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***Expulsion is Transfer:
The Colonial Logic of Bush's Response to New Orleans
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Guest Commentator***

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It's not so much that the Emperor has no clothes but that his clothes, under the black sky, are shining white, with many thousands gone, enabled deliberately by his white imperial rule. I believe this to be the only honest, rational conclusion to draw from all the evidence on the ground in New Orleans.

A lot of the shock and awe being expressed in the mainstream media over the Bush administration's four days of willful indifference toward the suffering of Black people of New Orleans, those who either did not or could not leave, is disingenuous. For example, Chicago's Mayor Richard M. Daley's comment that he was "shocked" to hear that Bush wanted no part of a substantial material aid package he had offered on Sunday, one day before the landing of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, is a salient fragment of the noxious whole.

According to Mayor Daley, the Bush administration rejected on Sunday the city's offer of "36 members of the firefighters' technical rescue teams, eight emergency medical technicians, search-and-rescue equipment, more than 100 police officers as well as police vehicles and two boats, 29 clinical and 117 non-clinical health workers, a mobile clinic and eight trained personnel, 140 Streets and Sanitation workers and 29 trucks, plus other supplies" (*Chicago Sun-Times*, 9/3/05). Daley had emphasized in his offer to Bush that his city personnel were "willing to operate self-sufficiently and would not depend on local authorities for food, water, shelter and other supplies." Bush replied by saying that he needed only one truck from the City of Chicago. Pathetically, Daley actually dispatched the lone truck to New Orleans.

Are we to believe that a mayor who regularly denies permits to anti-war protesters in Chicago and who has attacked critics of U.S. torture at Guantanamo could be now "shocked" that his president, who got to power precisely by disfranchising Black voters, refused to save the Black survivors of the hurricane?

Likewise, commentators from the big television networks showed spirited outrage that the American Red Cross was nowhere to be found. Against a visual backdrop of Black babies dying of dehydration as well as elderly folk, white and Black together, some of them seeming to be breathing their last breath, we saw impassioned correspondents demand an immediate explanation for the lack of relief. Yet if they had merely checked the American Red Cross web site, they might have chosen to pursue a completely different line of reporting. For the American Red Cross had already explained, in an official statement, that "Access to New

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Orleans is controlled by the National Guard and local authorities and while we are in constant contact with them, we simply cannot enter New Orleans against their orders.... The state Homeland Security Department had requested – and continues to request – that the American Red Cross not come back into New Orleans following the hurricane. Our presence would keep people from evacuating and encourage others to come into the city” (<http://www.redcross.org>).

The cross-racial and-class outrage might have felt good at the moment, at least to those expressing it, considering that it rarely if ever gets voiced in the mass media, but all the venting of indignant emotion had the predictable effect of foreclosing a coherent narrative of the real story in the Gulf, as well as preempting the most logical kind of analysis of the great New Orleans catastrophe: the one highlighting the obviously intersecting patterns of the U.S. colonial occupation of Iraq and the government’s further restoration of white supremacy at home. From outside the U.S., these connections were made rather quickly.

For instance, on September 3, the Agence France Presse released a report featuring criticisms of the Bush administration dealt by New Orleans deputy police commander W.S. Riley. “We expected a lot more support from the federal government,” Riley told the French Press Agency. “We expected the government to respond within 24 hours. The first three days we had no assistance...The guard arrived 48 hours after the hurricane with 40 trucks. They drove their trucks in and went to sleep. For 72 hours this police department and the fire department and handful of citizens were alone rescuing people. We have people who died while the National Guard sat and played cards. I understand why we are not winning the war in Iraq if this is what we have.” Here is the real story of the Bush government and New Orleans.

First, they order the American Red Cross to leave the site of the catastrophe and not return. Whenever the Red Cross is thrown out of a human disaster zone, the message to any other relief team, either church-based or public is, don’t even think about it. This, incidentally, is the same military strategy that the Israeli army used during its racist siege of Beirut in 1982, where Israel refused to permit the Red Cross to visit Palestinian refugee camps it had just bombed into oblivion (see Noam Chomsky’s *The Fateful Triangle*, p. 231). In fact, the New York tabloid media seemed to sense this kind of Israelization of the situation in New Orleans when it turned its attention, instantly, to all the dangerous snipers shooting down cops, etc, etc.

This fixation on snipers provided the government’s official rationale for martial law, even though the reality of the situation called not for martial law but rather for urgent and massive relief efforts led by the Red Cross. The Bush response to the New Orleans catastrophe was a white supremacist military response, modeled in a precise way after the Israeli colonial occupation of Arab Palestine and the U.S.’s own colonial occupation of Iraq, duly noted, ironically, by commander Riley.

On this note, many neo-con pundits, who admitted Bush failed in the Gulf, refused at the same time to accept that he failed because most of the suffering folk are Black; smugly, they wanted to see it as a class issue. But, as they say, this doesn’t pass the laugh test. We’re supposed to accept that this same guard would have been napping, in between playing cards, had all the destitute and dying been white. Needless to say, this French Press Agency report has not been mentioned at all, to my knowledge, in the U.S. mainstream media. Had the criticisms of commander Riley been repeated every day, on every network, the evasion of the white racism issue at the heart of this crisis would have been much harder to pull off.

The following question has been raised already by many independent commentators and analysts, but we need to take seriously in the weeks and months to come the fact that the Bush government is clearly a reactionary bourgeois military junta, not a democratically-elected civil institution accountable to the people of this country. The white left’s biggest mistake, in my view, has been to treat the Bush regime as an unfortunate expression of a bunch of ignorant and misguided Red-Staters instead of the patently illegal government that it is.

Hence, when people say that the New Orleans catastrophe has finally lifted the veil and shown that the Emperor has no clothes – that the Bushies are now at their most vulnerable politically – we need to qualify that with some sober *realpolitik*. And perhaps the best way to do this is to understand what the Bush regime was doing immediately before the week of Hurricane Katrina, and that which explains in large part Bush's own description of the catastrophe, one day after New Orleans went completely under water, as "a temporary disturbance." Indeed, from the standpoint of the racist U.S. imperialist social engineers in Iraq, any domestic crisis, from an earthquake or hurricane to a major airline workers' strike or a collapse of the nation's housing market, is minor compared to the task of writing Iraq's new constitution.

In other words, it is inaccurate and politically weak to say that the Bush administration was unprepared for the catastrophe, because the Bush administration is unprepared for absolutely everything except seeing through to the end its neo-colonialist class project of remaking the former Arab nation of Iraq into an intentionally fragmented region of ethnically and religiously segregated Bantustans, governed militarily by the U.S. and in the political service of Israeli apartheid in occupied Palestine. Anyone surprised by the federal response to the New Orleans crisis has not been paying attention to Iraq nor do they seem to understand the crucial role Israel has played in the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq.

Before looking closely and briefly at the U.S. engineering of Iraq's new constitution, consider the following overview of the possibilities of a dismantled Arab Iraq provided by Oded Yinon, an Israeli journalist and former official of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, in a report produced for the World Zionist Organization in 1982. And while reading, keep in mind the precarious future of Black New Orleans:

"Iraq, rich in oil on the one hand and internally torn on the other, is guaranteed as a candidate for Israel's targets. Its dissolution is even more important for us than that of Syria. Iraq is stronger than Syria. In the short run it is Iraqi power which constitutes the greatest threat to Israel.... In Iraq, a division into provinces along ethnic/religious lines as in Syria during the Ottoman times is possible. So three (or more) states will exist around the major cities: Basra, Baghdad and Mosul, and Shiite areas in the South will separate the Sunni and Kurdish North" (see *The Zionist Plan for the Middle East*, edited by Israel Shahak, pp. 8–11).

In relation to the U.S. war in Iraq, Professor Ralph Coury has formulated the problem nicely in his recent essay "The Demonisation of pan-Arab nationalism" (*Race & Class*, vol. 46, no. 4). Coury argues that, from the standpoint of the U.S. neo-conservative policy makers in the Bush administration who are closely tied politically to Israel, "Arab unity is inherently dangerous. A fragmented Arab world, reduced to primordial but manageable identities (tribal, regional, religious and ethnic), will be incorporated into a redesigned 'multicultural' sub-imperial system dominated by the United States and its principal non-Arab satrapies Israel and Turkey."

During the past few months, the Bush regime has been busy putting into practice these neo-conservative theories of U.S. colonial domination in Iraq. Impossible to find in the mainstream media, there have been, however, many good articles published in the independent media. One such article appeared two weeks ago on the excellent *Asiatimes.com* site, written by Herbert Docena titled "How the US got its neoliberal way in Iraq" (9/1/05). Studying closely his article is highly recommended for obvious reasons, but also because in closing this commentary I'm forced to provide just a brief synopsis of his research and analysis.

Suffice it to say that the original draft of the new Iraqi constitution greatly alarmed the U.S. occupiers. According to Docena, the Iraqis wanted "to build a Scandinavian-type welfare system in the Arabian desert, with Iraq's vast oil wealth to be spent on upholding every Iraqi's right to education, health care, housing, and other social services. 'Social justice is the basis of building society,' the draft declared. All of Iraq's natural resources would be owned collectively by the Iraqi people. Everyone would have the right to work and the state would be legally bound to provide employment opportunities to everyone. The state would be the Iraqi

people's collective instrument for achieving development.”

But as direct occupiers, the U.S. wanted to enact laws that “give foreign investors equal rights with Iraqis in the domestic market; permit the full repatriation of profits; institute the flat tax system; abolish tariffs; enforce a strict intellectual property rights regime; sell off a whole-range of state-owned companies; reduce food and fuel subsidies; and privatize all kinds of social services such as health, education and water delivery.”

Therefore, the original draft advanced by the Iraqis was “disappeared” by the U.S. occupying forces, a process presided over by Paul Bremer and assisted in by a small group of hand picked Iraqi exile politicians. Replacing it became Article 25: “The state shall guarantee the reforming of the Iraqi economy according to modern economic bases, in a way that ensures complete investment of its resources, diversifying its sources and encouraging and developing the private sector.”

If we are to act wisely on the freshly released anti-Bush energies and passions in this immediate aftermath of the New Orleans catastrophe, it is critical that we continue persuading people, including those calling themselves our leaders, that the Bush regime must be completely removed from power in 2006, which means in practice every elected official up for re-election who has supported the war, Democrat or Republican. But we need to be precise. The Iraq war and its new corollary, the Bush government's particular response to the New Orleans catastrophe, are not policy failures nor are they examples of executive incompetence and gross negligence. They are the products of a criminal military junta, deeply colonialist and therefore racist at its core; and this group is determined, if given more opportunity, to induce an even greater catastrophe than the one we're going through right now.

The whole disgusting debacle evokes a compelling passage from *The Communist Manifesto*. Marx wrote:

“The conditions of bourgeois society are too narrow to comprise the wealth created by them. And how does the bourgeoisie get over these crises? On the one hand, by enforced destruction of a mass of productive forces; on the other, by the conquest of new markets, and by the more thorough exploitation of the old ones. That is to say, by paving the way for more extensive and more destructive crises, and by diminishing the means whereby crises are prevented.”

Our platform should be simple: (1) the immediate withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Iraq; (2) a popular-democratic, anti-racist reconstruction of the Gulf in which “social justice is the basis of building society,” not some white-privileged privatization frenzy organized for corporate monsters such as Halliburton; and (3) freedom for Palestine.

The first requires us to get as many people we know to go to D.C. on September 24, and then to organize anti-war candidates in our communities to run in 2006. The second is much more complex, but somebody needs to call a national mass meeting, organize and fund it. The third is simple: our anti-war and anti-racist candidates in 2006 must be for ending all U.S. aid to Israel so long as Israel maintains its illegal military occupation of Palestinian land. To be against the dispossession and expulsion of Black people in New Orleans is to be against the dispossession and expulsion of Palestinians. And why is this so important? Because every colonial military occupation the U.S. is involved with is a direct cause of our current national catastrophe.

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