

GI SPECIAL 6J18:



**OCCUPATION FORCES,
OUT NOW!**

**These Are The Loathsome,
Disgusting Rat Governments
Serving The U.S. Empire:
Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay,
Bolivia, Chile, Peru, Ecuador,
Guatemala:**

“We Demand That The Governments Of All Latin American And Caribbean Countries Sending Troops To Haiti Pull Out Immediately”



The Presidents and Generals Of Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia, Chile, Peru, Ecuador, and Guatemala meet to plan how their armies can kill more Haitians:
October 19, 2008 by Batay Ouvriye

Today, October 17th, marks the anniversary of the assassination of Haiti's founding father, Jean-Jacques Dessalines.

This is also the same week in which the UN occupation forces, the MINUSTAH, announced the renewal of its mandate on our land of Dessalines. These troops, led by Brazil, are mainly composed of Latin Americans, a region whose independence was largely gained with the help of the new Haitian nation.

As we pay tribute to the memory of Emperor Jean-Jacques Dessalines,

We recall this great leader's ultimate outcry: "And, what, I ask, are we leaving for the children of Africa on this land?!" referring to the recently liberated enslaved population here, deliberately excluded from the "spoils of war" following the revolution.

An outcry clearly opposed to the emerging new ruling classes' plans to exploit the workers, and which led to his assassination; an outcry that, today still, confronts the imperialists' and their local puppets' imposed neo-liberal agenda.

We've handed to the regional governments occupying Haiti our stand on the mystifying "assistance" they're pushing down our throats and the occupation-protectorate they're imposing upon us.

This text is also circulating in various countries of the region (Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia, Chile, Peru), where progressives in each of these countries have delivered it to their respective governments, and on the streets.

They're also rallying and protesting this week to explicit their total rejection of this unbearable situation.

To The Presidents Of The Latin American Countries Occupying Haiti

Port-Au-Prince, October 16, 2008

Presidents of Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia, Chile, Peru, Ecuador, Guatemala through their embassies in Haiti:

Since over four years, under the guise of the UN, military forces of Latin American countries under the leadership of Brazil have been occupying Haiti militarily.

The arguments justifying their presence are always the same: the military occupation's goal is to guarantee peace and stability in the country.

However, this is far from the truth.

Such talk about "humanitarian assistance" and economic aid is not intended to solve the Haitian people's real basic needs.

The real purpose is to defend the rich's interests, as well as those of U.S. imperialism.

Such occupations always result from a power struggle whose outcome is far from respecting the peoples' sovereign rights.

The true goal of the occupation in Haiti is to settle that the people here can't independently debate and emerge with the solutions necessary to solve our own problems.

Accordingly, force and repression are necessarily integral parts of such a policy: countless denunciations of assassinations, rapes, blatant violations of our democratic rights have been registered against the occupation forces in the country - all being the direct consequences of military occupation.

This is why we demand that the governments of all Latin American and Caribbean countries sending troops to Haiti pull out immediately, according to the principle of respect for all peoples' sovereign rights.

OCCUPATION FORCES, OUT NOW!

HAITIAN PEOPLE'S SOVEREIGN RIGHTS, FORWARD!

DOWN WITH FOREIGN DEBT SERVICES!

WE OWE NOTHING AND WON'T PAY!

For:

BATAY OUVRIYE (WORKERS' STRUGGLE): Yannick Etienne

HAITIAN WOMEN'S SOLIDARITY (SOFA): Carole Jacob

HAITIAN PLATFORM ADVOCATING AN ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT (PAPDA):
Camille Chalmers

POPULAR DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT (MODEP): Guy Numa

DESSALINES UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION (ASID): Emmanuela Paul

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Grieving The Loss Of A Fiance

10/8/2008 By TIMOTHY J. GIBBONS, The Times-Union

The wedding, Tavarus Setzler had said, should be this Thanksgiving.

Setzler and his fiancée, Brittne Jones, first planned on tying the knot next year, but sometime during the long hot days in Iraq, the soldier decided to move the date up.

He'd get about two weeks of leave in November and planned on swinging by the courthouse to get the paperwork taken care of.

But Setzler won't be coming home for Thanksgiving.

Instead, his body will be brought back to Jacksonville on Friday.

The 23-year-old Army private first class died last week, the Department of Defense said, when his vehicle struck a roadside bomb in Iraq.

His funeral will be held at noon Saturday at Greater Hope First Born Church.

Setzler had been in the Army for less than a year and had been in Iraq for about six months.

He proposed after returning from boot camp in Texas.

“He was wearing a big old ring, and I said ‘Oh, that’s what happens now - you go to Texas and come back with a ring?’” Jones remembered saying. “‘Where’s my ring?’”

Setzler gave it to her later that day, not long before heading off to Iraq.

The decision of the Robert E. Lee High School graduate to enlist harkened back to what had been his favorite thing about high school: ROTC. “He was an outstanding student,” said Navy Lt. Dean Williams, senior naval science instructor at the school. “For ROTC, he was the kind of student you want. He was motivated and dedicated and very well disciplined.”

Nevertheless, his decision to join the Army came as a surprise to his family and friends.

“He didn’t even let us know,” said his brother Shawn Baker, 24. “He didn’t want anyone to discourage him.”

The military was going to give him a step up in life, said his mother, Mary Setzler. Afterward, maybe college, or enlisting in the Navy.

Setzler’s fiancée, who joined the Navy about a month after Setzler enlisted, had talked to him about signing up for that branch of the service, but something about the Army grabbed Setzler.

The money helped.

“The bonus got him,” said his brother Jimmy Baker, 31, the only other of Setzler’s eight siblings who’s ever enlisted. “The situation out here in the world, there’s not much money. The money is right in the military.”

Baker had handled supplies during his service days, and he worried about his brother’s more dangerous job. “He was a combat engineer,” he said. “It’s telling you right there: You’re going into combat.”

But Setzler wasn’t worried.

“He was excited about what he was doing,” Baker said. “He had a military mind-set.”

The last time Baker heard from his brother was Sept. 29, three days before his death. It was the day before Baker’s birthday.

“It was an e-mail and it said he was coming home soon,” Baker said. “It said, ‘Happy birthday, old man. I’ll see you in November.’”

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

More Good News From Afghanistan: “The Enemy, They Watch Us,” He Said: “They’re In Every City. They’re In Every Town”

10.20.08 By Michelle Tan, Army Times [Excerpts]

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — Commanders here say at least 2,300 more military personnel are needed to train the Afghan army and police, a mission often cited by top U.S. forces leaders as the key to success in this country.

“The enemy, they watch us,” he [Capt. Ernest Harrell is the S-2 and S-3 mentor for 5th Kandak, or battalion, in 2nd Brigade, 205th Corps, in Zabul province, south-east Afghanistan] said.

“They’re in every city. They’re in every town.

“They pretty much have free rein, which is not good.”

The only U.S. troops in Zabul province are army and police mentors.

There are no troops dedicated to hunting down the enemy, said Harrell, who has been in Afghanistan since March. “That’s the main weakness of the Afghan theater on the whole,” he said.

The biggest threat to Harrell and his Afghan counterparts are improvised explosive devices, mostly pressure-plate IEDs.

“The terrain is conducive for that,” he said. “It’s mostly dirt and gravel.”

Soldier Killed By Bomb In Afghanistan

Oct 16, 2008 The Associated Press

BEVERLY, Mass. — A 25-year-old soldier from Beverly died after his truck hit a roadside bomb in Afghanistan.

Army Spc. Stephen Fortunato was killed Monday on his first day back on patrol after a 19-day leave in Massachusetts.

Fortunato was in the 26th Infantry Regiment and served as a gunner in back of a Humvee. He had served in Afghanistan since July.

Fortunato's mother, Elizabeth Crawford, said her son was a brave soldier and had been eager to return to help his unit.

His wife, Sherri, said her husband was a caring person who loved his family and his pet python, Max.

Fortunato grew up in Beverly and graduated from the city's high school in 2002. He and his wife had been married since 2006.

**[This Is What They Call “Small But Precious Victories American Troops Are Making”]
“Two Key Weaknesses In The Shah Joy District Are Insubordination And A Lack Of Leadership”
“Rahmaan Can’t Go On Leave Because He Can’t Find Someone Within His Own Ranks He Can Trust To Be In Charge While He’s Gone”**

10.20.08 By Michelle Tan, Army Times [Excerpts]

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — One of the few hopes for stability and security in Shah Joy, a district tucked deep in Taliban country in south-east Afghanistan, is a tall, thin, serious-looking man who seemingly has no fear.

His name is Faizal Rahmaan, a lieutenant who is now Shah Joy's police chief.

He was promoted after his predecessor was ousted for squirreling away fuel and weapons from his own men and then selling those items for profit, said Maj. Devin Gray, senior mentor for the police mentor team in charge of Rahmaan and his police officers.

Rahmaan already has a bounty on his head, Gray said.

The Taliban who roam his district want him dead. But his American mentors say he has more than enough courage for the job.

“He’s smart. He knows he’s got trouble in his ranks,” said Staff Sgt. Matthew Barker, of the Shah Joy District police mentor team, a tightly knit band of 13 men who work daily with Rahmaan and his men.

Rahmaan’s progress in Shah Joy is an example of the small but precious victories American troops are making with the police force across Afghanistan. The U.S. did not start working with the Afghan police until 2007.

Two key weaknesses in the Shah Joy district are insubordination and a lack of leadership, Barker said.

Gray said that for now, Rahmaan can’t go on leave because he can’t find someone within his own ranks he can trust to be in charge while he’s gone.

TROOP NEWS

NOT ANOTHER DAY NOT ANOTHER DOLLAR NOT ANOTHER LIFE



The casket of Army Chief Warrant Officer 4 Michael Slobodnik, who was killed in Afghanistan, at Arlington National Cemetery, Oct. 8, 2008. Slobodnik also served in Operation Desert Storm, and five tours in the current war in Iraq. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)

BEEN ON THE JOB TOO LONG: COME ON HOME, NOW



U.S. soldiers in Baquba, in Diyala province, northeast of Baghdad, October 15, 2008.
(Goran Tomasevic/Reuters)

3,300 From Texas Army National Guard Off To Bush's Imperial Slaughterhouse

10.20.08 Army Times

The Texas Army National Guard's 56th Infantry Brigade Combat Team is scheduled to deploy to Iraq in early November, according to a public af-fairs official.

The Fort Worth-based unit was alerted for mobilization in October 2007 and began post-mobilization training at Fort Stewart, Ga., in August.

The 3,300 soldiers will conduct convoy security and base defense in several locations, including Baghdad, al Asad, Taji and Tallil.

The unit is scheduled to return around August 2009.

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In Iraq!**

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rsvp: wendy@ivaw.org

**See ya'll there!
Wendy
President**

IVAW - Los Angeles



**DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND OR RELATIVE IN THE
MILITARY?**

Forward GI Special along, or send us the address if you wish and we'll send it regularly. Whether in Iraq or stuck on a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to the wars, inside the armed services and at home. Send email requests to address up top or write to: The Military Project, Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657. Phone: 917.677.8057

**“Doctors At The VA Diagnosed
Jimenez With Traumatic Brain
Injury”**

**“The VA’s Ratings Board, Which
Approves Disability Payments,
Said No”**

**“They Said It Was Because Of A Car
Accident I Had 21 Years Ago”**

“(They) Said I Needed Further Evaluation,’ Roy Says. Nine Months Later, He’s Still Waiting”



Juan Jimenez

[Thanks to Mark Shapiro, Military Project, who sent this in.]

[Here it is again. Same old story. Used up, thrown away, and the politicians couldn't care less. To repeat for the 3,529th time, there is no enemy in Iraq. Iraqis and U.S. troops have a common enemy. That common enemy owns and operates the Imperial government in Washington DC for their own profit. That common enemy started these wars of conquest on a platform of lies, because they couldn't tell the truth: this war was about making money for them, and nothing else. Payback is overdue. T]

Crenshaw said doctors flagged him for evaluation of TBI when he left the military in September 2006. That evaluation has never been done.

October 16, 2008 By MARK MUCKENFUSS, The Press-Enterprise [Excerpts]

When Juan Jimenez wakes up tomorrow morning, if his tongue is bleeding, he'll know he had a seizure during the night.

A veteran of the Iraq War, Jimenez was part of the initial force that entered Baghdad and overthrew the Iraqi Army.

After an 18-month deployment, he returned in 2005 with war souvenirs that included two Purple Hearts, shrapnel in his left shoulder and elbow and a brain that didn't seem to function the way it did when he left.

Jimenez, 39, who moved from Torrance to Yucaipa two years ago, is one of a growing number of war veterans diagnosed with traumatic brain injury.

During his deployment, Jimenez was injured twice by roadside explosives. Concussions from such blasts can tear apart brain tissue, not unlike what happens to a violently shaken baby.

The damage can cause brain hemorrhaging, similar to that observed in a stroke.

Those veterans are finding out there is no cure for their injury and that getting appropriate treatment and benefits can be a challenge. They say the military and U.S. Veterans Affairs are often reluctant to acknowledge their condition.

When doctors at the Veterans Affairs hospital in West Los Angeles diagnosed Jimenez with traumatic brain injury -- commonly referred to as TBI -- it made sense to him.

It helped to explain the migraine headaches he was getting, the ringing in his ears, the mood swings, his memory loss and the occasional seizures his wife had observed. He expected he would not only get treatment but disability compensation.

But then the VA's ratings board, which approves disability payments, said no.

"They're saying my seizures don't have anything to do with the two explosions," Jimenez said. "They said it was because of a car accident I had 21 years ago."

Jimenez found that hard to believe, especially since he'd never had seizures prior to his military service.

He appealed the decision.

Later, he said, the rating board revised its ruling and blamed his seizures on mood-stabilizing medication he was taking.

Side effects of that medication do include possible seizures, he said, but he was having seizures before he started taking it.

Sgt. Major Bill Roy, 53, of Winchester, is a veteran of both Afghanistan and Vietnam. Still an active member of the Army, he's been receiving treatment at the Loma Linda facility. Doctors there told him in January that he has TBI from a blast inside a bunker he was in Afghanistan.

A brain scan revealed six penny-size hemorrhage spots on his brain, he said.

"(They) said I needed further evaluation," Roy says. "I needed to have it determined if it was mild, moderate or severe."

Nine months later, he's still waiting.

Recently, Roy says, "I inquired and I'm still on the backlog (MRI) list, along with like 1,000 veterans."

Bill Crenshaw, 30, of Beaumont, experienced several explosions while he was in Iraq. He blames the blasts for his daily headaches and a partial loss of hearing.

Crenshaw said doctors flagged him for evaluation of TBI when he left the military in September 2006.

That evaluation has never been done.

Roy said there is a chance he will be returning to service. He is at Fort Lewis, in Washington, this week undergoing an evaluation to determine whether he is still fit for duty or should be retired.

He anticipates retirement, but with the Army desperate for seasoned veterans, he can't be sure.

"With my experience, I'm sure that's why they want me back," he says. "The spirit is willing but the body is saying, 'Hell no, you're broke.'

"In the end, I'm a soldier. I do what I'm told. If they determine me fit for duty, I'm going."

MORE:

Hell At Hood: Military Families Can't Get Medical Help:

**"The Waiting Time In The Emergency
Room Is About 14 Hours"**

**"Appointment Specialists Are Simply
Telling People That No Appointment Is
Available — Without Telling Families
They Can Be Referred Elsewhere"**

Kelly Phenis, family readiness group leader at Fort Hood, Texas, said she has been trying for more than 18 months to get a referral for a follow-up appointment. "I have no idea what's going on in my body," Phenis said.

10.20.08 By Karen Jowers, Army Times [Excerpts]

Spouses have sent a loud and clear message to Army leaders: Getting access to health care is tough.

Because of issues raised in family forums at the annual meeting of the Association of the U.S. Army, Army Secretary Pete Geren met with his surgeon general, Lt. Gen. Eric Schoomaker, and Maj. Gen. John Macdonald, chief of the Army's Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation Command, on Oct. 7 to discuss those concerns, said Col. Steven Hunte, surgeon for the Army Installation Management Command.

Macdonald's first step was to have an impromptu meeting with about a dozen Army family readiness group leaders.

"The issue we have is access, being able to get an appointment," Patti Clark, a family readiness group leader at Fort Campbell, Ky., said after the meeting.

Kelly Phenis, family readiness group leader at Fort Hood, Texas, said she has been trying for more than 18 months to get a referral for a follow-up appointment.

"I have no idea what's going on in my body," Phenis said.

"If there was better, quicker access, I could follow up in two weeks as the doctor requested, rather than calling back and calling back and being told there are no appointments."

Families have access to military treatment facilities for appointments. But if they can't get an appointment there, they often can't get a referral to a civilian doctor, either, said Bill Bradner, spokesman for the Family and MWR Command, who also attended the session.

Appointment specialists are simply telling people that no appointment is available — without telling families they can be referred elsewhere, Bradner said.

"In effect, they are blocking access to both systems," he said.

Military family advocates said this has become a big issue.

"They don't offer them the option of going to a civilian health care provider unless you ask for it — you have to know the secret handshake," said Kathy Moakler, director of government relations for the National Military Family Association.

Moakler noted that there is "an increased cost to the military treatment facility if they send them out to a (civilian) network provider." Because families can't get appointments, they often end up going to emergency rooms for treatment.

At Fort Hood, Phenis said, the waiting time in the emergency room is about 14 hours.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

War Resisters Gather To Commemorate 40th Anniversary Of “Presidio 27 Mutiny” “This Was For Real. We Laid It Down, And The Response By The Commanding General Changed Our Lives”



Gathering in front of the old stockade. Photo by Jeff Paterson, Courage to Resist Oct 15th, 2008 4:40 PM

October 14, 2008 by Jeff Paterson, Courage to Resist

SAN FRANCISCO: Vietnam War resisters were joined by Gulf War and Iraq War resisters to commemorate the anniversary of the "Presidio 27 Mutiny," a 1968 protest and sit-in conducted by imprisoned Vietnam War resisters.

During the Vietnam War era, the Presidio Stockade was a military prison notorious for its poor conditions and overcrowding with many troops imprisoned for refusing to fight in the Vietnam War.

When Richard Bunch, a mentally disturbed prisoner, was shot and killed on October 11th, 1968, Presidio inmates began organizing. Three days later, 27 Stockade prisoners broke formation and walked over to a corner of the lawn, where they read a list of grievances about their prison conditions and the larger war effort and sang "We Shall Overcome."

The prisoners were charged and tried for "mutiny," and several got 14 to 16 years of confinement.

Meanwhile, disillusionment about the Vietnam War continued to grow inside and outside of the military.

The mutiny's anniversary today comes at a time when military resistance against the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is climbing. U.S. Army soldiers are resisting service at the highest rate since 1980, with an 80 percent increase in desertions, defined as absence for more than 30 days, since the invasion of Iraq in 2003, according to the Associated Press.

"This was for real. We laid it down, and the response by the commanding general changed our lives," recalls Keith Mather, Presidio "mutineer" who escaped to Canada before his trial came up and lived there for 11 years, only to be arrested upon his return to the United States.

Mather is currently a member of the San Francisco Bay Area Chapter of Veterans for Peace.

Other "mutineers" who attended the commemoration today include: John Colip of Mesa, Arizona; Randy Roland of Seattle, Washington; and Mike "The Mole" Marino of Vacaville, California. They were joined by Roger Broomfield, a stockade guard who later became a defense witness, and former San Francisco District Attorney Terence Hallinan who helped kickoff his career by defending "The Presidio 27."

"This was one of the first major acts of GI resistance against the Vietnam War. Forty years later we again have growing resistance within the military in opposition to a long, brutal occupation war-complete with prisoners of conscience and resisters seeking refuge in Canada," explained Gulf War GI resister Jeff Paterson, Project Director of Courage to Resist, an organization established to support Iraq War era military objectors.

Among the dozens of folks who gathered to listen to the "mutineers" was a class of high school students from the Presidio Bay School.

Iraq War resister Stephen Funk explained to the students that this was not simply a question of history, but that GI resisters are locked up today for refusing this generation's unjust wars.

October 18, 1648: Americans Organize For Self-Defense



Carl Bunin Peace History October 15-21

The Shoemakers Guild of Boston became the first labor union in the American colonies.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

**“Senators John McCain And Barack Obama Both Want To Send More American Troops To Afghanistan”
“Both Are Wrong”**

October 15, 2008 By Stephen Kinzer, Boston Globe [Excerpts]

DESPITE their differences over how to pursue the US war in Iraq, Senators John McCain and Barack Obama both want to send more American troops to Afghanistan.

Both are wrong. History cries out to them, but they are not listening.

Both candidates would do well to gaze for a moment on a painting by the British artist Elizabeth Butler called “Remnants of an Army.”

It depicts the lone survivor of a 15,000-strong British column that sought to march through 150 kilometers of hostile Afghan territory in 1842. His gaunt, defeated figure is a timeless reminder of what happens to foreign armies that try to subdue Afghanistan.

A relentless series of US attacks in Afghanistan has produced “collateral damage” in the form of hundreds of civilian deaths, which alienate the very Afghans the West needs.

As long as the campaign continues, recruits will pour into Taliban ranks. It is no accident that the Taliban has mushroomed since the current bombing campaign began.

It allows the Taliban to claim the mantle of resistance to a foreign occupier.

In Afghanistan, there is none more sacred.

“Instead Of Demanding Immediate Withdrawal From Iraq And Afghanistan, We Hear The Candidates Debating Over Whether Pakistan Or Iran Should Be Our Next Target”

“Both Candidates Have Offered More Of The Same Establishment Solutions”

October 13, 2008 By Adam Sanchez, Portland, Ore.; Socialist Worker [Excerpt]

WITH GROWING class inequality, the increasing threat of ecological catastrophe, two disastrous wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the worst financial upheaval in the U.S. since the Great Depression, millions of people are tuning in to the presidential debates in hopes that the candidates might offer some solutions to the multiple crises facing the world's population.

Yet despite all the rhetoric about “change,” both candidates have offered more of the same establishment solutions.

Instead of demanding immediate withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan, we hear the candidates debating over whether Pakistan or Iran should be our next target.

Instead of offering solutions that would help working people who are losing their jobs and their homes, both candidates lent their support to the massive bailout for Wall Street that will transfer \$700 billion from working people to the wealthy.

And instead of demanding a cut in the Pentagon budget, which is almost as much as the rest of the world's defense spending combined, both candidates continue to claim that the economic crisis will necessitate cuts in social programs.

POLITICIANS CAN'T BE COUNTED ON TO HALT THE BLOODSHED

THE TROOPS HAVE THE POWER TO STOP THE WARS



Troops Invited:
Comments, arguments, articles, and letters from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Write to Box

126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657 or send email contact@militaryproject.org: Name, I.D., withheld unless you request publication. Replies confidential. Same address to unsubscribe. Phone: 917.677.8057

CLASS WAR REPORTS

“Even Bankers And Managers Are Now Reading ‘Das Kapital’ To Try To Understand What They’ve Been Doing To Us”

“Marx Is Definitely ‘In’ Right Now”

“I Don’t Think Capitalism Is The Right System For Us,” Said Monika Weber



Brice Hall/Reuters

[Thanks to Clancy Sigal, who sent this in.]

Oct 16 By Erik Kirschbaum, BERLIN (Reuters)

Two decades after the Berlin Wall fell, communism's founding father Karl Marx is back in vogue in eastern Germany -- thanks to the global financial crisis.

His 1867 critical analysis of capitalism, "Das Kapital," has risen from the publishing graveyard to become an improbable best-seller for academic publisher Karl-Dietz-Verlag.

"Everyone thought there would never ever again be any demand for 'Das Kapital'," managing director Joern Schuetrumpf told Reuters after selling 1,500 copies so far this year, triple the number sold in all of 2007 and a 100-fold increase since 1990.

"Even bankers and managers are now reading 'Das Kapital' to try to understand what they've been doing to us. Marx is definitely 'in' right now," Schuetrumpf said.

A month of intense financial turmoil has toppled banks in the United States and forced a series of government bailouts in Germany and elsewhere, reinforcing anti-capitalist sentiment.

Chancellor Angela Merkel -- herself an easterner -- unveiled a 500 billion euro financial rescue package this week, a move decried as a reward for irresponsible bankers.

A recent survey found 52 percent of eastern Germans believe the free market economy is "unsuitable" and 43 percent said they wanted socialism rather than capitalism, findings confirmed in interviews with dozens of ordinary easterners.

"We read about the 'horrors of capitalism' in school. They really got that right." Karl Marx was spot on," said Thomas Pivitt, a 46-year-old IT worker from east Berlin.

Free market hopes were high in the east when Chancellor Helmut Kohl promised "flourishing landscapes."

But while some areas on the outskirts of Berlin, in Leipzig and along the Baltic shore are thriving, much of the rest suffers from depopulation and high unemployment.

The opposition Left party, which traces its roots to Erich Honecker's SED party, has capitalized on the frustration and become the east's most popular party with support of 30 percent.

"I don't think capitalism is the right system for us," said Monika Weber, a 46-year-old city clerk.

"The distribution of wealth is unfair. We're seeing that now.

"The little people like me are going to have to pay for this financial mess with higher taxes because of greedy bankers."

MORE:

Don't Panic!

“That's The Panicked Cry Of Governments And Central Bankers Around The World”

The Problem Is Capitalism

Capital flocked to high-return, high-risk investments in the unproductive financial sector because profit rate in the real economy was low.

The financial crisis is bringing that underlying problem of a low profit rate to the surface.

[Thanks to Phil G.]

17/10/08 by Rick Kuhn. Monthly Review [Excerpts]

Don't panic!

That's the panicked cry of governments and central bankers around the world.

After repetition over more than a quarter of century -- by mainstream economists, ministers, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund -- neo-liberal platitudes have been forgotten.

Today, we just aren't hearing about the efficiency of markets, the importance of balanced budgets or, better, budget surpluses.

Bush in the USA and Brown in Britain have been prepared to shell out billions to prop up the financial system.

In the face of the crisis, a prolonged and careful assessment of how to spend the billions of dollars in the Fund on competing projects was set aside. It was necessary to get the money flowing to make up for the anticipated slow-downs in Australian investment, consumption and income from the export of minerals to China.

The Australian Reserve Bank Board, on which the head of Treasury sits alongside a majority of corporate heavyweights, has the same fears as the Government. So it slashed the official interest rate by a whole one percent on 7 October, for the first time since 1992.

Australia is following a pattern set in the United States, Britain and other countries in Europe.

This looks like Keynesian economics, where the government steps in to sustain growth, to make up for the deficiencies of markets. But the massive policy shift underway is more than Keynesian, as states are taking over some very large businesses.

Governments in the most prosperous countries in the world have been providing tens and hundreds of billions of dollars to bail out private and state banks. In the USA, Britain, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Iceland, they have nationalised failing banks.

Will these policies work?

It's unlikely.

There is bound to be even more overt state involvement in economic activity as the crisis deepens.

Even heavy-duty state intervention is unlikely to solve the world's current economic problems for two reasons.

First, the problems are not simply financial. As Henryk Grossman put it in 1929, before the stock market crash, the very laws of capitalist accumulation impart to accumulation a cyclical form and this cyclical movement impinges on the sphere of circulation (money market and stock exchange).

More 'transparency' and better regulation of banking won't deal with the underlying issue which is low average rates of profit across the global economy.

During the long boom after World War II, capital intensive investment meant that outlays on employing workers declined compared to business spending on machinery, equipment, buildings, raw materials and other goods used in production.

Yet it is only the labour of workers that creates new value.

The rate of profit fell and the period between the mid 1970s and the early 1990s saw the deepest global recessions since the 1930s. Profit rates have recovered somewhat, largely thanks to neo-liberal policies that squeezed more work out of employees and, especially in the United States, led to declining real wages.

Even so, the rate of profit did not recover to the levels of the long boom to the early 1970s.

So those who own and manage corporations often prefer to invest in speculative financial assets rather than activity that produces real goods that people need.

While the US finance sector only realised 10 per cent of total corporate profits in 1980, the figure was 40 per cent in 2007.

So developments in the real economy explain the speculative frenzy that led to the credit crunch.

Capital flocked to high-return, high-risk investments in the unproductive financial sector because profit rate in the real economy was low.

The financial crisis is bringing that underlying problem of a low profit rate to the surface.

Capitalism has a tendency to break down that is expressed in deep crises like the current one.

Grossman argued that capitalist production is characterized by insoluble conflicts.

Irremediable systemic convulsions necessarily arise . . . from the immanent contradiction between value and use value, between profitability and productivity, between limited possibilities for valorisation and the unlimited development of the productive forces.

The fact that production is organised not to satisfy human needs but to make profits for the capitalist class is the ultimate cause of the system's recurrent crises.

Financial regulation and even an expansion of state ownership, which conservatives and supporters of traditional social democracy label 'socialism', cannot overcome this tendency.

Governments will soon demand that 'everyone' tighten their belts.

Unemployment will rise, while employers and governments try to boost profits by driving wages down.

The alternative is a real socialism in which workers replace production for profit with production to fulfill human needs and the despotic structures of all corporations with democratic control over workplaces and society as a whole.

Now that neo-liberalism has ceased to be common sense, it is worth considering.

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