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US Capitalism on Heat again for War

Finian CUNNINGHAM

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When capitalism is in crisis, war is always an imminent danger. History shows us this to be case. The two biggest conflagrations ever, the First and Second World Wars – claiming total deaths of around 80 million – were both presaged by economic collapses in the capitalist system.

This is what makes the present juncture in international relations so disturbing. The American-centered capitalist system is once again choking to death from deep social malaises of poverty, unemployment, vast income inequality, and with that, stagnation in the productive economy. The tendency, as in the previous depressed economic times of the early 1900s and 1930s, is to go to war in a desperate act of “creative destruction”. Rationally and morally perverse, war nevertheless makes logical sense to the capitalist system as a way of clearing its choking contradictions. Depraved, yes to be sure, but that’s the ineluctable logic of the profit system.

One illustration of how deeply in crisis the capitalist system has once again become is the story of fake towns that the Pentagon is building across America. These towns are being used to train the US army in techniques of “urban warfare”. One such place was recently reported as newly opened as a training facility in the state of Virginia. The “model town” took six years to plan and two years to build at a total cost of \$96 million, according to a report in Britain’s Daily

Telegraph...

The Pentagon facility, covering 300 acres, is a replica of other cities that one might typically find across the US. It has residential houses with gardens, schools, places of religious worship, a sports stadium, banks, and even a five-storey embassy. The replica town has also been built with an underground subway and train station, complete with real, working trains.

The only thing missing from the picture are human beings. No one actually lives in this military model town in Virginia and others like it elsewhere in the US. These fake urban centres are to be used solely by the Pentagon to conduct ground troop and helicopter assaults on the various premises.

Some astute observers have speculated on a more sinister implication: that the American ruling class is anticipating social upheaval or even revolution in years to come and that the “urban warfare” training of military forces is the government’s contingency planning against its own citizenry. In that scenario, US troops are being prepared to attack and kill their own people, not the supposed target of “terrorists” in some foreign country.

The American ruling class is right to be wary over the potential of internal rebellion. Even official statistics cannot hide the glaring collapse of modern American society. Ironically, the fake towns that the Pentagon is constructing are more salubrious and serviced than those of many American communities in real life. Deterioration in basic American social infrastructure of roads, bridges, schools, hospitals, goes hand in hand with chronic unemployment, poverty and delinquency.

Americans, even many of those in full-time employment, are increasingly mired in poverty, while the top five percent of the population amass ever more obscene wealth. There are now 46.5 million Americans classed as poor out of a total population of 311 million. The Economic Policy Institute noted last year that “income and poverty trends paint a bleak picture” with the median wage of American workers having slumped by nearly 12 per cent between the years 2000 and 2012. Workers in fast food restaurants are a case in point. It is reckoned that half of all employees in this sector are subsisting below the official poverty line, as a result of pittance wages.

The same can be said for other Western countries. Britain, for example, was recently reported as the world’s primary residence for billionaires, with London boasting more super wealthy individuals (300 or so) than any other international city. Yet, like the US, British figures for poverty are at record levels. Soup kitchens and food banks can hardly cope with the increasing needs in the same capital that has the world’s largest number of residing billionaires.

Back in the US, there are reportedly some 600,000 homeless people – at a time when the construction industry is stagnant and whole city areas lie vacant because no one can afford to buy or rent the properties. Amnesty International has calculated that the number of vacant homes in the US is five times the number of homeless people. How is that for a mammoth failure in supply and demand capitalism?

Of the US homeless numbers, some 60,000 – 10 per cent – of all those living on the streets are reported to be military veterans. Having fought America's wars of aggression in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere, many of these veterans return to a civilian life of unemployment, family estrangement, mental breakdown and drug abuse, without a roof over their heads.

And yet this same military is building "model" cities and towns across America not to accommodate human beings, but to train them to kill. There is a strong possibility that the future targets may be ordinary Americans, including veterans, who can no longer tolerate the grotesque absurdity of their rulers' economic pillaging of society.

The building of homes, churches, schools and hospitals for military target practice against the backdrop of so much neglect of human needs is surely an abhorrent sign of the precarious times. Capitalism, the system that uniquely only operates for private financial profit, has on the face of it become unworkable and redundant as a social organizing phenomenon. It is evidently and irreparably stuck in a historical dead-end.

The only way out for dead-end capitalism is the explosive force of war. That's what makes the US-led Western aggression towards Russia over this fabricated Ukraine crisis so alarming; or the US goading of China and its Asian neighbours over arcane territorial disputes that really should be none of Washington's business. The system has thus reached the historical point where war is once again being recklessly contemplated. But if a world war breaks out this time, there will likely be no world left to rebuild. That is the madness of capitalism and those who largely run it – the American ruling elite.

Unless, of course, people can avert this destructive course by replacing capitalism with a democratic, sane and sustainable alternative. Socialism? Why not? The world presently faces a stark moment in history.

To quote the late German playwright Bertholt Brecht: "War is a bastard but the bitch that bore him is on heat again."