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THE EMPIRE RELOADED

Edited by LEO PANITCH and COLIN LEYS

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PREFACE

This, the 41st annual *Socialist Register*, is a companion volume to the hugely successful 2004 volume on *The New Imperial Challenge*. Originally planned as a single volume that soon proved to be too large, they now form a complementary pair. *The New Imperial Challenge* dealt with the overall nature of the new imperial order – how to understand and explain it, what its strengths and weaknesses are. *The Empire Reloaded* rounds this out with an analysis of finance, culture and the way the new imperialism is penetrating major regions of the world – Asia Minor, Southeast Asia, India, China, Africa, Latin America, Russia, Europe.

The two volumes are united by some distinctive themes. All the essays see globalized capitalism and US imperialism as two dimensions of a single phenomenon – a point made very explicit in Gill's overview essay in the present volume. All recognize that what most distinguishes US supremacy in the new imperial order is not its military and surveillance power, huge though that is, but the penetration of the states, economies and social orders of the other leading capitalist countries by the US state, US corporations, and US values. Contributors differ, however, on various questions. One is how far inter-imperial rivalry persists in the new global order. Another is the extent to which the US economy and the US-led global financial structure is stable. The essays by Cammack on Latin America and Kagarlitsky on Russia suggest that there is significant competition and rivalry between the US and Europe and that this implies serious constraints on US supremacy. The essays by Panitch and Gindin and Rude suggest that the US-dominated global economy and its financial structures are both inherently strong and efficiently locked into a global financial hierarchy in whose stability all the leading capitalist states and their ruling classes have a crucial collective stake.

The essays also reflect differences of opinion on the left about the nature of the responses to neoliberalism and US dominance. In the current volume the contributions by Greenfield, Chibber, Zhao and Friedmann all point to the need for a much more radical analysis of neoliberalism by anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist popular movements, and a much more self-critical analysis of some of their own strategies. And the essays by Grahl, Bohle and Deppe chal-

lenge the idea, popular in some left quarters, that the allegedly regulated capitalism and rights-based internationalism of ‘social Europe’ offer a worthwhile and realistic alternative to US-led globalization.

Another strong theme of the present volume is its focus on culture, broadly defined – from Burstyn’s account of the extent to which even the most fantastic elements of Huxley’s and Orwell’s dystopic nightmares have already been realized, or soon will be, in the imperial heartland; to Forsyth’s analysis of the nature and phenomenally pervasive impact of Hollywood’s pre-eminent product, the ‘action’ blockbuster; to Zhao’s account of the role played by US media power in the turn to capitalism in China.

We believe that taken together the two volumes offer a so far unmatched guide to the new imperialism – and its contradictions.

Among our contributors to this year’s volume, Varda Burstyn is an independent Canadian writer and activist. Stephen Gill and Sam Gindin teach political science at York University, Toronto. Christopher Rude, who previously worked for the New York Federal Reserve Bank, has just completed his doctoral dissertation in economics at the New School University in New York. Scott Forsyth is in the Department of Film and Video at York University, and Harriet Friedmann teaches sociology at the University of Toronto. Vivek Chibber is in the Department of Sociology at New York University, and Gerard Greenfield is an independent labour and environmental researcher and organizer, living in Bangkok. Yuezhi Zhao is in the School of Communication at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, and Patrick Bond is Director of the Centre for Civil Society at the University of Kwazulu-Natal in Durban. Doug Stokes teaches international politics at University of Wales, Aberystwyth, and Paul Cammack is Head of the Department of Politics and Philosophy at Manchester Metropolitan University. Boris Kagarlitsky is an independent writer and activist living in Moscow, and John Grahl is Professor of Global Business Management at London Metropolitan University. Dorothee Bohle is in the Department of Political Science at the Central European University in Budapest, and Frank Deppe teaches politics at Marburg University in Germany. Tony Benn, after five decades as an MP, Cabinet Minister and foremost voice of the left in the British Labour Party, is ‘free at last’.

We thank all the contributors for the effort they put into this volume, while reminding readers that neither the contributors nor the editors necessarily agree with everything in it. We also want to thank our contributing editors, whose involvement in planning this and the previous volume has been especially important to their range and quality. We are sorry to have to report the resignation of Norman Geras, a brilliant contributor to many previous *Registers*, after a decade on our editorial collective. We are,

however, very happy to report the acquisition of three new contributing editors: Barbara Harriss-White, Director of Oxford's development studies centre, Queen Elizabeth House; Terry Eagleton, Professor of Cultural Theory in the Department of English and American Studies at the University of Manchester; and Vivek Chibber, whom we have already mentioned as a contributor to this volume. We are also very pleased to announce that Atilio Boron, Executive Secretary of CLACSO (Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales) will be joining us as our corresponding editor in Buenos Aires.

Times are changing, and the Register has been registering them not only in its pages but in its sales. *The New Imperial Challenge* quickly sold out and has been reprinted, the first time this has happened since 1990, and new overseas editions have been initiated. There are now separate annual editions in English published in India and Greece; a Korean edition began with the 2003 volume, and a Turkish edition with the 2004 volume; and, also starting with the 2004 volume, a Spanish edition published in Latin America will be launched and widely distributed at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre in January 2005. The Merlin Press has also recently brought out *The Globalisation Decade*, a collection of ten key essays from the Register from 1994 to 2003, edited by Martijn Konings, Alan Zuege and ourselves. Alan Zuege has also performed heroic work as our editorial assistant for the current volume; and Louis McKay has once again designed a brilliant cover. We thank them, and also Marsha Niemeijer who keeps our website going. To Tony Zurbrugg and Adrian Howe at Merlin Press are due very special thanks not only for their work on this volume but for all their efforts on behalf the Register.

We can't close this year's Preface without expressing our sadness at the passing of so many leading socialists in the past year, among them Hamza Alavi, Paul Foot, William Hinton, Maxim Rodinson, Edward Said, Paul Sweezy, and Neal Wood, members of a brilliant and courageous generation of left intellectuals and activists who inspired much of the work that has appeared in the Register over the years.

LP.
CL.
July 2004

