

Linking the Bank and the War: Why go To Washington?

By Starhawk

In November of 1969, President Nixon was preparing to use nuclear weapons against Hanoi and Haiphong. What stopped him were the anti-war mobilizations of that autumn. There were 'too many people in the street.' This September, as Bush continues to push for an invasion of Iraq, to support Sharon's seige of Palestine, and to reinforce the endless 'war on terror', the streets of Washington DC will again be filled with protestors. A mass mobilization has been called for September 25-29, when the World Bank and International Monetary Fund hold their annual Fall meetings.

The protests will focus on issues of economic justice, but they are also a general expression of our opposition to the Bush gang and their policies. If they are large and successful, they too could serve as a deterrent to Bush's escalation of his various wars, provided that we make clear connections between the issues of economic justice and peace.

What does global justice have to do with peace? Everything. The war on terror and the threatened war in the Middle East are integral outgrowths of the global corporate capitalist agenda.

That system has based its legitimacy on a fiction: that by opening the world's resources and peoples to unchecked corporate exploitation, removing governments from their responsibilities as regulators and providers of social services, and releasing corporations from any community accountability, it can provide the good life for all. Endlessly expanding wealth will bring universal democracy and harmony—and you can be a part of it!

But in reality, most people in the world are worse off than they were twenty years ago. The environment deteriorates and governments prove unable to grapple with serious issues such as global warming. Third world countries struggle under crushing loads of debt, and suffer further from IMF policies that enforce privatization of state resources and services and cutbacks in health, social welfare and education. Argentina, the IMF's 'poster child', is in economic ruin. Africa is more deeply impoverished than it was twenty years ago. In industrialized countries, policies of privatization, deregulation, corporate license and withdrawal of public support for social programs result in reduced services, increased prices, blackouts, brownouts, and unemployment, not to mention Enron, WorldCom, and all the rest. The promise now rings false to more and more people. Its legitimacy has successfully been eroded by campaigns of education, public information, demonstrations and direct action, and by its own flaws.

The system requires a new basis of legitimacy in order to retain power. Since September 11, that basis has been fear. If the promises of the system no longer seduce us, we may still cling to it out of fear of a larger enemy. An enemy is such a useful thing. It justifies the erosion of our freedoms and huge expenditures on armaments and the military. It keeps us from looking too closely at what our own leaders are doing, and focuses our anxieties and discontents on a foreign menace. An enemy allows us to periodically demonstrate the scope and firepower of the US Military, just in case anyone in the world still had lingering doubts about who is the top global superpower.

It is no accident that the enemy now wears a Muslim face. The power base of the Bush gang is oil. Oil is the life blood of the global corporate capitalist system. Only cheap oil can subsidize the transport of goods that make it possible for corporations to roam the globe in search of the cheapest labor and most lax regulations. An endlessly expanding economy requires endless oil reserves.

To maintain their control, the oil barons need to maintain our dependence on oil, undercutting the development of alternative fuels and renewable sources of energy, denying the facts of global warming and of oil's environmental costs. Much of the world's oil is under the Middle East, so American control must be maintained there. The world's largest untapped reserves of oil are in central Asia: hence the invasion of Afghanistan. Israel acts as a surrogate for U.S. military power, maintaining a harsh and humiliating control over Palestine as an ongoing warning to the rest of the Arab and Muslim world. A new mythology postulating a 'clash of civilizations' reworks old stereotypes of a progressive, democratic West in conflict with a regressive, primitive, autocratic East—when in reality, repressive forces can be found on both sides.

The mobilization needs to make these connections.

How do we delegitimize fear in a world in which we have real enemies? Not by pretending the world is safe, or by denying that there are regimes that pose the threat of violence. But by challenging the idea that safety can be assured by military backing for systems that create gross inequalities and mass despair. People's desires for lives of dignity and hope cannot be stamped out by force. Real security cannot be achieved by the hegemony of U.S. military might backing global corporate control. Global justice is the solution to global security.

These issues need to be faced on a global stage. Some voices in the movement have been suggesting that resources are better used locally than in going to mass mobilizations. While local organizing is always important, now is not the moment to pull back into a local focus. For this is the historic moment when the Bush forces will either win overarching control or be stymied. We are facing national and global policies that threaten our basic liberties and undermine anything we can achieve on a local level. It's a global system—its center of power is in Washington, DC, and that is the place to confront it. And the time to confront it is now.

Now—when the false promises of corporate globalization are more and more evident and its legitimacy is faltering. Now—when the Bush junta is pushing its warmongering agenda on an increasingly unsympathetic public. Now—when we most need to show the power holders and the world that there is a strong US movement that is not willing to march lockstep into the war frenzy. Now—when we still have a chance to prevent the

next round of slaughter. Now is the moment to fill the streets in an exuberant uprising against the politics of fear and the policies of greed—and to recognize that they are two faces of the same system, and to disrupt it in as many unruly and joyful ways as our imaginations can conceive. For systems that depend on fear are on shaky ground.

We can refuse to be ruled by fear ourselves, to let fear narrow our choices and constrict our imagination. Courage feels good. When we act in spite of fear, we feel good about ourselves. When we plan and act with courage, when we choose our boldest and most creative visions, we evoke the opposite of fear, which is love, the tremor that can bring the fortress down.

The mobilization in Washington DC is from September 25-30. For more information, see:

AntiCapitalist Convergence
Main Day of action: 9/27
www.abolishthebank.org

Mobilization for Global Justice
Main Day of action: 9/28
www.globalizethis.org
202-452-5912

Schedule of events:

Sept 25-29 Convergence of organizers and activists.

Trainings, teach-ins, and coordination for the Fall and beyond

Sept 25-27 End Corporate Rule Teach-In: Global Struggles Against the IMF & World Bank organized by 50 Years is Enough and others (see www.50years.org)

Sept. 25-27 CEO Summit, Ritz Carlton Hotel Sept. 26th Power for the People / Clean Energy Rally (day) Interfaith Vigil (evening)

Sept. 27th Anti-Capitalist Convergence Action (see www.abolishthebank.org)

Sept. 28th-29th IMF & World Bank Group Annual meetings

Sept. 28th Mobilization for Global Justice Rally & March (day)
Quarantine Actions (evening)

Sept. 29th Social Forum and People's Assemblies being planned

From Washington to Quito
Join us for Corporate Fall!

www.globalizethis.org
202-452-5912

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