agreement however there was no extensive consultation with Maori indeed only one Maori organisation was visited by MFAT representatives. The agreement does contain a clause which states that “nothing in this Agreement shall preclude the adoption by New Zealand of measures it deems necessary to accord more favourable treatment to Maori in respect of matters covered by this Agreement including in fulfilment of its obligations under the Treaty of Waitangi”. However, considering that the New Zealand government has a long and sad history of breaching the Treaty of Waitangi, including most recently by passing the Foreshore and Seabed Act 2004 it is difficult to imagine that this clause affords Maori any protection per se.

The P3/Trans-Pacific agreement is also intriguing in that in the initial MFAT documentation the benefits for Maori were described as ‘cultural’. More specifically these were said to be involve “cultural linkages between Maori and Chile’s indigenous people, including the

Mapuche from mainland Chile and the Rapa Nui of Easter Island, who have historical linkages with Maori”. This kind of description casts Maori as most importantly ‘cultural’ and involved in cultural activities. This differs significantly from what might be assumed to be the role of Maori in negotiating international agreements in light of Maori tino rangatiratanga being reaffirmed in Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Under a Tiriti o Waitangi framework we might understand that Maori should have a large, if not equal say in the kinds of binding relations which are established with other nations and which relate to the access and use of resources in this country, in many places on contested whenua.

According to MFAT documentation the benefits for Maori are described as relating to “Indigenous business links”. According to this analysis the P3 would facilitate business links between Maori and Mapuche in areas such as tourism, agriculture and fisheries. It remains unclear at this point whether such business links already exist or whether governments on both sides intent to encourage it in the future. Central to the ideas here however are neoliberal notions of utilising the market as a civilising mechanism, in this case to transform Maori from cultural to economic beings.

Like Maori, Mapuche also continue to be involved in contesting the ownership of large areas of land and the resources contained therein. The P3 certainly does not bring them any redress on these matters. The alleged benefits of the P3 therefore for Maori or Mapuche, whether these are ‘cultural’ or ‘economic’ are not overly convincing.

Taking an interest in the actions of the G8 is an essential part of opposing neoliberalism globally however of equal importance is the maintenance of a focus on the kinds of injustices that these practices and agendas are inextricable from locally.

# Media Disinformation: Journalists "Disengaged" From Real Gaza Story

by Umkahil

There were an estimated four thousand journalists in Gaza, of whom only fifty are allowed access to the colonies. We were inundated with heart wrenching pictures of a Jewish soldier painfully opposing a kinsman whom he must reluctantly evict from his beloved home. "We are brothers," colonists with American accents implore the soldiers, a sound-bite that western journalists eagerly convey. What is not mentioned is that the illegal colonists occupy a land inhabited by refugees, the majority of whom originally came from inside Israel's green line, and who, contrary to international law (a phrase rarely voiced on CNN or the BBC), are not permitted to return to their lands and homes. What will also remain largely unreported is that Gaza has served as a veritable killing field of the occupied territories, victim of a disproportionate amount of Israel's targeted assassinations and child deaths.

Journalist Michael Bronner told Amy Goodman on Democracy Now: "There are thousands of journalists, there are, some say, about 4,000 journalists. And the image of settlers being dragged from their homes or pulled from their homes is an image that they really want to have, and there's almost a sense that, you know, they're being taken to some place far worse than down the beach where they're going, where the new settlement is being built for them, the new community."

What journalists are not telling viewers of BBC and CNN is that the The Fourth Geneva Convention, the primary document governing the OPT, stipulates in Article 49 that the transfer of the population of the occupying power into the occupied territory is in breach of international law. Hence, the colonists are war criminals albeit war criminals who are being compensated handsomely for their crimes with some families receiving upwards of four hundred thousand dollars to relocate. Add to the pot the World Bank's last minute buyout for fourteen million dollars of the colonies' greenhouses built on confiscated lands. Some of the kicking and screaming colonists will relocate on illegal colonies in the occupied West Bank.

What journalists are also not telling viewers is that "under the 'disengagement' plan, the

Israeli military will continue to control air and land borders (they will continue to be deployed along the Philadelphi Road border between Gaza and Egypt), and sea access to the Gaza Strip. Disengagement is . . . only a redeployment of Israeli military to the border areas."

Journalists, most pointedly, western journalists, are not telling viewers that the colonists have led privileged lives on confiscated land in Gaza. According to Hanan Ashrawi's MIFTAH (which means 'key' in Arabic): "In the Israeli occupied Gaza, one of the most densely populated areas in the world, a settler population of approximately 6,500 controls more than 20% of Gaza's territory and has full freedom of movement." Today, afforded a few minutes on CNN, Ms. Ashrawi provided more recent figures: The colonists controlled sixty percent of the water and forty percent of the land.

Western journalists are also depriving viewers by not informing them that Neve Dekalim, a favored settlement for coverage by the BBC, is one of fourteen illegal colonies that surrounds the village of Al-Mawasi. Mawasi's cleanest water is controlled by the colonists, with much of it pumped inside the Green line to the Negev.

What western journalists probably won't tell you is that Mawasi's villagers have been denied access to their own beach for four years. And before one sheds any tears for the Israeli colonists, consider pregnant women, who have often had to wait up to one week for permits to get out of Mawasi, whose inhabitants' movements have been totally controlled by the IDF for the past four years.

Al-Mawasi's hardships continue throughout the "disengagement." According to Palestine Center For Human Rights, Gaza: "At approximately 0330 on Saturday, the 13th of August 2005, IOF moved into al-Lahham quarter in al-Mawasi area in the west of Khan Yunis, raiding and searching a number of houses. They checked the identity cards of Palestinian civilians. They then took 8 civilians to a nearby military post, where they interrogated them for two hours. Seven of these civilians were released, while 18-year-old Ahmed Yousef al-Lahham has remained in custody."

Al-Mawasi is not the only Palestinian village

affected. Al-Sayafa is a "Palestinian area located in between the Dogit and Elli Sinai settlements in the Northern Gaza Strip and is home to approximately 180 Palestinians. Its inhabitants have been subjected to severe restriction of movement including requiring prior coordination to enter and exit the area and restrictions on the movement of goods and services."

But, here's hoping that some intrepid journalist will speak to Raja Sourani, head of Palestine's Center for Human Rights in Gaza. Here's what Raja said to Democracy Now's Amy Goodman:

RAJI SOURANI: [inaudible] There is nothing special. There is nothing special, nothing unique. [inaudible] It seems there is total misunderstanding for the disengagement [inaudible]. The Israeli occupation will continue in its legal and [inaudible] form. What's happening, this is unilateral disengagement [inaudible] decided by Sharon, and the occupation will remain, they will continue, they will keep controlling the borders, they will keep controlling the land. They will keep controlling the sea and the air. Gaza will be closed off. We will have no connection whatsoever with our people, relatives [inaudible] Jerusalem. The Gazans will be disconnected from the West Bank and Jerusalem, and their only contact with outside world, their only connection with the outside world [inaudible] will be under full Israeli control. And there will be no ports, no airport. It's already in Gaza there is 60% unemployment.

And with a little divine intervention a journalist just might point out the following: Ariel Sharon and George Bush have made very clear in public statements that Israel will remain entrenched in the West Bank because of "facts on the ground," according to Bush. Arab East Jerusalem is being encircled by expansion of existing illegal Jewish colonies. Palestinian homes continue to be demolished. Palestinians in East Jerusalem will be effectively cut off from neighbors, families, schools, hospitals, and land, before the citizens of Israel are satiated. The Apartheid Wall continues to be built further ghettoizing the Palestinians. Just like Oslo was a ruse for Israel's most intensive period of colonisation, the Gaza disengagement has effectively diverted the mainstream media's attention from Israel's continuing war crimes.

# Has Globalisation Eased Global Poverty?

by Joseph Yu, IBON Features

The IMF-World Bank have been promoting neoliberal globalization as the solution to global poverty, but globalization policies have only worsened the problem

The United Nations Development Program recently revealed in its 2003 Human Development Report (HDR) that the world is facing an acute development crisis. According to the HDR, 21 developing countries experienced reversals in key socio-economic indicators in the 1990s. This should not be surprising given the spread of economic globalization in the 1980s due to the neoliberal policy prescriptions of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB), and the intensification of trade liberalization under the World Trade Organization (WTO), which was formed in 1995.

The IMF and WB have long been promoting economic globalization as the solution to the global poverty problem. In a 2000 report, IMF said that "as globalization has progressed, living conditions have improved significantly in virtually all countries, although it conceded that the strongest gains were made by the developed nations. The World Bank in a 2001 report on Globalization, Growth and Poverty said globalization (referring specifically to trade integration) is a very powerful force for poverty reduction. But they also had to admit that billions of people globally are being left out of the process.

The two institutions also stated that globalization itself was not to blame for global poverty, but rather the failure of many developing countries to fully integrate into the global economy. But it is precisely the IMF and World Bank's prescription of neoliberal globalization policies that is the cause of worsening poverty in the developing countries.

## A PORTRAIT OF GLOBAL POVERTY

Based on WB estimates of poverty, half of the world population lives on less than \$2 a day and 1.3 billion on less than \$1 a day. These measures, with \$1 a day indicating extreme poverty and used to gauge poverty in the least developed countries, have been accepted by the United Nations (UN) and used as the basis for the Millennium Development Goals.

But critics such as Michel Chossudovsky, author of the book *The Globalization of Poverty and the New World Order*, argue that the IMF-WB

use the \$1 and \$2 a day measures to legitimize their neoliberal reforms by showing that global poverty is on the decline, thus proving that globalization policies are conducive to long-term prosperity.

However, these measures fail to take into account growing global income disparities. In 2004, some 0.13 percent of the world's population controlled 25 percent of global assets. Consumption was similarly skewed as 20% of the world's population consumed 86 percent of the world's goods.

The WB's income-driven estimates also fail to reveal the full dimensions of the poverty problem. For example, poverty also means lack of access to vital services. The WB itself acknowledged that 1.3 billion of the world's people have no access to clean water, 3 billion have no access to sanitation, and 2 billion have no access to electricity.

## STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT PROGRAMS

The IMF and WB impose globalization policies on developing countries through their "macro-economic stabilization" and structural adjustment programs (SAPs). These "reform" programs include policies such as trade liberalization, openness to foreign direct investment, privatization of state enterprises, and deregulation or abolition of regulations that impede entry or restrict competition.

These policy prescriptions have worsened poverty in developing countries by lessening the access of the poor to vital social services. Under SAPs, these countries have effectively privatized social services by reducing state participation in their financing, administration and delivery.

For example in Argentina, Decree 578/93 required public hospitals to obtain contracts with the social security and private sectors, and collect user fees from people without social security or private coverage. Others deregulated social security agencies, decreased health care services that participants received through salary contributions while increasing out-of-pocket costs.

In addition, the WB's support for large-scale infrastructure projects such as hydroelectric dams and agro-industrial projects has also intensified environmental degradation, deforestation and the displacement of millions of people from their lands and livelihoods.

Meanwhile, intensified trade liberalization under the WTO has eased the entry of cheap, subsidized agricultural goods into developing countries, forcing farmers off their lands or driving them into exploitative contract growing arrangements of cash crops for export, which sink them into poverty.

A February 2003 report of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) found that the cost of production for a bushel of wheat in the US in 2000 was \$6.24 while its export price was only \$3.50. In 2001, US exporters dumped corn at 33% of production cost, soybeans at 29%, cotton at 57% and rice at 22%.

Industrialized countries' corporations outsource much of their manufacturing production and services to developing countries where labor costs are low, in order to increase profits by lowering costs. Rich countries also undertake extractive activities such as mining and oil exploration in developing countries, and export the mined resources back home for use in their industries.

In short, globalization worsens global poverty, as developed countries pit developing countries against each other in a "race to the bottom." Wages are forcibly lowered and basic human needs decline to justify low real earnings. The migration of Third World workers to First World countries to work low-wage jobs is also a consequence of globalization.

The application of SAPs also directly benefits local elites in underdeveloped countries who collaborate with transnationals. This causes consolidation of resources amongst a few as these elites accumulate superprofits through liberalization and privatization. This is why income disparity in developing countries has remained high.

## TRUE POVERTY ALLEVIATION

Under pressure from organized anti-globalization groups, the IMF and World Bank have undertaken poverty alleviation programs. But these programs, such as the Highly-Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative and the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) are still mired in the neoliberal framework.

Most fundamentally, poverty reduction strategies must ultimately seek basic structural changes in society to eliminate inequitable power relations. It is these unfair social relations that are the ultimate root cause of poverty. Unless these are addressed, true poverty reduction can never really be achieved.

# Military Setting the Stage for Massacre of workers in Lepanto

## PRESS STATEMENT

18 August 2005

Martin Montana, Spokesperson  
Chadli Molintas Command  
(New People's Army, Ilocos-Cordillera)

The military and police are setting the stage for a bloody crackdown on the striking workers of Lepanto Consolidated Mining Company (LCMC) by inventing the story that the NPA has infiltrated the strike and is planning to blow up mining facilities. This is exactly the same modus operandi which the psywar department of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) used in the Hacienda Luisita massacre – make wild claims that the strike is instigated or infiltrated by the NPA, then use

this as an excuse to beef up military forces in the area to brutally suppress the people's resistance.

The demands of the workers for additional wages and benefits is a just and legitimate struggle. Lepanto claims that it is losing at least P5 million a day due to the strike. More than 77 days have passed since the workers launched their strike last June 2. That means the company has already lost at least P385 million and counting.

The workers are demanding a 29-29-33 peso wage increase over a three-year period. The company's niggardly counter-offer is 21-27-29. If computed, the total difference between the two is only P8,610,350. This is "chicken feed" which Lepanto can well afford! But why would Lepanto rather lose P5 million a day instead of just granting the demands of the workers? Why is Lepanto being so bullish and pigheaded like Gloria Arroyo?

The involvement of the Mankayan farmers and cause-oriented groups in the strike is likewise just and legitimate, considering the environmental havoc and poison that Lepanto continues to pour on the Abra river which traverses

19 municipalities all the way to Ilocos Sur. The mining pollution affects the land, livelihood, and health of an estimated 100,000 residents along the river, as proven by several scientific fact-finding missions. Lepanto is a usurper of ancestral lands of Igorots in Mankayan, and yet Lepanto's resident manager had the gall to say, "Mga Igorot, patay gutom!" ("These Igorots are avaricious!")

The Chadli Molintas Command fully supports the struggle of the Lepanto workers, Mankayan farmers, and the communities along the Abra river. Nevertheless, the NPA is not allowed to join or interfere with the workers' strike in any manner. That is the standing policy of the NPA with regards to legal struggles. The NPA does not need to join the picket line at all. The AFP and the Philippine National Police (PNP) are already doing a good job of pushing the workers to join the NPA, by violent dispersals, food blockades, illegal arrests, and other forms of suppression. Those who make peaceful reforms impossible will make armed revolution inevitable.

The AFP and PNP should be the ones to cease and desist from interfering with the workers' strike. The military and police have no business being there. Deploying the 77th Infantry Battalion

as an additional force to protect the interests of corporate big business is a gross overkill against poor unarmed workers, their wives and children, and their supporters from the Mankayan farming community and various legal people's organizations and NGOs.

We call on the striking workers to guard their ranks against military and police agents provocateurs who will try to infiltrate the strike, provoke the military to shoot and kill, and sabotage the strike. We salute the perseverance of the workers and call on them to resist the brutal suppression of their rights. We will gladly welcome the workers and farmers who come to realize that their chains of oppression and exploitation can only be broken by joining the NPA in waging armed revolution.

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# US Forces Recruiting from the Pacific

by James Brooke  
The New York Times

Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands - By jogging at sunset on the white sands of a palm-fringed beach here, 17-year-old Audrey O. Bricia is doing more than toning up for her next try in this island's Miss Philippines contest. She is getting in shape for US Army boot camp.

To gain an edge on the competition for enlistment, she reserved a seat two days in advance to take Army's aptitude test on a recent Saturday morning here. Safely ensconced in her seat, she watched an Army recruiter turn away 10 latecomers, all new high school graduates.

"I am scared about Iraq, but I am going to have to give something in return for those benefits I want," said Ms. Bricia, a daughter of Filipino immigrants whose ambition is to attend nursing school in California.

From Pago Pago in American Samoa to Yap in Micronesia, 4,000 miles to the west, Army recruiters are scouring the Pacific, looking for high school graduates to enlist at a time when the Iraq war is turning off many candidates in the States.

The Army has found fertile ground in the poverty pockets of the Pacific. The per capita income is \$8,000 in American Samoa, \$12,500 in the Northern Marianas and \$21,000 in Guam, all United States territories. In the Marshalls and Micronesia, former trust territories, per capita incomes are about \$2,000.

The Army minimum signing bonus is \$5,000. Starting pay for a private first class is \$17,472. Education benefits can be as much as \$70,000.

"You can't beat recruiting here in the Marianas, in Micronesia," said First Sgt. Olympio Magofna, who grew up on Saipan and oversees Pacific recruiting for the Army from his base in Guam. "In the states, they are really hurting," he said. "But over here, I can afford to go play golf every other day."

Here, where "America starts its day," the Army recruiting station in Guam has 4 of the Army's top 12 "producers." While small in real terms, enlistments from Guam, Saipan, and American Samoa are the nation's highest per capita. Saipan, with a population of about 60,000 American citizens and green card

holders, has 245 soldiers in Iraq.

[American Samoa, population of 67,000, has lost six soldiers in Iraq, most recently Staff Sgt. Frank F. Tiai of Pago Pago on July 17. Guam has lost three. Saipan has lost one.]

"I see yellow ribbons everywhere," Staff Sgt. Levi Suiaunoa said by telephone from the Army recruiting station in Pago Pago, capital of the territory. "'Come home safely' signs almost litter the streets."

Despite the casualties, poverty and patriotism fuel enlistments.

"I buried at least one myself, but it hasn't stopped the number of recruits going in," said the Rev. J. Quinn Weitzel, bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Samoa-Pago Pago. "They still feel like they want to do something special for the United States."

In Guam and Saipan, the letters U.S.A. are emblazoned on license plates, as if to educate tourists that these territories are American.

"There is a very strong sense of patriotism throughout the U.S. territories," David B. Cohen, deputy assistant secretary of the Interior for Insular Affairs, said. "How else can you explain someone like Ray Yumul, a sitting Northern Marianas congressman who has spent a year serving in Iraq? He's certainly not someone who needed the military as a ticket out."

In the Marianas, the tradition of American military service stretches back three generations, starting with the defeat of Japanese rule here in the summer of 1944.

"We support our Liberation Days, our Memorial Days, our Flag Days," said Ruth A. Coleman, military and veterans affairs director for the Northern Marianas. A retired Air Force officer, she said: "Look at me: my father, husband and I were in the service. My youngest son is an M.P. His wife is an M.P. commander. My middle son is in the Air Force."

The tie between military service and economic advancement is clear to many young people here.

"It's the benefits," said Arnold Balalisisa, who took the aptitude test here in late June. Taking a break from his \$3.25-an-hour job at a McDonald's, he said: "It is better than stay-

ing on this island. There's nothing going on here. I'm 19, and I have never even been to Guam."

His friend Ms. Bricia spent a year at a high school in California, and she can see the difference.

"People in the states have the higher pay, the residency," she said, referring to residency requirements to attend a state university at lower rates. "A lot of people in Saipan are joining ... for the higher pay, the benefits."

Clouding Saipan's economic future, Japan Airlines, the carrier for 1/4 of Saipan's tourists, is to suspend service here in October. The garment industry, the island's largest source of employment, laid off thousands of workers after the recent liberalization of American import rules for clothing from China.

To a tourist, Saipan may look like a paradise. For a restless teenager, it may look like a dead end. On the eastern flank of Mount Tapochao, Ross Delarosa, 18, looked beyond the cows and chickens near his front yard and seethed with ambition.

"There's hardly any life this island," Mr. Delarosa said. The son of Filipino immigrants, he confronts a society where land ownership and government jobs are largely the preserves of the indigenous Chamorro and Carolinean groups. A self-taught mechanic, he said: "Here it is not what you know, but who you know."

For teenagers who think they are invincible, the brakes often come from their mothers. Ms. Bricia's mother, Mira, kept her arms crossed during most of her daughter's interview.

"I heard about that Jessica Lynch, and I thought, 'My daughter? No way!'" she said, recalling the American private who was briefly captured early in the war. In the end, she signed the Army authorization papers for her daughter, a minor.

Potential recruits say that Iraq weighs heavily in their decision.

"The scary part is, what if you go to Iraq, and someone shoots you?" Mr. Balalisisa during his break at work. But soon he was worrying about how he fared on the Army's aptitude test. Turning to Audrey Bricia, he said: "He's called you. Why hasn't he called me?"

# Truth about China's Military Spending

by CHEN XULONG,  
originally published in *Beijing Review*

Defense budgets are a mirror to a country's strategic intentions and its potential to threaten others. It comes as no surprise therefore that the many China watchers in the West keep a close eye on any movement in the China's defense spending. Recent remarks made by senior U.S. and Japanese officials have accused China of upping its spending in this area to alarming proportions.

But as Mao Zedong once said, "Seek truth from facts." A recent internationally accredited report on military matters, including expenditures, flies in the face of accusations leveled against China and puts the country's military spending into perspective.

World military expenditure in 2004 has, for the first time since the end of the Cold War, exceeded the benchmark of \$1 trillion. The major determinant of this trend is the increased spending by the United States, which makes up 47 percent of the world total.

These and other revealing facts are detailed in the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's (SIPRI) latest research report entitled "SIPRI Yearbook 2005: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security" issued on June 7. The latest information on world military expenditure contained in this yearbook by the world-leading institute specializing in research in arms control and disarmament has captured wide attention since its release. The yearbook reports that U.S. military expenditure has increased by 12 percent year-on-year to \$455.3 billion, surpassing the combined military expenditure of the following 31 biggest spenders, as well as the combined military expenditure of the entire developing world. China's \$35.4 billion pales in

comparison. Predictably Japan emerges as Asia's biggest military spender and the fourth largest in the world. Of particular interest is India's military expenditure, which increased by 19 percent in 2004 over the previous year, enjoying the fastest growth among South Asian countries. India has been the world's largest arms importer since 2003.

## CHINA'S POSITION

According to SIPRI, China's 2004 military expenditure, 4 percent of the world's total and the fifth largest in the world, converts to \$27 per capita, the second lowest among the 15 major spenders. By comparison, U.S. military expenditure in 2004 was 12.86 times greater and its per-capita amount 57 times of that of China.

Regionally, China's military expenditure is \$7 billion less than its Asian neighbor Japan.

What emerges from the SIPRI statistics refutes accusations from countries like the United States and Japan that China is increasing spending in military hardware. Just days before the release of the report, at the Fourth Asia Security Conference held in Singapore, representatives from the United States and Japan made harsh remarks on China's "high" defense expenditure. U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld claimed, "China has the third largest military budget in the world, and clearly the largest in Asia."

As a matter of fact, China has for a long time maintained moderate defense expenditures, lower than that of some Western countries in absolute terms, as well as lower in its proportion in gross domestic product (GDP) and the government's budget. In the last two decades or so, China's military expenditure's share of GDP has floated below the benchmark

of 2 percent, which is lower than the average level of 3 percent of developed countries and the average 2.6 percent of developing countries. Just as Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman Kong Quan once pointed out, as opposed to China's huge population, long land border and coastline, its defense expenditure has constantly maintained a relatively low level. Kong said that China's military expenses lag behind major countries in the world in absolute and per-capita terms, amount per soldier, proportion of GDP, and proportion of government expenditure.

## REASONS FOR INCREASE

**IN BETTER SHAPE:** The Chinese Government has increased expenses for improving living conditions and training facilities of servicemen and servicewomen

Without doubt, along with China's economic development in recent years, the country's military expenditure has also maintained a trend of expansion. This trend is elaborated upon by the Chinese Government's white paper entitled "China's National Defense in 2004." In accordance with the National Defense Law, the Chinese Government follows the guiding principle of coordinated development of national defense and economy. Based on the economic development and revenue growth, it has continued to increase its defense expenditures moderately, so as to keep up with the changes in the demands of national defense. China's GDP in 2002 and 2003 was 10.5 trillion yuan (\$1.3 trillion) and 11.7 trillion yuan (\$1.4 trillion) respectively. Its defense expenditure in 2002 and 2003 was 170.8 billion yuan (\$20.6 billion) and 190.8 billion yuan (\$23 billion) respectively. Its defense budget for 2004 is 211.7 billion yuan (\$25.6 billion). In the past two years, the ratios of

China's annual defense expenditure to its GDP and to the state expenditure in the same period have remained basically stable.

Furthermore, China has neither intention nor capacity to dramatically increase expenses on armaments. As the increase of China's military expenditure is made possible by the country's economic growth and growing government revenue, the functions of military expenditures have decided that such an increase is necessary and justified. According to China's National Defense in 2004, the increased part of China's defense expenditures has primarily been used for the following purposes.

First, to increase the salaries and allowances of military personnel. It is necessary to raise the salaries and allowances in accordance with socio-economic development and the per-capita income rise of urban and rural residents.

Second, to further improve the social insurance system for servicemen.

Third, to support the structural and organizational reform of the military. China has once again downsized its military by 200,000, and has to increase the expenses on the resettlement of the discharged surplus personnel accordingly.

Fourth, to increase investment in the development of talented personnel. Chinese army has established and refined an incentive mechanism for talented people, improved conditions in military institutions of higher learning, and entrusted non-military colleges and universities with the education of qualified personnel, so as to implement the army's Strategic Project for Talented People.

Fifth, to moderately increase expenses on armaments. This is aimed at facilitating a leap forward in updating weaponry and equipment and stepping up preparations for military confrontations.

**ULTERIOR MOTIVE**

It is stated in the annual report by U.S. Department of Defense submitted to the Congress in May that China's military spending had grown rapidly in recent years, reaching \$70 billion in 2004, which is almost twice of SIPRI's figure of \$35.4 billion. The latter, to many, is more believable than the former, considering that even experts from the RAND Corp., the leading U.S. research institute in military studies and analysis, once pointed out China's military expenses had been overstated by the Pentagon by

71 percent.

In fact, as a country of 1.3 billion people, with booming economy and a heavy defense task, China has maintained a moderate military expenditure and growth rate. What is more, China has adhered to the path of peaceful development, pursuing a national defense policy that is defensive in nature and an independent foreign policy of peace. China will never pose a threat to another peace-loving country.

Regardless, the United States and Japan have continued to make exaggerations and blunt accusations over China's military expenditures and military power, in an attempt to promote the "China threat theory." Many see this as reasoning from a particular mindset along with ulterior motives.

Although it has been a long time since the Cold War ended, the Cold War mindset continues to exert its influence from time to time in countries like the United States and Japan. Those who prescribe to this mindset are obsessed with power politics and have the need to seek absolute security by forming allies and seeking military supremacy. This line of thought translates development of other countries into a challenge to their own advantageous positions. Moreover, adopting an ideology standard and drumming up the "democratic peace theory," they take Western political systems and values as the guarantee for peace, and classify countries with political systems different from their own as those that need defending against and transformation.

There are two ulterior motives behind these overstatements of China's military spending and power.

First, they want to project China as their "imaginary rival" and use it as an excuse to maintain their own strong military power. This becomes an excuse for the United States to continue its military presence in Asia and for Japan to expand armaments in a bid to become a military power.

Second, they intend to make excuses to continue military interference in Taiwan and arms sales to Taiwan.

Third, they are trying to justify their opposition to the EU's wish to lift the arms embargo over China.

Fourth, they intend to make legislatures in both countries to ratify more military expenses, in order to stop China's mili-

tary modernization and maintain their military edges over China.

Admittedly, in a modern world, the military factor influence over international structure and national security is on the rise. Meanwhile, with a quarter-century-long economic advancement and rapid development of comprehensive national strength, China is committed to promoting military modernization in conformity with world trends in this area. From this perspective, it is understandable for foreign powers to pay due attention to any expansion in China's military muscle.

In response to groundless criticism from the United States and Japan, Cui Tiankai, Chinese representative to the Asia Security Conference in Singapore retorted that as a country with military spending much larger than that of China, America's criticism is unjustified. He added that every country is entitled to its own defense focuses, and the size of China's military expenditure is appropriate. While answering questions at a daily news briefing, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman Liu Jianchao noted it warrants no accusation for the Chinese army to update weaponry in order to tackle complicated international situations and defend its sovereignty, security and territorial integrity. He said any word and act aimed at creating and whipping up China's military threat is harmful to regional peace and stability. He also expressed the hope that the United States shall respect facts and contribute more to healthy development of Sino-U.S. relations, increase of mutual trust between countries in the Asia-Pacific region, and peace and stability in this region.

No matter how hard some countries have tried to exaggerate China's military expenses and military power, China is firmly committed to moving down the road of peaceful development.

# The Mama and the War President

by Mumia Abu-Jamal

Aug. 16--The sight of Cindy Sheehan, bereaved California mother of her soldier son Casey, holding a protest in the summer heat of Crawford, Tex., drives to the hearts of many--perhaps millions--but certainly of those parents whose sons and daughters are being sacrificed on the altar of oil wealth in the urban wilds of Iraq.

It is a measure of American disengagement with the processes that lead to war that when a U.S. network attempted to get an opposing view, it interviewed a Hispanic mother who lost a son in Iraq and who predicated her "support" of the continuing presence of U.S. troops on the events of 9/11. Sheehan, her presence fueled by a mother's loss of her child, would never make such a mistake.

She speaks clearly, knowingly, and condemns not merely the meaningless loss of her son, but the war proper. She notes in clear undeniable terms that there is no connection between the events of 9/11 and Iraq. And reminds us of the dreaded weapons-of-mass-destruction lie that convinced many to suspend their objections and misgivings and support this bone-headed imperial dream of remaking the

Middle East.

Sheehan has demanded a brief but substantive meeting with a man who sent her child into death. America's war president, who will be in Crawford for about a month, has declined her invitation. In his stead, right-wing talking heads and propagandists have taken to the airwaves and op-ed pages to attack the woman for daring to really exercise her alleged constitutional rights of protest.

She is essentially told to be loyal, which means shut up, go home, and don't criticize the commander in chief. As a matter of fact, a similar sentiment seems to obtain for soldiers-- shut up, follow orders and kill or die for your commander in chief. In short, in the service of empire, both the views of parents and the lives of young recruits are expendable. The common denominator is "shut up."

What a strange message to emerge from a country claiming to be a democracy, engaged in building democracy in the Middle East. Funny, how come there is no serious effort to build democracy in Israel, which has been standing for half a century? Sure, there is some degree of democracy for folks who happen to be Israeli Jews, but what of the millions who

are Palestinian Arabs? They have the right to occupation.

So much for the building democracy line. One could of course point to America's closest Arab allies in the region and democracy gets no closer. Egypt--a kingdom in everything but name. Saudi Arabia--a kingdom where a prerequisite for ministerial posts is to share the blood of the founding king Saud and to be male. Pakistan--a military junta. Afghanistan--an American-installed and -preserved puppet. Iraq--a collection of ex-CIA assets and informants or former recipients of MI5 largess. People whose greatest fear is leaving the Green Zone and walking among the people they claim to represent.

Cindy Sheehan has every right to be in Crawford and every right to protest the bogus war that snatched the young promising life of her son, Casey. She knows as thousands of other mothers and fathers have come to know that their sons and daughters did not die to bring democracy. Their lives were lost to insure the wealth and maintenance of princes, kings and presidents, of corporate directors of Halliburton, of the rights of the elite, not the working many.

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# HT Lee: born Malaysia 1946, died Melbourne 26 July 2005.

HT Lee, as everyone knew him, was a student activist in New Zealand in the early part of the 1970s, and an internationally acknowledged photo-journalist after his escape to Australia in 1973.

Born into a rubber-rich family in Malaysia he turned his back on potential wealth and privilege in his pursuit of justice. In New Zealand, he was prominent in anti-apartheid and solidarity work with students in Singapore and Malaysia fighting for democratic reforms in those countries. In 1971 he was elected Man Vice President of the Victoria University of Wellington Students' Association for the following year and in early 1972 was also made International Students' Officer.

1972 was a tumultuous year at VUWSA, as the Student Union Building hosted a meeting of the Pacific Basin Economic Council, a sort of precursor to APEC, and in the protest that students organised a precursor to the anti-globalisation protests that would rock Seattle, Montreal and Melbourne in the early years of this millennium. The booking for the building had been accepted in 1970 and 1972 President Peter Cullen claimed it was impossible to pull out of.

One matter that particularly incensed radical students was the presence at PBEC of delegates, and the flags, from the Republic of China, the Republic of Korea and the Republic of South Vietnam. VUWSA policy instead recognised the People's Republic of China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Provisional Government of Vietnam. Lee, acting in accordance with this policy, climbed into the rafters of the Union Hall and tore the offending flags down. This caused a diplomatic incident and brought HT to the attention of the authorities.

The next day was the conference proper. Students, organised through the Labour Club (which that year called for a boycott of the general election so wasn't that close to the party that shared its name) blockaded the delegates out, and then in. During his speech to the Council, government finance spokesperson Robert Muldoon called for a group of 'red-blooded' men to 'sort out' the 'troublemakers'. The violence that ensued, further exaggerated by the

police, was subsequently blamed on the Labour Club and HT resigned from the students' association executive.

He continued to be active in political movements, especially those involving international solidarity and in late 1972 the New Zealand government almost certainly under pressure from the Malaysian government, stripped him of his student visa, claiming that he was not studying. HT went into hiding, well aware that the the National Security Act and indefinite detention - without trial - under that remnant of colonial rule, would await him back in Malaysia.

In early March 1973 HT was persuaded to hand himself in and was duly deported, via Australia. Yet on the way a saving grace had been arranged by New Zealand University Students' Association vice-president Alick Shaw and Australian Union of Students' president Neil McLean. Neil had talked with Lance Barnard, Deputy Prime Minister under the Whitlam government, who had said to tell HT 'when you get to the immigration desk' (you didn't even need a passport to travel between New Zealand and Australia in those days) 'ask for me'. With what Shaw described as 'an amazing leap of faith' HT did and obtained refugee status in Australia

Lee had began his activism as a photographer and then journalist with *Salient*, the student paper at Victoria, and after a period of extreme financial uncertainty - he was at least partly supported by anonymous donations from other overseas students in New Zealand - he found work as a freelance journalist again. At times he worked for trade unions and occasionally as a paid campaigner or researcher. He also made films, 'So Long John' perhaps the one with the widest exposure even if ultimately unsuccessful in preventing the Howard government being returned in 2004.

It was for the cause of East Timorese independence and self-reliance that HT saved his greatest efforts. He was part of the international campaign that resulted in the August 1999 referendum and went to observe and cover the ballot as a journalist. As fellow journalist John Martinkus wrote: 'HT arrived in East Timor as the Indonesian military and the militia were about to begin destroying it. After the ballot was announced

on September 4 and the destruction of East Timor began, the journalists from News Ltd, BBC, Reuters, CNN and all the other major organisations packed up and fled, leaving the Timorese to their fate. HT was among a small group of us who remained.'

In the UN compound the awful reality dawned that the UN staff were intending to evacuate and leave behind the 3000 East Timorese who had sought shelter in the compound. HT organised a petition. He drafted and collected signatures from the journalists and encouraged the unarmed UN police officers to do the same. It worked, and was one of the major reasons those in the compound were brought to Darwin when the full evacuation eventually took place a few days later - instead of being left to the mercy of the Indonesian soldiers.

Martinkus again: 'It's hard to describe that environment and what it meant, but HT was the kind of person who could make people put themselves on the line for a principle. [He] ... woke many of us up from being passive observers to the great humanitarian tragedy that was taking place around us.'

HT was humble and generous and fought energetically (despite poor health) for the causes he believed in, invariably siding against vested interests and injustice. His most recent campaign was against the Australian federal government's effort to unconscionably, in his view, rob East Timor's of its potentially vast resource riches. His efforts included working on a film that was re-visiting Australia's complicity in the 1975 Indonesian invasion. His life reminds us that real journalism demands courage and that weighing up the evidence and taking sides can serve intelligent news consumers better than the fantasy of 'objective' reporting.

HT was just 56. He had escaped what looked like certain imprisonment under Malaysia's NSA, and survived the notorious 1999 TNI siege of the UN compound in Dili, but succumbed in Melbourne's Austin hospital after complications from a heart bypass operation. The operation, twice rescheduled, was meant to give him a new life, instead it ended up robbing us of his.

# Strive to Unite!

## Ka Kohi Te Toe Ka Whai Te Marama Tanga

*(through the sharing of knowledge, enlightenment will follow)*

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The immediate task is to encourage working people and all possible forces to unite in a Patriotic and Democratic United Front led by the working class to remove the stranglehold of foreign monopoly capitalists and their local agents, by establishing a People's Democratic State System. This stage of the advance to Socialism is determined by the objectively exist-

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