

# 1917

"To face reality squarely; not to seek the line of least resistance; to call things by their right names; to speak the truth to the masses, no matter how bitter it may be; not to fear obstacles; to be true in little things as in big ones; to base one's program on the logic of the class struggle; to be bold when the hour of action arrives—these are the rules of the Fourth International"

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ANNAF AWAD—REUTERS

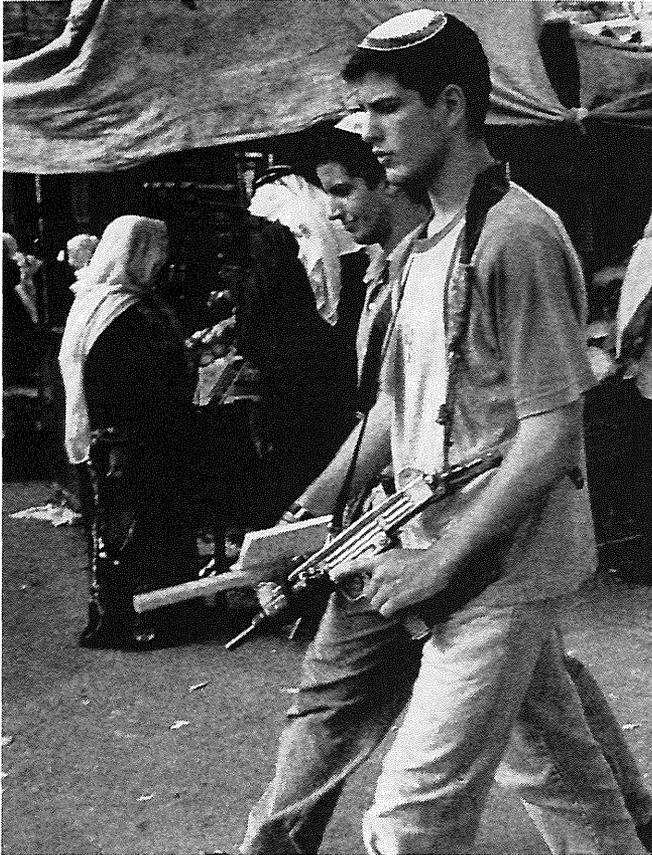
*Not Jew Against Arab, But Class Against Class!*

## Defend the Palestinians!

One of the important achievements of the French Revolution was Jewish emancipation—a process initiated in 1791 when the National Assembly, after considerable debate, decreed that henceforth Jews would have complete legal equality with other citizens. The victorious campaigns of France's armies during the next decade abolished the special, inferior, status of Jews throughout most of Europe. The champions of "liberty, equality and fraternity," who rejected the notion that the "natural rights of man" were con-

ditional on race or creed, sought to create a state in which all citizens were equal before the law.

The creators of the state of Israel had entirely different aspirations. They dreamed of an ethnically exclusive Jewish state. In Israel today all citizens do *not* have equal rights—Jews have special privileges and receive preferential treatment in education, employment, housing, land ownership and most other areas of life. Palestinians who were not expelled from their ancestral home in 1947-48, and



RICKI ROSEN-SABA

### Armed Zionist settler thugs in Hebron's Arab market

reside within Israel today, are second-class citizens.

Edward Herman of the University of Pennsylvania has observed that any state that treated its Jewish minority as Israel treats its Arab population would be universally reviled. If, for example, France refused to permit Jewish citizens to rent accommodations, buy land or open a business in 90 percent of the country; if it refused to allow Jews into the military (making them ineligible for many government subsidies); and if French police routinely inflicted torture exclusively on Jewish detainees, France would be (quite rightly) denounced for abominable anti-Semitism. Yet this is how Israel treats its Palestinian citizens.

For some time the Zionist ruling class has been pursuing a policy of incremental "ethnic cleansing" of Palestinians from most of the Occupied Territories. At the annual Herzliya conference attended by Zionist politicians, academics and security officials, the "demographic threat" posed by the higher birth rate of Israel's Arab minority is now openly discussed. A variety of racist "solutions" have been proposed—from reducing Palestinian birth rates, to deportations and mass population transfers.

Twenty years ago only Meir Kahane's fascist Kach party talked of the "transfer" (a euphemism for forcible expulsion) of Israel's Palestinian minority. But times have changed. Where Israeli apologists used to deny that the 750,000 Palestinian civilians who left Israel in 1947-48 were driven out by terror, today suggestions that it may be necessary to "finish the job" are being floated by both right- and "left-" wing Zionists. Benny Morris, one of the country's "new historians," whose work exposed the crimes of Israel's founding fathers against the Palestinians, has now decided that this was a case in which "the overall,

final good justifies harsh and cruel acts." This pathological mindset is common to all "ethnic cleansers."

*The following is a slightly edited version of a talk given in Toronto by Tom Riley on 4 October 2003.*

A hundred years ago, when the decrepit Ottoman (Turkish) Empire still controlled much of the Middle East, there was no cycle of bloodletting between Jews and Arabs in the Holy Land. A small Jewish community co-existed peacefully in a predominantly Muslim society, much as it had for at least 1,500 years. There were thriving Jewish communities in practically every Arab city in the region. Things are very different today, and I want to talk about why that is, and how a just and equitable "peace" for all the peoples of the Middle East can be achieved.

The Middle East plays a pivotally important role in world politics today for one reason—oil. In 1945, according to Noam Chomsky, a U.S. State Department document described the oil fields of the region as "a stupendous source of strategic power, and one of the greatest material prizes in world history." The history of the Persian Gulf over the past century has been decisively shaped by the struggle of various imperialist powers for control of that prize. This seems unlikely to change, as one informed commentator recently observed:

"As vital as the Persian Gulf is now, its strategic importance is likely to grow exponentially in the next 20 years. Nearly one out of every three barrels of oil reserves in the world lie under just two countries: Saudi Arabia (with 259 billion barrels of proven reserves) and Iraq (112 billion). Those figures may understate Iraq's largely unexplored reserves, which according to U.S. government estimates may hold as many as 432 billion barrels.

"With supplies in many other regions, especially the United States and the North Sea, nearly exhausted, oil

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## 1917

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# Capitalism in a Deformed Workers' State China: Towards the Brink

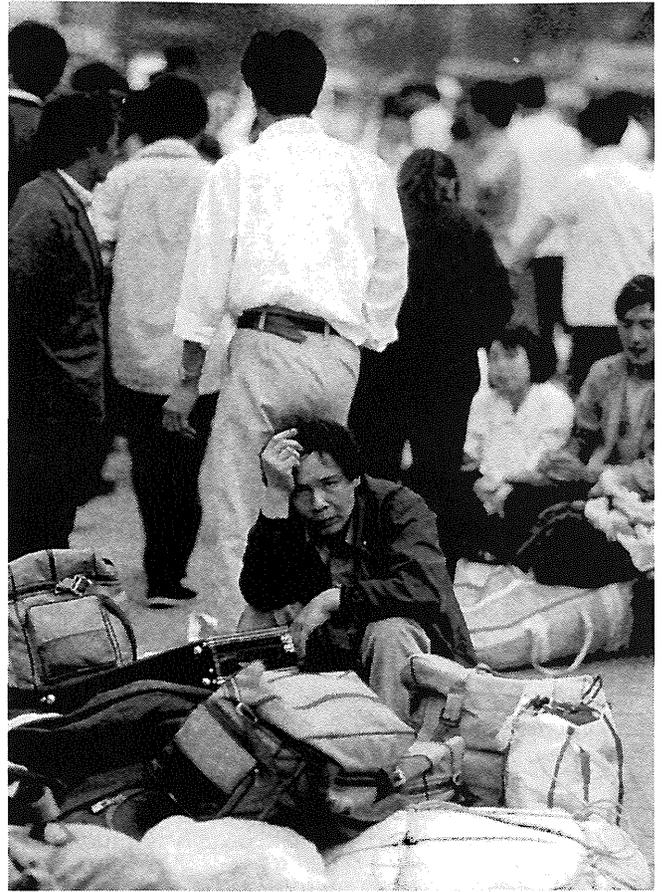
Millions of workers, poor peasants and other victims of the growth of capitalist social relations in China have been mobilizing on a massive scale. Their organizations are primitive and localized, but the numbers and intensity of the resistance are rising. In the spring of 2002, 50,000 oil workers from Daqing and 30,000 metal workers from Liaoyang in the industrial northeast rustbelt organized a series of street demonstrations, road blockages and sit-ins to protest cutbacks and layoffs. While these actions were carried out to defend individual state enterprises and the entitlements of laid-off workers, their logic points to the need for a broad offensive to eradicate the capitalist tumor that threatens to destroy the institutions of nationalized property and central planning created by the 1949 Chinese Revolution.

The expropriation of the Chinese ruling class and its imperialist patrons freed China from the domination of the world market. The new regime headed by Mao Zedong rapidly introduced measures that produced immediate and substantial improvements in living conditions, healthcare and education. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) cadres were confident that they were laying the foundations of a new socialist China. However, the bureaucratic Soviet-model command economy introduced by the CCP did not—and could not—result in a society where the working class exercised direct political power, an essential precondition for genuine socialist development.

China is a “deformed workers’ state,” qualitatively similar to North Korea, Vietnam and Cuba. In these societies capitalism has been uprooted, but political power is monopolized by a privileged bureaucratic caste organized by the “Communist” Party. The exclusion of the producers from decision making prevents a collectivized economy from performing efficiently, especially after the rudimentary stages of industrialization have been achieved. Moreover, as Marx and Lenin repeatedly asserted, socialism is conceivable only on the basis of an international division of labor and the conquest of power by the workers in the advanced capitalist countries. The ideology of “socialism in one country” espoused by each nationally-limited Stalinist bureaucracy is an expression, at bottom, of their desire to reach an accommodation with world imperialism.

The scrofulous bureaucratic caste that heads the CCP has no necessary social function. It is solely concerned with attempting to preserve its own privileges and prerogatives. Its program is a mishmash of short-sighted improvisations and bits and pieces of policies borrowed from two fundamentally incompatible economic systems: competitive capitalism and central planning. As contradictions continue to accumulate, the CCP’s room for maneuver is shrinking. China’s bourgeoisie and its proletariat are both far stronger today than they were in 1949 when Mao Zedong’s peasant-based guerrilla army took power. The CCP bureaucracy is vastly weaker in terms of morale, self-confidence and social authority.

Soon after Mao’s death in 1976, Deng Xiaoping’s faction in the CCP took power promising to accelerate growth by introducing elements of market competition. While de-



JEFFREY AARONSON—NETWORK ASPEN

## Migrant worker outside Beijing train station

nounced as “capitalist roaders” by its rivals, Deng’s faction saw the use of capitalist methods as a means to strengthen, rather than liquidate, the party’s position within the workers’ state.

To this day many strategic, and potentially profitable, sectors of the Chinese economy remain closed to private investment. However, China is playing an increasingly important role in the world economy—annual foreign direct investment (FDI) rose from \$1 billion in 1983 to \$53 billion in 2002. Today China ranks sixth in total trade (the combined value of exports and imports) although much of this is made up of the in-house activity of foreign corporations that import machinery and other equipment and export finished products:

“Walk into any Wal-Mart and you won’t be surprised to see the shelves sagging with Chinese-made goods—everything from shoes and garments to toys and electronics. But the ubiquitous ‘Made in China’ label obscures an important point: Few of these products are made by indigenous Chinese companies. In fact, you would be hard-pressed to find a single homegrown Chinese firm that operates on a global scale and markets its own products abroad.

“That is because China’s export-led manufacturing boom

is largely a creation of foreign direct investment (FDI), which effectively serves as a substitute for domestic entrepreneurship."

—Y. Huang, T. Khanna, *Foreign Policy*,  
July/August 2003

The dramatic growth of the consumer-goods sector over the past quarter century, which has meant higher living standards for a significant minority of China's population, has also sharpened social contradictions, thus undermining the stability of the regime. Capitalist development is severely distorted by the CCP's ability to set the rules and by state control of energy, heavy industry and finance.

The thousands of newly-minted millionaires in the People's Republic of China are anxious to be rid of the CCP and to dismantle what remains of centralized planning. This, however, cannot be achieved through a gradual accumulation of CCP "reforms." The transition from a system of collectivized property to one where private property predominates requires a social counterrevolution. The bureaucracy cannot transform itself into a new bourgeoisie. While a section of CCP cadres could use their positions to carve out individual fortunes, many more would stand to lose everything from capitalist restoration.

## The Bureaucracy & Corruption

The centralized monopoly of political power in a society increasingly oriented to the pursuit of private gain is a recipe for monumental corruption. Every enterprise in China today, even the largest ones, depends on the political favors it commands, or is thought to command. Nothing is more important than having political, administrative and financial connections. This is known as the *guanxi* system. The bureaucracy's contradictory position as a mediator between workers and capitalists is expressed in its attitude toward *guanxi*. Personal enrichment is widely viewed as a legitimate reward of office, yet corruption is a crime punishable by execution, and the death penalty is imposed frequently, if inconsistently.

The *guanxi* system has enabled children of the top political leaders to amass considerable wealth. In the 1990s Deng Zhifang, former president Deng Xiaoping's youngest son, got rich in real estate and finance, while Jiang Mianheng, eldest son of former president Jiang Zemin, made a fortune as Shanghai's "King of IT." Deng Sr. was well known for his aphorism "to get rich is glorious," but there are limits, and some of the CCP "princelings" have occasionally had their wings clipped.

Officials who are prosecuted for corruption have either run afoul of higher-ups or have been exposed in the media. Uncovering corruption has become a standard weapon in intra-bureaucratic warfare, but it can be a dangerous game as sometimes the whistle blowers themselves end up in prison. Some forms of corruption (e.g., participation in organized crime, land privatizations, large-scale theft of state assets) are punished severely, while other, lesser infractions are routinely ignored (e.g., the private use of state-owned limousines, imposition of unofficial road tolls, awarding contracts and soft loans to cronies). Favoritism is accepted as part of the *guanxi* system.

One of the most spectacular cases of corruption took place in Shenyang, China's fourth-largest city, in the northeast province of Liaoning. When revelations of the sale of positions, theft, smuggling, contract-rigging and murder first started bubbling to the surface in 1999, they were

vigorously suppressed. Zhou Wei, a retired official who tried to report the corruption, was sentenced to two years in a labor camp, and Jiang Weiping, a journalist who wrote a series of exposés for *Front-Line*, a Hong Kong magazine, was jailed for nine years. When the government did eventually crack down, several better-connected suspects managed to escape punishment, including Bo Xilai, Liaoning's governor, whose father happened to have a seat on the CCP's ruling Political Bureau.

The official investigation uncovered a network of corrupt police, prosecutors, judges, legislators, customs officers, bankers and executives of private companies all working together in Shenyang. One senior official, Liu Yong, went so far as to arrange the murders of more than 30 people in order to free up real estate that he wanted to develop. The city's executive deputy mayor, Ma Xiangdong, spent \$4 million in public funds gambling in Macao and Las Vegas. Shenyang's mayor, Mu Suixi, hid \$6 million worth of gold bars and 150 Rolex watches in the walls of his two country homes, which he unwittingly furnished with a collection of fake antiques.

Corruption on this scale poses an obvious threat to the survival of the deformed workers' state. The appropriation of huge quantities of state property by well-connected bureaucrats is the most frequent complaint made by ordinary Chinese citizens, who see corruption as a major factor in the collapse of state enterprises and the resulting mass unemployment. A call for the creation of a network of workplace committees to safeguard public property and root out corruption would have widespread appeal—and potentially revolutionary implications. To be effective such formations would have to be democratically elected in the offices and factories by rank-and-file workers and be completely independent of the CCP apparatus. Such committees could represent an important step in the mobilization of the Chinese proletariat against the rising tide of counterrevolution.

## The People's Liberation Army

For years the People's Liberation Army (PLA) officer corps, an integral part of the bureaucracy, ran its own farms, textile factories and other operations. Deng Xiaoping's decision to permit PLA enterprises to produce commodities for sale to the general public predictably resulted in widespread corruption and the growth of pro-capitalist sentiment within the officer corps. In *State and Revolution*, Lenin noted that the state, reduced to essentials, is an armed force that defends the interests of a particular social class, i.e., its property system. Any state is in imminent danger when elements of its military begin to develop an attachment to a different social system. The most overtly pro-capitalist wing of the CCP, represented in the late 1990s by Prime Minister Zhu Rongji, was comfortable with the PLA's growing attachment to the market. But the majority of the bureaucracy was not and, in July 1998, the government demanded that the military divest itself of its business interests. In early 1999 the regime took a further step and centralized military procurement, thereby severing many of the threads connecting local military commanders and entrepreneurs.

The CCP is a profoundly heterogeneous formation containing many shades of political opinion, from outright pro-capitalists to orthodox "Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought" leftovers from the disastrous Cultural Revolution of the 1960s. The party is cohered by two things:



AP—WIDE WORLD

### People's Armed Police in Yunnan

a fear that China will descend into social chaos if the bureaucracy loses its grip and a desire to preserve its personal security, political authority and privileges. The CCP leadership is well aware of the economic, social and political disaster that resulted from capitalist restoration in the Soviet bloc, culminating in the fragmentation of the former USSR, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia.

Those bureaucrats less well placed to get a share of the loot—a category that now includes most PLA officers—have serious reservations about continuing down the path of privatization and integration into the capitalist world market. The left wing of the bureaucracy—the more conservative elements who wish to preserve the existing social institutions—are concentrated in the declining northeast and the poorer and less developed western and central areas of the country. China's booming southeast, where capitalist activity is centered, is home to the right wing of the bureaucracy, i.e., that section most willing to press economic "reform" all the way to capitalist restoration.

The intra-bureaucratic squabbles have so far been contained within the existing structures of the CCP. A middle faction of "pragmatists" has maintained a precarious balance between the conservatives and the pro-capitalist "reformers." The pragmatists hope that continued private-sector growth and the further integration of China into the world market will somehow raise productivity and living standards enough to allow the bureaucracy to muddle through.

Until recently the most prominent conservative in the CCP was Premier Li Peng—the analogue of Egor Ligachev or Gennady Yanayev in the Soviet party prior to the August 1991 counterrevolution. The leading figure among the pro-capitalists in the CCP—the Boris Yeltsin analogue—was former Prime Minister Zhu Rongji. Deng Xiaoping's successor, President Jiang Zemin, played the role of Mikhail Gorbachev, balancing between the two extremes.

China's *perestroika* has been relatively successful in part because it has not been accompanied by *glasnost*, or democratization. Jiang held the CCP together by permitting capitalist development, while preserving state ownership in key economic sectors and jealously guarding the bureau-

cracy's control of the media, the police, armed forces and all regulatory and juridical institutions. Jiang's replacement, Hu Jintao, was selected because he is a pragmatist committed to keeping the CCP intact. But as insurance, Jiang has retained the position of chairman of the Central Military Committee, just as Deng Xiaoping did when he "retired."

For the working class and poor peasantry the defense of the system of socialized property and state planning is a matter of life and death. While advocating the overthrow of the CCP through proletarian political revolution, Marxists unconditionally defend the Chinese deformed workers' state against capitalist restoration, and are prepared to bloc militarily with Stalinist bureaucrats against counterrevolution.

In August 1991 many Soviet workers recognized the Yeltsinites as their enemies, but the only instruction from the conservative Stalinist bureaucrats of Yanayev's Emergency Committee to the working class was to do nothing. A small revolutionary organization prepared to intervene before the counterrevolution gathered momentum could potentially have rallied enough pro-socialist workers to have tipped the balance. Yeltsin's victory was not inevitable—the absence of revolutionary leadership conditioned the outcome.

A Chinese capitalist state will not be established with the speed and relative bloodlessness seen in Russia. Millions of working people in China who understand that their interests are counterposed to those of the "capitalist roaders" have already begun to act entirely independently of the bureaucracy. The rhythm of developments has been far slower and more uneven in China than in Russia in the late 1980s. There is still an opportunity for the development of the consciousness, program and organization necessary to successfully defend the collectivized property system and oust the CCP bureaucracy.

### Ostensible Trotskyists & China

The program of proletarian political revolution was initially advanced by Leon Trotsky for the bureaucratized Soviet workers' state in the 1930s. Most ostensibly Trotskyist orga-



DAN HABIB—IMPACT VISUALS

### Shanghai: worker in Singer Plant

nizations today which claim to uphold Trotsky's perspective fail to do so in practice. The Spartacist League/U.S. (SL), for example, has oscillated wildly on China. In 1997 the SL gloomily announced that CCP plans to sell off a bunch of state-owned industries "*would mean the liquidation of what remains of the planned, collectivized economy and the restoration of capitalism in China*" (*Workers Vanguard* [WV], 3 October 1997, emphasis in original). A couple of years later, WV was still claiming: "the main force leading the drive for capitalist restoration today [in China] is the Stalinist regime itself" (WV, 11 June 1999). In 2000, the SL announced that China's entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO) would effectively signal the end of the deformed workers' state:

"WTO entry would mean eliminating what remains of the state monopoly of foreign trade, further subjecting the economy to the pressures of the world capitalist market. It would thus act as a battering ram to force through the CCP's 1997 decision to privatize the bulk of state-owned industry."

—WV, 7 April 2000

This pessimistic prognosis has been proven wrong. China's membership in the WTO represents a significant step toward integration into the world market and increases the pressure for capitalist restoration, but so far there has been no dramatic privatization of the state sector. The SL's characterization of the Chinese Stalinists as the leading force for capitalist restoration recalled its refusal to bloc militarily with Yanayev's Emergency Committee against the Yeltsinite riff-raff in August 1991. They criticized our position of military support to the Stalinist coupsters, who, the SL claimed, "were just as committed to capitalist restoration as Yeltsin" ("The International Bolshevik Tendency—What Is It?").

The leaders of the Internationalist Group (IG—a 1996 split from the SL), who uphold the Spartacists' 1991 position on the coup for reasons of personal prestige, criticized the SL for taking an essentially identical approach toward China. The SL responded by claiming that the IG were Stalinophiles who ascribed a revolutionary capacity to the bureaucracy. IG leader, Jan Norden, was denounced for having "endowed the geriatric Stalinist has-beens [in East Germany] with some kind of instinctive revolutionary appetites" and for promoting, "the illusion that a wing of the Beijing bureaucracy will itself take up the fight against capitalist counterrevolution" (WV, 11 June 1999). In fact, it is entirely possible that elements of the Stalinist apparatus would side with the workers against capitalist restoration. And revolutionaries would certainly seek to exploit contradictions within the bureaucracy to strengthen the position of workers mobilized for independent political action.

The SL criticisms of Stalinophilia are particularly odd coming as they do from a group which paraded around as the "Yuri Andropov Battalion" in the early 1980s, and which "hailed" Leonid Brezhnev's intervention in Afghanistan. The SL's Stalinophilia reached its height in January 1990 when James Robertson, the group's founder/leader, tried to arrange a personal meeting to offer free advice to three top Stalinists in East Berlin: Soviet General B.V. Snetkov; Markus Wolf, a top East German intelligence officer; and Gregor Gysi, leader of the ruling party (see "Robertsonites in Wonderland," 1917 No. 10).

The SL's Stalinophilic zigs were accompanied by occasional Stalinophobic zags, as, for example, when WV denounced the Soviet termination of an imperialist provocation (the KAL 007 spy plane incident of 1983) as "worse than a barbaric atrocity" (see *Trotskyist Bulletin* No. 1). The IG represents the SL frozen in "zig" mode—they have never repu-

diated the approach to Gysi, Snetkov and Wolf, and would presumably endorse a similar attempt to braintrust the leadership of the Chinese bureaucracy.

Unlike the IG, the SL's approach is *not* frozen—SL cadres are at bottom not loyal to a particular political program, but rather to a leader, James Robertson, who can shift the group back and forth between different political positions at will. After several years of treating the Chinese Stalinists as simply capitalist-restorationists, the SL, perhaps chastened by the failure of its dire projections to materialize, has quietly changed its line and is once more discussing the possibility that serious resistance to capitalist restoration could split the CCP.

The SL's failure to offer any explanation for its earlier Stalinophobic deviation has not deterred it from indignantly berating the unscrupulous reformists who lead the Committee for a Workers International (CWI) for adopting the same position:

"Commenting on the 16<sup>th</sup> CCP Congress, the British-centered tendency led by Peter Taaffe wrote: 'China is on the road to complete capitalist restoration, but the ruling clique are attempting to do this gradually and by maintaining their repressive authoritarian grip' (*Socialist*, 22 November 2002). By labeling China's government an 'authoritarian' capitalist-restorationist regime, the Taaffeites and their ilk can justify supporting imperialist-backed anti-Communist forces in China in the name of promoting 'democracy,' just as they supported Boris Yeltsin's 'democratic' counterrevolution in the USSR in 1991."

—WV, 21 November 2003

The SL sagely intones:

"A capitalist counterrevolution in China (as in East Europe and the former USSR) would be accompanied by the collapse of Stalinist bonapartism and the political fracturing of the ruling Communist Party."

—*Ibid.*

But in August 1991, during the terminal political crisis of the Soviet Stalinist bureaucracy, the SL adopted the same attitude they now attack Taaffe for, and claimed that there was no difference between the Emergency Committee "conservatives" who wanted to preserve the Soviet Union and the Yeltsinite rabble who wanted to restore capitalism.

David North's Socialist Equality Party, which also claims Trotsky's political heritage, regularly features articles about China on its web site that studiously avoid the elementary question as to whether China is a bourgeois or deformed workers' state. The Northites have a record of consistent Stalinophobia, having sided with Boris Yeltsin, Lech Walesa and virtually every other counterrevolutionary in the Soviet bloc. We expect that in any future showdown they will once again come out squarely on the side of "democratic" counterrevolution.

Other supposedly revolutionary groups are less coy. The British Workers Power group, for example, claims that the Chinese deformed workers' state has already made a seamless (and unremarked) transition into a capitalist state. But serious bourgeois analysts know better:

"The biggest myth about China in the 1990s was that the country ceased to be socialist. Despite a self-proclaimed communist government, operating through a Politburo, a Central Committee and a national network of 50 million Party members, this myth became received opinion. It was repeated in newspapers and magazines, not to mention boardrooms, around the globe. The official credo of 'socialism with Chinese characteristics', propagandised daily by the official media, was taken by the outside



DER SPIEGEL

### Rolls Royce for Beijing nouveau riche

world to be a Chinese formulation for the still politically difficult concept of capitalism.... The country in the 1990s was not a free market economy, it was a fundamentally socialist country undergoing some Chinese modifications."

—*The China Dream*, Joe Studwell

### Chinese Stock Markets, Banks & WTO Membership

Capitalism has made dangerous inroads in China to date, but it is still constrained within a social/political order antithetical to the free market. Unlike in a capitalist market economy, neither China's stock markets nor its banks function to channel investment to enterprises that seem most likely to generate high rates of profit. In China, investment is controlled by the state apparatus, and the ultimate criterion is not profit maximization, but the maintenance of the position and control of the ruling bureaucracy. This is seen as positively perverse by bourgeois commentators:

"In the early 1990s, when China was registering double-digit growth rates, Beijing invested massively in the state sector. Most of the investments were not commercially viable, leaving the banking sector with a huge number of nonperforming loans—possibly totaling as much as 50 percent of bank assets."

—Y. Huang, T. Khanna, *Foreign Policy*, July/August 2003

The capitalist stock market permits companies to raise capital through the sale of "shares" of existing assets and future profits. Share prices fluctuate according to potential profitability and any investor who controls a majority of a company's shares can determine its decisions.

For a capitalist share market to operate properly, information about the profitability of competing investment opportunities must be widely accessible. This is why, even under conditions of strict press censorship, the financial press in capitalist countries is usually more or less unfettered. The markets have elaborate rules governing disclosure, accounting, auditing and reporting which, in theory, eliminate distortions due to differential access to information.



MARCEL GUBAIDULIN

### Chinese high-tech space program

While big players routinely ignore prohibitions on insider trading, violations on a sufficiently large scale are subject to sanctions because they can destabilize financial markets and thus threaten the interests of the capitalist class as a whole.

The Shanghai and Shenzhen share markets have been operating for two decades and today 60 million Chinese have trading accounts. Yet rather than funneling investment to profitable enterprises, the role of these exchanges is to provide financial support for the firms that are permitted to list their shares—most of which happen to be State Owned Enterprises (SOEs). The government not only decides which enterprises are permitted to list on the exchanges, but also what financial information is available. As a result, prices swing wildly on the basis of manipulated information, insider trading and swindles, much of which would be exposed by the financial press in a capitalist country. Shareholders can make or lose money as stock prices rise and fall, but they have the same relation to the firms they invest in that bettors at a racetrack have to the horses they wager on:

“In China...bureaucrats remain the gatekeepers, tightly controlling capital allocation and severely restricting the ability of private companies to obtain stock market listings and access the money they need to grow. Indeed, Beijing has used the financial markets mainly as a way of keeping the SOEs afloat. These policies have produced enormous distortions....”

—*Ibid.*

The enormity of the distortions makes the Shanghai stock market roughly 800 times as volatile as the New York exchange, according to an article in the Summer 1998 issue of the *Harvard China Review*.

When it joined the World Trade Organization in December 2001, China agreed to allow imported commodities to be sold at world market prices. This promises to devastate the Chinese countryside, where the majority of the population still lives, as well as strategic industries such as steel. But despite its agreement on paper, Beijing has retained considerable leverage over its domestic economy. For example, foreign insurance companies, which were supposed

to get access to the Chinese market within two years, are not permitted to operate without a government license, which the authorities grant at their discretion. Half of China's telecommunications market is supposed to be opened to foreign ownership, but the terms are set by China's regulatory body, which owns the largest fixed-line supplier and the two main cell phone companies. The regulations require three quarters of the capital to be put up by a domestic Chinese partner (*Financial Times* [London], 15 March 2002).

Foreign banks are now permitted to operate in China, under the terms of the agreement with the WTO, but the Chinese government has stipulated that each bank may only open one new branch per year. Given that the four big state banks already have a total of 130,000 branches across the country, it will be a while before foreign banks are able to compete effectively. These four banks, which account for two-thirds of all transactions, are wholly owned by the finance ministry. Most of China's other banks and credit institutions are owned by government agencies, and all are tightly controlled by the central authorities who use them as a mechanism for financing new investment. In China, unlike in a capitalist country, investment is determined by the requirements of the ruling bureaucracy:

“The central government treat the banks as a ‘secondary budget,’ a convenient place to find funds with which to paper over problems of the past. Fixing sick state-owned enterprises is only the starting point. There are, in addition, high-tech zones to build, rivers to dam, and anything in China's western region to be developed. State leaders expect the state banks to do their part.”

—*The Coming Collapse of China*, Gordon G. Chang

A large proportion of bank loans go to the SOEs that still employ 55 percent of the urban workforce. The fact that most of them cannot pay their debts is irrelevant. Under capitalism, the banks, and the SOEs they keep afloat with subsidies and soft loans, would be forced into bankruptcy. But in the People's Republic of China, state-owned enterprises can only go bankrupt by government decree.

### SEZs & SOEs

One of the key “reforms” introduced after Mao's death was the dissolution of collective farms into household enterprises. Today in rural China millions of families lease small plots from the state. While a few farmers have accumulated enough capital to launch larger-scale operations, many more have sunk into desperate poverty. Yet even the most successful Chinese farmers cannot compete with Western agribusiness. For example, corn was listed on the Chicago commodities exchange in September 2000 at \$100 a ton. In China, it was selling for \$175 (*Minneapolis Star Tribune*, 1 October 2000). Almost 20 percent of the rural workforce is already unemployed. More than a hundred million former peasants have been forced into street trading, prostitution and petty crime in the shantytowns surrounding China's cities. The Chinese Ministry of Agriculture has projected that relaxing import controls as required by the WTO will cost at least another 20 million agricultural jobs.

In 1980 the government opened four Special Economic Zones (SEZs) for foreign investment in Guangdong, near Hong Kong. There are now about 12,000 SEZs, mostly concentrated on the southeast coast. They are essentially capitalist economic colonies in the deformed workers' state, accounting for an eighth of China's total manufacturing output and half its exports. The Chinese capitalists in

Hong Kong and Taiwan who put up most of the initial investments have found the SEZs to be very profitable. China has some of the cheapest labor power in the world: wages are half the Mexican rate and one twentieth the American. Wages are held down because the CCP, which sets the rules, ruthlessly suppresses any attempt to create effective trade unions.

The huge State Owned Enterprises of the northeast, which are managed directly by the CCP, constitute the core of the collectivized economy established by the 1949 Revolution. In the 1980s, the SOEs accounted for virtually all of China's non-agricultural production, but today their share has fallen to a mere 30 percent. However, they still constitute vital sectors of the economy (heavy industry, high-tech, armaments, energy and telecommunications), account for roughly 70 percent of total fixed assets, and pay a disproportionate share of the taxes that finance the state. The SOEs, through which the state guaranteed workers an "iron rice bowl"—jobs, food, healthcare, housing and pensions—remain critical to the bureaucracy's hold on power, although without either the pressure of the market or democratic control by the producers, productivity has declined steadily, both in absolute terms and relative to foreign corporations.

The SOEs are seen by the bourgeois financial press as vestigial remnants of a failed system that should be dismantled as soon as possible. But the CCP bureaucracy, itself a "remnant" the imperialists would like to be rid of, takes a different view. Since the late 1990s, the CCP has been attempting to "rationalize" the SOEs by letting the least productive go to the wall, while encouraging others to emulate capitalist enterprises by entering into mergers, issuing shares and selling off the less viable parts of their operations.

In May 2003 President Hu Jintao announced that the SOEs, previously run by various ministries and municipalities, would henceforth be administered by a central State Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC). The goal is to create a few dozen internationally competitive State Owned Enterprises in strategic industries modeled on the Japanese *zaibatsu* and South Korean *chaebols*. While this will not resolve the fundamental contradiction of bureaucratic control over a collectivized economy, it may improve the SOEs' performance in the short run.

The "rationalization" of the SOEs has meant slashing services for workers and retirees and dramatically shrinking the workforce. Since 1998, the SOEs have eliminated between 25 and 50 million jobs. This wholesale attack on working-class living standards has enraged millions. In China's northeast rustbelt, where unemployment stands at 40 percent, instead of "cops and robbers," children play "kill the boss."

## Western Big Development & the National Question in Tibet and Xinjiang

The CCP has in recent years launched a "Western Big Development" project for the people living in Gansu, Guizhou, Ningxia, Qinghai, Shaanxi, Sichuan, Tibet, Yunnan and Xinjiang. These territories, which constitute more than half of China's landmass and have a population of 300 million people, include the strategically crucial borderlands, key military installations, and the country's most important oil and mineral deposits. Geographic isolation,



STEVE LEHMAN

1987: Tibetans stone police station

political instability, primitive infrastructure, and poorly educated, dispersed populations make these regions unattractive for capitalist investment.

The project represents a massive expansion of the state sector including construction of roads, railways, airports and a \$14 billion pipeline to ship natural gas 2,500 miles from Xinjiang to Shanghai. Xinjiang, China's largest province, is one of its poorest and home to eight million Turkic-speaking Uighurs, among whom Islamist-nationalist discontent smolders. In early 1997 some 500 Uighurs were arrested during anti-Chinese disturbances in the city of Yining in western Xinjiang. Amnesty International reported that 30 Uighurs were sentenced to death in April 2001 for separatist and religious activities.

The government is actively promoting Han immigration into Xinjiang, which has two major exports, oil and cotton. The Han already run the oil industry and their new, large-scale cotton farms are outproducing the Uighurs' small private plots. While Uighurs still outnumber Han, the latter will be the main beneficiaries of any future state-sponsored development.

The oppression of Uighurs gets little attention from the Western media, perhaps because 300 of the Taliban prisoners captured by U.S. forces in Afghanistan are Uighur. But despite Beijing's craven attempts to sign on as a partner in America's "war on terrorism," the U.S. steadfastly refuses to acknowledge China's concern about the existence of Islamic fundamentalism in Xinjiang, or hand over their Uighur prisoners. U.S. policymakers are presumably considering employing Islamist fanatics in Xinjiang for the same reason the CIA armed and trained Osama Bin Laden's Afghan *mujahedin* two decades ago.

Unlike the Uighur, the plight of the Tibetans is close to the heart of pro-imperialist "democrats," who tend to ignore the fact that in 1949 Tibet was an extremely backward, monk-ridden, feudal society where the average life expectancy was 30. In the early 1950s, when it first came to power, the CCP sought a "united front" with Tibet's theocrats and aristocratic parasites, and tried to curry favor with the cosseted teenage Dalai Lama and his retinue. This accord unraveled within a few years, and in 1959 a large-scale rebellion was put down by the PLA at the cost of tens of thousands of Tibetan lives. The Dalai Lama fled across the Himalayas to India. Beijing took direct control and proceeded to uproot the traditional social system by parceling

out the lands of the nobility and the monasteries to the peasantry.

It is clear that the Tibetan people, who have their own language, culture and territory, resent Han domination. Like the Uighur, the Tibetans are entitled to their own national existence, but for socialists the defense of the national rights of oppressed peoples in China must be subordinate to the defense of the deformed workers' state. The international campaign to "free Tibet" is one prong in the imperialist drive against China. This is not a new development: the CIA's involvement in the 1959 uprising has long been a matter of public record, and a few years ago the Associated Press reported: "The Dalai Lama's administration acknowledged today that it received \$1.7 million a year in the 1960's from the Central Intelligence Agency...." (*New York Times*, 2 October 1998). An annual subsidy of \$180,000 was "earmarked for the Dalai Lama."

Marxists recognize that reactionary ideologies and nationalist sentiments are rooted in the material inequality of class-divided society. Whenever possible, we would seek to erode the influence of social backwardness through education and economic incentives rather than repression. A Leninist regime would combat Han chauvinism by combining generous subsidies for development with real regional autonomy for national minorities, including the right to control local political institutions, to receive education and government services in the language of choice, freedom of political expression and freedom to travel. By agreeing that the Tibetans or Uighur have the right to control their own domestic affairs, a revolutionary government in China would signal its willingness to coexist with Tibet's traditional ruling caste and Xinjiang's mullahs as long as they retain popular support.

## The Imperialist Noose

The imperialist noose around China's neck has tightened considerably in the past few years. The restoration of China as a field for unfettered imperialist looting remains a key strategic priority of the U.S. One of the objectives of America's recent neo-colonial wars has been to increase its leverage over the Chinese deformed workers' state. China is increasingly dependent on imported oil, and the creation of a viable U.S. puppet state in Iraq would represent a real threat to Beijing.

U.S. military installations in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, established during the conquest of Afghanistan, have displaced Chinese influence in former Soviet Central Asia. In addition to its garrisons in Afghanistan, South Korea and Japan, the U.S. is currently negotiating with Vietnam and Thailand for naval and air facilities and is continuing to arm Taiwan. U.S. policy is currently focused on exerting economic pressure on China and checking its ability to project power abroad. At the same time, American missiles permanently target key Chinese installations, and the risk of aggressive military action against the Chinese deformed workers' state on one pretext or another remains very real.

## Falun Gong: Threat to CCP?

The CCP has always jealously guarded its monopoly on political organization. As Joe Studwell observed in *The China Dream*: "Chinese citizens cannot start a fishing club, a self-help group for alcoholics or a community newsletter

without official sanction." Any organization that connects people with others outside their own immediate locality is seen as a threat. The Chinese news media routinely fails to report on major industrial accidents, corruption scandals, strikes and demonstrations in order to avoid provoking a public outcry on a national scale.

But the CCP's control has always been imperfect, and the advent of the internet has presented the regime with a new set of problems. The internet is credited with the rapid growth of Falun Gong, a sort of Chinese New Age meditation/exercise movement that developed out of public qigong/tai chi sessions. The government long viewed qigong/tai chi as a harmless source of exercise and social activity for the (mostly older) participants, and turned a blind eye to the anti-materialist philosophical underpinnings of many strands of the movement. The regime even sponsored a Qigong Research Association within which Falun Gong developed in the early 1990s under the leadership of Li Hongzhi. In 1994 Li split from the Association and moved to New York.

Falun Gong preaches "truthfulness, benevolence and forbearance," while warning that people of mixed race will have difficulty finding a proper place in the afterlife. It also teaches that modern machines (such as computers and airplanes) were created by extraterrestrials disguised as human beings. Falun Gong devotees are taught that by practicing a series of five exercises they can develop a golden-colored spinning "falun" within their bodies which will enable them to absorb energy from different universes, while simultaneously attaining religious enlightenment and physical health. This nonsense has an obvious appeal in a society where an increasing number of people face a future without pensions or access to affordable medical care. It is hardly surprising that Falun Gong is particularly popular with older people, the unemployed and others who are not making it in the "new" China.

In 1999, after local authorities began to complain about the disruptive effects of Falun Gong gatherings, He Zouxu, a theoretical physicist at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, wrote a highly publicized critique of their teachings. In response, 10,000 Falun Gong followers assembled on 25 April 1999 for a meditation session outside the Zhongnanhai compound in Beijing, home to China's political elite. The demonstration caught the authorities entirely by surprise. While the CCP feels compelled to tolerate localized protests focused on immediate concerns, it absolutely forbids any organizational activity that it does not control. Following the April demonstration, Falun Gong exercises were prohibited and many of its leaders jailed. But Falun Gong survives. In at least five different provinces Falun Gong supporters have managed to hack into government television channels, enabling them to broadcast messages ranging from simple exhortations stating "Falun Gong is good!", "to programs of up to an hour proselytizing for the cult.

The Chinese Stalinists are too politically bankrupt to be able to effectively combat the primitive notions of Falun Gong. The CCP leadership no longer deals in ideas, only in repression. Falun Gong is doubtless supported by imperialists and freelance counterrevolutionaries, but, unlike Polish Solidarnosc, whose leadership functioned as a consciously pro-imperialist agency within the deformed workers' state, Falun Gong advances no particular political or social program. Marxists take no responsibility for the CCP's suppression of this particular brand of superstitious nonsense.



AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE—GETTY IMAGES

### Coal miners in Guangde, eastern China

Falun Gong is clearly a pernicious opiate embraced by many Chinese desperate for a refuge from the insecurities and material deprivations of life in a crumbling workers' state. There are, however, far more dangerous pro-capitalist forces in China, including those within the leadership of the Communist Party itself. The fact that Falun Gong was widely practiced within the PLA, and even within the upper echelons of the CCP, is evidence that the party whose cadres were once animated by "Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought" is today committed to nothing more than maintaining its privileges and prerogatives.

### China's Proletariat: A History of Struggle

The working class has repeatedly thrown up its own organizations throughout the history of the People's Republic of China. During the brief "Hundred Flowers" liberalization campaign in 1956-7, a series of workplace-based "grievance redress societies" that sprang up outside the control of the official All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) led a wave of strikes. The high point of this movement was reached when half the workforce on the Guangzhou (Canton) docks mobilized against a pay cut. In the end, however, the CCP was able to crush the strikes and ship many working-class activists off to labor camps.

The intra-bureaucratic power struggle of the mid-1960s known as the "Cultural Revolution" had the unintended side effect of briefly creating openings for independent labor actions. There was a significant upsurge in working-class combativity in 1966-7, particularly in Shanghai where mass organizations embracing hundreds of thousands of workers were created. These formations played a role in deposing the CCP city administration and establishing the short-lived Shanghai People's Commune. In early February 1967 the commune was launched with a rally attended by a million workers. Throughout its short life, the Shang-

hai Commune was effectively controlled by a faction of disaffected CCP cadres who proclaimed their intention of ruling on the basis of the principles outlined by Karl Marx in *The Civil War in France*, his classic study of the 1871 Paris Commune (although they ignored his injunction that leaders should be popularly elected and immediately recallable). After only three weeks, the commune was liquidated at the "request" of the Great Helmsman himself. The misplaced enthusiasm of Shanghai's workers for a "commune" that was in fact only a tool for a faction of the ruling CCP demonstrated both the instability of the bureaucracy and the volatility of the working class.

In April 1976 another wave of workplace-based activity flared briefly in reaction to the ultra-Maoist policies of the "Gang of Four." Deng Xiaoping was briefly deposed a second time for his role in these disturbances, but was soon back in power. Workers took advantage of a temporary easing of political repression as Deng's "capitalist roaders" consolidated power to demand independent trade unions and denounce low wages, arbitrary management and other features of the new market "reforms." A journal based in the Taiyuan Iron and Steel Works proposed that to really defend their interests, workers needed their own organizations with elected and recallable delegates. Such voices were quickly silenced, but the ideas they advocated live on.

In early April 1989, when student protesters occupied Tiananmen Square to demand democratic reforms, they were soon joined by delegations of workers from Beijing factories. By the end of the month, the Beijing Workers Autonomous Federation (WAF) had sprung up, based in rail, steel and aviation. Similar formations soon emerged in other major cities. Initially, these organizations focused on demanding the legalization of independent trade unions separate from the ACFTU; however, they soon began to raise issues of wages, living standards, bureaucratic privilege, income differentials and workplace democracy. Work-

ers' organizations in different cities began linking up and many sent representatives to the Beijing WAF, which had started to function as the leading center of the movement.

On 18 May 1989, one million people, mostly workers, demonstrated in Beijing. A week later a preparatory committee for a national "workers' self-governing federation" was established. The CCP bureaucracy saw this as a serious threat to its rule. On 2 June 1989, the ACFTU, which had previously acceded to mass demands for a general strike, suddenly began to demand that the WAFs be outlawed. Two days later, army units loyal to the regime brutally attacked the demonstrators, killing hundreds. Thousands of workers who were charged with having participated in the autonomous workers' movement were thrown in jail or executed.

While the WAFs were crushed by the repression, they provided the workers' movement with a powerful demonstration of the potential for independent working-class political action. Between 1990 and 1994 three attempts to establish labor rights organizations were suppressed, and their organizers imprisoned. Only the ACFTU (labor arm of the CCP) is legal, and it is only allowed to put forward "reasonable demands," "uphold [market] reform" and "restore the normal order of production as soon as possible" in the event of any labor disruptions.

### Rising Tide of Workers' Struggle

The upsurge in workers' protests in recent years, fueled by massive unemployment, has already reached dimensions unprecedented since the 1949 Revolution. According to reports attributed to the Ministry of Public Security, the average number of daily protests more than doubled between 1998 and 2002. While most of these actions focus on immediate demands for the restoration of jobs, health care and unemployment benefits for workers in particular enterprises, demonstrators also frequently denounce the corrupt dealings of managers and local authorities.

The size and scope of the protest mobilizations is a real concern to the authorities. A CCP Central Committee study in 2001 reported: "In recent years some areas have, because of poor handling and multiple other reasons, experienced rising numbers of group incidents and their scale has been expanding, frequently involving a thousand or even ten thousand people" (*New York Times*, 2 June 2001). The report complained: "Protestors frequently seal off bridges and block roads, storm party and government offices, coercing party committees and government and there are even criminal acts such as attacking, trashing, looting and arson." Even more worrisome was the fact that participation was "expanding from farmers and retired workers to include workers still on the job, individual business owners, decommissioned soldiers and even officials, teachers and students."

Some of the militants involved in the 1989 labor upsurge have been playing a role in the current wave of workers' struggles. Zhang Shanguang, who spent seven years in jail for his role in the 1989 WAF, was sentenced to another ten years in prison in 1998, ostensibly for supplying intelligence to Radio Free Asia, a U.S. propaganda outlet. His real crime, however, was organizing the Shupu County Association for the Rights of Laid-off Workers, which supported farmers' protests against arbitrary taxation. Yue Tianxiang, a veteran labor activist who initiated the Shaoyang City Workers' Mutual Aid Society in 1983 and was jailed for heading the Shaoyang Autonomous Workers' Union in

1989, was sentenced to another ten years in prison in 1999 for his role in publishing the *China Workers Monitor* in Gansu province. In 1999, Xue Jifeng was locked up in a psychiatric hospital for having organized an independent union in Henan province. A 30 April 2002 Amnesty International brief recounted how Cao Maobing, a worker in a silk factory in Jiangsu province who tried to form an independent trade union and expose management corruption, was sent to a psychiatric hospital where he was forcibly subjected to drugs and electric shock "therapy."

Various imperialist agencies, including the Hong Kong-based *China Labor Bulletin* (connected with Radio Free Asia) and the pro-capitalist China Democracy Party, are hypocritically promoting the struggles of the Chinese proletariat as a means of undermining the CCP. While most worker activists are well aware of the negative effects of capitalist market "reform," many have illusions in the sugar-coated promises of the "democratic" agents of imperialism. Leaders of localized struggles victimized by Stalinist repression, who see no alternative to allying with pro-capitalist "reformers," can easily end up acting as agents of capitalist reaction.

### For Workers' Political Revolution!

The triumph of counterrevolution in the Soviet bloc was the greatest defeat ever inflicted on the international workers' movement. Today the question of whether the Chinese deformed workers' state will suffer a similar fate is acutely posed. The accumulation of social tensions along ethnic, regional and, most importantly, class lines, make the status quo unsustainable. Yet, unlike Soviet workers during the *perestroika* period of the 1980s, tens of millions of Chinese working people are well aware that the growth of capitalist market relations threatens to tear their lives apart. While plebeian discontent is rising, China's increasingly powerful bourgeoisie is also chafing under the restrictions on capitalist development imposed by the Stalinist bureaucracy. The imperialists and their ideologues look forward to the overthrow of the demoralized CCP and the transformation of China into a "normal" capitalist neo-colony, open to the ravages of "globalization" and the wholesale privatization of the means of production. The only alternative is a proletarian political revolution to topple the corrupt CCP, expropriate all capitalist property and establish institutions of genuine workers' democratic rule.

A revolutionary organization with roots in the militant Chinese proletariat could rapidly win the allegiance of the hundreds of millions of working people who already perceive the growth of capitalism as a deadly danger. The Chinese working class has repeatedly demonstrated that it possesses both the social power and the will to resist the rise of a new capitalist social order. This is a critically important factor. In China today the central issue is the struggle to create the nucleus of a new, revolutionary workers' party—a Trotskyist party—armed with an internationalist program of resolute struggle against the ravages of imperialism and committed to the unconditional defense, and the extension, of the gains of the Chinese Revolution. A Chinese workers' political revolution would represent a far greater blow to the world imperialist order than the original "loss" of China in 1949. It could ignite a revolutionary wave across Japan, Korea and the rest of Asia, that could radically transform global social and political reality, opening the road to a socialist future for all of humanity. ■

# Palestinians...

*continued from page 2*

from Saudi Arabia and Iraq is becoming ever more critical—a fact duly noted in the administration's National Energy Policy, released in 2001 by a White House task force. By 2020, the Gulf will supply between 54 percent and 67 percent of the world's crude, the document said, making the region 'vital to U.S. interests.'"

—Robert Dreyfuss, "The Thirty-Year Itch,"  
*Mother Jones*, March/April 2003

World War I, the first great inter-imperialist conflict, pitted Germany, Austro-Hungary and Turkey against Britain, France and Russia. The Middle East was a minor arena in that struggle for world domination, but the British made some effort to ignite an Arab revolt against Turkish rule. (This was the subject of the 1962 Academy Award-winning "Lawrence of Arabia" that starred Peter O'Toole.) The British promised the Arabs self-government after the war if the Turks were defeated.

## Perfidious Albion

Suddenly in February 1917, in the midst of the war, the Russian Czar was overthrown and a shifting succession of republicans, liberals and "moderate socialists" took turns at the helm. Britain's rulers were concerned that Russia might unilaterally pull out of the war, thereby freeing the German high command to move all its troops to the Western Front. The British Foreign Office was very aware of the prominent role that Jews played in every wing of the Russian socialist movement, and in an attempt to strengthen the pro-war "socialist" government of Alexander Kerensky against the irresponsible Bolsheviks, British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour pledged to create a Jewish homeland in Palestine. But the "Balfour Declaration" wasn't enough to save Kerensky who was overthrown five days after it was issued. One of the first actions of the new revolutionary government was to pull Russia out of the war. The Allies won anyway, enabling Britain to grab most of the Ottoman holdings in the Middle East, with the exception of Syria and Lebanon, which went to France.

The British welcomed Jewish European immigration to Palestine because they considered the Zionist settlers potential allies in the defense of the Suez Canal and other imperial holdings in the region. Between 1918 and 1932 Palestine's Jewish population almost tripled from 65,000 to 180,000. This increased even more after the Nazis' 1933 seizure of power in Germany. All the great "democracies," including Britain, Canada and the U.S., had blatantly anti-Semitic immigration policies and accepted only tiny numbers of Jewish refugees. Palestine was one of the few places that German Jews could go, and so by 1940, the Jewish population had grown to 450,000.

This massive influx alarmed the indigenous Arab population, and was a major factor in touching off the 1936-39 Arab revolt against British rule. The rebellion was eventually put down by the British Army with the aid of Zionist auxiliaries. It had nonetheless alarmed the policy makers in London. War with Germany was clearly imminent, so the British government, figuring that the Jews could never support Hitler, decided to mend fences with the Arabs. A May 1939 White Paper renounced any intention of partitioning Palestine between Arabs and Jews and promised instead to

create an independent Palestinian state within a decade, to restrict further Jewish immigration and to ensure that the Jewish population of the territory would not exceed a third of the total. In 1938 Tony Cliff, who later founded the "third-campist" International Socialist Tendency, commented on this development in the American Trotskyist theoretical journal:

"A little illustration will plainly show how the struggle against Jewish immigration distorts the anti-imperialist struggle: a short time ago rumors spread in Palestine that the government was on the verge of stopping Jewish immigration; where upon the Arabs organized joyous demonstrations in which they cried: 'Long Live Chamberlain! 'Long Live England!' 'The government is with us!'"

—"Class Politics in Palestine," *New Internationalist*,  
June 1938

After the war there was another major influx of Jews into Palestine—the "displaced persons" who had managed to survive Hitler's death camps. Very few of them were Zionists, and most would have preferred to go to America or Britain, but once again the Western democracies refused to accept them. The title of Irving Abella's book, *None is Too Many*, sums up the Canadian government's attitude to Jewish immigration at the time. The *New York Times* of 30 August 1948 noted:

"The almost universal opinion of refugee experts who have observed procedures in Germany is that [U.S.] consular officials make it much more difficult for displaced persons than for Germans emigrating to the United States."

It was a good deal easier for former Nazis (who were considered politically reliable anti-communists) to enter the United States and Canada than for their victims.

British attempts to restrict Jewish immigration to Palestine led to a conflict with the Zionist settlers who carried out a campaign of terror against the colonial administration. The British ruling class, which was virtually bankrupt by the end of the war, was in the process of divesting itself of most of its colonial holdings and announced plans to vacate Palestine in May 1948. The fledgling United Nations proposed a partition that gave the Jewish minority the majority of the territory. This crime was backed by the U.S. and also endorsed by Joseph Stalin, who hoped to reap some short-term diplomatic advantage. In fact, the Soviet Union was the first state to officially recognize Israel.

The Trotskyists, to their credit, opposed the partition and denounced the Zionist plans for an exclusively Jewish state as reactionary. While few in numbers, the Palestinian Trotskyists were an integrated organization—about one quarter Arab and the rest Jewish. The Trotskyists took a position of revolutionary defeatism on both sides in the 1948 War, during which the Zionists and the Arab rulers cooperated in carving up the land the UN had allocated to the Palestinians. The Zionist "war" mostly consisted of bloody ethnic cleansing of Palestinians, the most infamous example being the massacre of 250 civilians in the village of Deir Yassin by Menachem Begin's Irgun in April 1948. In 1980, when he was Israeli prime minister, Begin celebrated this crime by leveling what remained of the ruins of the village, and building a new Jewish settlement on the site with streets named after the Irgun units that carried out the massacre. Roughly half the Palestinians (some 700,000 people) were driven out of their ancestral homeland by Zionist terror in 1948.

One tragic aspect of the destruction of Palestine in 1948



1948: Palestinian refugees from Zionist terror

was that many of the Zionist pogromists who carried out the "ethnic cleansing" were the brutalized survivors of the horrors of the Nazi destruction of European Jewry—certainly one of the most horrendous crimes in history. The Jewish people in the diaspora were among the most cosmopolitan, educated and politically sophisticated elements in every society in which they lived. Jewish militants played a disproportionately important role in the socialist movement in the Arab world, just as in North America and Europe. Henri Curiel, a central leader of the Egyptian Communist Party in the 1940s, for example, was Jewish. But today the majority of world Jewry has been poisoned by Zionism—the ideology of the oppressors of the Palestinians.

The Arab-Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973 were, like that of 1948, essentially reactionary conflicts between Arab and Zionist bourgeoisies in which revolutionaries were for the defeat of both sides. In 1967 Israel seized the West Bank (which Jordan had carved out of Palestine in 1948), took the Gaza Strip and Sinai from Egypt and the Golan Heights from Syria. Most of the reformist and centrist left sided with the supposedly "anti-imperialist" Arab regimes. Fake-Trotskyists like Ernest Mandel and Gerry Healy joined New Leftists and Stalinists in hailing a supposed "Arab Revolution" which cast the various sheiks, colonels and bonapartist oppressors of the Arab peoples, as the agents of an "objectively" revolutionary dynamic. Today, with most of the Arab regimes signed up as enforcers of IMF "structural adjustment" programs, it is impossible to sustain such illusions.

The Middle East is a region with vast riches, which under the rule of imperialism, are used to enrich foreign capitalists (with a minor share diverted to their local agents in the ruling elites). Yasir Arafat's Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), which used to describe itself as a "revolutionary" movement engaged in struggle against "imperialism," is widely recognized as nothing but a bunch of petty-bourgeois nationalists who aspire to play the role of exploiters of their own people.

The PLO's "armed struggle" of the 1960s and 70s—airline hijackings and occasional small-scale guerrilla raids in Israel—never posed any threat to the Zionist state. It was intended by the PLO leadership to draw international attention to the plight of the Palestinians and put pressure on the Arab rulers for more support. The only interest the Arab bourgeoisie ever had in the Palestinians' predicament was as a means of diverting domestic anger onto a foreign enemy. The Arab regimes, like the Zionist one, are the enemies, not the allies, of both the Palestinians and their own peoples.

In 1970 King Hussein of Jordan killed over 10,000 Palestinians in the infamous "Black September" massacre, and pushed the PLO into Lebanon. In 1982 Israel launched a massive assault on Lebanon (Operation "Peace in Galilee") with the intention of destroying the PLO once and for all. At least 17,000 civilians perished in the brutal Zionist assault and the subsequent siege of East Beirut where the PLO was trapped.

Yasir Arafat, the PLO leader, called for the dispatch of imperialist UN troops to protect the Palestinians. Virtually every reformist and centrist left tendency treated this as the only "realistic" option, but when the U.S.-led UN "peacekeepers" arrived, they disarmed the PLO fighters and shipped them out to Tunisia and left Ariel Sharon, then Israel's "Defense" Minister and today prime minister, free to organize the massacre of 2,000 defenseless Palestinian refugees at the Sabra and Shatila camps.

U.S. troops remaining in Lebanon after the departure of the PLO became involved in the squalid Lebanese civil war, siding with the Israeli-backed Christian Phalange government. In October 1983 Islamic Jihad truck bombers blew up the U.S. Marines' compound (and simultaneously hit the French paratroopers' encampment). President Ronald Reagan proclaimed that the U.S. would not cut and run, but, a couple of months later, they did just that. Revolutionaries defended the blows that drove out the imperialists—without giving any political support to the Islamic fanatics who struck them—just as today we welcome every blow struck at the Zionist military in the West Bank and Gaza, or at imperialist "coalition" troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, by indigenous forces.

There was a great deal of opposition within Israel to the invasion and occupation of Lebanon. Like American soldiers in Vietnam, many Israeli conscripts were deeply disturbed by the Zionist war crimes against civilians. The ratio of "psychiatric" to physical casualties in the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) during the campaign in Lebanon was reported to be double the norm.

### Oslo Peace Accord: Betrayal of Palestinian Rights

Exiled in Tunis, the PLO gradually lost influence in the Occupied Territories. It played no role in initiating the first *intifada* in 1987. The PLO had been weakened by the growth of radical Islamist currents and the dramatic reduction in funding from its Arab state sponsors. Its position was further undermined by the implosion of the Soviet bloc, which had provided important political support. By the late 1980s Arafat was anxious to make a deal on virtually any basis. The result was the August 1993 Oslo agreement.

The core of the deal was that in exchange for giving up all claims to the 78 percent of Palestine that lay inside Israel's 1967 borders, the PLO would be permitted to police

a patchwork of Palestinian ghettos in the West Bank and Gaza. The poison pill was sweetened with vague talk about an eventual Palestinian mini-state in parts of the Occupied Territories, but in reality the PLO had signed on as auxiliaries for the Zionist occupation authorities. In September 1993 we said: "The so-called 'Peace Plan' signed a few weeks ago is a travesty of justice and represents a new betrayal of Palestinian national rights" (1917 No. 13). The latest step in the Zionist drive for *lebensraum* is the construction of an enormous fortified concrete wall to contain the West Bank Palestinians in a series of tiny, isolated concentration camps.

In her recent book, *Israel Palestine: How to End the War of 1948*, Tanya Reinhart quotes Sharon as describing the current campaign against the Palestinians as "the second half of 1948," i.e., an attempt to finish eliminating the indigent Arab population from the historic territory of Palestine. The whole "peace process" is a gigantic swindle in which the Palestinians were offered "land for peace," but got nothing more than empty promises. Although Zionist settler outposts were supposed to have been frozen under the Oslo agreement, the number of settlers has doubled since the deal was signed in September 1993.

The murderous Zionist military has already killed hundreds of Palestinian civilians and seriously injured thousands more. The destruction wrought on the Palestinians by the Israeli war machine is generally portrayed by the corporate media in North America as a defensive, if regrettable, necessity in response to Palestinian terrorism. This lie is exposed by the fact that the Israeli occupation authorities have been systematically destroying the tools of civil administration—including educational and medical records—while also bulldozing Palestinian homes, hospitals and even water and sewage systems throughout the West Bank. The Sharon government's strategy is simple—to make life so unbearable that large numbers of Palestinians, particularly youth, will be forced to leave the Occupied Territories. The Israeli state's "solution" to the Palestinian "problem" is called "ethnic cleansing" when implemented elsewhere.

The blatant corruption of Arafat and the top echelon of the Palestinian Authority (PA) has fueled the growth of theocratic, misogynist, homophobic, anti-Semitic formations like Hamas and Islamic Jihad among Palestinians, who had previously been among the most secular, best educated and most cosmopolitan peoples in the Arab world. Arafat is a prisoner in the rubble of his compound in Ramallah. Sharon recently announced his intention to kill him, but Washington is not sure that is wise, particularly with the situation in the Middle East deteriorating, so that plan is on hold, at least for now.

Israeli state policy on the West Bank has long been to make normal life impossible. In 1983 the military authorities decreed that Palestinians were not permitted to plant trees or even vegetables without a written permit. Anyone caught illegally planting an eggplant or tomato could be sentenced to up to a year in jail. Chomsky sums up life in the West Bank as follows:

"While a handful of Israeli settlers run luxury hotels with swimming pools for guests and profit from water-intensive agriculture, Palestinians lack water to drink—or, increasingly, even food to eat, as the economy collapses, apart from wealthy Palestinians, who are doing fine, on the standard Third World model."

—*The Fateful Triangle*

In the tiny Gaza strip things are even worse. A third of the territory is occupied by a mere 6,000 Jewish settlers (and the IDF garrison which protects them) while a *million* Palestinians are penned up in the other two-thirds.

One bright spot in a generally bleak situation has been the intervention of young people from the International Solidarity Movement (ISM) risking their lives in attempts to defend individual Palestinians. Rachel Corrie, an American student from Washington State, was killed earlier this year [2003] when she was deliberately run over by an Israeli bulldozer driver intent on destroying a Palestinian home. Another ISM member, Tom Hurndall, a British youth from Manchester who was shot in the head by an IDF sniper, is now brain dead. We salute the courage of these youth and their determination to help expose the brutality of the Zionist ethnic cleansers. But lying down in front of tanks cannot decisively change the balance of forces in the Middle East.

We side militarily with the oppressed against the Israel Army and the racist Zionist settlers, while recognizing that the Palestinians cannot win a military confrontation with the Israel Defense Force. This has led Hamas to look for softer targets—schools, shopping malls and dance halls. It is easy to understand the psychology of the young Palestinian suicide bombers. Their lives destroyed; their homes bulldozed; their futures stolen; their parents and siblings beaten, tortured or killed, they want revenge and a quick exit from the living hell that the Zionists have created. Yet Marxists cannot condone indiscriminate attacks on Israeli civilians—unlike those on the fascistic settlers and IDF members.

Attacks on Zionist troops (or their settler auxiliaries) are blows against the occupation. But blowing up people riding on a bus or going to a movie is not only a criminal act from the point of view of the workers' movement, it is also profoundly stupid, as it only welds Israeli working people more closely to their rulers. We saw how this works with the upsurge of mindless, xenophobia in the U.S. after "9/11." If ordinary Israelis believe that their physical survival is at stake, they will be far more supportive of brutal repression against the Palestinians. The *only* road to the national liberation of the Palestinians is through the destruction of the Zionist state, but that cannot be achieved through a nationalist strategy.

## Divisions Within the Zionist Fortress

It is easy enough to demagogically declare that the Israeli Jewish nation has no right to exist, but those who might attempt to implement such a program quickly come up against some hard material facts. The Zionist rulers are armed to the teeth, largely as a result of U.S. subsidies. The concern about "weapons of mass destruction" does not apply to the Zionists, who possess several hundred nuclear warheads that give them the ability to easily obliterate every Arab city, whenever they choose to. The prospect of "driving the Jews into the sea," as well as being reactionary, is delusional. The Zionist fortress must be destroyed *from within*. And this means winning over at least a section of the Jewish working class to a perspective of joint class struggle with the Palestinians and other Arab workers of the region. This is a very difficult, but not impossible, project as indicated by the fact that last year there were several hundred IDF reservists who refused to serve in the Occupied Territories. Last week they were joined by 27 reserve air force pilots.



Tel Aviv, April 2002: Jewish opponents of Zionist terror

There has been plenty of evidence during the past year that the objective interests of the Israeli working class are counterposed to those of their masters. In an attempt to reduce overheads and revive Israel's sagging economy, which has been hit hard by the simultaneous collapse of the technology stock bubble and tourism, the Sharon government has been cutting jobs, social benefits and wages for Jewish workers. In March 2003, half a million Israeli government workers mobilized for strike action to beat back, at least temporarily, a particularly aggressive austerity package being pushed by finance minister (and former prime minister) Benjamin Netanyahu. This confrontation graphically demonstrated that Zionist chauvinism and territorial expansionism have not obliterated the profound social contradictions between Israel's bosses and the Jewish working class.

Another fault-line in Israeli society is between Jews of European origin and those from Arab countries. The darker-skinned Sephardic Jews, who constitute the popular base for the ruling rightist Likud Party, tend to be less educated, and are segregated into the lowest-paid jobs where they are most directly threatened by cheaper Palestinian labor. They have real grievances, but their anger has largely been channeled into hatred of Arabs, much as poor whites in the U.S. have often provided a mass base for the Ku Klux Klan.

Shas, the National Religious Party and the other Jewish fundamentalist formations, which have often held the balance of power in the Israeli parliament, are practically as misogynist as their Islamist equivalents. They flatly reject equality for homosexuals and are opposed to co-education and to a woman's right to abortion. They consider that Jewish women have a duty to produce as many babies as possible to populate "Eretz Israel," which, according to their biblical maps, includes everything from the Nile to the Euphrates—i.e., a big chunk of Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, and all of Kuwait, Jordan and Syria.

The settlers in the Occupied Territories, most of whom are religious fanatics, get an average subsidy of \$10,000 a year. This is the source of considerable resentment among ordinary Israeli taxpayers who are not fundamentalists. The quarter of the Israeli Jewish population which is

strictly secular tends to resent attempts by the fundamentalist minority to impose their religious beliefs.

## Not Jew Against Arab, but Class Against Class!

The root of the problem is that both Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews claim the same small territory—and under capitalism one people can only exercise real self-determination at the expense of the other. Various liberal Zionists and reformist leftists have proposed that if Israel would just pull out of Gaza and the West Bank (which neither the Labour nor Likud wings of the Zionist ruling class has ever had any intention of doing) then the Palestinians could have "self-determination" in their own bifurcated mini-state. There are 6 million Palestinians, and 4.5 million Jewish Israelis. Giving the Jewish minority four-fifths of the territory, and squeezing the Arab majority into two impoverished Bantustans that constitute the other fifth would not solve anything in the long run. Israelis have no "right" to retain all the territory stolen from the Palestinians, but Marxists recognize that a Jewish-Israeli nation exists with an innate right to national existence.

Many leftists, including the left social-democratic International Socialists (IS), think that because workers' revolution is a long way off, we have to take a more practical approach and look for an equitable resolution under capitalism. The 14 August 2002 issue of *Socialist Worker* [Canada] put it like this:

"The goal of a real peace plan must be a single, democratic, secular state, where all religions and cultures can be freely expressed and where politics is based on fair and open elections."

Sounds pretty nice. A "democratic, secular [capitalist] state" where everything is fair and square. Who needs socialism? Social democrats, whether in the New Democratic Party or the IS, imagine that the irrationality of the capitalist world order can be overcome if sufficient pressure is brought to bear on the vicious imperialists to force them to play fair and be friends. Why have inter-imperialist rivalry? Why have class struggle? Wouldn't it all be easier if the lions and lambs just lay down together? But capitalism is a dog-eat-dog system. The history of the past 500 years has been one of constant struggle for the division and re-division of the world by various capitalist bandits. Marx and Engels laid out the essentials pretty clearly in the *Communist Manifesto* in 1848.

The precondition for Palestinians and Israelis equitably sharing the territory they both claim, like the precondition for Kurdish self-determination, women's liberation, full employment, universal healthcare and all other good things, is the uprooting of imperialist control in the region and the creation of a Socialist Federation of the Middle East. Unlike the various competing bourgeoisies, the proletariat of every country has an objective interest in promoting egalitarianism and resolving national antagonisms. But the working class can only come to power if it is led by a Leninist-Trotskyist party, based on the program of permanent revolution, and committed to implacable struggle against the Islamic reactionaries, monarchists and bonapartists of the Arab world as well as Israel's racist Zionist rulers.

It will not be easy to build such an organization, but it is not impossible. Most importantly, there is no other road. Only a party that inscribes on its banner "Not Jew Against Arab, But Class Against Class!" can solve the seemingly intractable problems of the Middle East in a historically progressive manner. ■

# Polemics with the LRP

## Leninism & Immigration

Reprinted below is a letter to the League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP) on the question of the Marxist position on immigration.

30 May 2003

Comrades:

In the report on your 10 May debate with the Spartacist League (SL), you note:

"Two other left organizations took part in the discussion, both founded by former SL members: the Bolshevik Tendency and the Internationalist Group. One BTER complained that the LRP had 'manufactured differences that don't exist' by bringing up the Spartacists' chauvinist position on immigrants. A handy evasion: the BT shares the SL line and has every reason to be ashamed of it. Not to defend the right of immigrants to enter the imperialist countries is a very big 'difference' that does indeed exist."

—"LRP Trounces SL in Imperialism Debate"

The IBT [International Bolshevik Tendency] has a record of consistently defending the rights of *all* immigrants, including "the right of immigrants to enter the imperialist countries." We had imagined that our essential programmatic difference on immigration was largely resolved by your renunciation of the petty-bourgeois utopian call for "open borders" ("Correction on the Slogan 'Open the Borders'," *Proletarian Revolution*, Spring 2002). This slogan had been rejected 28 years earlier by the then-revolutionary Spartacist League for reasons we elaborated in a 1988 polemic with Workers Power:

"Workers Power's hysterical denunciation of our Marxist position on immigration/emigration as 'potentially reactionary' and based on a 'racist fantasy' reveals in a particularly stark fashion the substrate of petty-bourgeois moralism which underlies so many of the MRCI positions. In the interest of political clarity we will nevertheless attempt to unravel some of the key elements in your argument.

"First, your statement that it is a 'racist fantasy' to assert that there can be cases where 'a mass influx of people from one country (unspecified) into another (unspecified)' can jeopardize the right to self-determination of the host population, is a deliberate smear. Anyone who takes the trouble to read what we actually wrote can see that we 'specified' three historical examples of situations where such migrations have in fact occurred: Zionist immigration into Palestine in the 1930's and 1940's; French colons immigrating to New Caledonia in the past several decades and Han immigration into Tibet in Maoist China. To imagine that such scenarios could be repeated in the future is neither fantastic nor racist. It is obvious that your attempt to label it as such is due only to your political inability to deal with our position.

"Secondly, you allege that we reject 'the democratic right for the free movement of workers across all countries.' Again, if the comrade who concocted this nonsense had taken the trouble to read the document he polemicized against, he might have noticed that it very clearly states that we support 'the basic democratic right of any individual to emigrate to any country in the world.' We uphold the democratic right of individual emigration, while recognizing that it is neither categorical nor absolute. In some cases it could abrogate other democratic rights, as in

the examples cited above—or it may conflict with a higher principle, such as the defense of the deformed and degenerated workers states.

"Finally, you suggest that we pose 'as the immediate answer to fight a particular aspect of imperialist policy—racist immigration controls—the revolution.' Once again we have to refer you to what we actually wrote:

"In the U.S. we defend Mexican workers apprehended by *La Migra*. We oppose all immigration quotas, all roundups and all deportations of immigrant workers. In the unions we fight for the immediate and unconditional granting of full citizenship rights to all foreign-born workers."

—*Trotskyist Bulletin* No.3

What "very big difference" does the LRP have with this? We note that the *Proletarian Revolution* article claims:

"Our position has nothing in common with those of the Spartacist League or its spin-off debris, which oppose 'Open the Borders' on chauvinist grounds. These groups advocate instead 'full citizenship rights' for all immigrants—that is, only when they get here. The Spartacists say they oppose 'open borders' as liberal utopianism unachievable under capitalism, which is true enough. But their real reason is that they are against ending all immigration restrictions by imperialist powers. Here is the Spartacist argument, presented over 25 years ago and repeated often:

"However, on a sufficiently large scale, immigration flows could wipe out the national identity of the recipient countries...Unlimited immigration as a principle is incompatible with the right to national self-determination...."

—*Workers Vanguard*, Jan. 18, 1974"

There is nothing "chauvinist" about this observation—it is simply a truism, as cases like Palestine or Tibet illustrate. But you insist that these sentences constitute evidence of some sort of "chauvinist" cover-up:

"That is, a tide of poor proletarians from third world countries endangers the 'national identity' of the advanced capitalist countries. This is obviously a cover-up for a national chauvinist position. The SL and its offspring defend the right to self-determination of the imperialist U.S.—which means the suppression of the national rights of people across the globe. Communists, in contrast, defend resisters and refugees *against* imperialism. As framed by the Bolsheviks, the right to self-determination distinguishes between oppressed and oppressors."

You can offer no evidence beyond bald assertion that the SL or any of "its offspring" have ever failed to "defend resisters and refugees *against* imperialism." The SL is guilty of many things but it is not, to our knowledge, guilty of this; nor is the IG. It is not a good practice to make serious allegations without proof.

And then there is the question of whether or not Leninists uphold the right of *all* nations to self-determination, or only *some* nations. In your report on the recent debate (addressing the question of interpenetrated peoples) you observe:

"Of course, the SL can find quotes where Lenin says that all nations have the right to self-determination. It would



BROOKLYN COLLEGE HISTORY DEPT

1948: Jewish refugees arrive in Palestine

never have occurred to Lenin to say otherwise, because oppressor nations already had their self-determination; it was the oppressed who needed it."

Very true, which is why communists today spend no more time campaigning for self-determination for France, Russia or the United States than the Bolsheviks did 90 years ago. Lenin (and Trotsky) insisted on the strict equality of all nations, a position that conflicts with your own despite your attempts to prove otherwise at the debate:

"[LRP spokesperson] Richardson pointed out that Trotsky also addressed the question of Lenin's attitude toward the rights of oppressor nations. In a discussion of Ukrainian self-determination, Trotsky wrote:

"The right to self-determination, i.e., to separation, Lenin extended to the Poles and the Ukrainians alike. He did not recognize aristocratic nations. To any tendency to be silent about or to put off the problem of an oppressed nationality, Lenin related as he did to expressions of Great-Russian chauvinism."

—'On the Independence of Ukraine and Sectarian Muddleheads,' our emphasis [LRP]

"As Cde. Richardson stated, 'Let those words ring in the ears of every Spartacist today: Lenin did not recognize the rights of aristocratic nations, and any tendency to put off the rights of the oppressed he condemned as great-power chauvinism!'"

If you look a bit more closely you will find that this quotation does not say what you would like it to. Contrary to comrade Richardson, Trotsky did *not* claim that "Lenin did not recognize the rights of aristocratic nations." What he said was that Lenin did not "recognize aristocratic nations," i.e., he considered all nations equal, with an equal right to self-government. Lenin was, of course, well aware of national privilege and national oppression, but he rejected (or refused to recognize) the legitimacy of such disparities, just as he rejected the notion that some people (aristocrats) are entitled to special social status.

In 1997 our British comrades, then members of Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party, began publication of the *Marxist Bulletin*. Each issue featured "A Marxist Programme for the Socialist Labour Party" that clearly stated: "The SLP calls for the scrapping of the Asylum Act; we should extend this to all other immigration laws."

The third issue of *Marxist Bulletin* published an article on the hotly debated question of immigration controls:

"Many comrades from South London, Manchester and Birmingham put forward a number of amendments to this policy of keeping 'humane' and 'non-racist' immigration controls. They rightly pointed out that given the historical legacy of British colonialism and imperialism it is impossible to have 'humane' exclusion or to have 'non-racist' discrimination. One Asian comrade powerfully stated she had left the Labour Party precisely because it supported immigration controls, and she expected the SLP to oppose all the capitalist parties' immigration laws.

"Comrade Brian Heron defended the existing policy against the amendments, arguing that Cuba had immigration controls, and that Britain would need them, citing a hypothetical mass exodus of rightist white South Africans escaping a workers' revolution there. This seems to almost deliberately confuse the question that was being debated. Does the SLP defend or oppose the British capitalist state's immigration laws? Yes or no? Socialists clearly do not advise the capitalist class in Britain how best to keep foreign-born workers out. This is ABC for any socialist! The SLP should loudly and proudly oppose all capitalist immigration laws.

"On the other hand there is Cuba, a deformed workers state. Socialists defend Cuba from capitalist counter-revolution and attack. Cuba belongs to the international working class, despite its leadership. It has the right to defend itself and this means it must tightly police its borders as it is encircled by hostile capitalist enemies led by the US. This means restricting immigration and more importantly emigration of its trained professionals and skilled workers.

"The SLP should be against all capitalist Britain's immigration laws, and for the right of Cuba to defend and police its borders. There is no contradiction here, as Britain and Cuba are two different, antagonistic, types of state. In capitalist Britain all immigration controls are necessarily discriminatory, racist and anti-working class."

"We oppose the capitalists' immigration laws for many of the same reasons the capitalists support them. Our interests are opposite. Most people who try to come to Britain are refugees from terror or economic migrants escaping poverty at home. They are mainly working people, and they will strengthen our class here. They will strengthen our links with workers and socialist parties in such places as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Caribbean. The capitalists oppose their entry because they are poor, and if they don't require the extra labour see them only as a drain on their economy.

"We do not demand the 'right' of rightist, white South Africans to come *en masse* to the UK. The SLP would not be pleased about such possibilities. But it is not socialists' job to design ideal immigration laws for the bosses. We do not run this country. We would rather campaign for real solidarity, such as blocking armed intervention against a South African workers state.

"The SLP should be very clear on opposing capitalist immigration laws and harassment of our foreign-born comrade workers. Any SLP local councillor who does not oppose any sacking or police roundup of so-called 'illegal' immigrants, however 'humanely' or 'non-racially', should be denounced and expelled immediately as a traitor. Any future SLP MP who does not oppose all capitalist immigration laws, however 'liberal', should also be denounced and expelled immediately as a traitor."

—"Anti-Racism and the Fight Against the Bosses Immigration Controls," *Marxist Bulletin* No. 3, August 1997

A statement by our German comrades (reprinted in *Marxist Bulletin* No. 8, February 1999) stated unequivocally: "The struggle against state racism must be directed against all immigration legislation and deportations and must demand full citizen rights for all immigrants." In an article discussing the question of strategy for anti-fascists, our German comrades noted:

"At officially sponsored trade-union demonstrations, the demand for *Bleiberecht* (the legal right to remain) dominates the banners and speeches. Many left groups capitulate to the union bureaucrats' at best half-hearted defense of immigrants by uncritically taking up this slogan."

"While the call for 'open borders' is more radical than the union bureaucrats' demand for *Bleiberecht*, it implies that the German bourgeoisie can be pressured into redressing the wrongs done to people victimized by imperialism by permitting unlimited immigration. Communists generally uphold the democratic right of individuals to live where they choose and oppose laws limiting immigration into imperialist countries. But we do not attempt to transform liberal sentiments into a utopian/reformist answer to the gross inequities of the capitalist world order."

—"German Reunification Fuels Fascist Terror," 1917 No. 11, 1992

In a 21 January 1945 letter from prison, James P. Cannon observed: "Lenin said: 'It is very hard to find a conscientious opponent.' That was in Russia. In America it is impossible." We would like to be able to consider the LRP an exception to this rule, and to this end, suggest that you either

substantiate your allegation that we have a "chauvinist position on immigrants" which we have "every reason to be ashamed of," or withdraw it.

Yours for debating real differences,  
Samuel T.

The LRP replied with a lengthy letter, dated 8 August 2003, which can be read on their web site ([www.lrp-cofi.org](http://www.lrp-cofi.org)). Their letter began with a correction:

"You say in your letter of May 30 that the International Bolshevik Tendency stands for the rights of all immigrants, including 'the right of immigrants to enter the imperialist countries.' You provide us with evidence from your British and German publications, which we were unaware of before receiving your letter. We acknowledge that, in the literature of the IBT, you have defended the rights of immigrants in relation to the imperialist countries in more sweeping terms than has the Spartacist League. Therefore, we now correct our unequivocal statement that you 'share the [Spartacist League] line' opposing that right."

The LRP however reiterated their allegation that a 1974 article by the Spartacist League (SL) on the question is "openly chauvinist," and cited the following passage:

"If, for example, there were unlimited immigration into Northern Europe, the population influx from the Mediterranean basin would tend to dissolve the national identity of small countries like Holland and Belgium."

—*Workers Vanguard* [WV] No. 36, 18 January 1974

There is no suggestion in this passage, or elsewhere in the article, that such a hypothetical development would necessarily be a bad thing. All it states is that a sufficiently large-scale change in the ethnic composition of the population of a particular territory must inevitably change its national character. This is simply a fact. The LRP asserts that the next sentence in the WV article shows that the SL regards massive immigration as a "real danger":

"In reality, of course, long before immigration would actually affect national identity, a chauvinist reaction, penetrating even into a traditionally pro-socialist working class, would cut off further inflows."

However much we might wish that this was not true, there is considerable historical evidence to the contrary. This is why in 1917 No. 24 we observed:

"...Marxists must oppose, as a matter of principle, all bourgeois immigration controls, but also remain sensitive to the ways in which large-scale population transfers can be used by reactionary demagogues to promote chauvinism and undercut class consciousness."

The LRP asked for an explanation of this statement. It means that, on the one hand, Marxists must attempt to neutralize such backward appeals by crushing fascistic/xenophobic activity in the egg, while, on the other, pedagogically addressing the anxieties of plebeian layers who may be susceptible to such demagogy. In their interventions in the struggles of workers and the oppressed, revolutionaries must seek to underline the fundamental identity of interests between indigenous and immigrant workers. Only in this way will it be possible to forge a leadership in the proletariat committed to the wholesale expropriation of capital, which alone can lay the material basis for an egalitarian, socialist society—the precondition for eliminating antagonisms based on race, ethnicity or national origin. ■



(WSF), a popular-frontist lash-up of Third Worldists, trade-union bureaucrats and NGO hustlers committed to peddling the illusion that "another world is possible" under capitalism:

"Revolutionary Marxists say openly that we want to help it [the WSF] develop into an international movement, able to direct the struggle against capitalism and imperialism — a new world party of socialist revolution.

"Over a century ago the forces of Marxism faced similar challenges within a period of rising struggles when the movement, which came to be known as the Second International, was born. There are many lessons to be learned in the way that this movement was founded in 1889..."

—*Workers Power*, January 2003

Their projected world party is modeled on the Second International of Karl Kautsky, Eduard Bernstein and Henry Hyndman:

"The Second International proved beyond doubt that political struggle, trade union action, electoral campaigning and wide-scale agitation and propaganda can rally mass forces to working class parties everywhere."

—*Workers Power*, May 2003

Kautsky, the leading theorist of the Second International, argued that Marxists, centrists and reformists all belonged in a single party. He claimed that bourgeois influence in the workers' movement had its origins outside the class, and would tend to diminish with the assimilation of recently proletarianized peasant and petty-bourgeois layers. He maintained that the growing social weight of the proletariat would translate into increased support for socialism, provided the workers were organized into a single political party. His formula, "one class—one party," sums up *Workers Power's* new strategy.

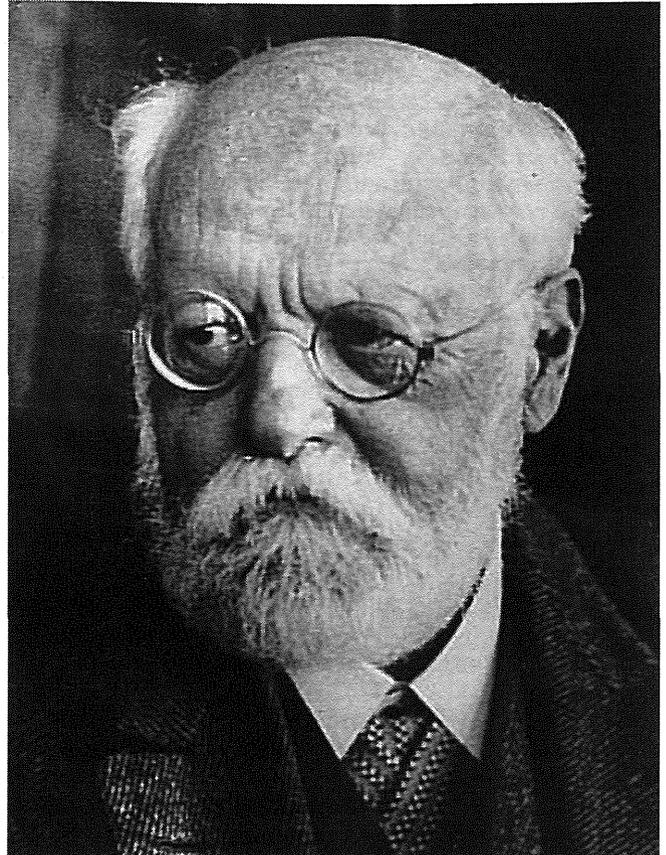
But the awkward fact remains that the union bureaucrats, social-democrats and Stalinists who dominate the "World Social Forum" and the "European Social Forum" (ESF) are explicitly pro-capitalist. *Workers Power* proposes to get around this by simply having the reformists pledge to be more revolutionary:

"Parties [in the ESF] must declare that they will not govern in coalition with the capitalists or on their behalf but will struggle to overthrow them.

"In this way, we can unite the ESF (and the WSF too) not only into a democratic forum and co-ordinator of action, but also into a new World Party—a fifth international—to struggle for an end to the rule of global capital and the establishment of the rule of the majority of humanity."

—*Workers Power*, October 2003

Trotsky and Lenin explicitly rejected Kautsky's model of an all-inclusive party because they recognized that the reformist labor bureaucracy is a capitalist agency *within* the workers' movement. They also rejected Kautsky's view that socialism can be attained through the unfolding of a semi-automatic historical "process." The Third (Communist) International under Lenin and Trotsky asserted that the precondition for socialist victory was the organization of the most advanced workers into a disciplined, revolutionary vanguard party, separate from, and politically hostile to, the labor lieutenants of capital. The lesson drawn by Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin, Trotsky and other leaders of the revolutionary Comintern, was that the August 1914 collapse of the Second International into social-patriotism was inevitable, because a workers' party that embraces reformists and centrists is organically incapable of presenting a serious threat to the rule of the exploiters.



BILDARCHIV DER ÖSTERREICHISCHEN NATIONALBIBLIOTHEK

### Karl Kautsky: L5I's mentor

While touting the Second International, *Workers Power* continues its long history of confusionist doubletalk by occasionally referring positively to the Bolshevik tradition. For example, the October 2003 issue contained an article on the Middle East entitled "Roadmap to Permanent Revolution" which broadly approved of Trotsky's strategy for the neo-colonial world. The July/August 2003 issue had gone even further and explicitly endorsed Lenin's faction in the famous 1903 split with the Mensheviks:

"The great revolution of 1917 confirmed that the issues of the split of 1903 had not been accidental. The Mensheviks formed a government with the Liberals against the revolutionary workers: the Bolsheviks led the revolutionary majority of the working class to the seizure of power.

"Thus the birth of Bolshevism one hundred years ago is something all revolutionaries today should celebrate. It initiated the necessary split between reform and a revolution. Everyone today who turns their back on Bolshevism, who proclaims that the divisions of 1903 and 1917 are outmoded or irrelevant, is giving us a fair warning that they will act as Mensheviks in the great revolutions of the 21<sup>st</sup> century."

—*Workers Power*, July/August 2003

The willingness of *Workers Power* to publish such statements, and at the same time recommend the reformist Second International as a model for revolutionaries today, provides an index of the utter cynicism and unseriousness of the group's leadership.

### Swamp-Building *Sui Generis*

*Workers Power's* leading members no doubt imagine that dropping the label Trotskyist is a clever "tactical" ma-

neuver that will bring them closer to the anti-globalizers. The heirs of Michel Pablo and Ernest Mandel have made the same calculation. At its 15<sup>th</sup> World Congress in February 2003, the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USec) also discussed prospects for getting in on the ground floor of a new, politically heterogeneous international thrown up by the anti-globalization movement:

"This new International, or at least a first step on the road to its construction, will emerge from the current movements and mobilizations. It will not resemble any of its predecessors, and certainly not the revolutionary Marxist party-based internationals. It will be the massive 'spontaneous' response to the current historically unprecedented global despotic reign of capitalism, and its anchoring will be its internationalism and intuitive anti-capitalism; but also its very great heterogeneity from every viewpoint."

—*International Viewpoint*, May 2003

The USec Pabloites pledge in advance not to try to "impose" their own views in such a formation:

"Our objective is not to make a short term political-organizational raid on the global justice movement according to the lines of fracture already perceptible in it so as to impose on it a political organization. On the contrary, we must build it, strengthen it as a combat movement *sui generis*, and realize all its potentialities on different levels..."

—*Ibid.*

Workers Power's parent, the SWP, is also eagerly awaiting the creation of a heterogeneous, all-inclusive anti-globalization swamp. Alex Callinicos, the SWP's leading propagandist, has even written an *Anti-Capitalist Manifesto* for such a formation. Workers Power, whose hypothetical Fifth International is also supposed to be all-inclusive, rejects Callinicos' offering as "an opportunist manifesto" that attempts to:

"accommodate to the reformist policies and practice of the SWP's hoped for allies in the movement. It tries to split the difference between the ideas currently in vogue in the movement and the principles of communism."

—*Workers Power*, July/August 2003

The absurdity of these would-be architects of a reborn Second International invoking "the principles of the communist movement" to chastise a larger rival is comical. But Workers Power often makes abstractly correct political observations and/or accurate criticisms of the revisionist deviations of others, while pursuing grossly opportunist policies of its own.

A recent example is WP's activity in the SWP's "Stop the War Coalition" (StWC)—a reformist propaganda bloc that organized demonstrations against British involvement in the U.S. attack on Iraq. The January 2003 issue of *Workers Power* proclaimed: "revolutionaries are not afraid to say that we positively want Iraq to defeat the attacking US and UK forces, just as we want the Palestinians to defeat their Israeli oppressors." But this was just a literary posture. Workers Power cadres attended the 11 January 2003 conference of the StWC where the SWP outlined its plans for building a movement "on the widest possible basis" to pressure British imperialism into pursuing a more pacific foreign policy. Just to make it clear what was meant by "broad," the SWP made sure that a seat on the steering committee of the StWC was explicitly reserved for a representative of the bourgeois Liberal Democrats.

At no point did Workers Power criticize the overtures to the Liberal Democrats, nor the resolutions supporting the

United Nations den of imperialist thieves, nor the StWC's bourgeois-pacifist political program. They used their time instead to put forward anodyne proposals that more should be done to build support for the StWC among young people and trade unionists. The February 2003 issue of *Workers Power* proudly reported: "Our members have leading positions in the National Stop the War Coalition." Workers Power's presence in the StWC represented an accommodation to the SWP's "reformist politics and practices" and helped provide a left cover for the Cliffites' class-collaborationist policy.

The StWC's chief accomplishment was to organize a massive demonstration in London on 15 February 2003, which *Workers Power* claimed "changed the world." While unprecedented in size and the degree of international coordination, the politics presented at StWC events were tailored to exclude anything unacceptable to the "progressive" wing of the imperialist ruling class. Clergymen, mullahs, Labour dissidents and Liberal Democrats were all invited to put forward their views, but no one, including the coalition's ostensibly revolutionary animators, was so gauche as to breathe a word about Marxism from the podium. The desire for "unity" (with the liberal wing of the bourgeoisie), which was rationalized as a means of ensuring the "broadest" mobilizations, only guaranteed that imperialist war preparations could go ahead without serious resistance.

The task of revolutionaries in seeking to oppose a criminal imperialist assault on a neo-colony is to struggle to shift the political axis of "anti-war" sentiment amongst working people and youth by winning them to an understanding of the need to side with the victims of their own ruling class. This requires a sharp political struggle against the rotten class-collaborationist politics represented by the StWC, something the Second Internationalists of the L5I leadership are organically incapable of. *Workers Power's* relentlessly upbeat treatment of the StWC's massive, but confused and bourgeois-pacifist, anti-war mobilization in February 2003 recalled the mechanically "optimistic" objectivism of the Second International. Closing their eyes to the fact that the February protests were hegemonized by social-pacifists and pro-capitalist ideologues, these charlatans proclaimed:

"The movement in the West is already extraordinarily strong. As it moves from million-strong marches through blockading railroads and ports to strike action, it will become with each step more aware of its power to stop not only this war, but the system that creates war—capitalism."

—*Workers Power*, March 2003

But the overt social-pacifism of the StWC made the anti-war movement extraordinarily *weak*. By gutting the protests of anything that might offend the bishops, mullahs, Liberal Democrats, union bureaucrats and other eminent persons, the SWP (aided by its left tail, Workers Power) ensured that popular opposition to Blair's adventure remained within the framework of bourgeois politics. This is why the mass "movement" melted away so quickly after the U.S./UK axis conquered Baghdad.

It took a while for this fact to register with Workers Power, which is why the report on the launch of the L5I in May 2003 was still hailing the 15 February demonstrations as "world historic" (*WP*, May 2003). But by July 2003, *Workers Power* had changed its tune, and without any mention of its own role, began complaining that at the 15 February



WHITE HOUSE

### Brazilian President Lula da Silva feted at White House by Imperial President Bush

demonstration, "The SWP left the trade union and reformist leaders unchallenged..." and "neither called on the official leaders to act in the interests of the working class nor criticised them for their refusal to commit to action." This, they sagely intoned, meant, "the SWP in reality lets the reformists off the hook and spares them concrete criticism at the crucial time." All that remains is to explain why the "revolutionary Marxists" of Workers Power would have joined such a propaganda bloc in the first place.

### Converting the Devil Himself

This passive objectivism is evident in the LRCI/L5I's treatment of other questions. An article on the imperialist-sponsored attempts to overthrow Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez in *Workers Power* (January 2003) correctly suggests that the plebeian masses, "need to be won from Chavez's brand of neo-populism, from the reliance on him as a 'people's president', to the goal of making a revolution themselves to install workers' power," and even ventured that it is necessary to found, "a new party of the poor and working class against the bosses and US imperialism." Yet the LRCI/L5I, in classically centrist fashion, combines the call for a "new party" with tactical advice for Chavez, who, they complain, has, "taken far too few radical or socialist measures which could have won over the organised working class to his side." *Workers Power* offers the following advice to the Venezuelan Bonaparte:

"To defeat his enemies he should, of course, seize the wealth of the 'investment strikers', of the US and EU-based banks and corporations and put this wealth at the service of the impoverished millions. He should take the weapons away from the professional officer caste and create a mass workers' and people's militia. He should encourage and help build organs of working class and popular resistance – councils or committees of action – as an alternative to the capitalist state machinery."

This overlooks one detail—Chavez is a *bourgeois* politician. His job is neither to expropriate capitalists nor to "build organs of working class and popular resistance."

His task is to ensure the continued domination of capital over labor and to strengthen the position of the Venezuelan bourgeoisie in the international capitalist world order. If Chavez is someone Workers Power expects to carry out "radical or socialist measures" why not invite him to help launch their Fifth International? After all, Chiang Kai-Shek joined the Comintern (for a while) and the suggestion that Chavez can be pressured into acting in the interests of the workers closely parallels Stalin's disastrous adaptation to the Kuomintang in the 1920s. The chief difference is that Stalin's class-collaborationist policy beheaded the Chinese working class, while the LRCI/L5I's daydreaming about finding a shortcut to mass influence through Third World "anti-imperialist" bonapartists is purely literary. But politically there is little to distinguish them.

Whatever might be said about Chavez, he has at least come into conflict with Latin America's imperial overlords. This distinguishes him from Lula who was elected president of Brazil in October 2002 promising to carry out the instructions of the IMF and World Bank and to keep paying off the imperialist loansharks, "instead of reneging on them as he once proposed" (*Economist*, 2 November 2002). The popular-frontist character of Lula's campaign was highlighted by his selection of José Alencar, a millionaire textile magnate from the bourgeois Liberal Party, as his vice-presidential running mate.

In September 2003, *Workers Power* described Lula's government as a cross-class "popular front" and indignantly denounced the USec's Miguel Rossetto, who holds the portfolio as Lula's Minister of Agrarian Reform, for "sowing illusions that Lula governs in the workers and peasants interests." The L5I quite correctly denounced the USec for "tramp[ing] on these principles of working class independence" and also for alibiing the PT "selling out [the workers'] interests to the bourgeoisie." Yet when Lula was first elected, and illusions ran high, *Workers Power* was singing a different tune. At that time, it described Lula's popular-frontist campaign as a potential "base for radical socialist measures" and argued that his government:



CLARIN

### Venezuelan bonaparte Chavez

"must be forced to table progressive legislation on the minimum wage, social welfare, land reform and labour rights. The workers must call on the CUT to organise mass strikes and protests to stop the right wing in parliament from voting such measures down.

"Out of such a movement a powerful force for revolution can be assembled, one fighting for the expropriation of the banks and big businesses and the repudiation of the foreign debt – and for the overthrow of the capitalist state machine that is committed to the preservation of both."

— *Workers Power*, January 2003

In the seminal text of the International Left Opposition, Leon Trotsky ridiculed Stalinist/Menshevik utopian "demands" that petty-bourgeois demagogues, hustlers and bureaucrats (like Chavez, Lula and the WSF honchos) act as revolutionaries:

"As was said long ago, purely practical agreements, such as do not bind us in the least and do not oblige us to anything politically, can be concluded with the devil himself, if that is advantageous at a given moment. But it would be absurd in such a case to demand that the devil should generally become converted to Christianity, and that he use his horns not against workers and peasants but exclusively for pious deeds. In presenting such conditions we act in reality as the devil's advocates, and beg him to let us become his godfathers."

—*The Third International After Lenin*

The policy of "demanding" that pro-capitalist elements initiate anti-capitalist struggles also characterizes Workers Power's domestic politics. The September 2003 issue of *Workers Power* proposes that Britain's trade-union tops create a new workers' leadership: "We must call on the union leaders and Labour left to break with Blair and rally anti-capitalist and anti-war forces to a new workers' party." This is incongruously combined with a proposal to "fight for a rank and file movement" inside the unions. The "rank and file" strategy, carried over from the Cliffites, is based on the workerist presumption that the "class in itself," with all its Labourite/trade-unionist (i.e., bourgeois) consciousness, only needs to be organized separately from its current leadership to automatically become a "class for itself."

"Rank and file" trade-union reformism takes workers down a political dead-end. The core proposition of Leninism is that it is necessary to forge a new leadership in the working class that is both organizationally and politically

independent of the "labor lieutenants of capital." This requires the intervention of revolutionaries to combat the prevailing reformist ideology represented by the Labourite bureaucracy. Instead of undertaking a political struggle to expose and discredit the bureaucrats, who constitute the central agency of the capitalists within the workers' movement, Workers Power calls on them to build an "anti-capitalist" workers' party!

### Kautskyism for the Twenty-First Century

The key lesson drawn by the Bolsheviks from the social-imperialist betrayal of the Second International in August 1914 was that the "unity" of revolutionaries and reformists in a single organization can only lead to disaster. The Third International was launched on the basis of organizing revolutionaries independently of the capitalists and their lackeys in the workers' movement. Workers Power, after almost 30 years spent wandering about in a centrist no-man's-land between Cliffite reformism and genuine Trotskyism, has apparently drawn the opposite conclusion.

The most obvious question posed by Workers Power's latest maneuver is why bother to maintain an independent organizational existence if what is necessary is the creation of an amorphous all-embracing movement. The SWP is many times larger than the LSI and, apart from a bit of rhetorical leftist posturing (which *International Socialism Journal* also features from time to time) there is really nothing much that politically distinguishes Workers Power from the Cliffites, who have also signaled a willingness to dissolve into a larger, all-inclusive "socialist" party. The SWP at least has a few thousand members to throw into such a venture—but why should anyone expect a few dozen Workers Power members to play a catalytic role in reviving Kautsky's all-inclusive "party of the whole class"?

While Lenin and Trotsky advocated speaking the truth to the masses, "no matter how bitter," Workers Power has been primarily concerned with avoiding "isolation," and typically waits until the masses are already losing their illusions before putting forward anything resembling a hard position. As we observed several years ago:

"The LRCI were burdened since birth with a glaring contradiction. On the one hand, their empirical observations were often trenchant and realistic, and appeared to support a Trotskyist political understanding; on the other hand, [Workers Power] were unwilling to draw the proper political and theoretical conclusions from these observations for fear of offending left-liberal and social-democratic opinion. To pursue their thinking to its logical conclusions might isolate them on the left, and gain them a reputation for being 'sectarians' – which to the centrist mind is a fate worse than death."

—1917 No. 17, 1996

In its new *Manifesto for World Revolution*, Workers Power congratulates itself for being "bold enough to write a guide to action to an entire international movement" while apologizing that it may still contain "jargon that is off-putting to many" in the anti-globalization milieu. Having abandoned their Leninist-Trotskyist pretensions in an attempt to find a shortcut to mass influence via the gimmick of a "Fifth International," this peculiar centrist grouping is on a path to outright liquidation. With their renunciation of the Fourth International in favor of the Second, these confusionists have taken a major step toward bringing their nominal politics into alignment with their practice. ■

# Why Socialists say 'Defend Iraq'!

## Neutrality in the Face of Imperialism

Reprinted below is a reply by the International Bolshevik Tendency to an 18 January 2003 leaflet from "an informal group of people in Toronto of varying perspectives (anarchist, communist and others)."

29 January 2003

Comrades:

Your 18 January leaflet, "Against Capitalist War! Against Capitalist Peace!", raises a question about our position on the pending U.S.-led war against Iraq: "In effect the IBT militarily defends the Ba'athist regime while affording 'no political support to Saddam Hussein'—but what the hell does that mean?" We are happy to explain.

If you are "politically supporting" an individual or organization it means that you broadly agree with at least some of the ideas, program and perspectives they represent. "Military support" means taking a side in a particular conflict, without necessarily endorsing any or all of the politics or ideology of those you support.

If, for example, a group of anarchists came upon a gang of Nazis attacking a synagogue full of devout Jews, should they refuse to get involved because the congregation's rabbi is a religious obscurantist or because the synagogue has been fund-raising for the racist Zionist state? Of course not. Any decent person would side with the Jewish congregation (including the rabbi) against the Nazis. This would imply neither an endorsement of Judaic theology nor approval of Israel's crimes against the Palestinians.

If workers in a union controlled by corrupt bureaucrats go on strike against a vicious corporation, or an aboriginal band council led by self-serving careerists resists a government attempt to expropriate their land, revolutionaries are not neutral. We side with the oppressed against their oppressors *regardless* of their leadership.

The capitalist world economy operates as a mechanism for extracting wealth from the vast majority of humanity for the benefit of a tiny handful. It is therefore necessary to distinguish between imperialist or oppressor countries (Canada, the U.S., France, Britain, etc.) and neo-colonial or oppressed countries (Jamaica, Lebanon, Colombia, Iraq, etc.). Your description of the U.S.-led crusade as an "imperialist drive to dominate the world's oil reserves" and a "genocidal war" against the people of Iraq implicitly makes this distinction.

It is true that the pending "war is an expression of capitalist competition," despite the fact that Iraq is not competing with the U.S. The American attempt to seize Iraq's oil is aimed at increasing its leverage over Japan, Germany, and other imperialist powers. When inter-imperialist competition erupted into military conflict during World Wars I and II, revolutionaries supported neither side, and called on workers in both camps to recognize that their main enemy was at home. Marxists do not determine their policy on the basis of the relative strength of the combatants. Workers have no interest in defending weaker imperialist powers (Canada, Belgium or Austria) against stronger ones (U.S., France or Germany). Nor do we take sides in conflicts between neo-colonies, e.g., Iraq vs. Iran in the 1980s, or Iraq vs. Kuwait in 1990. But when U.S. imperialism organized the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961, unleashed contra-

mercenaries against the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and invaded Grenada and Panama in the 1980s, revolutionaries *did* take sides.

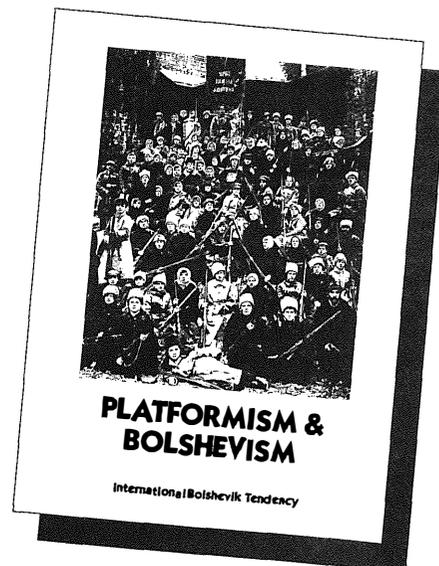
Should revolutionaries have supported the Irish Republicans' Easter 1916 Rising aimed at driving out the British? We say yes. When Islamic Jihad blew up the U.S. Marine and French Foreign Legion barracks in Lebanon in 1983, we said that regardless of the politically reactionary character of the indigenous resistance, they had every right to drive the imperialists out of their country. (In that instance we had a rather sharp disagreement with the Spartacist League/TL who shamefully called for saving the surviving Marines—see our *Trotskyist Bulletin* No. 2.)

In the Spanish Civil War both left-anarchists and Trotskyists took up arms on the side of the Stalinist-dominated popular front Republican government against Franco's fascist Nationalists. Yet at the same time, the Trotskyist Bolshevik-Leninists and the anarchist Friends of Durruti, unlike the opportunist left, remained adamantly opposed to the popular-front government and actively sought to build a revolutionary movement capable of overthrowing it. Revolutionaries should make an equivalent distinction today and side militarily with Iraq against the imperialist aggressors, while remaining intransigently politically opposed to Saddam Hussein's bloody regime. This no more means abandoning the perspective of workers' revolution in Iraq than military support to the Republican government during the Spanish Civil War meant renouncing the fight to overthrow capitalist rule in the Iberian peninsula.

With Communist Greetings,

International Bolshevik Tendency

### Anarchism vs. Bolshevism



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# Dutch 'VVI' Joins IBT From the IG to Trotskyism

In the month preceding the U.S./UK attack on Iraq, the web site of the Internationalist Group/League for the Fourth International (IG-LFI) highlighted the activity of its Dutch affiliate in the port of Rotterdam:

"In contrast to the classless appeals to 'citizens' and civil disobedience, the Verbond voor de Vierde Internationale (VVI—League for the Fourth International) has been calling since last fall to mobilize workers action to stop the war cargos. A leaflet put out by the VVI in October 2002 appealed to dock workers to boycott U.S. and Dutch warships, and to refuse to handle military goods."

—*Internationalist*, January-February 2003

On 25 February 2003, a united-front demonstration initiated by the VVI took place:

"In response to the news of trains with U.S. military equipment heading to Rotterdam, the VVI issued an appeal for a mobilization on February 25 that would march to the docks of the company shipping war goods to the Gulf. Leaflets of the VVI and a united-front flyer calling for the action were distributed in largely immigrant and working-class areas of South Rotterdam and the protest was announced on Radio Rijnmond (in Rotterdam)."

—*Ibid.*

Fifty militants, including many immigrants, marched to the docks in an action that contrasted sharply with the cross-class "peace" mobilizations of the reformist left. At the demonstration:

"A speech by a representative of the VVI explained the need to defend Iraq through the call for workers action against the war, including trade-union boycotts and strikes. He also emphasized defense of the immigrant population, which is under constant racist attack as imperialist war in Afghanistan and elsewhere is brought home."

—*Ibid.*

It was a good speech and a good initiative. At the time we did not know that the speaker, Comrade W. Spector of the Dutch VVI, was also its only member. He had considerable experience in the organized left, having spent a few years with affiliates of both Jack Barnes' Socialist Workers Party/U.S. and Tony Cliff's British group of the same name, and then a couple more as the sole Dutch supporter of James Robertson's International Communist League (ICL—formerly the international Spartacist tendency [iSt]).

Comrade Spector, who had come to understand the importance of a correct political program from his experience with the opportunist Barnesites and Cliffites, was initially attracted to the ICL's ostensibly orthodox Trotskyism. Over time, however, he became increasingly troubled by the apparent discrepancy between the frequently correct-sounding positions of the ICL and the commandism and peculiar internal dynamics of the organization. He began to look around and discovered the IG/LFI on the internet. In December 2001, during a trip to New York, he had a few days of discussions with IG leader Jan Norden and other members. It was proposed that he join their group and return to build an LFI affiliate in Holland. Impressed by the IG's apparent seriousness and its hard anti-imperialist posture, Spector willingly accepted their account of the political degenera-

tion of the ICL and its leading section, the Spartacist League/U.S. (SL), as originating with the demoralization of the leading cadre in the wake of the destruction of the Soviet Union. He also accepted the IG's claim that the definitive turning point in the ICL's degeneration came when Norden et al. were tossed out in 1996.

This was a position that the comrade began to question, in an increasingly serious fashion, as he explored first one, and then another, of the historical polemics between the International Bolshevik Tendency (IBT) and the iSt during the 1980s. At first Spector expected to find ample confirmation of the IG's characterizations of the IBT as "anti-communist" renegades. But the more he read, the more uneasy he became with his leadership's explanations. He gradually realized that there were serious discrepancies between the hard-edged Trotskyist positions advocated by the contemporary LFI and some of the historical ICL positions they stand on. He was also surprised to find that on virtually all the disputed questions, the positions of the IBT (and its forerunner, the External Tendency of the iSt) were superior to those of the ICL/LFI.

## 'Hailing' Brezhnev's Afghan Policy & Saving U.S. Marines

The first question Spector grappled with concerned the debate between the IBT and the iSt over the correct formulation of the Trotskyist position of defense of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. In a 4 January letter to the IG explaining his decision to support the IBT, Spector included two counterposed formulations that captured the nub of the controversy over "hailing" the Soviet Army:

"In fact we [IBT] rejected 'Hail Red Army' in favor of 'Military Victory to the Red Army in Afghanistan.' We did so because 'hailing' Brezhnev's military intervention in Afghanistan tended to blur the critical distinction between *political* and *military* support...just as the SL supported the Vietcong against the U.S. in Vietnam militarily. It was the Pabloites who 'hailed' Ho Chi Minh's armies....We saw no reason to apply different criteria in Afghanistan."

—"IBT Letter to IG/LQB," 15 December 1996, reprinted in *Trotskyist Bulletin* No. 6

"We [IG] proudly stand on the [Hail Red Army] slogan and program we defended at that time, which was deeply and explicitly counterposed to the Stalinist program of 'peaceful coexistence' with imperialism and intimately linked to our fight for proletarian political revolution in the Soviet Union itself."

—IG letter to MEG, 18 July 1998, reprinted in *Trotskyist Bulletin* No. 6

After careful consideration, Spector concluded:

"The IBT didn't 'duck' by dropping a pro-Stalinist (Hail Red Army) slogan that implied political support to the Stalinists in favor of military victory to the Soviet Army. The facts seemed pretty well set in cement, while maintaining the call for political revolution as well as defending the deformed workers states, they had followed the Trotskyist program of defending the degenerated workers state which was the USSR."

He observed that "hailing" Brezhnev's Afghan policy: "leftwomen, workers & leftists who had placed their faith in the military arm of the Stalinist bureaucracy, open to the Kremlin's capacity for betrayal whose tragic consequences have brought it under the boots of US & Dutch imperialism today."

The second major point Spector found himself in agreement with was the IBT's criticism of the SL's call to save the U.S. Marines after their barracks had been blown up in Beirut in 1983. The IG's defense of this position is in contradiction to its openly defeatist attitude toward the current imperialist interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan. In his 4 January letter, Comrade Spector recalled:

"What was most perplexing to me as a member, was that the IG-leadership's proud defeatist position towards imperialist 'kill-crazed' Marines (terrorising the Iraqi women & workers there today, [a] case presented with merit in *The Internationalist* #16) is squarely counterposed to that SL's tearful slogan (bowing before Reagan) they also advanced then, without ever having gone thru an honest reappraisal of the opposing slogans since the LFI's founding.

"What if tomorrow whole US barracks [in Iraq were to] fly sky high with enormous casualties? This would leave the LFI-membership 20 years later, in times of increasing military setbacks to bloody imperialist plunder across the globe, with 2 irreconcilable positions."

Whether in 1983 or 2004, Spector concluded: "Revolutionaries have no enthusiasm whatsoever for saving the lives of colonial troops!"

### Goring Norden's Ox

Another issue raised by Spector, to which Norden is particularly sensitive, is the iSt's political disorientation during the terminal crisis of the German Democratic Republic (DDR—aka "East Germany") in 1989-90. This is a touchy subject for the IG because Norden was personally in charge of Spartacist activity on the ground. While energetically pursued, the iSt's intervention was decisively flawed politically. As the leaders of the DDR's ruling Stalinist party (the Socialist Unity Party—SED) were negotiating a capitulation to the West German bourgeoisie, the iSt pursued a policy referred to internally as "unity with the SED." This reached its nadir when SL founder/leader James Robertson absurdly attempted to arrange personal meetings with DDR master-spy Markus Wolf, Soviet General B.V. Snetkov and SED chief, Gregor Gysi. The SL, which seems to have developed amnesia about the whole business, today retrospectively denounces the SED for leading the counterrevolution and blames Norden for wanting to adapt politically to the Stalinists. The IG, on the other hand, flatly defends the whole iSt intervention. But neither is able to offer a coherent rationalization for Robertson's ludicrous, and grossly opportunist, attempt to counsel Gysi, Wolf and Snetkov.

In bidding Spector farewell, the IG/LFI leadership acknowledged that: "As a comrade of the LFI, under the direction of the executive committee, you sought to bring about labor actions to boycott NATO war materiel bound for Iraq with a February 2003 worker-immigrant demonstration at the Rotterdam docks." But they also sputtered indignantly at the IBT's "anti-communist scandal-mongering" and our penchant for "prurient gossip and supposed horror stories." This is somewhat amusing coming, as it does, from the former long-time editor of *Workers*



25 February 2003: Rotterdam united-front demonstration

*Vanguard* which, when it was a revolutionary publication, was regularly denounced in exactly these terms by various opportunists and political bandits who resented having their hustles and crooked maneuvers exposed. Name-calling is easy, but IG/LFI members who are serious about building a genuinely Trotskyist organization, rather than a Potemkin village, should carefully investigate the substance of the political differences between the IBT and the ICL/IG (many of which are documented in our *Trotskyist Bulletin* series) and draw their own conclusions.

To defend previous political errors is to open the door for future ones. The IG has always been reluctant to seriously address the origins of the SL's degeneration, which was qualitatively complete long before Norden et al. were unceremoniously driven out. Largely for reasons of personal prestige, the IG's founders pretend that, prior to their own departure, the SL had an almost pristine political and organizational record. Yet the IG's own account of its cadres' termination accuses SLers of "willful fabrications," "smears," "inventions" and "mud-slinging." We have no reason to doubt the accuracy of any of this, as it tallies precisely with our own experience a decade and a half earlier. However, Norden's own "horror stories" raise some uncomfortable questions he would prefer not to answer:

"how could the cadres of a revolutionary Trotskyist organization turn, on command, into purgers, wreckers, witchhunters and hand-raisers? Where did the layer of 'self-conscious fabricators and liars' who 'boast' of their misdeeds come from? And why were Norden and Stamberg so sure that there was no point in bothering to appear at their scheduled 'trial'?"

—"IBT Letter to IG/LQB," 15 December 1996, reprinted in *Trotskyist Bulletin* No. 6 [p.23]

We welcome the adherence of Comrade Spector to the IBT and fully endorse his appeal to supporters of the IG/LFI who are serious about the struggle to reforge the Fourth International that, as a first step, they seek to participate in "a regroupment of the LFI with the IBT that preserves the revolutionary elements of the LFI-politics and breaks with the inherited mistakes of the SL." ■

# Young Militant Chooses IBT over ICL

## All That Glitters...

Reprinted below is an application to the IBT, submitted in September 2003, from a youth in Toronto.

Over the past eight months I have carefully compared the politics of the IBT [International Bolshevik Tendency] with that of the International Communist League [ICL], have attended public events (demonstrations, forums, etc.) with comrades from the IBT, and have participated in the internal political life of the tendency. In sum, I have come to identify the IBT as, uniquely on the left, the one political group which operates according to the principles of democratic centralism and whose program is authentically Trotskyist.

I first encountered the organized "left" as a fourteen-year-old, grade nine student in September 1998. The Trotskyist League had set up a literature table in front of Robarts Library at U of T [University of Toronto] and, impressed more by their low price rather than their politics, I bought copies of *Workers Vanguard* [WV] and *Spartacist Canada* [SC]. As an avid (though largely penniless) reader, the \$3 cost of a *Spartacist Canada* subscription was most appealing, and I immediately subscribed. I would wait a few months to obtain a subscription to WV, as the US \$10 subscription fee seemed a bit steep.

Needless to say, I began reading socialist press at a very "low level" of political consciousness. In retrospect, I was vaguely a liberal when I started to read SC and WV. While I was interested in bourgeois politics and world events, I lacked any conception of Marxism and socialism. Terms such as "socialism," "communism," "proletariat," "bourgeoisie," etc. were completely alien to me, and the dictio-

nary became an indispensable tool in deciphering the articles of WV. Nevertheless, I quickly assimilated basic ideas of Marxism and Leninism through regular reading of SC and WV, and by my fifteenth birthday I had become a self-professed communist. My interest in science and natural history had already compelled me to reject religious obscurantism, and I was hungry for a method of explaining the social world of history and politics. Marxism's tremendous appeal for me was its explanatory power. With Marxism as a tool, the social world in its entirety could be explained: the origins of racism, sexism, and homophobia; homelessness, poverty, and unemployment as endemic to the capitalist system; combined and uneven development as the source of the misery and underdevelopment of the "Third World." Moreover, Marxism was attractive because it offered a way out: a guide to action and a program for *changing* the world.

After identifying with Marxist politics, I sought out a variety of written works about or pertaining to socialism: the Marxist classics, introductory works on socialism, the October Revolution, etc., as well as the publications of a variety of OROs [ostensibly revolutionary organizations] and OTOs [ostensibly Trotskyist organizations]. I read (and subscribed to) *Socialist Worker*, *New Socialist*, *People's Voice*, and *The Militant*, and read the literature of Maoist and anarchist/syndicalist groups via the internet. The publications of the Spartacist League always impressed me with the clarity of their analysis and the intelligence of their program, an impression that was deepened as I read the muddled, confused, and opportunistic politics of the SL's political competitors. During this time I also identified with the politics of the International Socialists, but the idiocy of the Cliffite "theory" of "state capitalism" and their open capitulation to Canadian nationalism (plugs in *Socialist Worker* for Maude Barlow's Council of Canadians) put them increasingly at odds, in my mind, with revolutionary Leninism. Thus, by the age of seventeen I had come to view the Spartacist League's political tradition as the very best on offer from the myriad of ostensibly socialist groups that I had investigated.

Since first becoming aware of Marxist politics and socialist history, I have wanted to join and become politically involved with a revolutionary organization. One of the reasons I chose Toronto as a place to attend university was its status (along with Montreal) as one of the primary centers of leftist politics in Canada. I therefore initiated contact with the Trotskyist League at an anti-war-in-Iraq demo in late January 2003. Having dismissed most other centrist and reformist pretenders to the mantle of Trotskyism, but still interested in those groups which claimed a Spartacist tradition, I spoke with comrades A. and J. five days later at a New Socialist Group forum.

For approximately the next month and a half I met regularly with contacts from both the IBT and the TL. This was a very illuminating period, as I carefully considered the political positions of both groups and became acquainted with the ability (and capacity) of each group for calm discussion and reasoned debate. The IBT's intelligent polemics with the SL on its social-patriotic flinches over Lebanon

TROTSKYIST BULLETIN No. 5

**ICL  
vs.  
IBT**

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and KAL 007, as well as the exchange on the Yuri Andropov brigade, made it clear in my mind that the IBT was more than simply another traveler in the "anti-Spartacist swamp." Learning of the SL's shameful behavior during the hot-cargoing of South African goods in 1984, and of the ICL's confusionist and contradictory position on the events of August 1991 in the USSR, further separated the ICL/TL from what I considered to be a real revolutionary group. Still, there were questions that I had to consider for some time before agreeing with the IBT, particularly Quebec. I read (and re-read) the documents of both the IBT and the TL concerning the Quebec national question before finally coming into fundamental agreement with the IBT.

My final break with the Trotskyist League was not easy for me, but was also something that I had come to see as inevitable. Since I began reading *WV* I had viewed the ICL/TL as *the* revolutionary group, with a clarity of analysis and a correctness of program unrivaled by its political opponents. But the TL that I encountered in face-to-face discussion was much different than the TL I had envisioned after four years of reading *SC* and *WV*. I was dismayed by

the TL's inability to answer, calmly, politically, and without hysterics, the political charges leveled at it by the IBT. When I refused to agree with my TL contacts' interpretation of "SL's Cop-Baiting Celebrity" [an article in *1917* No. 1], I was denounced as a "racist," "Anglo-chauvinist," and a number of other liberal-guilt smears in a hysterical "freak-out" session. This event forever severed, in my mind, the TL from any claim to revolutionary Marxism. This idiotic behavior was in stark contrast to the discussions I had with [an IBT comrade who] remarked that a good political group tends to raise the intelligence of all its members, while a poor political tendency, prone to leader-worship, hysterics and lies, tends to lower the intelligence of its members. Indeed it does.

I am a socialist not least because I have come to realize that the profound social problems engendered by a decaying capitalism *cannot* be solved short of socialist revolution....I therefore submit this application for membership in the IBT.

Sincerely,

Gary

## Setback for U.S. Space Militarization

# The Columbia 'Disaster'

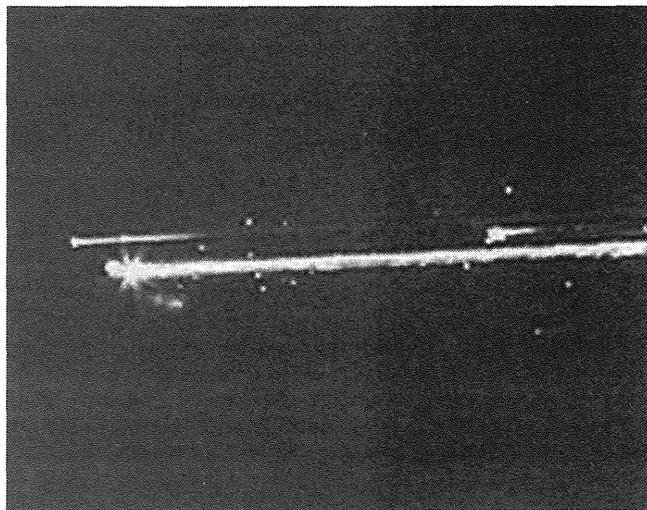
Reprinted below is a 8 February 2003 statement by the International Bolshevik Tendency

The spectacular demolition of the space shuttle *Columbia* captured the attention of millions of people around the world. The corporate media played up the human element, but largely ignored the shuttle's critical military role, particularly for deploying intelligence and weapons systems in space. The loss of the *Columbia*, one of only four shuttles, represents a significant setback for the U.S. military as no replacements are available, nor are there any alternative systems.

The 2001 report of the U.S. Department of Defense Space Commission (chaired by Donald Rumsfeld, until his appointment as Secretary of Defense) characterized space as a "top national security priority" which presented "burgeoning opportunities." It also noted:

"U.S. national security space programs are vital to peace and stability, and the two officials primarily responsible and accountable for those programs are the Secretary of Defense and the Director of Central Intelligence. Their relationship is critical to the development and deployment of the space capabilities needed to support the President in war...."

In its coverage of the *Columbia*'s mishap, the American media invariably described the astronauts as pilots, scientists and doctors, but rarely mentioned that all but one of them were military officers. Kalpana Chawla, an aerospace engineer from India, was the only civilian. Captain David M. Brown, Commander William C. McCool and Commander Laurel Clark held commissions in the U.S. Navy, while Lt. Col. Michael Anderson (the only black) and Col. Rick Husband were officers in the U.S. Air Force. Ilan Ramon, the seventh crew member, was an Israeli airforce officer, who:



WASHINGTON POST

Space shuttle Columbia self-destructs

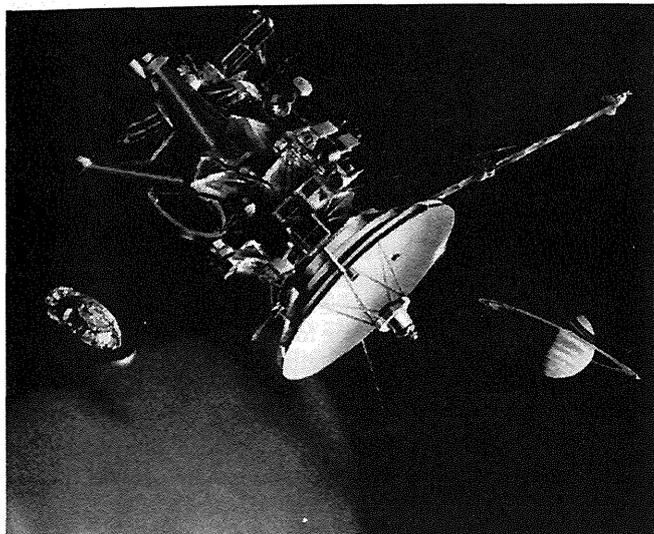
"logged thousands of hours of flight time and was part of the first Israeli squad to pilot American-made F-16 fighter jets in 1980. He fought in the Yom Kippur War in 1973 and in the 1982 war in Lebanon.

"Ramon was one of the fighter pilots who destroyed an unfinished nuclear reactor in Iraq in 1981.

"The attack, in which eight F-16 warplanes obliterated the French-built Osirak reactor near Baghdad, was a milestone for Israeli aviation because the planes flew over enemy Arab territory for hours without detection. The pilots flew in a tight formation to send off a radar signal resembling that of a large commercial airliner."

—CBS News, 1 February 2003

Ramon was involved in an Israeli satellite surveillance program:



**Cassini space probe**

"On Columbia, Ramon was in charge of experiments that comprised the Mediterranean Israeli Dust Experiment, a camera to image and measure small dust particles in the atmosphere over the Mediterranean Sea and the Saharan coast of the Atlantic."

—*Washington Times*, 1 February 2003

Prior to the fiery destruction of the *Challenger* space shuttle in 1986, NASA set the odds of losing a shuttle at 1 in 100,000. Patrick Smith noted in *Salon.com* (1 February 2003) that two shuttles have now been destroyed in only 113 launches. Future space mishaps could be vastly more serious, as the Bush administration revives a nuclear rocket program that was abandoned in the 1960s because of the potentially devastating effects of a launch accident. The development of nuclear rocketry may well be accompanied by the deployment of space-based nuclear reactors to power Star Wars laser weapons.

Dr. Michio Kaku, a theoretical physicist at the City University of New York, is a prominent critic of NASA's dangerous practice of putting payloads of highly toxic plutonium in orbit. In "A Scientific Critique of the Accident Risks from the Cassini Space Mission," Kaku estimated that in the event of a catastrophic failure of the 1997 Cassini space probe (which carried 72 pounds of plutonium) the "true casualty figures for a maximum accident might number over 200,000." NASA had provided a worst-case estimate of 2,300.

Marxists find no satisfaction in the personal tragedies resulting from military mishaps like the *Challenger* or *Columbia*. At the same time, setbacks for the imperialist drive to militarize space are, from the standpoint of humanity, far less dangerous than steps forward. This might seem elementary for Marxists, but the 14 February 1986 issue of *Workers Vanguard*, publication of the Spartacist League (SL), echoed the bourgeois media's treatment of the victims aboard the *Challenger* (whose mission had been to deploy a major spy satellite for the U.S. military): "What we feel toward the astronauts is no more and no less than for any people who die in tragic circumstances, such as the nine poor Salvadorans who were killed by a fire in a Washington, D.C. basement apartment two days before" (see 1917 No. 2).

Those "nine poor Salvadorans" were refugees from desperate poverty and rightist death squads in a U.S. neo-colony. The willingness of the "revolutionary" SL to blithely equate

them with the six U.S. military cadres who perished aboard the *Challenger* was clearly motivated by a desire to avoid displeasing the Reagan White House. This cowardly flinch is defended to this day by both the SL, and the former SLers of the Internationalist Group.

The U.S. space program is driven primarily by imperialist militarism, and secondarily by the search for profitable investment opportunities. While many of the research projects on the *Columbia* apparently did not have a directly military character, the NASA press kit for the flight (STS-107) reported that one of the "payloads" was a Miniature Satellite Threat Reporting System (MSTRS). "This payload is a communications technology demonstration developed by the Air Force Research Laboratory in Albuquerque, N.M. STS-107 is the first flight of MSTRS." Another payload, dubbed "RAMBO" (Ram Burn Observations), was described as, "a Department of Defense experiment that observes shuttle Orbital Maneuvering System engine burns for the purpose of improving plume models. On STS-107 the appropriate sensors will observe selected rendezvous and orbit adjust burns." Sean O'Keefe, the former Secretary of the Navy who currently heads NASA, was recently quoted as saying:

"I think it's imperative we have a more direct association between the Defense Department and NASA.... You can't differentiate between... military application and those capabilities which are civil and commercial in nature."

—*Synthesis/Regeneration* 30, Winter 2003

The destruction of the *Columbia* appears to be linked to cost-cutting and privatization of maintenance contracts, as well as NASA management's repeated refusal to act on warnings by scientists and engineers of serious safety problems with the shuttles. Under capitalism, a fundamentally irrational social system, scientific inquiry will always be subordinated to profit maximization and the pursuit of military supremacy. Only under socialism will scientific research in general, and space exploration in particular, be conducted in the interests of humanity, instead of for the benefit of a tiny minority of plutocrats. ■

## Contact the International Bolshevik Tendency

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# CWI Leadership's Role in Ukrainian Fraud

## No Innocent Explanation

In 1917 No. 24, we announced a "fusion" that took place at the Third International Conference of the IBT in 2001 with a group calling itself the "Young Revolutionary Marxists" (YRM) of Ukraine. We also published two articles in the same issue that polemicized with the Ukrainian supporters of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI—now the League for the Fifth International [L5I]). In August 2003, we discovered that we had been duped by an elaborate scam perpetrated by members of the Ukrainian section of the Committee for a Workers International (CWI—the international organization of the Socialist Party of England and Wales, led by Peter Taaffe). Our supposed group in Kiev was a fiction, as was the LRCI's and those of ten other organizations. It seems that the whole intricate charade was conducted to obtain money and other material support. These same crooks were apparently simultaneously attempting to obtain funds from the Libyan government.

As soon as we were certain of the facts, we posted the photographs of the perpetrators along with everything published about the affair on our web site, [www.bolshevik.org](http://www.bolshevik.org). Our intent was simple:

"We cannot allow these gangsters to discredit Trotskyism in the former Soviet Union. Serious people can have no hesitation in exposing this kind of scam. To be victimized but remain silent is to facilitate future frauds. It is of course embarrassing to have been taken in, but we have a responsibility to do what we can to expose these crooks to the workers' movement."

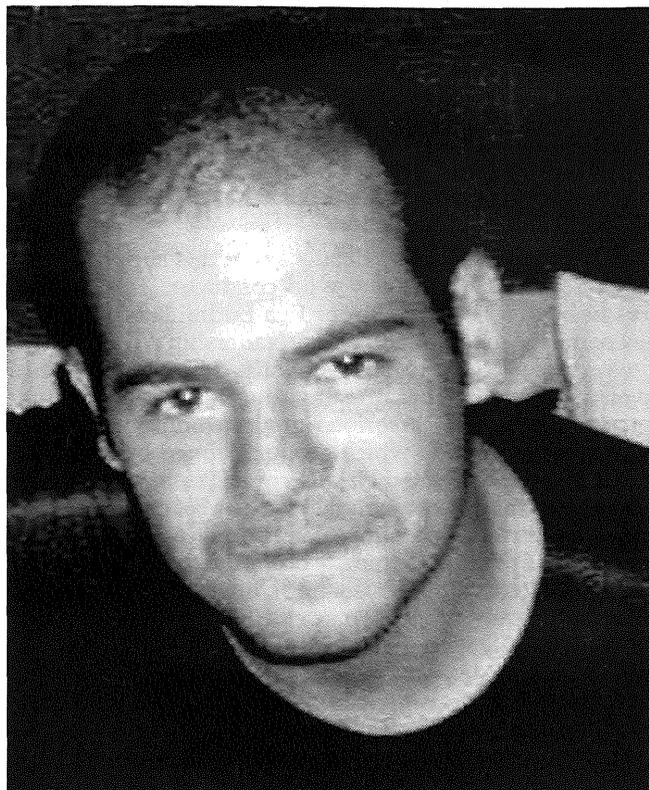
—"IBT Conned in Kiev," 21 August 2003

The CWI has expressed similar sentiments, claiming to be "profoundly shocked" by this "shameful" activity. A 29 August 2003 CWI statement announcing the expulsion of seven individuals who had been "primarily responsible" for the scam also cynically claimed: "The CWI has been the main victim of this duplicity." To our knowledge, the CWI has yet to post any statement about the scandal on its web site, or to publish any account in its press. When asked about this, one CWI member offered the excuse that "workers aren't interested" in such things.

It is clear that the Taaffeites' primary concern is to minimize the political fallout for themselves. Their email statements on the affair have added little to the information already revealed by others. Although the CWI's history of voting for, and even joining, petty-bourgeois and bourgeois political formations (from the U.S. Green Party to the Pakistan People's Party), demonstrates their utter disregard for the class line, their 29 August 2003 statement reveals considerable anxiety about acquiring a reputation for dubious financial dealings:

"We have a spotless banner and honest method on the issue of raising money. For instance, the right wing in the British Labour Party, together with the capitalist press in the witch-hunt against the CWI section in Britain, Militant (now the Socialist Party) in the 1970s and 1980s, accused us of raising money from all sorts of alleged dubious and 'foreign' sources....

"The CWI has never received any political or financial support from big business, from state organisations, from



RCO

CWI's Ilya Budraitskis: liar and thief

'foreign powers', etc. In those cases where we have discovered that groups, individuals or sections of the CWI have acted in violation of these revolutionary principles we have not hesitated to separate ourselves from them.... "...[We] have always differentiated between raising money from the workers' movement on clear political and solidarity grounds and seeking finance from bourgeois sources. The latter are ultimately used to corrupt, to disorientate, and to bend the workers' organisations in the neo-colonial world to reflect the interests of the bourgeois."

This was perhaps an oblique response to a report in our 21 August statement that:

"We recently came across an internet posting by [CWIIEC member from Kiev] Oleg Vernik and [Ukrainian CWI leading member] Boris Pastukh dated 11 June 2001 announcing preparations for a 'summer camp in Crimea for brothers from Lybia [sic], Ukraine, Russia, Byelorussia and Moldova' and advertising their own web site as [www.GreenBook.da.ru](http://www.GreenBook.da.ru). (The *Green Book* was Qaddafi's equivalent of Mao's *Red Book*.)"

It would seem that at least some CWI leaders had been involved in "seeking finance from bourgeois sources." The fact that they used their own names to do so, and posted the information on the internet, hardly confirms the CWI's claim to have enforced a rigorous prohibition on such activity. The impression that the CWI was, or should have been, well aware of what was going on in Kiev is strengthened by

the revelation in their 29 August 2003 statement that they had learned of the scam nine months earlier:

"When some of the CIS [Russian-dominated Commonwealth of Independent States] leadership did become aware, because of rumours that were circulating amongst the CIS left, and with one of the Kiev leadership breaking ranks, some nine months ago, they confronted the Kiev leadership on the veracity of the allegations that were being made. The leading group of Oleg Vernik and Boris Pastukh, faced with these allegations—which by no means revealed the full scale of their involvement with other organisations internationally at that stage—point blank denied that anything of the kind had transpired. Even the source in Kiev who leaked this information at the time then blatantly denied that he had alerted the CIS leadership to this situation."

The CWI provides few details about this supposed investigation—they don't say who conducted it (could it have been Russian CWI leader Ilya Budraitskis?) nor do they name the member of the Kiev leadership who initially "broke ranks" only to subsequently participate in the cover-up. Could it be because this same individual remains a member of the CWI? A serious inquiry would surely have begun by determining which groups claimed branches in Kiev, and then verifying their existence. If there were actual groups, then the rumors would obviously be false. If, on the other hand, investigation revealed that no such groups existed then the principled thing to do would have been to notify the victims of the scam, set up an internal investigation and deal severely with the perpetrators. The CWI's story about an investigation that was terminated by claims of innocence by the suspects (whose earlier record of corrupt "GreenBook" fundraising would have come to light with a simple internet search) strains credulity.

The CWI statement concluded with a disingenuous offer to provide further information:

"We would also add that if any organisation believes they have been duped by these individuals and requires further information we would be prepared to discuss in complete confidence and supply, where possible, information which would help them to clarify their position in these events."

On 9 September 2003 we attempted to take up this offer, and sent the CWI a letter with a series of questions related to the affair. The CWI report had indicated that the money stolen by its members in Kiev was used to fund their activities in Ukraine:

"Some of this money [from the victims of the scam], claims the Ukrainian leadership, was used to finance an office, not to further the aims of the organisations who supplied the finance but allegedly to continue with their work as the official section of the CWI in the Ukraine. In addition to this, equipment, including computers, second-hand laptops, was furnished to the Kiev and Ukrainian organisations."

The question of the "work [of] the official section of the CWI" is an interesting one. While this lucrative, but complicated and time-consuming, scam was taking place, Ukrainian society was wracked by an intense struggle between pro- and anti-Kuchma factions of the nascent bourgeoisie. What instructions did the CWI leadership give its Ukrainian affiliate? How did they evaluate their group's intervention in these momentous events? Had the CWI leadership actually been surprised to learn of this fraud, one of the first things they would have done would be to review the "work" of their "official section" during this critical period.

In our 9 September 2003 letter we inquired:

"What activities has the section undertaken since 1999? What publications (newspapers, leaflets) has the section produced? Are there any photographs available of them, for example on demonstrations?"

The CWI refused to answer. Another question they avoided related to attempts by the group's leaders to get money from the Libyans: "Has your organisation investigated this Libyan dimension of the matter? With what results?" This too was ignored. We also asked:

"Has your organisation yet sought to prepare accounts (with whatever precision may be possible) of incoming and outgoing money and other resources in this scam? If this has not yet been done, when will it be done? When will those accounts be made available to the wider workers' movement which has been defrauded?"

Again there was no reply. But one question that could not be ducked was the involvement of the CWI's CIS cadres in the scam. In its 5 August 2003 statement the CWI explicitly claimed that neither its international leadership nor its Russian lieutenants were involved. In its 29 August statement, it further claimed that its CIS affiliate had suffered as a result of the Kiev swindle. But in the weeks that followed, information provided by a number of organizations, including the Internationalist Group, the Communist Party of Great Britain, the League for the Revolutionary Party and ourselves, conclusively proved that Ilya Budraitskis, the CWI's leading Russian cadre, was deeply involved.

In our 9 September 2003 letter we asked:

"Can you give any information as to how far this conspiracy extended? Certainly it extended rather further than your statement admits, and was by no means confined to the Kiev branch of your organisation. It is clear that Ilya Budraitskis, perhaps the most prominent Moscow-based representative of your tendency, was an integral part of this scam. He made numerous trips to Kiev to participate in the fraud. What did other leading members of the CWI in Moscow make of these visits? How did they believe these trips were financed?"

"Were the suspicions of your representative Robert Jones not aroused? What did he think Ilya Budraitskis was doing in Kiev so frequently? How did he think Ilya Budraitskis could afford those trips? Has comrade Jones visited Kiev in the last four years? How often? Did he not notice anything untoward?"

Three months later, in a 9 December 2003 letter sent to Workers Power and ourselves, the Taaffeites admitted that Budraitskis had indeed participated in the fraud. Far from being "the main victim," as they claim, it is clear from the extremely mild sanctions taken against Budraitskis (who was merely suspended from formal membership in the group's leading bodies for six months) that the CWI's only real regret is that the scam ever came to light.

Budraitskis is a proven liar and a thief. If the CWI leaders were merely naive, rather than unprincipled cynics, they would have automatically expelled him when his involvement came to light. They would also have prepared a detailed and factual account that named names and attempted to "follow the money." Instead of trying to get to the bottom of this criminal hoax, the CWI has only offered vague, self-amnestying explanations. The leniency toward Budraitskis, the refusal to seriously investigate this scandal involving senior CWI cadres, the stonewalling and the lack of cooperation with the investigations of other organizations, form a pattern for which there can be no innocent explanation. ■

# Iraq...

*continued from page 40*

only superpower. In the end, the "coalition of the willing" included only two partners (Britain and Australia) that made significant military contributions. Both did so in anticipation of future pay-offs in oil concessions, trade agreements and access to the American market.

Today, Saddam is in chains and there are 125,000 U.S. troops in Iraq. But the world is proving too large and complicated to be successfully micromanaged from Donald Rumsfeld's office in the Pentagon. What was supposed to be a relatively painless acquisition of some lucrative oil assets is turning into a mess, as the subjugated Iraqis, particularly in the "Sunni Triangle," refuse to simply roll over. Most people on the planet (including tens of millions of Americans) recognize that the U.S. occupation of Iraq has nothing to do with "freedom" and "humanrights" for Iraqis or self-defense against the Ba'athist regime's non-existent "weapons of mass destruction."

The transparent lies pushed by Bush Jr. about the "danger" that Iraq posed to the U.S. were cooked up a dozen years earlier when his father was preparing public opinion for "Operation Desert Storm," following Saddam Hussein's ill-fated occupation of Kuwait in August 1990. Bush Sr. was eager to seize the opportunity this presented to establish a permanent U.S. military presence in the Gulf, using the pretext of "defending" Saudi Arabia. Hussein, a long-time U.S. asset, was suddenly demonized as a "new Hitler." But important sections of the American bourgeoisie were doubtful about the wisdom of attacking Iraq, and as the autumn wore on, popular support for the venture steadily shrank. Eventually, Bush the Elder stumbled upon Iraq's "weapons of mass destruction," as the *New York Times* recounted at the time:

"The Administration's inability to make a compelling argument for a possible war was reflected in a plunge of 19 percentage points [from August to November 1990] in the public's confidence that it understood the aims.

"Out of three possible reasons for fighting—restoring the Government of Kuwait and defending Saudi Arabia, protecting oil reserves, and stopping Mr. Hussein from developing nuclear weapons—majorities of 56 and 62 percent, respectively, rejected the first two reasons as not being good enough. But 54 percent accepted the third as a potent justification.

"This result was intriguing because...the Administration has not been emphasizing the nuclear threat...

"But the President's poll takers have begun to realize that hitting harder at the nuclear issue may be a way of capturing the sustained public support that has eluded the Administration so far. Marking a change in tactics, President Bush inserted a line about the issue in a speech in Germany this weekend."

—*New York Times*, 20 November 1990

After the "Desert Storm" victory in 1991, Bush Sr. and Cheney (then defense secretary) decided not to topple the Ba'athist regime. This provided a pretext for maintaining a large-scale U.S. military presence in the region. They calculated that UN sanctions would eventually create enough domestic pressure to remove Saddam's regime, and replace it with a more pliable alternative. While this turned out to be overly optimistic, the elder Bush's description of the pitfalls of an occupation was remarkably prescient:

"To occupy Iraq would instantly shatter our coalition, turning the whole Arab world against us and make a bro-

ken tyrant into a latter-day Arab hero...assigning young soldiers to a fruitless hunt for a securely entrenched dictator and condemning them to fight in what would be an unwinnable urban guerrilla war. It could only plunge that part of the world into even greater instability...."

—*A World Transformed*, George Bush Sr., 1998

## Iraqi Defensism vs. Social Pacifism

Despite the brutal and oppressive nature of Saddam Hussein's dictatorship, the international workers' movement had a vital interest in militarily defending Iraq. Leon Trotsky explained why in 1938:

"In Brazil there now reigns a semifascist regime that every revolutionary can only view with hatred. Let us assume, however, that on the morrow England enters into a military conflict with Brazil. I ask you on whose side of the conflict will the working class be? I will answer for myself personally—in this case I will be on the side of 'fascist' Brazil against 'democratic' Great Britain. Why? Because in the conflict between them it will not be a question of democracy or fascism. If England should be victorious, she will put another fascist in Rio de Janeiro and will place double chains on Brazil. If Brazil on the contrary should be victorious, it will give a mighty impulse to national and democratic consciousness of the country and will lead to the overthrow of the Vargas dictatorship. The defeat of England will at the same time deliver a blow to British imperialism and will give an impulse to the revolutionary movement of the British proletariat."

—"Anti-Imperialist Struggle Is Key To Liberation,"  
23 September 1938

The central slogan of the International Bolshevik Tendency (IBT) in the mass anti-war demonstrations of 2003 was "Defend Iraq Against Imperialist Attack!" This contrasted sharply with most of our leftist opponents, who concentrated on "popularizing" what was already popular: pacifist neutrality. The various "peace coalitions" cobbled together by supposed Marxists, and politically dominated by clerics, social democrats, labor bureaucrats and liberals, constituted an obstacle to the development of anti-imperialist consciousness among the millions of ordinary people who opposed the war.

In Britain, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), the animator of the "Stop the War Coalition" (StWC), made an overt appeal to Christian pacifists on the front page of its paper: "Across the world this Christmas: Peace on earth? ...not if Bush gets his way" (*Socialist Worker*, 21 December 2002). Marxists want a world without war, but we do not shrink from telling working people that the only way to get one is to rid the planet of the cancer of capitalism and replace it with a socialist planned economy.

The Ligue communiste révolutionnaire (LCR—flagship of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International) played a key role in organizing anti-war demonstrations in France. Acknowledging that the French, German and Russian rulers' "opposition to the war led by the United States was motivated solely by rival interests in this region of the world" (*Rouge*, 17 April 2003), the LCR also explicitly criticized the social democrats, Greens and Stalinists who endorsed French president Jacques Chirac's refusal to enlist in Bush's campaign:

"The various leaders of the parties of the parliamentary left aligned themselves with Chirac. He 'was right to oppose this war,' affirmed Jack Lang in the 13 April *Journal du Dimanche*. 'My own position, and that of France, was



GETTY IMAGES

1993: Donald Rumsfeld & Saddam Hussein

always, "let's push a diplomatic solution right to the end" ...I think we were right...," adds Fabius. Others advised Chirac not to give in. Like Mélenchon, who says he must 'hold out' or Dominique Voynet, who encourages him to 'remain firm in his positions'...

"In reality, the leaders of the parliamentary left aligned themselves with Chirac and Villepin because they all defend the interests of French businesses...."

—*Ibid.*

This was all true enough, but only a month earlier, on the eve of the U.S. assault on Iraq, the LCR was itself applauding the French government's refusal at the UN to support the American invasion:

"France and Russia have initiated a turning point in post-Cold War international relations by announcing that they would use their veto to oppose any UN resolution resorting to force [in Iraq]. Let's not beat around the bush: anything that thwarts Mr. Bush's bellicose undertakings is worthwhile. Moreover, it's the reason why, with the one hundred organizations from the French anti-war coalition, we demanded that our rulers make good on their promises by using every means at their disposal."

—*Rouge*, 13 March 2003

In September 2002 (a few months after calling for a vote to Chirac in the second round of the presidential election) the LCR and the British SWP signed a joint statement with various other leftists and liberals that promoted the illusion that the European imperialists can be pressured into pacifism:

"Those who show solidarity with the people of Iraq have no hearing in the White House. But we do have the chance to influence European governments—many of whom have opposed the war. We call on all the European heads of state to publicly stand against this war, whether it has UN backing or not, and to demand that George Bush abandon his war plans"

—*Rouge*, 19 September 2002

This abject lesser-evilism, so characteristic of "socialist" reformists, typified the utopian popular-frontist illusions pushed by the "revolutionaries" who provided the organizational muscle for the anti-war mobilizations. Trotskyists counterpose the defense of Iraq to both the flabby bour-

geois pacifism of the SWP, LCR et al., and the pseudo-leftist neutrality of anarchists who advocate a plague on both houses.

### 'Operation Iraqi Freedom'— Naked Colonialism

The U.S. attack was launched on 19 March 2003 with a barrage intended to "shock and awe" the population of Baghdad. The next day, tens of thousands of American and British invaders flooded into Iraq. Over the following few weeks, coalition forces bombarded Iraq with 750 Tomahawk cruise missiles and 12,000 "precision-guided munitions," killing thousands of civilians. Iraqi military resistance initially proved considerably stiffer than anticipated. Umm Qasr, a small city just north of the Kuwaiti border, held out for five days. Basra, a lightly defended, predominantly Shi'ite city, with a reputation for hostility to the Ba'athists, was supposed to be an easy victory. However, it took a week of intense fighting for it to fall. The struggle was fiercer still in Nasiriyah, which was not captured for more than two weeks. Yet once U.S. forces reached Baghdad, resistance quickly collapsed, and by 9 April 2003 American soldiers were pulling down Hussein's statue in Firdos Square.

Vice President Dick Cheney confidently expected that U.S. troops would be welcomed as "liberators," but that is not how most Iraqis saw things. Thirty-five of Baghdad's 38 hospitals were closed, and much of the country was left without water and electricity, resulting in outbreaks of cholera and other debilitating diseases. Looters were allowed to sack Iraq's national museum and library, as the "liberators" looked on impassively. The only things the colonial gendarmes had been instructed to protect were the Ministry of Oil and the country's refineries.

In mid-April 2003, U.S. Brigadier General Robert Crear ceremoniously opened an oil spigot in Basra and declared: "Now we're in the oil business." The naked predatory character of the entire enterprise was highlighted in a report by the *Wall Street Journal* (1 May 2003) that BearingPoint Inc. had been given a one-year contract worth almost \$80 million to organize a "broad-based Mass Privatization Program" of state-owned industries and services in Iraq. Hundreds of foreign firms (mainly American) lined up for the projected fire sale of Iraqi assets, expecting to profit handsomely from the further impoverishment of the already destitute country.

French, German and Russian companies were to be excluded from the plunder, but even Washington's Australian and British janissaries were soon grumbling about their meager share of "reconstruction" goodies. After a fruitless trade mission to the U.S. in May 2003, Leigh Purnell, the executive director of the Australian Industries Group, complained: "If we are going to commit Australian troops and resources with their lives at risk, we would like to think that would be translated into more than just nice sounding words." Gordon Page, chairman of Cobham PLC, a British aerospace company, sourly commented: "There hasn't been a payback."

### Iraqis Resist Imperialist Occupation

The imperialist lolly scramble was not only undignified—it also turned out to be rather premature. The 28 December 2003 *Wall Street Journal* reported that: "Plans to privatize state-owned businesses...have been dropped

over the past few months" because of resistance activity:

"[U.S. gauleiter Paul] Bremer's chief economic adviser over the summer, Peter McPherson, advocated a speedy move toward privatization....

"But as resistance attacks grew more intense, security worries quickly trumped economic ambitions in Bremer's office. No one wanted to do anything that would increase the number of jobless Iraqis who might be recruited to fight the occupation. Practical concerns also surfaced: the closure of Baghdad's airport to commercial flights meant few investors could travel to Iraq."

The extent of Iraqi opposition following Bush's 2 May 2003 declaration of "victory" stunned the Pentagon war-gamers. But not everyone was surprised:

"When it is over, if it is over, this war will have horrible consequences,' were the ominous words from Hosni Mubarak, the Egyptian President, yesterday. 'Instead of having one Osama bin Laden, we will have 100 Bin Ladens.'"

—*Independent* (London), 1 April 2003

The motivations of the resistance fighters do not seem particularly difficult to fathom, as John V. Whitbeck observed:

"If the United States were conquered and occupied by Arab armies which announced their intention to stay for years and to restructure the country's government and economy along Islamic lines, would no Americans resist, not even 'hardcore Bush loyalists' or 'Republican Party remnants'?"

—*Arab News*, 10 July 2003

The heavy-handed behavior of the occupation forces fueled popular anger from the outset. On 15 April 2003, U.S. Marines opened fire on a demonstration of about 150 civilians in Mosul, killing ten and injuring dozens more. Nine days later, U.S. troops killed another ten people in the same city. When marchers protesting these outrages stopped in front of the 82nd Airborne Division headquarters in Fallujah, U.S. soldiers again opened fire, killing two and injuring 14. Shortly afterwards, messages written in both English and Arabic began to appear, reading "Go Out From Our City. If Refuse We Will Kill You. Because You Are Come Here For Petrol Not for Freedom" (*Observer* (London), 4 May 2003).

As time went on the demonstrations grew in frequency and size:

"Massive and increasingly angry marches have been taking place throughout Iraq—including the British-occupied south—often triggered by local issues, such as the imposition of mayors. Figureheads appointed by the US and British in Basra, Karbala and Najaf have been assassinated. Fury has been mounting at the hundreds of Iraqis killed by the occupation forces since the fall of Baghdad—on top of the thousands killed in the war itself."

—*Guardian* (London), 26 June 2003

The Western media (particularly in the U.S.) usually ignored cases of coalition forces firing on defenseless demonstrators. When such incidents were reported, the official lies about "self-defense" were given prominence. The increasingly successful attacks on U.S. forces, their quislings and the oil and gas pipelines that were supposed to help finance the occupation were more difficult to ignore. Soon "Operation Iraqi Freedom" had morphed into "Operation Desert Scorpion," as thousands of American stormtroopers staged midnight raids in towns and villages across the country, kicking in doors, terrifying families and carting off hundreds of "suspects." The *New York Times* (14 June 2003)

reported one incident in which U.S. tanks and Apache helicopters attacked the small Shiite village of Al Hir, killing a 70-year-old grandfather, his three sons and one of his grandchildren. An elderly female relative of the victims, who said she had previously supported Bush, exclaimed: "I will not forgive him. They were so young, they had children, they had never committed any crime. He has leveled our family."

Civilian complaints of hundreds of similar "mistakes" were routinely brushed aside with callous indifference. When five members of a single family were recklessly gunned down on 27 July 2003 at a U.S. checkpoint in a residential neighborhood of Baghdad, Lieutenant-General Ricardo Sanchez commented, "Apologies are not something that we have as a normal procedure in the military processes"—at least when no American lives are lost.

The situation had deteriorated so far by late summer that even the servile U.S. media began to admit that resistance to the occupation extended far beyond a small coterie of Hussein loyalists. On 19 August, a truck bomb at the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad killed at least 20 people, including the head of the mission, and wounded more than 40. The master hypocrites who run the imperialist media's spin machine feigned outrage that anyone would attack a "humanitarian" institution like the UN—conveniently overlooking the fact that the first imperialist assault on Iraq in 1991, which the Medical Educational Trust estimated to have killed more than 200,000 Iraqis, had flown the flag of the UN. For a dozen years afterwards, the UN administered a barbaric sanctions program against Iraq that resulted in well over a million Iraqi deaths, many of them children. In addition to the UN, the Iraqi fighters have carried out a series of successful strikes against other imperialist auxiliaries, like the Jordanian embassy and the quisling Iraqi police.

To combat the Iraqi resistance, the U.S. is openly borrowing tactics from the Zionist tormentors of the Palestinians:

"Underlying the new strategy, the Americans say, is the conviction that only a tougher approach will quell the insurgency and that the new strategy must punish not just the guerrillas but also make clear to ordinary Iraqis the cost of not cooperating.

"'You have to understand the Arab mind,' Capt. Todd Brown, a company commander with the Fourth Infantry Division, said as he stood outside gates of Abu Hishma. 'The only thing they understand is force—force, pride and saving face.'"

—*New York Times*, 7 December 2003

The U.S. locked down the village of Abu Hishma after an American patrol was attacked:

"Two and a half weeks [after a successful attack on a U.S. armored personnel carrier], the town of Abu Hishma is enclosed in a barbed wire fence that stretches for five miles. Men ages 18 to 65 have been ordered to get identification cards. There is only [one] way into the town and one way out."

—*Ibid.*

The occupiers describe imprisoning the villagers as "protection":

"'This fence is here for your protection,' reads the sign posted in front of the barbed-wire fence. 'Do not approach or try to cross, or you will be shot.'"

—*Ibid.*

The area commander summed up the strategy:

"'With a heavy dose of fear and violence, and a lot of money for projects, I think we can convince these peo-



October 2003: Toronto protest against imperialist occupation of Iraq

ple that we are here to help them,' Colonel Sassaman said."

—*Ibid.*

But the U.S. has been unable to establish a monopoly on the "fear and violence." Imperialist financial and technical superiority provide substantial advantages, but do not guarantee omnipotence, as Paul Wolfowitz, a leading administration chicken-hawk, discovered last October when a rocket narrowly missed him in the Al-Rasheed Hotel in Baghdad.

### Lebanon 1983, Somalia 1993, Iraq 2004: Blows Against the Empire

The successes scored by the Iraqi resistance have recalled earlier U.S. failures—particularly humiliations in Lebanon in 1983 and Somalia a decade later. In both situations, indigenous forces managed to overcome an enormous disproportion in brute firepower by playing to their strengths—a sympathetic population in which to hide, a superior knowledge of local conditions and terrain and a greater willingness to make the sacrifices necessary to prevail. On the eve of "Operation Iraqi Freedom," the leading organ of British finance capital recalled an earlier defeat:

"Given the fearsomely fissile ethnic, tribal, religious and political patchwork in Iraq, the US should remember its bloody experience in Lebanon in 1983-84. Initially welcomed as peacemakers, American forces ended up being treated as just another militia and got bombed out of Beirut. Mishandled, Iraq has the violent capacity of many Lebanons."

—*Financial Times* (London), 18 March 2003

Frank Gaffney, president of the neo-conservative Center for Security Policy, in Washington D.C., wrote:

"The enemy...has a clear strategy: Bleed the United States to the point where the American people and/or their elected representatives feel compelled to abandon Iraq....

"Inevitably, some will suggest that the death of roughly a

score of Americans in the Chinook blown out of the sky last weekend, should be a tipping point—like the loss of the ill-fated Blackhawk helicopter in Mogadishu a decade ago. Call it the "Chinook Down" syndrome. That is, of course, precisely the hope of Saddam loyalists and their imported, Islamist allies."

—*National Post* (Toronto), 4 November 2003

Like the earlier failed interventions in Somalia and Lebanon, the current U.S. occupation lacks popular support at home. This can magnify the impact of casualties, and lead to the rapid growth of defeatist moods within the ruling class and the population at large.

In 1983 when Islamic fundamentalists in Beirut eliminated almost three hundred U.S. Marines and French paratroopers with a pair of truck bombs, a bourgeois consensus rapidly developed in favor of pulling out before more damage could be inflicted. Revolutionaries welcomed this setback for the colonial oppressors and were glad to see the imperialist garrisons depart. Our slogan at the time was: "Imperialists Out of Lebanon—By Any Means Necessary!" The formerly-Trotskyist Spartacist League (SL), by contrast, took a social-patriotic dive, calling to save the surviving U.S. Marines (see *Trotskyist Bulletin* No. 2). This squarely contradicted Lenin's injunction that:

"In every country the struggle against one's own government, which is conducting an *imperialist* war, must not stop short of revolutionary agitation for the defeat of that country.' This is precisely what the line of the so-called theory of 'defeatism' involves."

—Leon Trotsky, "Lenin and Imperialist War,"  
30 December 1938

In Afghanistan in 2001, the SL once again flinched and claimed: "the call for a U.S. military defeat is, at this time, illusory and the purest hot air and 'revolutionary' phrasemongering" (*Workers Vanguard*, 9 November 2001). The U.S. military overwhelmed the Afghan Taliban regime and its Islamist allies, but today in Afghanistan, as in Iraq, the occupation forces and the puppet governments they sup-

port face a resurgent resistance movement. The imperialists and their vassals barely control Kabul, the Taliban are increasingly active in the south and the rest of the country is held by rival warlords who are a law unto themselves. The conflict in Afghanistan is not yet over, despite the demoralized speculation by the SL and other pseudo-revolutionaries who proclaimed that resistance to the imperialist Levia-than was hopeless.

The once-revolutionary Spartacist tendency today determines its political line on the basis of expediency and short-term organizational advantage, rather than Marxist principle. Bush's predatory assault on Iraq was, for Leninists, qualitatively the same as the earlier attack on Afghanistan, although it was considerably less popular. The cowardly SL leaders calculated that over Iraq they had enough cover to once again be associated with the position they had denounced a year and a half earlier as the "purest hot air and 'revolutionary' phrasemongering":

"It is in the class interest of the international proletariat to clearly take a side in defense of Iraq without giving any political support to the bloody Saddam Hussein regime. Every victory for the U.S. imperialists can only encourage further military adventures. In turn, every humiliation, every setback, every defeat they suffer will serve to assist the struggles of working people and the oppressed around the globe."

—"Statement of the Political Bureau of the Spartacist League/U.S.," *Workers Vanguard*, 28 March 2003

For reasons best known to themselves, Jan Norden and the other former SLers of the Internationalist Group (IG), who shared our criticism of *Workers Vanguard's* cowardly dive on Afghanistan, have insisted that during the U.S. invasion of Iraq the SL again "refused to raise the Leninist call for defeat of 'its own' imperialist bourgeoisie" (*The Internationalist*, May-June 2003). This is simply not the case, as the SL Political Bureau statement demonstrates. The IG also reported: "SL members continually defend their organization's abandonment of the call to defeat their 'own' bourgeoisie by arguing that Iraq does not have the military means to defeat the U.S. imperialists..." (*The Internationalist*, October-November 2003). This is believable enough—we have certainly found the SL membership to be thoroughly confused by the abrupt zigging and zagging on revolutionary defeatism. The SL leadership is in the habit of substituting internal administrative pressure for political consciousness, and generally avoids any honest accounting of its errors. This preserves the prestige of the leading clique at the cost of confusing its increasingly politically incoherent rank and file.

While the IG has taken an essentially correct position on both Afghanistan and Iraq, it has yet to repudiate the SL's shameful 1983 flinch on Lebanon. Yet the parallels between Lebanon two decades ago and Iraq today are so obvious that they have frequently been pointed to in the bourgeois press. For example, on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beirut barracks bombing, Lawrence Pintak of the *Detroit Free Press* wrote:

"For anyone with a sense of history, the recent suicide bombings in Iraq carry with them haunting memories of the Oct. 23, 1983, destruction of the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut, Lebanon, which claimed the lives of 243 U.S. Marines and sailors, and similar attacks on two U.S. embassies in that city.

"In the past, the terrorists have cited the examples of Beirut and Somalia, claiming that if you inflict harm on

Americans, we will run from a challenge,' President George W. Bush told the nation in his September 2003 speech. 'In this, they are mistaken.'

"The lessons of history tell a different story. America's brief encounter with Lebanon lasted less than two years. But it was long enough to show the world that a handful of men and women with a few hundred pounds of explosives and a willingness to sacrifice their lives could bring a superpower to its knees. The anti-American militants have learned their lessons well; the same cannot be said for inhabitants of the White House."

—*Detroit Free Press*, 23 October 2003

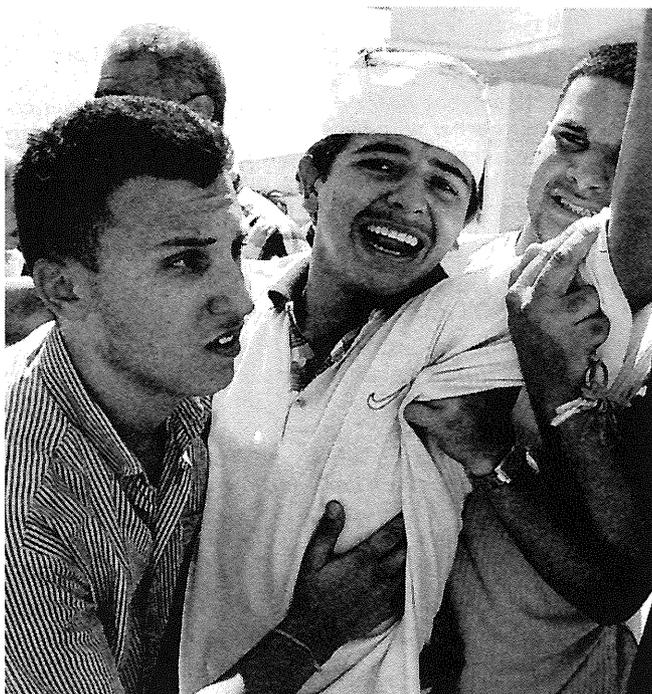
The Iraqi "terrorists" and "loyalist remnants" are now commonly referred to as "resistance fighters" by the U.S. media. American soldiers are no longer "liberators," but "occupiers" and the term "quagmire" is used a lot more frequently than "victory." Television viewers are becoming used to images of jubilant crowds dancing around smoldering Humvees and proudly displaying wreckage from downed helicopters. When U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell appeared on the NBC program "Meet the Press" in October 2003, he admitted: "We'll have to get the security situation under control...we didn't expect it to be quite this intense, this long."

Much of the American bourgeoisie is concerned that "pacifying" Iraq is likely to interfere with the pursuit of more vital interests. This sentiment is reflected in Democratic Party attacks on Bush for squandering resources on Iraq that could be better spent on the "War on Terror." The Democrats also criticize Bush's unilateralist foreign policy for depriving the U.S. of the "legitimacy" of the UN. The Democrats are, of course, just as committed to U.S. control of the Middle East as their Republican twins—they just have tactical differences over how to obtain it.

## National Liberation and Social Revolution

While the Iraqi resistance has scored some spectacular hits, and is making the occupation costlier than the Pentagon planners had hoped, the U.S. is not under any serious military pressure at present. But morale, measured by re-enlistment rates, is beginning to sag, largely as a result of the unexpectedly long deployments. All the contradictions of racist American capitalism are present in the U.S. military, and particularly the army. The callous indifference of the American ruling class toward its praetorians was highlighted by the Pentagon's attempt to charge wounded U.S. soldiers for their hospital meals. Many members of the U.S. occupation army, which is overwhelmingly working-class and disproportionately black and Latino, have expressed serious reservations about what they are being called on to do in Iraq. That is a positive development that is largely attributable to the effectiveness of the Iraqi resistance.

The U.S. ruling class cares little for those who do its dirty work, but it is concerned about optics. Popular support for the conquest of Iraq was shallow from the beginning, particularly among the minority of Americans who understood that there was no connection between Saddam and either "9/11" or Al Qaeda. It is likely to melt away over time if a steady trickle of U.S. personnel keep getting sent home in "transfer tubes." The occupation is severely straining the American military and the Pentagon is increasingly forced to dispatch lightly-trained reservists. The failure of the U.S. to get the upper hand in Iraq has discouraged other countries from contributing troops or sharing the costs of



KATE BROOKS—POLARIS

### Iraqi youth vows to avenge brother killed by U.S. troops

the occupation, while also emboldening the Afghan resistance.

While siding militarily with the Iraqi resistance against the imperialist army, we do not close our eyes to the anti-working class character of the former Ba'athist dictatorship, nor to the profoundly reactionary character of the Islamic fundamentalists who target liquor shops and cinemas as well as Christians and other minorities. Many Iraqi women, accustomed to Western dress under the secular Ba'athist regime, now feel pressure to don the headscarf because of the growing influence of Islamic reactionaries.

The relative popularity of the Ba'athists and Islamists is the bitter fruit of earlier betrayals by the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) in the 1950s. At that time, the ICP had a mass following in the working class, was hegemonic on the campuses, had substantial support from peasant organizations, and was even influential within the officer corps. It also commanded the allegiance of oppressed national and ethnic minorities, including Kurds and Jews. In 1956 Walter Laqueur observed:

"Since that time [1947-49 when the Communist Party was crushed] the Iraqi regime has been one of scarcely veiled dictatorship and wholly reactionary in its outlook; it has been neither able nor willing to carry out sweeping social and political reforms. Petty intrigues and feudal vested interests have prevailed over the urgent necessity to act for the benefit of the nation. As a result, the government has antagonized most of the population, including the entire middle class, which is now willing to make common cause with the Communist fronts in order to overthrow the hated autocracy. The parallel with Czarist Russia is uncomfortably obvious."

—*Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East*

Two years later the revolutionary explosion Laqueur anticipated took place. U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower was so concerned by the prospect of a wave of proletarian revolution originating in Baghdad that he dispatched 10,000 U.S. Marines to Lebanon to prepare for an invasion

of Iraq. Yet instead of mobilizing the working class to seize power, the Moscow-loyal ICP threw its support behind the nationalist wing of the Iraqi bourgeoisie headed by Brigadier Abd al-Karim Qasim. Sacrificing working-class interests in pursuit of "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism, the Kremlin had instructed the ICP leadership to avoid provoking Qasim. The timidity of the ICP in the revolutionary crisis of 1958 demobilized the working class and emboldened its enemies.

The 14 March 2003 *New York Times* noted: "Forty years ago, the Central Intelligence Agency, under President John F. Kennedy, conducted its own regime change in Baghdad, carried out in collaboration with Saddam Hussein." In the aftermath of the coup against Qasim, Hussein, then a 25-year-old Ba'athist intelligence official, was actively involved in the liquidation of an estimated 5,000 ICP members and the imprisonment and torture of many others. But these crimes are unlikely to be among those Hussein faces at his upcoming kangaroo court trial.

The ICP's 1958 betrayal discredited socialism and Marxism within the Iraqi workers' movement. Today, these traitors have joined the American puppet "Governing Council" and condemn the resistance to the imperialist occupation as "the main threat to society's security and progress." The absence of any revolutionary alternative has made it easy for the reactionary, anti-proletarian Islamic fundamentalists to pose as serious anti-imperialist fighters and gain support within one of the traditionally most secular Arab societies.

While their influence is growing, the Islamists are far from hegemonic. With the Ba'athist boot removed and the American gendarmes tied up fighting the guerrillas, there has been a resurgence of trade-union activity at the grass-roots level, and some significant strike actions. In this situation a small revolutionary organization rooted in Iraq's combative working class, prepared to champion the rights of Iraq's oppressed ethnic and religious minorities, to fight for women's equality and to stand for the strict separation of mosque and state could grow rapidly.

What is critical is to link the fight for national liberation to the struggle for social revolution (i.e., the expropriation of foreign and domestic capital) as the only way that Iraqi working people can free themselves from neo-colonial servitude. Imperialist propaganda about "freedom and democracy" stands in stark contrast to the brutal reality of foreign military occupation. A revolutionary organization in Iraq would attempt to intersect the democratic yearnings of the plebeian masses by putting forward a demand for a constituent assembly elected by universal suffrage. This demand cuts simultaneously against the imperialists, Islamists and Ba'athist bonapartists. The occupation authorities fear that such an elementary democratic measure would lead to the breakup of Iraq along ethnic and religious lines, which in turn might destabilize other imperialist client states in the region. But the workers' movement has nothing to fear from such a development—if the Shiites in the south or the Kurds in the north wish to separate, Marxists defend their right to do so.

### Next Targets for 'Regime Change'— Syria, Iran, North Korea, Cuba

Immediately after the premature declaration of a U.S./British "victory," the Bush administration began threatening Syria, claiming it was hiding Iraq's non-existent

“weapons of mass destruction.” The intensity of Iraqi resistance has forced the U.S. to temporarily shelve any plans for attacking Syria, although Washington’s tacit approval of Israel’s October 2003 air strike on a site ten miles north of Damascus makes it clear that the regime of Bashar al-Assad remains in the imperialist cross-hairs. Iran has also faced escalating threats from the U.S., with allegations of “weapons of mass destruction” again providing the pretext. Bush has openly advocated “regime change” in Tehran, and the U.S. military is now heavily deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan on Iran’s eastern and western flanks. At the moment the U.S. has its hands full in both countries, but Iran remains high on the Pentagon’s hit list.

The U.S. administration’s appetite for confrontation with the North Korean deformed workers’ state, which is openly listed in Washington’s “Nuclear Posture Review” as a potential target for an American nuclear first strike, is particularly ominous. The U.S. feigns outrage that the North Koreans dare assert a right to develop, produce and test nuclear weapons for self-defense, though American plans for a “missile defense system” in the Pacific are intended to facilitate a pre-emptive strike against the North Korean and/or Chinese deformed workers’ states. North Korea’s offer to dismantle its nuclear deterrent in exchange for a worthless non-aggression pact with the U.S. (which Bush has thus far refused) is foolish and very dangerous.

In North Korea, as in China, capitalism has been overthrown, the bourgeoisie expropriated and private property collectivized. These achievements represent real gains for the working class that must be unconditionally defended against capitalist restoration. Revolutionaries therefore defend North Korea’s right to possess nuclear weapons, despite its truly bizarre, nepotistic ruling bureaucracy. In North Korea, and other deformed workers’ states, the task of the proletariat is not to destroy the social foundations of the system—nationalized property—but rather to politically expropriate the parasitic bureaucratic caste and institute a regime of democratic workers’ rule.

Cuba, another deformed workers’ state, is also on the U.S. “Nuclear Posture Review” list of potential targets for a nuclear first strike. The Bush administration has floated ludicrous claims that Cuba’s advanced health-care system—made possible by its collectivized economy—is being used to produce biological weapons. In fact, the U.S. has the world’s largest biological war program, which it cynically insists exists purely for defensive purposes. The American bourgeoisie yearns to destroy the gains of the Cuban Revolution and reclaim the Caribbean’s largest island as a neo-colony. It is the duty of all class-conscious workers to unconditionally defend Cuba and all the remaining deformed workers’ states against imperialist aggression.

Working people and minorities in the U.S. are forced to pay for the imperial adventures abroad with union-busting, racist scapegoating and a wholesale assault on elementary democratic rights. Every setback the U.S. rulers suffer overseas strengthens the position of American working people and the oppressed, just as every success for the capitalist rulers abroad sets the stage for renewed attacks at home.

The destruction of the Soviet Union, which functioned as a global counterweight to American imperialism and permitted neo-colonial regimes far more room for maneuver than they have today, was the most serious defeat ever inflicted on the international workers’ movement. Common hostility to the Soviet Union provided an impetus for European, American and Japanese imperialists to partially

suppress their differences. The fall of the Soviet bloc unleashed a massive attack on working-class living standards in every imperialist country and heightened inter-imperialist competition for markets, cheap labor, scarce resources and spheres of influence. The U.S. remains dominant, but the tough talk and unilateralism of the Bush administration is at bottom a reflection of the erosion of American hegemony.

The U.S. grab for Middle East oil is unacceptable to its European rivals, who have watched the American Leviathan venture into the Iraqi tar pit with barely concealed glee. The danger of a third inter-imperialist world war—fought with nuclear “weapons of mass destruction”—looms just over the horizon. Capitalism is a system that produces grotesque social inequality, causes irreversible ecological destruction and, ultimately, threatens thermonuclear mass slaughter. It can only be eliminated through the intervention of a revolutionary, disciplined organization standing at the head of a decisive section of the international working class—particularly within the imperialist countries. The selection of a person as narrow and obtuse as George W. Bush as commander-in-chief of the most powerful country in the history of the world is a perfect metaphor for an irrational and profoundly destructive social system in terminal decline. The world-historic mission of the proletariat is to rescue human civilization by overthrowing the bloody and anarchic rule of capital and replacing it with a planned economy that will lay the basis for a socialist future free of hunger, poverty and war. ■



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# Drive Out the Imperialists—By Any Means Necessary!

## Blowback in Iraq



FALEH KHEIBER—REUTERS

### Iraqis celebrate downing of U.S. Apache helicopter

The U.S. “liberation” of Iraq, trumpeted by the invaders as heralding a golden age of prosperity and democracy in the region, was seen for what it was by the overwhelming majority of the world: a brutal colonial rape. Crippled by twelve years of UN starvation sanctions, Iraq was subjected to an unprovoked, “pre-emptive” attack by the world’s most powerful military machine, whose budget is greater than the 30 next largest militaries combined. An ad on MoveOn.org, a liberal American web site, aptly observed: “What were war crimes in 1945 is foreign policy in 2003.”

The seizure of Iraq was an important step in an attempt to employ America’s unquestionable military superiority to assert its supremacy within the imperialist world order. Oil is a crucial strategic resource, and Iraq has the world’s second largest proven reserves—nearly 11 percent of the total. The U.S. claims a “vital interest” in the Persian Gulf, even though it obtains a mere five percent of its oil from the region—with Japan and the European Union accounting for most of the rest. Control of Middle East oil is “vital” for the American ruling class chiefly because it gives the U.S. a decisive advantage over its imperialist rivals. The main objective of the intervention in Iraq was spelled out in a September 2000 document by the “Project for the New American Century” cabal that included Vice President Dick Cheney, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and his deputy, Paul Wolfowitz:

“Indeed, the United States has for decades sought to play a more permanent role in Gulf regional security. While the

unresolved conflict with Iraq provides the immediate justification, the need for a substantial American force presence in the Gulf transcends the issue of the regime of Saddam Hussein.”

—“Rebuilding America’s Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century”

Cynically wielding the victims of the 11 September 2001 criminal attack on the World Trade Center, the U.S. military and its allies easily toppled Afghanistan’s Islamic fundamentalist Taliban government and installed their own puppet, Hamid Karzai, as nominal ruler. The conquest of Afghanistan provided a pretext for the creation of American bases in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan through which the U.S. hopes to limit Russian power in the region, exert control over the oil deposits of the Caspian Basin and prepare a noose for China. The campaign against Iraq provided a similar opportunity to establish a string of permanent military installations in the Persian Gulf.

American imperial ambitions may be unlimited but, as is increasingly obvious, there are real constraints on the capacity to pursue them. The German and French imperialists, who cast themselves as pacifist opponents of the brutish, uncivilized Americans in the run-up to the attack, were only concerned about the repercussions of a tighter U.S. grip on the Middle East. Their refusal to go along with the White House encouraged smaller imperialist allies (e.g., Canada) and neo-colonial vassals (e.g., Turkey) to defy the world’s

*continued on page 33*