

# Fight the empire, not its wars

## A Call to Action

Fifth Estate Collective

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As we go to press, the Empire is preparing for war against Iraq, and as you read this, the war may have already commenced. Or perhaps the saber rattling will continue until the mighty technological imperial blade falls as an October surprise to enhance the electoral fortunes of the ruling party. Or, maybe the bloody, high altitude rampage against that already-destroyed land will come the day after the election, as some have suggested, or, by January of next year, or, at some other date convenient to the needs of oil and politics.

But war will come, and if not in Iraq, then in some other country whose real or fabricated transgression will act as the Empire's justification for it to go where it wants, when it wants, to what it wants to protect its kingdom of commerce. At the same time, armed conflict acts to justify the domestic national security state and permanent war economy.

But the benefits are also grossly political. At the time of WWI, the First Inter-Imperial slaughter, radical journalist Randolph Bourne stated famously, that "war is the health of the state." He correctly observed that it is an electrifying moment for the masters of war, when no one dares or even desires to question the authority of the rulers; when dissent is uttered by only the addled; when the treasury of the state can be emptied on behalf of the war industries without question; when speech is free, but no one dares use it for other than patriotic utterances; when the contradictions of class are submerged beneath the edifice of imperial government. In war, the state reigns, not only unchallenged, but adored, its trappings displayed everywhere as its songs of patriotic adulation ring throughout the land; now, rulers, subjects, and soldiers, clear-eyed and of single purpose-slay the Enemy.

Beneath it all is fear, cleverly created through manipulation of public consciousness by the rulers, who translate a contrived alarm into a rage against the Enemy or the Terrorist, and a willingness to sacrifice for the state submission to "the coldest beast of all."

But for all the chilling, self-confident preachments emanating from the imperial chieftains, their arrogance has a hollow ring to it, much like an Arthur Andersen accountant at WorldCom who knows that it's just a matter of time before a real look at the books will expose them for the charlatans they are. The Empire sways but never quite falls, stumbles from one debacle to the next always leaving a massacre in its wake, sometimes numbering in the millions. Its economy is a con game, ferry rigged to appear as a mountain of gold, but at its core is only a Ponzi scheme, a shell game, a bunko racket that depends on everyone insisting that the emperor is fully clothed.

The Empire in decline lurches crazily, now offering Nexos and Caligulas rather than Ceasars as it had in its ascendancy, destroying an ecosystem here, a smashed national economy there (and now here), but commanding enough power and wealth to always, like a rich drunk, show up for work the next day to continue business as usual.

However, it won't go on forever; that's a safe bet. The conservative historian, Paul Kennedy, warned the leaders of the West in his 1987 book, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, that they were dangerously nearing the point of imperial overreach a state of affairs in which ever more is expended on war, preparation for war, and the administration of a world-wide empire to the detriment of domestic plenitude. This, he cautioned, is what had brought

down previous great powers such as Britain, Spain and the Dutch, and the U.S. is headed down the same dead-end road.

Although, the U.S., with its corrupt politicians, its economic system based on looting, its shredding of the ecological web of life is characteristic of empires in decline, it must be remembered that even the tail of the dragon can lay waste to more territory. That's where we come in. Our forces may seem Lilliputian in contrast to those of the Imperial Guard, but there are a many of us, and the rot at the root of the beast is creeping slowly up towards its heart.

Its death throes may be as dangerous and deadly as ever, but as those who live in relative privilege in its belly, we have an ethical obligation to do what we can to trip the monster, to hobble its final raging, and to make sure it falls with as little damage as possible.

We need a million people in the street. We need massive civil disobedience at home and a mutiny in the armed forces. We need a general strike against the Empire's wars. Can't imagine that? Well, imagine what will happen if we don't stop them from their next season of slaughter.



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