

THE ORGANIZER

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY USA NATIONAL OFFICE

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Response to Obama's Surge in Afghanistan *passed by the NAC*

On December 1st, President Obama has announced that he will send 30,000 more troops to Afghanistan. The justification is paper thin. Far from creating security, the occupation itself has created a state of lawlessness in Afghanistan. The fraud ridden reelection of the puppet Karzai regime has put popularity for the US mission in Afghanistan through the floor, and further inflamed anger in the middle east. Far from building Afghan sovereignty, Obama's policy is to deepen support for an illegitimate regime with tight associations with oil companies, drug lords, and warlords. Americans are waking up to the fact that, like the occupation of Iraq, this occupation isn't making us any safer, nor is it bringing development, democracy, security, or women's rights to Afghanistan. Rather, it is killing Afghan civilians and U.S./ NATO troops while stealing badly needed funds from housing, jobs, healthcare, and climate protection.

Even before the election, Obama refused to counter McCain's assertion that the surge in Iraq had worked. Instead he said US policy should turn toward Afghanistan. One year into his administration and we are on course to double the number of troops in Afghanistan from Bush Administration levels.

The anti-war movement is slowly and painfully learning several important lessons. First that these occupations do not represent the mistaken policies of a peace-loving government, but rather are to a global system emanating from Washington that can only be addressed in their entirety. And second, the Democratic Party will not move one inch toward a less belligerent policy.

These wars are about seizing natural resources, expanding unregulated markets, and dominating the middle east militarily, politically, and economically, vis a vis our competitors in Europe and Asia. These motivations are not unique to one country or region of the world; nor were they unique to the Bush administration. Rather, these factors characterize a decades old global US imperial project. Rather than enjoying a much sought after "peace dividend" after the Cold War, US military spending and curtailments on civil liberties continued unabated.

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Faith & Socialism Holiday Greeting

by Josh Hatala, Faith & Socialism Commission member

The Holidays are a time filled with stark contradictions. While most religions offer inspiring messages of peace and love, commercial enterprises attempt to put a price tag on every human emotion and social relation. But the shiniest presents in the world can't hide the raw inequalities that exist in our country and across the globe. This Holiday season, as a member of the Faith and Socialism Commission, I ask you to consider what really matters - our communities, our planet and the cause of social justice.

What lessons do the scriptures offer religious Socialists during this time of the year? For Jewish people, the story of Hanukkah commemorates a miracle attesting to God's love for His people, as well as fidelity to truth in times of hardship. Within the story of the rededication of the temple after persecution by Antiochus IV, and the unexpected burning of lamp oil for eight days, lies another truth- perhaps more interesting and sadly still relevant today. At the core of the Hanukkah story is a celebration of the Jewish victory over the Seleucid Empire. Then, as now, peoples living under the domination of empires are subject to the will of that empire- whether it be the Seleucids or a modern-day empire of global capital. The minority Jews stood little chance against this mighty empire, yet they fought for the continuation of their communities, their customs, and their beliefs. They stood up to empire- and won.



There is also a message of liberation within the familiar Christmas story. In the context of the Roman Empire, the most powerful empire the world had ever seen, a boy was born to a mother who, as tradition has it, declared: "He hath put down the mighty from their seat: and hath exalted the humble and meek. He hath filled the hungry with good things: and the rich he hath sent empty away."

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Afghanistan continued...

From this understanding we can see how deeply radical a true peace movement must be. An antiwar stance ought to be a point of unity among a variety of movements, from climate change to health care; workers rights to civil rights. This broad unity must be matched by a firm commitment to uncompromising struggle. We can expect that every angle of non-violent force must be fully leveraged in order to impose such radical changes on how the US ruling establishment conducts business.

Lastly, we should recognize that some elements of the establishment may be split away from supporting direct military confrontation in favor of “smarter” more efficient levers of domination. The withdrawal of troops from any theater of conflict would signal a major victory in terms of lives saved and the morale of peoples' struggles everywhere. But the peace movement must go further to address military spending and the power of those who own the war industry, or else we can expect the unending threats and interventions around the world to continue. We must not tolerate occupations like that suffered in Palestine, which is underwritten with US sponsorship. While we make the immediate demand of “troops home now from Iraq and Afghanistan,” we must also lay the foundation for a movement that can dismantle US militarism and demand real alternatives.

As this new phase of imperial expansion unfolds under the leadership of the Obama administration, the Socialist Party USA stands ready to struggle for an antiwar movement that respects the right to self-determination of the Afghan people; a movement that is democratic and inclusive; a movement that involves the participation of broad sectors of society; and finally, a movement that is truly independent of the partisan interests of the Democratic Party and the capitalists they represent.

Holiday Greeting continued...

During his time on Earth, Jesus exalted and fed the poor and castigated the rich who had made idols of their earthly wealth, declaring that, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God” - a saying important enough to Jesus' disciples to be included in three of the four canonical Gospels.

How might Jesus respond to the massive disparities in wealth in the United States? Or to the fact that 50 million people - including almost one in four children- struggled this past year to obtain sufficient food? How would He react to global inequalities such as the sad fate of the 18,000 children who die each day from hunger? What would He have to say about the wars initiated by modern empires? It seems obvious in these cases whom he would rebuke, and whom he would aid- which system he would indict, and which he would promote.

Jesus turned the “worldly” wisdom of His day on its head and taught that His kingdom is a kingdom of justice for the oppressed, where the mightiest of this world are in fact the lowest in His. Jesus placed God's kingdom of peace and justice in direct opposition to an unjust system of imperial rule.

This holiday season let us not forget those who like the Jews of Judea, or the early followers of Jesus, suffer at the hands of empires. Let's remember the enduring light the Jews commemorate, or the “light of the world” that Jesus became to his followers, as symbols of hope for the future. With this hope let's act with resolve to challenge injustice, defeat the modern empires, and build bonds with our fellow humans strong enough to make real the message of peace and love that is so central to the holiday season. Our traditions show us that this is possible and, just as importantly, that we are on the right side of history when we do so.

For news, statements, meeting announcements and more, check out the Party's website at: www.socialistparty-usa.org. Also check out the webzine at: www.socialistwebzine.blogspot.com

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