

The Slavery of Freedom

by Britton Calvert

“We are not here because we’re free, we are here because we’re **not** free.” *Agent Smith, The Matrix Reloaded*

This paper is starting from the assumption that democracy is a governmental organization which is an historical product of a capitalist economic system. Democracy was contingent upon the emergence of and was an enabling factor in the development of capitalism, and further, a totalized capitalist world system. The current world order is characterized by the will of the capitalist elite towards the development of a total, global, capitalist, free-trade economy, which necessitates the universalization and installation of democracy everywhere. Because democratic governance legitimizes capitalism (and thus capitalist exploitation), the problem of the contemporary world order is not only the problem of capitalism but the problem of democracy.

With the European Enlightenment and the supposed emancipation of human reason from the religious dogmatism of the middle ages, the bourgeoisie was able to provide itself with the intellectual justification of the process towards democracy. Thus one sees the writ-

ing of documents expounding the universal equality of all white men, in texts such as “The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen” or the American Declaration of Independence. Such declarations of universal liberty and equality were tools that the bourgeoisie used to supplant the aristocracy.

I will be discussing democracy shortly but first I want to note that capitalism is marked by a logic of inclusion i.e. imperialism, or the expansion and protection of “Western” economic interests by military, diplomatic/coercive, economic and intellectual means. Capitalism had to, and still must, expand, create new markets, lower production costs, etc. and thus imperialism was and still is necessary for the development and maintenance of the West’s economic system. 1

The set of practices which is commonly referred to as imperialism was justified by the production of an intellectual representation of self and other which posited the West as the bringer of light, and the non-west as the backwards savage.

