

The

May-June 2003

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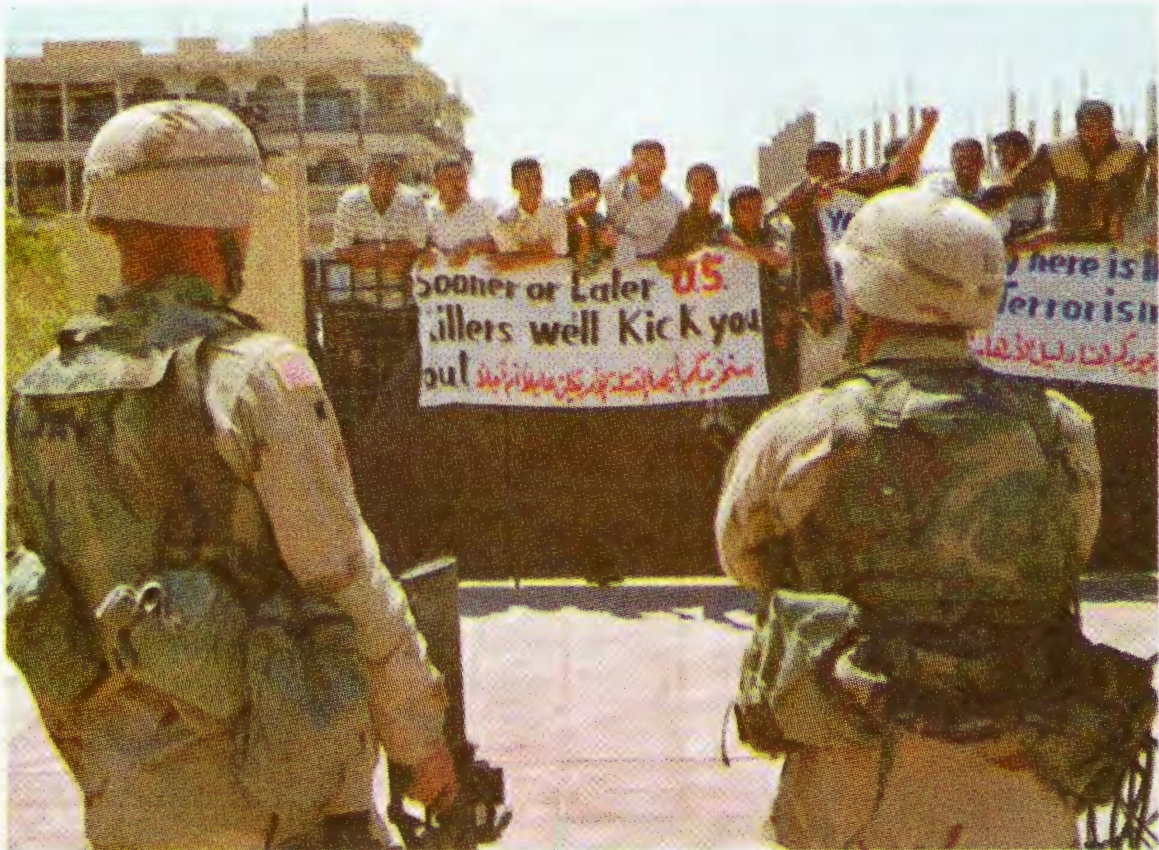
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# Internationalist



***U.S. Imperialism Get the Hell Out!***

## **Defeat Colonial Occupation of Iraq!**



Husein Mallia/AP

### **Imperialist Barbarism on the Road to WWII**

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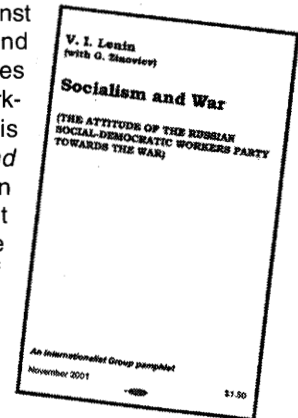
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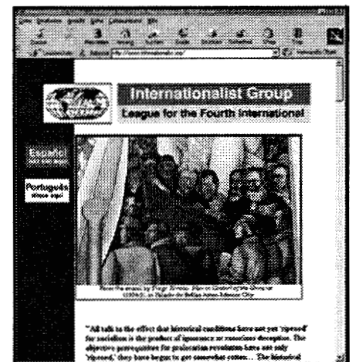
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## The Internationalist



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No. 16



May-June 2003

# Defeat Colonial Occupation of Iraq

## *U.S. Imperialism Get the Hell Out!*

MAY 31 – “America broke Iraq; now America owns Iraq,” declared *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman on the day U.S. troops entered Baghdad. He was expressing the supreme arrogance of the imperialist rulers of the United States who fancy themselves masters of the world. They laid waste to the Iraqi capital, setting the center of the city ablaze to show off their firepower. They permitted and even encouraged the looters who have gutted virtually every functioning enterprise and service. Hospitals were stripped of their medicines, anesthetics and equipment while U.S. soldiers stood guard outside. The National Museum was ravaged, with invaluable remnants of the world’s oldest civilizations going back 10,000 years stolen or destroyed. The National Library was burned to the ground, destroying countless priceless manuscripts.

You would have to go back centuries, to the Mongol sacking of Baghdad in 1258, said an English archeologist, to find vandalism on this scale. The administrator of the ministry of religious affairs differed: “When Baghdad fell to the Mongols in 1258, these books survived,” he said, referring to Korans over a thousand years old. “And now they didn’t survive.” Liberation? No, this was the deliberate destruction of a nation. Baghdad aflame and in ruins is the gory image of *imperialist barbarism*.

Only the Ministry of Oil survived intact, and Saddam Hussein’s moat-surrounded Republican Palace which was converted into the HQ of the short-lived Sheriff of Baghdad, General Jay Garner. When his boss, War Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, visited the opulent chandeliered quarters of the U.S. command in Iraq, Garner collared reporters to complain about negative stories about the chaos and widespread opposition to the occupiers. “We ought to look in a mirror and get proud, and stick out our chests and suck in our bellies and say, ‘Damn, we’re Americans!’” Garner declared (*New York Times*, 1 May). This ostentatious triumphalism could only further inflame the Iraqi population, while the Pentagon’s “Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance” he headed still couldn’t get power, water or any other vital service functioning. So the White House decided to replace Garner with the State Department’s “counterterrorism” man, L. Paul Bremer III. The new American proconsul will work together with the head of the U.S. military administration of Baghdad, General Buford C. Blount III, and they report in turn to George Bush II. As with the British before them, colonial rule and aristocratic pretension go hand in hand.

Meanwhile, Rumsfeld and the war hawks in Washington have been unable to install their quisling Ahmad Chalabi to give an Arab façade to their colonial rule, as Britain’s Lord



Enraged survivor of the U.S. bombing of Baghdad market, March 26.

Curzon did in the 1920s by putting “King” Feisal atop an invented throne (see page 36). The Bush regime clearly saw a kindred spirit in Chalabi, a swindler who is despised throughout the Near East for emptying the coffers of Jordan’s Petra Bank and then escaping in the trunk of a car as bankruptcy loomed. Putting him in as the U.S.’ satrap in Iraq is like naming Enron’s Kenneth Lay, notorious for shamelessly enriching himself while milking the company dry. (But then, Enron was a big Bush backer.) Instead, Shiite clerics quickly moved to take over the teeming slum area of Baghdad (formerly known as Saddam City, now re-baptized al-Sadr City for a fundamentalist ayatollah executed by Hussein). In southern Iraq, a U.S.-backed imam, his pockets stuffed with dollars, was assassinated by Iranian-backed rivals. In the north, militias of the Kurdish Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, historic rival clans whose leaders have long been on the U.S. payroll, have moved into the cities of Mosul, Kirkuk and Erbil and are expelling tens of thousands of Arab residents in a wave of “ethnic cleansing” rivaling Hussein’s forced population transfers.

Rather than pulling troops out of Iraq, as the Pentagon operations chiefs had planned, the invasion force is being kept in place and they are sending in more units in an attempt to keep the situation from spiraling out of their control. The new U.S. masters are keeping their eyes on the prize, control of Iraq’s oil reserves. For years, official Washington has publicly professed non-interest in Iraqi oil: “We have no interest in Iraq’s oil,” intoned U.S. vice president Dick Cheney as American troops approached Baghdad. Yet while youthful antiwar protesters in Washington and New York intoned, “Hell no, we won’t go, we won’t die for Texaco,” U.S. commanders in the field had no compunctions: the first military supply depots set

up inside Iraq were named Forward Operating Base Exxon and Forward Operating Base Shell. Meanwhile, politically well-connected U.S. oilfield companies Halliburton and Bechtel, armed with multi-billion-dollar contracts, have taken control of key oil fields, to the exclusion of their French and Russian competitors, while British companies are begging in Washington for subcontracts. The U.S. may barely control Iraq's cities, but it is determined to ensure that to the victor go the spoils.

As Bush and Blair strut the world stage imitating Spanish conquistadors or Roman emperors, and looking instead more like characters out of Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator*, their conquest is far from secure. After bloody fighting in the south, where Iraqi paramilitary units managed to pin down advanced units of the U.S. strike force for days and hold vital supply lines, resistance faded as the invaders approached Baghdad. Once again, after three days in which Iraqi soldiers "fought ferociously; when fired upon they had fired back" (*New York Times*), the army melted away literally overnight, and the American expeditionary force took the capital unhindered. U.S. soldiers draped a statue of Saddam Hussein with the stars-and-stripes before pulling it down with an army crane as some dozens looked on. War Secretary Donald Rumsfeld in Washington grandiosely compared it to "the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Iron Curtain." But Rumsfeld's "scenes of free Iraqis celebrating in the streets, riding American tanks" were purely imagined. Nowhere in central and southern Iraq were there crowds of people to greet the conquerors, and certainly not as liberators. Instead, there was mass popular opposition to the victors, and calls for them to get out.

From the outset, this criminal war had nothing to do with destroying "weapons of mass destruction" (WMDs), protecting "human rights," replacing a tyrant through "regime change," or any of the other threadbare pretexts cited by U.S. president George Bush and his British prime minister sidekick Tony Blair. There are no and were no WMDs, the rights of the Iraqi people were shredded by the invaders, and the new regime is far more tyrannical than two-bit dictator Saddam Hussein, who for years was America's man in Baghdad. The war had a good deal to do with oil, although not in the simplistic sense of fueling gas-guzzling American SUVs, as petty-bourgeois ecology groups and various reformists claimed. It was outright colonialism, talking of spreading "democracy" as colonialists a century ago spoke of their "civilizing mission." It certainly served the interests of the Zionist expansionists in Israel, who are gearing up to "ethnically cleanse" the Palestinians from the Occupied Territories. But above all, the invasion was about securing U.S. domination of an imperialist "New World Order" which would reign supreme over the planet. Washington and Wall Street will use their control of the Near Eastern oil spigot to intimidate their imperialist allies/rivals, while U.S. troops in this pivotal country are used to intimidate the surrounding states, from Syria to Iran and beyond.

Although its immediate target was Iraq and the Near East, the "war without end" unleashed by the U.S. beginning with Afghanistan in 2001 is lurching headlong toward a new inter-imperialist global conflagration. For now, Washington wants to intimidate any potential "great power rival" by spilling riv-

ers of Iraqi blood. Next up on the U.S. hit list may be North Korea, as Pentagon planners ready their contingency plans. As the Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International warned in a statement last October, "Pentagon's 'First Strike' Strategy: Careening Toward World War III" (*The Internationalist* No. 14, September-October 2002). The duty of revolutionists and all class-conscious workers, we have insisted, is to fight to *defeat U.S. imperialism and defend Iraq*. Following the program of V.I. Lenin and the Russian Bolsheviks in World War I, we called "For Class War Against the Imperialist War!" (*The Internationalist* No. 15, January-February 2003). In contrast to liberals and reformists in the West who looked to the United Nations or the French and German imperialists, while "Third World" nationalists similarly looked to "their own" bourgeois rulers to stand up to the Yankee invaders, Trotskyists look to the international working class to use its tremendous power in sharp class struggle against the war.

In the run-up to the invasion, the IG/LFI agitated for workers to refuse to handle ("hot cargo") military goods and to carry out strike action against the looming war. We raised these calls with West Coast longshore workers in the United States last year and organized a worker/immigrant demonstration on the docks in Rotterdam, the Netherlands in February. This perspective was not "pie in the sky," for train drivers in Scotland and railway workers together with antiwar movement activists in Italy temporarily blocked shipments of munitions, tanks, helicopters and other war materiel bound for the Gulf. On the day the invasion was launched, there were widespread walk-outs by Italian and Spanish workers. Antiwar demonstrations were enormous, involving millions of protesters; even in the United States there were several demonstrations of more than 100,000 people against the war. But these "popular front" protests were dominated by bourgeois pressure politics, and the warmongers in Washington and London were impervious to pressure. Calls for Europe-wide strike action against the war fizzled for lack of revolutionary leadership; reformist pseudo-socialists simply enrolled "labor" as one more constituency in their "peace" crawls. The end result was a big zero.

These class-collaborationist coalitions of disparate forces were built on the lowest common denominator, which as always is the program of the bourgeois components: "no to war," and now "no to colonial occupation." Liberals and radicals also engaged in heavy red-baiting against leftist groups which were often the organizational backbone of the marches. The "moderates" wanted to make doubly sure that "the movement" didn't go beyond the bounds of capitalism. But you can't fight imperialist war on a platform of (bourgeois) democratic demands, for at bottom it is a *class* issue. Capitalist politicians of various stripes may squabble, but they recognize their common class interests: what they fear is a *losing* war. The antiwar movement wanted a different policy for imperialism, not a fight against the imperialist system that has produced one war after another over the last century. Their bottom-line appeal was that the war was unnecessary or counter-productive, that it would spur more terror attacks, that UN inspectors could look for Iraqi WMDs, etc. So as soon as the invasion started, the calls to "support our troops" (whose

Hussein Malla/AP



Ali Heider/AP

**The Falluja massacre: Left: U.S. occupation forces fire on crowd, April 30, killing at least 15 and injuring scores. Right: Iraqi mourners bury their martyrs the same day.**

troops? *their* troops) had an impact on the pacifists, who added “bring them home.” And as soon as Iraqi resistance collapsed and it looked like Bush & Blair could get away with murder, the “peace” movement collapsed as well.

In the aftermath, as the destruction of Iraq’s cities and economy continues day after day, U.S. troops have received orders to use more “muscle” to subdue the populace. When early in the fighting several captured American soldiers were shown on Iraqi TV, the Pentagon screamed about violations of the Geneva conventions on warfare. But now thousands of Iraqi soldiers are gagged, chained and hooded, with the International Red Cross denied access, although by any definition they are prisoners of war. When a revolt broke out at the Baghdad airport among these prisoners, it was mercilessly “dealt with” by U.S. authorities, who refused to confirm or deny having killed the “mutineers” (“Red Cross Denied Access to POWs,” London *Observer*, 25 May). Meanwhile, police-state repression is spreading in the victorious imperialist countries. Shotgun-wielding police in Oakland California fired a barrage of “non-lethal” munitions against dock workers and antiwar protesters in early April, sending several to the hospital. In New York City, a rash of police killings has occurred as cops stage raids using battering rams, flash grenades and other paramilitary weaponry. Across the U.S. and Europe, immigrants are under attack, particularly those from Arab or predominantly Muslim countries. In “old Europe,” workers’ social gains are under frontal attack. This is the “home front” of imperialist war.

The war on Iraq, as we have insisted, is a war on oppressed minorities, immigrants, poor and working people everywhere. Saddam Hussein and his generals put up only minimal resistance, but the Iraqi people are fighting back daily against the colonial occupiers. The peace movement didn’t even slow down Bush’s invasion, but the mass protests showed the deep discontent across the globe with a New World Order based on the subjugation of the exploited and oppressed peoples of the world. The war is not over, say the warmongers themselves. Meanwhile, the world capitalist economy is heading toward a depression, with spreading deflation and mounting unemployment. As the dollar and the euro battle for supremacy, the prospect is for escalating trade wars heading

ultimately toward a thermonuclear World War III. What is urgently required is a revolutionary leadership to mobilize all those that the imperialists would enslave, behind the one social force that has the power to defeat the new colonialists and would-be emperors, the international proletariat. To bring down the barbarous imperialist system of war, racism and poverty it will take nothing less than international socialist revolution.

### Wanton Imperialist Slaughter and Bitter Iraqi Resistance

The war was a merciless slaughter of Iraqi soldiers and civilians. How many? The imperialist rulers are silent. The response of the Pentagon is who knows, who cares, who’s counting? “You know, we don’t do body counts,” declared General Tommy Franks a year ago responding to reports of mass killings in the war on Afghanistan. The U.S.’ lying body counts in Vietnam became notorious, so they just redefined the civilian dead as “collateral damage.” According to an article in the *Christian Science Monitor* (22 May), “Preliminary reports suggest casualties well above the Gulf War.” Estimates of the number of non-combatants killed in the recent war range up to 10,000, but they may greatly understate the actual numbers. According to the *New York Times*, hospitals in Basra reported up to 2,000 corpses in three weeks of fighting over the city; the Campaign for Innocent Victims in Conflict reports that its volunteers have recorded more than 1,000 civilian deaths in the southern town of Nasiriya; and the *Los Angeles Times* canvassed hospitals in Baghdad, whose figures estimate as many as 2,700 civilians killed there. And these figures leave out huge numbers pulverized and blasted to bits by the powerful U.S. munitions, or burned or buried in the rubble.

As for Iraqi soldiers, after the expected mass desertions didn’t materialize, the Pentagon ordered an indiscriminate massacre. A Marine lieutenant summed it up, “Our goal is to kill as many of the bad guys as possible.” The *New York Times* (10 April) wrote: “The bombing campaign that accompanied ground actions to squeeze Iraqi military units into ever-smaller ‘kill boxes’ almost certainly left thousands of soldiers dead, perhaps tens of thousands. But the world will probably never know how many, and no Iraqi authority is left to count them

and notify their families.” Jonathan Steele, in the London *Guardian* (28 May), estimates that based on his interviews with officers and soldiers in Baghdad, the toll of fighters killed may be from 13,500 to 45,000. “All over Baghdad on walls of mosques or outside private homes, pieces of black cloth inscribed with yellow lettering bear witness to the thousands of Iraqis killed in the American-led war,” he writes. “As far as Iraqis are concerned all the dead are ‘martyrs,’ whether they fell defending their country or were struck when missiles or cluster bombs hit their homes.”

And these horrendous crimes were committed not only by the Pentagon brass who ordered them but by the U.S. soldiers that carried them out. Take the pair of Marine snipers swapping combat tales reported by the *New York Times* (29 March): “We had a great day,” said one. “We killed a lot of people.... We dropped a few civilians, but what do you do?” Describing shooting a woman standing next to an Iraqi soldier, he remarked casually: “the chick was in the way.” A private described machine-gunning a young Iraqi boy who stooped to pick up a rocket-propelled grenade launcher off the body of a dead fighter: “I think they thought we wouldn’t shoot kids. But we showed them we don’t care” (Reuters, 7 April). An American colonel said his aim was to establish “violent supremacy” with “smashmouth tactics.... The crueller it is, the sooner it’s over.” Asked about his troops’ gunpoint encounters with Iraqi civilians, he replied, “You’ll never make them like you.” His aim was to show that there were new “alpha males” in the country. “It’s over for us,” he said, when the last Iraqi fighter “has flies crawling across his eyeballs” (*New York Times Magazine*, 20 April).

The massacres reflecting this kill-crazed mentality were legion. There were the three busloads of civilians on a Baghdad bridge rocketed by missiles from an Apache helicopter; the killing of 13 women and children in a van at a checkpoint outside Najaf; the deliberate bombings of Baghdad markets that killed up to 60 civilians. The Iraq war will turn many of those who did this dirty work for U.S. imperialism into rabid pathological killers, like members of Salvadoran death squads or Israeli soldiers who gun down children throwing rocks at tanks. Recall that Timothy McVeigh, who blew up the Oklahoma City federal building, was trained to be a mass murderer in the 1991 Gulf War where he drove a bulldozer that buried surrendering Iraqi soldiers alive. Asked about the 19 children who died in the 1995 blast, McVeigh called them “collateral damage” – the same cynical phrase the Pentagon used to describe civilians massacred in the U.S. bombing of Iraqi cities. Many of those who today revel in slaughtering Iraqis are future members of strikebreaking squads and fascist militias that will be the mortal enemies of the workers movement.

The Americans are not the only war criminals. British colonel Tim Collins, who was praised by Bush and Prince Charles for his supposedly gallant battle orders to his troops, is now the subject of a war crimes investigation for pistol-whipping a Baath party official and shooting at civilians’ feet. Collins was commander of the Royal Irish Regiment, which has close ties to Northern Ireland Protestant rightists and played a key role in repression of Catholics in Belfast. Another British officer in Iraq, Brigadier General Gordon Kerr, was formerly head of the

British army’s secret intelligence outfit, the Force Research Unit, which a recent London police investigation revealed provided intelligence aid to the UDA Loyalist (Protestant) death squad in murdering Catholics. Kerr is being prosecuted for collusion in the 1989 assassination of Catholic lawyer Pat Finucane (*BBC News*, 16 April). And now a new scandal has erupted as the London *Sun* (30 May) broke the story of photos of torture and sexual abuse of POWs by British troops, including suspension from a fork-lift, rape and sodomy of Iraqi prisoners stripped naked.

But the Iraq war consisted not only of endless slaughter. There was stubborn and valiant military resistance in the southern Iraqi cities of Basra, Nasiriya, Kut, Diwaniya, Najaf and Hilla, although the “embedded” imperialist media gave little sense of the scope of the fighting. The Pentagon media control machine suppressed the fact that dozens of U.S. soldiers were killed on a single day in Nasiriya. A doctor who flew with a combat evacuation team later described the scene:

“Enemy tanks were burning alongside the road. A small

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oil refinery was in flames – so were buildings across the city. Looking down, we could see marines fighting house-to-house, kicking in doors. Occasionally, dark-clothed men would run into the open, fire from their automatic weapons, and then dart out of view. Thousands of Iraqis lined the streets and balconies to watch.... On the north side of town we found the site of the ambush. It was hard to miss: three destroyed amphibious personnel carriers – also known as Amtracks – were burning.”

–New York Times, 20 April

A corporal wounded in Nasiriya said they had been told to expect mass surrenders, but when they got into the city, “it was a whole different ball game. They weren’t rolling over like we thought they would” (Newsday, 28 March). A brigade commander in the Army’s Third Division said of the ambushes, sniping and suicide attacks by “the enemy”: “I have to give the guy credit. He has figured out how to stop us.” A sergeant who fought in the Gulf War said he saw nothing like this in Kuwait “It’s a big difference.

When you’re defending your homeland, maybe you fight a little harder” (“Death and Doubt on the Road to Baghdad,” New York Times, 13 April).

And the resistance has continued, even after Hussein’s army and militias dissolved. In a matter of days after the U.S. army took Baghdad, there were mass demonstrations in the capital with thousands chanting “Down, down U.S.A. – Don’t stay, go away!” The same day (April 15), a reported 20,000 marched in Nasiriya against the occupation. Particularly in the south and in Baghdad, these demonstrations have been dominated by Shiite Islamic fundamentalists. But not everywhere. In fact, there have been massive protests against the U.S. occupation forces throughout the Shiite and Sunni Muslim Arab regions. These have been particularly bitter in cities where U.S. troops have carried out massacres of the local population. In the northern city of Mosul, Special Operations forces wheeled around town in mid-April ostentatiously flying over-size American flags. Rather than intimidating, it infuriated the population. When a crowd gathered to stop the looting of a bank, U.S. troops shot directly into the crowd, killing at least ten. The next day as even larger crowds denounced the killings, soldiers again shot into the crowd; by the end of the week, 31 Iraqis had been killed and 150 wounded.

Two weeks later another massacre took place in the western Iraqi city of Falluja, with 18 Iraqis killed. Now guerrilla bands have formed in the area and in late May they launched attacks on U.S. occupation forces. In several days of fighting, partisans assaulted a military checkpoint in the city and later

ambushed a column of American military vehicles, killing at least five of the invaders, knocking out an armored vehicle and destroying a helicopter. A former brigadier in the disbanded Republican Guard said the aim was to exact revenge for the martyrs of Falluja, vowing “if you come as an invader, we will cut off your heads, and we will show them what street fighting is.” A New York Times (28 May) reporter described the city as “a bastion of hostility and resistance to occupation.” Another man declared, “We want to be free. We can govern ourselves. A million Saddam Husseins would be better than having one American soldier in our streets.” Rather than a rear-guard action by the now-dissolved Iraqi army, these attacks are a reaction

to the brutality of the U.S. occupiers. With such harassing actions and the popular hostility to the new rulers, Bush & Co. may have gotten more than they bargained for.

Clearly, Washington misjudged the reaction of the Iraqi population to the invasion, and this will continue to haunt the occupiers. It is hardly the first time in history this has happened. The Pentagon thought the Cuban people would rise up to



Map adapted from National Geographic

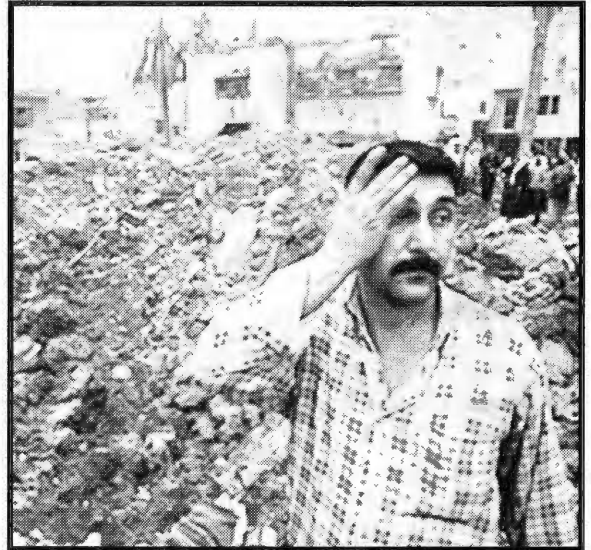
greet the *gusano* invaders at the Bay of Pigs in 1961, but instead peasants and workers rallied to defend the gains of their revolution. In Iraq, no sector but the Kurdish clans who have long been in the pay of the CIA welcomed U.S. troops. Much of the population was hostile from the outset, and reacted with fury to the bloodbath of the indiscriminate bombing. But they did not rise up to defend the regime, for there were no revolutionary gains for the impoverished, exploited and oppressed Iraqi masses to defend. The Baath (Arab Socialist Party) regime was a rather typical bourgeois-nationalist military regime, rife with corruption, which used a heavy hand of massive repression to dominate the disparate country inherited from British imperialism. Relative advances compared to the oil sheikdoms, monarchies and Islamic fundamentalists in surrounding areas (industrial development, public health and schools, a degree of equality for women), were largely gutted by the 1991 Gulf War, a decade of brutal UN sanctions and Hussein’s concessions to Islamic forces.

Despite its bravado against Bush, the Baath regime simply collapsed. The resistance to the occupiers comes not so much from die-hard defenders of Saddam Hussein, but from nationalists and Islamists and the mass of the population who don’t want to see themselves enslaved and their country again turned into a colony. Today, Islamic fundamentalists are increasingly assertive, particularly among the downtrodden Shiite population of southern Iraq and in the slums of Baghdad. Several ayatollahs are jockeying for advantage, proclaiming themselves leaders and

continued on page 34

## After U.S. Destruction of Baghdad...

Photos: Carolyn Cole/Los Angeles Times



**Left: Baghdad family in anguish after U.S. troops killed their father and brother. Right: Man stands in neighborhood of Iraqi capital bombed by U.S. planes.**

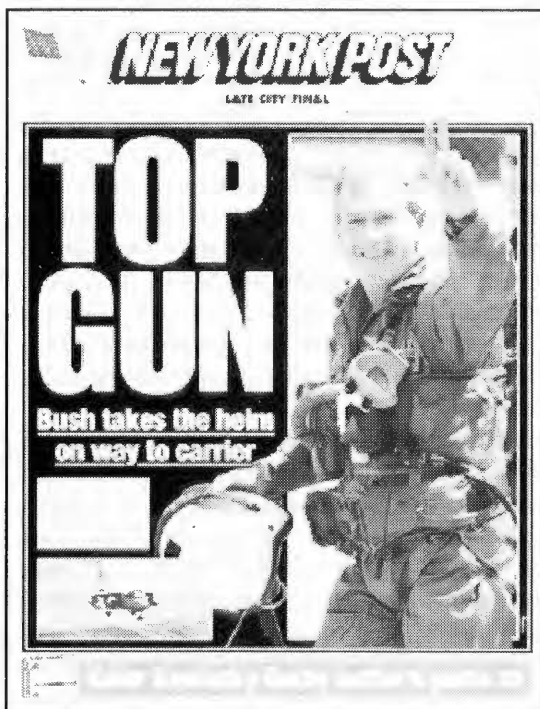
After U.S. planes bombed the center of Baghdad to smithereens, killing dozens in marketplaces, destroying residential neighborhoods.... After American tanks arrived in the Iraqi capital, leaving a trail of corpses and smoldering ruins along the road from Karbala...

After U.S. soldiers opened the gates for looting, standing

by as the National Museum, the National Library and virtually every hospital in the country were sacked.... As the colonial invaders shot down dozens of demonstrators in Mosul and Falluja, firing point-blank into the crowds...

George Bush, the commander in chief of U.S. imperialism, decided to hold a victory party.

## Triumph of the Will 2



The stage was set. The aircraft carrier USS *Abraham Lincoln* was positioned off San Diego to provide the best camera shots for TV coverage of the president's arrival and speech. On deck were hundreds of officers in dress whites and sailors in blue dungarees, lined up like so many tin soldiers.

On the horizon two small S-3B Viking aircraft appear. They buzz the carrier in a double fly-by, and then come in for a wrenching 150 mph landing. Out steps George W. Bush, dressed up in a flight suit, helmet under his arm. The U.S. president swaggers across the flight deck. The uniformed audience cheers.

Soon Bush reappears topside to give a speech before a mammoth banner proclaiming "Mission Accomplished." He declares the "battle of Iraq" a "victory" in a "war on terror" that "still goes on." Speaking the next day in California at United Defense Industries (partly owned by Halliburton), with a Bradley fighting vehicle as a backdrop, the president demands Congress pass a tax cut for the rich and superrich.

The message from the USS *Lincoln* was plain: the 2003 battle for Baghdad is over, let the 2004 battle for the White House begin. The "warrior president" has sounded the charge. The media got their orders, and dutifully saluted. Every daily paper in the country, it seemed, ran a front page featuring Bush in his flyboy suit with a headline including "Top Gun." TV news ran the scenes from the *Lincoln* over and over.



## ...Bush's Obscene Victory Party



Photos: Gabriel Piper and Larry Downing/Reuters

Plane carrying U.S. commander George Bush in tailhook landing on the USS Lincoln on May 1 (left). Bush gives speech to assembled sailors (right).

Bourgeois opinion makers opined that Bush's tailhook landing would be a defining image of his presidency and reelection campaign. The *New York Times* (3 May) reported, "Republicans noted that whoever came up with the idea of having Mr. Bush jet onto the carrier in a flight suit, looking rugged and windblown while surrounded by sailors and fighter pilots, had earned the day's pay."

But wait a minute, haven't you seen this somewhere before? Yes indeed, you may have – but not from Robert Duvall who directed the Reaganite action movie *Top Gun* (1986) starring Tom Cruise. The royalties for this production ought to go to Leni Riefenstahl, who staged the same entry for her propaganda film about the 1934 Nazi Parteitag (party congress) in Nuremberg, *Triumph des Willens* (Triumph of the Will), starring Adolf Hitler.

Riefenstahl's movie opens with Wagnerian music, and then mountains of clouds. As they disperse, a Junker 52 aircraft can be seen. At the Nuremberg airport tens of thousands of Nazis

eagerly await the approach of Hitler's plane. The airplane pulls up, two SS men rush out to secure it. The door opens and Nazi dignitaries file out, Goebbels and then *Der Führer* himself. The crowd chants, *Sieg heil!* over and over as the musical score builds to a crescendo.

You can bet your 52-card Saddam poker deck that whoever staged the spectacle aboard the USS Lincoln was brazenly copying Riefenstahl's opening of *Triumph of the Will*. It's only the most famous (or infamous) fascist propaganda film ever made. A biography of the director wrote of the "Führer's famous approach from the skies," recalling the ancient Aryan deity Odin. A recent biographer wrote:

"Like a god, the 'Führer' seems to waft down from the skies, with Goebbels' 1932 election campaign slogan 'Hitler over Germany' filling the screen."

–Lutz Kinkel, *Die Scheinwerferin: Leni Riefenstahl und das "Dritte Reich"* (Europa Verlag, 2002)



Plane carrying German dictator Adolph Hitler lying over Nuremberg (left). Cheering Nazis greet the *Führer* at airport (right).



It can hardly be an accident that the image makers in the White House bunker are picking up Nazi propaganda themes and techniques. As we have noted, U.S. military strategy in its recent colonial invasion of Iraq was explicitly taken from the Nazi generals' plans for *Blitzkrieg* (lightning war) at the outset of World War II. The Pentagon's bombing strategy of "Shock and Awe" was copied from the Luftwaffe's doctrine of "*Schrecklichkeit*" which aimed at terrorizing the population into surrender.

Bush's pretext for the war – the supposed "threat" to the U.S. of Iraq's hypothetical arsenal of "weapons of mass destruction" – recalls Hitler's claim that Poland was a "threat" to the Reich. Lacking any proof, the Nazi leader staged a 1 September 1939 "attack" on Danzig by concentration camp inmates dressed in Polish uniforms. Sooner or later, you can expect the CIA/DIA/NSA et al. to come up with a canister of something or other as a post-facto justification for the orgy of destruction the U.S. empire has unleashed on Iraq and its continuing colonial occupation.

The reality of an imperialist war of aggression is matched by the atmospherics. Democrats like Senator Robert Byrd are complaining that Bush's "'Top Gun'-style entrance" had turned the aircraft carrier into a "campaign prop," and timidly asking how much it cost. They will drop that as soon as Bush fires back. Perceptive liberals like Paul Krugman worry about the appearance of a "man on horseback" theme in U.S. politics (*New York Times*, 6 May).

If Hitler vowed to establish a *Neue Ordnung* in Europe, Bush father and Bush son vow to clamp a *New World Order* on the entire globe. In this they are seconded by the Democratic

Party of U.S. imperialism, whose Congressional representatives and presidential candidates backed this war, as they did the war on Afghanistan before it, and promise to do again as they beat the drums for war on North Korea. Not to mention the fact that the Democratic Clinton administration twice waged war on the former Yugoslavia and twice wantonly bombed the Iraqi capital.

The U.S.-dominated New World Order abroad is combined with a push toward police-state measures at home. George Orwell's Big Brother in his novel *1984* is a piker compared to what John Ashcroft at the "Justice" Department and Donald Rumsfeld at the "Defense" Department have begun carrying out. And the imperialist war – which is also a war on working people, oppressed minorities and immigrants "at home" – is "still going on," as Bush reminds us.

The goose-stepping media has its role to play in all this, from embedded correspondents in bed with the Pentagon to the elaborately staged spectacle on the Lincoln – definitely a made-for-TV moment. The White House first claimed that the president had to make his dramatic jet entrance because the ship would be hundreds of miles out to sea, too far to be reached by helicopter. When the Navy admitted the carrier was only 30 miles offshore, and according to the Associated Press, "acknowledged positioning the massive ship to provide the best TV angle for Bush's speech, with the sea as his background instead of the San Diego coastline," presidential mouthpiece Ari Fleischer changed tack and said his boss wanted to experience a carrier landing "as realistically as possible."

Like the ultimate in reality TV. What next? Maybe the former Air National Guard pilot who conveniently dropped from sight for a year to avoid getting sent to Vietnam will ask to go along for a joy ride on one of the planes from the *Lincoln* that mowed down thousands of Iraqis so that he can feel what it's like to get in some "good kills."

Meanwhile, the epigones of Leni Riefenstahl are shooting the footage for *Triumph of the Will 2*. Of course, there are some things in the Nazi original that will have to go. In the American remake, perhaps the Wagnerian soundtrack and Horst-Wessel-Lied (the Nazi marching song) will be replaced by Hail to the Chief – Heil to the Führer, as it were.

But the dramatic scenes of the party congress itself will have to wait until the Republican *Parteitag* in September 2004, to be held at Ground Zero in New York. Maybe Rudolph Giuliani can have his reconstruction corporation build a new stadium by then, with big ramps for the men on horseback. ■

**If Hitler vowed to establish a *Neue Ordnung* in Europe, Bush father and Bush son vow to clamp a *New World Order* on the entire globe. In this they are seconded by the Democratic Party of U.S. imperialism, whose Congressional representatives and presidential candidates backed this war, as they did the war on Afghanistan before it, and promise to do again as they beat the drums for war on North Korea.**

*Defend Iraq! Class War Against Imperialist War!*

## Mass Murderers Bush and Blair Bomb Baghdad



### Mobilize Workers' Power for *Defeat* of Bloody Imperialist Aggression!

*The following statement by the Internationalist Group, U.S. section of the League for the Fourth International, was issued on March 20.*

Last night, U.S. president George Bush Jr. launched the long-announced invasion of Iraq. The huge expeditionary force assembled by the United States and Britain in the Arab/Persian Gulf is on the march to seize Iraq and place it under imperialist occupation. The invaders' bombs are raining down on the population of Baghdad. Now the U.S. is cynically preparing to install a military dictatorship in the name of "democracy." They intend to finance it with billions of oil dollars looted from the Iraqis.

In this war of imperialist rape and conquest, working people and the oppressed around the world have a side. The Internationalist Group/U.S. and League for the Fourth International call to mobilize workers power in *defense* of semi-colonial Iraq and for the *defeat* of the imperialist butchers who are laying waste to the besieged Near Eastern country.

The sociopathic mass murderers in the White House and

Pentagon have planned an Armageddon on the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff announced that 3,000 "precision-guided bombs" are to be unleashed in the first 48 hours of aerial bombardment of Baghdad. This U.S. strategy of "shock and awe" is copied straight from the Nazis' doctrine of "*Schrecklichkeit*," trying to terrorize the population into surrender. What Bush intends is precisely a Hitler-style *Blitzkrieg* (lightning war).

The war on Iraq is also a war on labor, minorities and immigrants "at home." Class-conscious workers must fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants, and for worker-immigrant defense against chauvinist attacks such as occurred after the September 11 indiscriminate attack on the World Trade Center.

Wall Street and Washington's war is already being used as an excuse to impose police-state measures in the United States and the rest of the imperialist powers. Military forces stationed in the cities, indefinite detention without charges, star chamber trials, a huge increase in police spying on politi-

**For Strikes Against the War! No Police State!  
Build a Revolutionary Workers Party!**

cal activists, arrests and deportations of thousands of immigrants are already being carried out under the U.S.A. Patriot Act. Accusations of sedition and subversion will be hurled at striking workers defending their rights. And now U.S. rulers are preparing a Patriot Act II to remove the citizenship of those who oppose their bloody aggression.

The war of the capitalist-imperialist bosses must be answered with a class war by those whom they exploit and oppress. Many millions of people have repeatedly marched in opposition to this war in demonstrations that are bigger than at the height of protests against the Vietnam War. But pacifist peace crawls, no matter how large, will not stop the imperialist warmongers. Civil disobedience, in turn, is ultimately a futile appeal to the "conscience" of the capitalist murderers. Their butchery can only be stopped by mobilization of a greater power, that of the international proletariat that has the strength and social position to bring the war machine to a grinding halt.

Like the war on Afghanistan and the U.S.-led NATO war on Yugoslavia, these imperialist wars have been waged by the twin parties of U.S. capitalism, Democrats and Republicans alike. While organizers of the official "peace" marches routinely appeal to bourgeois politicians like Democrats Jesse Jackson and Barbara Lee, and march to the offices of Senator Hillary Clinton, begging the "liberal" capitalist politicians, whose hands are drenched with blood, can only mislead those who would fight against imperialist war.

The IG/LFI has called from the outset for labor to "hot cargo" (refuse to handle) war materiel and for workers' strikes against the war. In recent months, railway workers in Britain and Italy mobilized to stop the transport of war cargo. These actions inspired militant workers internationally. Now it is urgently necessary to go beyond this to undertake combative strike action against the war and the governments who are waging it. Today, hundreds of thousands of Italian workers walked off the job and joined in antiwar mobilizations in the principal cities. Wildcat labor actions against the war are reported from Britain. Tomorrow a Europe-wide "general strike" has been called to protest the war. But whether it is measured in minutes or a few hours, this is merely a symbolic action. All-out workers mobilization is called for to defeat the capitalist rulers and their war.

The fact is that support for the war is extremely narrow. The populations of Britain, Italy and Spain are heavily opposed to the war in which their own governments are participating. Even in the United States, opinion polls show that a majority of the population of New York City (and almost three-quarters of NYC blacks) opposes the war, as do even larger percentages on the West Coast. Numerous local and state labor councils and national unions have passed resolutions against the war and the accompanying attack on civil liberties. Even the AFL-CIO approved a mealy-mouthed "antiwar" statement. But paper statements mean nothing to the Bush gang. Militant labor action, such as shutting down the docks, would galvanize the widespread discontent.

The U.S.' erstwhile imperialist allies (now rivals) France and Germany and the rulers of capitalist Russia cooed like peace doves in the United Nations, but they are now busily

mending fences with Washington, hoping to get in on the post-war plunder of Iraq. They only wanted to delay the war so they could have a say in the war councils, which Bush haughtily denied them. In fact, they together with the bureaucrats of the Chinese deformed workers state all voted for UN Security Council Resolution 1441 in the name of which the U.S. is waging this obscene war.

The European imperialists are no saviors of the Iraqi people, any more than they are of the oppressed Palestinians under the boot of the Israeli Zionist occupiers in the West Bank and Gaza. The "United Nations," meanwhile, served as a cover for imperialist slaughter in Korea (3 million Koreans dead), for the assassination of Congolese independence leader Patrice Lumumba and for imposing imperialist protectorates in the former Yugoslavia. We demand that *all* U.S., British, UN and other imperialist military forces get the hell out of the Near East, *now!*

The war on Iraq is centrally aimed at locking in U.S. imperialist domination of a New World Order. Washington wants its hand on the Near East oil tap so that it can control its rivals from Tokyo to Berlin and Paris. As we have warned from the outset, war on Iraq is intensifying interimperialist rivalries, pointing to a Third World War between nuclear-armed powers. Next on Washington's target list is North Korea, followed by Cuba, Vietnam and above all China. As Trotskyists, we defend the North Korean, Cuban, Vietnamese and Chinese deformed workers states against imperialist threats and aggression, while fighting for workers political revolution to oust the bureaucracies that conciliate the imperialists and internal capitalist forces and thereby open the door to counterrevolution.

Saddam Hussein is a nationalist capitalist ruler little different from many tinpot dictators who have routinely been supported by the imperialists in the past, such as the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile and the Videla junta in Argentina each of which killed tens of thousands of leftists with U.S. approval. Upon taking power in 1970 with the backing of Washington, Hussein unleashed terror against communists using lists supplied by the CIA. The chemical weapons he is accused of having were supplied to him by the U.S. government for use against the Iranians. The plants which produced such weapons were built by German and British companies. The many crimes of Hussein are the crimes of the imperialists who backed him. And it will take revolution by the Iraqi workers, Sunni and Shi'ite alike, mobilized independently of and against the imperialist aggressors to put an end to the likes of Hussein and his former patrons.

In Palestine, the Israeli militarists have intensified the brutal occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, killing thousands. The Sharon regime has been waiting for the war on Iraq to begin the mass "transfer" (ethnic cleansing) of tens of thousands of Palestinians, whom the Zionists want to drive out of their ancestral homes as they did in the 1948 war. Revolutionary Trotskyists defend the oppressed Palestinian population in their uprising against the Zionist jackboot, and fight for an Arab-Hebrew workers republic in a socialist federation of the Near East. Such a federation would also make possible a united socialist republic of Kurdistan.

*continued on page 15*

# The Clash of Slogans: Revolutionary vs. Reformist

A contingent of high-school students was marching to join an antiwar rally at New York's Hunter College on March 5, a couple of weeks before Bush & Co. unleashed the bloody blitzkrieg against Iraq. Outraged at the U.S.' impending bloodbath, they picked up Internationalist Group slogans and yelled: "1-2-3-4, defeat U.S. imperialist war," "The enemy's at home, not in Iraq," "Military recruiters, off campus now." Some also joined us in chanting "Defend Iraq" and "Workers strikes against the war!" Others hesitated.

When this high-school contingent arrived at the Hunter rally, they joined dozens of college students who enthusiastically picked up our chant "Defeat U.S. imperialism!" It was new to many, but it expressed their gut desire for an all-out fight against the crazed war criminals in Washington. Some student bureaucrats and reformist leftists moved in to drown us out with more "acceptable" chants: "Peace now," "No blood for oil." This scene was a microcosm of far-reaching political debates.



Sue Kellogg

**Antiwar protesters chanting at March 5 rally at Hunter College, New York City. Internationalist Group banner calls to defeat U.S. imperialism, defend Iraq.**

Revolutionaries are often asked, "Why can't all the left groups get together?" "Why the fuss about different chants and slogans – aren't they all basically for the same goals?"

No, they're not. Reformist and liberal groups accurately perceive that there's a basic political difference between their slogans and our revolutionary politics. That's why they often put a claque with a bullhorn next to us to drown out chants they call "divisive."

Today, most of the organizers of antiwar marches are left groups, but the slogans they put forward are far from radical. A striking example are the Maoists of the Revolutionary Communist Party who push the milksop liberal plea "Not In Our Name." Workers World (which leads International A.N.S.W.E.R.), the International Socialist Organization and a host of others also believe the essence of "smart" tactics is for radicals to talk like liberals. This approach is the heart of what Marx and Lenin called "opportunism." Anti-communists seize on this contradiction for their red-baiting attacks. The truth is quite the opposite: the supposed "reds" leading peace marches are really pale pinks who only seek to reform capitalism.

The different slogans reflect different outlooks, different strategies, and at bottom different political and class positions. Reformist protest organizers push slogans that reflect their search for an alliance with liberal "doves" and politicians from the Democratic Party. They want to keep everything within the bounds of liberalism, and squelch anything they fear would "alienate" liberals and patriots. In Vietnam antiwar marches



Sue Kellogg

**Protesters at March 22 New York City peace march.**

they often tried to keep out Viet Cong flags. Today's protest organizers seek to provide the organizational glue for an anti-war "popular front" that ties radical-minded youth and workers to the parties, politicians and institutions of the capitalist ruling class.

Revolutionaries point out that the U.S. invasion of Iraq is the latest in a long list of imperialist wars: Afghanistan, Yugoslavia, the first Gulf War (1990-91), the first Afghanistan war (against the Soviet Union, 1980-89), the Vietnam War, the Korean War, World War II, World War I... While liberals and pacifists call for a class-collaborationist "peace" movement, revolutionaries expose these dangerous illusions, insisting that the only way to put an end to the endless imperialist wars is to bring down the capitalist system that produces them over and over.

Our chants and banners point to the need to mobilize the *power* of the workers and oppressed, to *defend* the targets of the imperialist bloodbath and fight for the *defeat* of our "own" U.S. rulers. It is necessary to go from protest to a fight for power.

This perspective is sharply counterposed to slogans like "Peace Is Patriotic" found on many signs in recent peace demos. During the first Gulf War, some reformists even took to wearing the yellow ribbons used by pro-war yahoos, saying they wanted to give the patriotic ribbons a "peace message." Yet American patriotism is the ideology of the capitalist ruling class that forged the U.S.A. in the blood and sweat of black slaves, genocide against native peoples, brutal exploitation of the multiracial working class, and imperialist conquest from Puerto Rico to the Philippines.

Flag-waving reinforces the ideology of "national unity" the capitalists use to deceive those they exploit. In contrast, we seek to unite the workers of the world, which can only be done by fighting against everything which subordinates the exploited to their exploiters, their ideology and symbols – particularly the most powerful and bloodiest exploiters on the face of the planet: the U.S. imperialists.

Following the huge antiwar demos of recent weeks, the U.S. government tried to whip up pro-war sentiment by organizing some red-white-and-blue rallies to "Support Our Troops." These consisted mainly of military reserves, fanatics of right-wing radio shows and Christian fundamentalists out to fight "the devil." Their call is transparent cynicism, since the ruling class doesn't give a damn about the black, Latino, white and Asian working-class youth recruited as cannon fodder for its wars of conquest. It's no accident that of the 535 members of Congress, only one has a son or daughter in the armed forces (*New York Times*, 22 March).

Some antiwar "progressives," like the friends of Noam Chomsky around Z Magazine, also call to "Support Our Troops," by "bringing them home." This only feeds into the rulers' patriotic claptrap, and obscures the fact that the military are the armed forces of the imperialist bourgeoisie. In the Vietnam War, while reformists said "Bring Our Boys Home," revolutionary Trotskyists declared that "our boys" were the heroic Viet Cong fighting to defeat the U.S. imperialists. Quite a few minority and working-class draftees in the U.S. armed forces came to see that the Vietnamese were fighting a just war,

while the American military was waging a dirty colonial war of counterrevolution.

The Vietnamese victory over the U.S. was a huge shot in the arm for the workers and oppressed peoples around the world, showing that the imperialists could in fact be defeated. Saddam Hussein's bourgeois nationalist regime is a far cry from the Viet Cong, whose struggle was based on a social revolution. Nonetheless, the present war is a just war of defense against imperialism on the Iraqi side, and a war of colonial conquest and aggression on the U.S. side. One of the most basic points genuine opponents of the U.S. war must get across is the need to stand with "the other side" – the targets of this imperialist mass murder – against the ruling class that wages a racist war against minorities, immigrants, and the working class here "at home."

Against calls to "support the troops," youth who want to strike a blow in the struggle against the war on Iraq should fight to *drive military recruiters off campus*.

An example of what Lenin called "social-patriotism" and "social-pacifism" are slogans like "Money for Jobs Not for War," "Books Not Bombs," and stickers like "Each Bomb We Drop There Could Build A School Here." Such appeals come down to the grotesque argument that killing Iraqi children is just too damn expensive; the money should be spent on "us" instead. These are favorite slogans of the "peace is patriotic" crowd.

More broadly, they misrepresent the war as a matter of incorrect "priorities" rather than the expression of the *system* of imperialism (the highest stage of capitalism, as Lenin explained). Another example is the slogan "No Blood for Oil." Many youth who chant it may only want to say that behind the war on Iraq is a hidden agenda. But the real, social-patriotic, content of this slogan was spelled out in the numerous signs at the January 18 Washington, D.C. antiwar march declaring, "No American Blood for Iraqi Oil." This slogan also obscures the fact that what the U.S. imperialists are fighting for is unquestioned and unchallenged *world domination*. Their interest in Iraqi oil is primarily to control its supply to their European and Japanese rivals.

What about slogans like, "The people united will never be defeated," often heard at antiwar demos? Many people are unaware that this was the motto of the popular front in Chile which through its class collaboration led thousands of workers and leftists to death, torture and exile. The reformist Stalinists and social democrats "united" the workers to supposedly progressive capitalist politicians and even "constitutionalist" army officers like Augusto Pinochet, who then led the bloody CIA-backed military coup of 11 September 1973. The "people" is a bourgeois category which obscures the division of capitalist society into classes with irreconcilably counterposed interests. Reformist groups who promote "unity" between the exploited and their exploiters pave the way for defeat.

What about calls for "peace now"? As we have pointed out in discussions with antiwar activists, the government has been hell-bent on war from the beginning. You can't "stop the

war” by pleading with Bush and the Democrats for peace – the imperialist war has to be *defeated*. And this requires mobilizing the power of the international working class. Actions pointing this way have begun in a number of places, like the British train drivers and Italian workers who blocked transport of war goods. In Holland, our comrades mobilized immigrant workers to the Rotterdam docks demanding “hot-carguing” of war materiel and workers strikes against the war.

Today, as the U.S. armed forces rain death and destruction on Iraq, ask yourself: Should Iraqi soldiers and civilians hold out the olive branch of “peace” to the invaders? Hell no! They should fight like hell against those who would conquer their country and bomb it into smoldering ruins, pillage it and subject it to colonialist rule. Peace can only be achieved when the international working class is able to “defeat, expropriate and disarm the bourgeoisie,” as Lenin insisted in his 1916 “Military Program of the Proletarian Revolution,” in World War I. The Bolsheviks then put this program into practice in the 1917 October Revolution.

Against the imperialists’ war, what is necessary is *class war* of the workers and oppressed around the world. Only when this leads to revolutionary victory through international socialist revolution will it be possible to talk of peace without pulling the wool over the eyes of the workers and oppressed. Yet even ostensible far left groups, mesmerized by the power of the imperialists, fail to fight for defeating the imperialists. During the first Persian Gulf war, the then-revolutionary Spartacist League raised the call to “Defeat U.S. Imperialism, Defend Iraq!” Under the impact of capitalist counterrevolution in the former Soviet bloc, the now-centrist SL has renounced key revolutionary positions one after another, and attacks the Internationalist Group for fighting for the defeat of U.S. imperialism in this war. Instead, the SL calls for “down with imperialism,” a vague appeal which has even been echoed by bourgeois politicians like Teddy Kennedy. So in rejecting the Leninist policy of *revolutionary defeatism* against imperialist war it seems the SL has come up with a new category, “revolutionary downism.”

An example of what this means “on the ground” came at a March 15 antiwar rally in New York. Sidling up to comrades holding an Internationalist Group banner in Times Square, an SLer sarcastically asked how the Iraqis are going to defeat the most powerful military machine in the world. An IG comrade explained that our call to defeat U.S. imperialism is directed at the working class of the entire world; in this context, it is vital for the Iraqis to carry out as much military resistance as they can against the imperialist invasion. Our comrade asked: “So if according to the Spartacist League the imperialists can’t be defeated, do you call on the Iraqi soldiers to surrender?” Snickering, the SLer said, “We’re not advisers to the Iraqi armed forces.” Exactly the same phrase was used half an hour later by a different SLer, so this is clearly a political *line* of the SL. We responded that in that case, their pretense of defending Iraq is truly empty: in the SL’s demoralization it is reflecting the ideology of the American ruling class, which in its imperial hubris believes itself to be invincible and its rule eternal.

Or take the League for the Revolutionary Party, another

centrist outfit, which claims to agree with the call “Defend Iraq – Defeat U.S. Imperialism!” Yet in a March 21 leaflet under this headline, the LRP goes out of its way to reassure liberals not to take its words too seriously: “Revolutionaries do not fight to artificially exclude liberals from the movement.... Thus we participate in demonstrations with liberal politicians while making every effort to expose their pro-imperialist role.” Actually, genuine revolutionaries militantly *oppose* the presence of representatives of the capitalist parties of war and racism speaking at antiwar protests. The LRP uses the image of workers and youth who still have liberal illusions as an excuse for coexistence with Democratic pols. This is hardly surprising for a group which tailed after black Democrat Al Sharpton for years. The LRP’s position might be characterized as “escape-clause radicalism,” leftist in words but pledging to keep things nice for the liberal bourgeoisie in deeds.

It’s necessary to think through the *political* meaning of slogans to understand their real *class content*. As youth become radicalized in the fight against the U.S. war on Iraq, the most conscious militants must reject slogans that lull, delude and obscure the hard realities of what is required to fight the war-mad rulers of this country. Exposing liberal, reformist and pacifist illusions and lies, they should join in the revolutionary struggle against the real enemy – imperialism, the capitalist ruling class which feeds off exploitation, racism and war. They can play a key role in helping to mobilize the *power* of the international proletariat to *defeat* the imperialists and *defend* the nations on their hit list (after Iraq, the North Korean, Chinese, Vietnamese and Cuban deformed workers state are next up).

The key to waging that struggle is to build a revolutionary workers party for international socialist revolution, which alone can put an end to capitalism’s endless wars. *Clarity* is required for *action*. Join us in this fight. ■

## Bush and Blair Bomb...

*continued from page 12*

From the Near East to the imperialist centers, the key to combating this imperialist war of aggression is the building of revolutionary workers parties like the Bolsheviks of V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky. During the carnage of World War I, the Bolsheviks fought to turn the imperialist war into a civil war, fighting for the defeat of “their own” imperialist rulers. This internationalist program enabled them to carry out the first successful workers revolution in history, the October Revolution of 1917. It was the destruction of the bureaucratically degenerated Soviet Union during 1989-92 that set the stage for Bush Sr.’s 1990-91 Gulf War. Today, it is necessary to take up the Bolshevik banner to reforge an authentically Trotskyist Fourth International that can end imperialist war through international socialist revolution.

Radical youth who want to fight against imperialist war and get rid of the capitalist system that spawns it should join in the struggle to mobilize the tremendous power of the working class against the bloody war criminals whose drive for global domination threatens all the peoples of the world.

Defend Iraq! Defeat U.S. Imperialism!

For workers strikes against the war!

# Bush's Blitzkrieg Runs Into Iraqi Resistance

MARCH 28 – The opening salvos of the U.S. invasion of Iraq were supposed to “decapitate” the Iraqi leadership and shock the army and population into submission. On orders from American president George Bush Jr., several massive “bunker buster” bombs and more than a dozen cruise missiles were launched on the Iraqi capital. The ferocious display of firepower against Baghdad was a bald-faced attempt at assassination of Iraqi strongman Saddam Hussein. After this kickoff, on Day One of the war, March 20, tens of thousands of U.S. and British troops streamed north across the Kuwaiti border. Within hours, the U.S. Central Command announced that the port of Umm Qasr had been taken and the southern Iraqi metropolis Basra had fallen. On Day Two, U.S. forces raced up the right bank of the Euphrates River past Nasiriya while a second prong headed up the left bank of the Tigris. The mouthpieces of the American empire were exultant: the U.S. attack, modeled on Hitler’s concept of “lightning war” (*Blitzkrieg*), was “on schedule.” But by Day Three the U.S. expeditionary corps had run into an unexpected storm of Iraqi resistance.

In short order, Iraqi militia men and women in the southern city of Nasiriya ambushed a supply column, killing ten, wounding scores and leaving an undetermined number of U.S. soldiers unaccounted for. Army trucks and Humvees were destroyed by Iraqi mortars, artillery cannons, rockets and rifles. The next day, five captured U.S. soldiers were shown on Iraqi TV while the Pentagon raged. At the same time, 18 British soldiers were killed in helicopter crashes and due to “friendly fire” by the U.S. Fighting raged for days in Umm Qasr, located on the Kuwaiti border, which had not been cleared. Nor was Basra captured: the British “Desert Rats” assigned to take it were camped outside the city, wary of entering. The U.S. Third Infantry went ahead to the outskirts of Najaf, 85 miles from Baghdad, but there they stopped, facing determined resistance and lacking fuel. When a squad of helicopters of the 101st Airborne were called in, “The Iraqis threw up a wall of lead,” said a U.S. analyst. With only small arms fire, all 32 helicopters were damaged, two were downed, and only seven were still operational.

**Defend Iraq! Defeat U.S. Imperialism!  
Class War Against Imperialist War!**



Faleh Kheiber/Reuters

**Iraqis celebrate the downing of U.S. helicopter, near Karbala, March 24.**

While the Pentagon planners are busy shifting gears, making a “pause” in their drive on Baghdad in order to “mop up” resistance in the south, around the world millions saw that the purportedly invincible Pentagon military machine can be wounded. The League for the Fourth International salutes the Iraqi fighters courageously waging an unequal battle against invaders who far from “liberating” them seek to turn their country into a direct U.S. colony. At the same time, a wounded beast is all the more dangerous. We denounce the war criminals in Washington and London who have already slaughtered hundreds of Iraqis and are preparing to massacre many thousands more before their abominable war is over. These butchers will not be stopped by pleading for peace. Blows landed against the imperialist behemoth by those who refuse to be its colonial slaves aid working people, oppressed minorities and immigrants in the U.S. and throughout the capitalist world. Now is the hour for us to come to the aid of the Iraqi people by mobilizing proletarian power in revolutionary *class war against the imperialist war*.

## “Operation Cakewalk” Mired in the Mud

In the run-up to the March 19 assault on Iraq, the U.S. imperialists were supremely confident. “There may be pockets of resistance, but very few Iraqis are going to fight to defend



Saddam Hussein,” said the head of the Defense Advisory Board, Richard Perle, last month on the television talk show “Hardball.” Vice President Dick Cheney, the silent man who runs the Bush government from an “undisclosed location,” went on NBC’s Meet the Press three days before the first strike arguing that the U.S. military “will be greeted as liberators,” the Iraqi army and even much of the elite Republican Guard would “want to avoid conflict with the U.S. forces,” and the war would be won within weeks. A year ago Kenneth Adelman, a Reagan administration official, wrote in the *Washington Post*: “I believe demolishing Hussein’s military power and liberating Iraq would be a cakewalk.” But in fact the Iraqis did not lie down before the U.S. military juggernaut, and instead began hitting the invaders’ vulnerable supply lines. Before long, Operation Cakewalk was mired in the mud and sands of south central Iraq.

A raging sandstorm grounded the copters, followed by heavy rains which drenched U.S. troops. A supply convoy of 300 trucks has been pinned down by Iraqi fire for days near Diwaniyah in central Iraq, unable to move the ten miles that separate it from the 22,000 Marines it was sent to resupply. While the U.S. has so far been unable to knock Baghdad TV off the air, its rockets did hit a Baghdad market, killing many civilians and arousing fury against the invaders. Likewise, after Marines brutally charged into Nasiriya, a farmer said that

supporters of Saddam Hussein had now been joined by others who were outraged by the U.S. intervention: “Of course these people will fight. They will fight against the invaders” (*New York Times*, 25 March). As the Internationalist Group noted in a 22 October 2002 statement: “Those who are counting on a cakewalk and getting war on the cheap may be sorely surprised, but even if the U.S. military force is able to overwhelm all resistance, an imperialist occupation of the country would drag on for years.”

Eventually, even some in the lying imperialist press, firmly “embedded” in the U.S. war machinery, began to ask a few timid questions. CNN and Fox TV are simply agencies of the Pentagon line, for which they were rightly expelled from Iraq,




Internationalist photo

**Contingent of Internationalist Group, U.S. section of the League for the Fourth International, at January 18 antiwar demonstration in Washington, D.C.**

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and liberal TV anchor Dan Rather struck out the phrase "bogged down" from a telecast. But soon the words began to creep onto the front page of the papers. More significantly, U.S. generals began to complain about the scenario that had been laid out by war secretary Donald Rumsfeld. "The enemy we're fighting is a bit different than the one we war-gamed against," said the commander of Army forces in the Gulf, Lt.-General William Wallace, saying they knew of paramilitary forces, "but we did not know how they would fight" (*New York Times*, 28 March).

The real problem the Pentagon and its bosses in the White House face is that of American casualties, summed up in the phrase "Vietnam syndrome." Ever since the U.S. ignominiously lost to the Communists in Indochina in that dirty counterrevolutionary war, the American population has been wary of getting bogged down in another *losing* colonial adventure. As a result, the U.S. military has relied on high-tech weaponry and aerial bombardment in the hopes of waging war with close to zero U.S. casualties. Right-wing war hawks like Rumsfeld and Cheney claim the Vietnam syndrome is history, but even they are wary of the reaction of a "gun shy" public. They hesitate at getting drawn into street fighting in any of the Iraqi cities, and particularly in Baghdad. But since their fantasy of the Iraqi population rising up to greet American "liberators" didn't pan out, that means that they intend to drastically escalate their bombing of the urban centers. The Bush administration is preparing to level Baghdad and burn out the population.

Bush's *Blitzkrieg* may have run into stiff resistance, and the Pentagon's strategy of "shock and awe" may not have shocked Saddam Hussein's military into surrender, but they are betting they can terrorize the population into fleeing the Iraqi capital. The people of Baghdad are certainly aware of how ruthless the U.S. can be, for no one has forgotten the Al Amariya massacre in February 1991, when the American military launched a "surgical" strike on this civilian bomb shelter killing over 400 people, mainly women and children. But that is only a small taste of what the war planners in Washington have in mind. The operations manual for the aerial bombardment of Iraq is a book by former military officers Harlan K. Ullman and James Wade, *Shock and Awe: Achieving Rapid Dominance*, published by the National Defense University in 1996. The authors say that their aims can be summed up as: "Paralyze, shock, unnerve, deny, destroy" through "very selective, utterly brutal and ruthless and rapid application of force to intimidate." The intended effect would be like the nuclear bombing of Japan in 1945:

"Shutting the country down would entail both the physical destruction of appropriate infrastructure and the shutdown and control of the flow of all vital information and associated commerce so rapidly as to achieve a level of national shock akin to the effect that dropping nuclear weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki had on the Japanese. Simultaneously, Iraq's armed forces would be paralyzed with the neutralization or destruction of its capabilities."

**Smash Imperialism Through  
Socialist Revolution!**

In the face of such ruthless would-be conquerors boasting of the most powerful military force in history, the guerrilla tactics of Iraqi fighters can harass and land blows against the invaders. The London *Financial Times* (28 March) writes, "It is hard not to draw comparisons with events surrounding North Vietnam's Tet offensive in 1968," which sent shock waves around the world even though the U.S. inflicted heavy casualties. But the Vietnamese Communists could awaken the revolutionary energies of the peasant and worker masses fighting for their social liberation, unlike the hard-fisted bourgeois regime of Saddam Hussein; and North Vietnam had the military backing of the Soviet Union, which enabled them to hold out for years and eventually achieve victory in 1975. Iraq's defeat in the first Gulf War of 1990-91 was a direct result of the collapsing of the bureaucratically degenerated Soviet workers state under the economic and military pressure of imperialism, facilitated by the capitulation of the Stalinist bureaucracy whose policy of "peaceful coexistence" paved the way for counterrevolution.

Washington has launched a second Desert Slaughter against Iraq not because of any mythical threat to its interests from the regime of Saddam Hussein, but because U.S. imperialism needs this war to enforce its world hegemony. It wants to use this war to put the U.S. hand firmly on the strategically vital Near East oil tap, thus giving it decisive control over its energy-starved European and Japanese imperialist rivals, and to lock down its domination of a "unipolar" world. This is why there was great reluctance from France and Germany, together with now-capitalist Russia and the Chinese deformed workers state, over Bush's war plans. In the end their vaunted "opposition" in the United Nations didn't stop the U.S. war of aggression, and now the other big powers are scrambling to get in on a reconstruction bonanza. But in the longer term, these are more than mere blips or tensions in the Atlantic Alliance. As the Balkan Wars of 1908-1913 set the stage for World War I, the war on Iraq is a giant lurch toward an inter-imperialist World War III.

The Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International  
*continued on page 25*

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## French-Russian-German Axis Is No Force for "Peace" *Defeat All the Imperialists!*

Henk Asma/Defensiekraant



AP

**All the imperialists are warmongers. (Left) Dutch occupation troops on patrol in Kabul. (Right) French occupation troops in Mazaar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan, December 2001.**

*The following is a translation of a leaflet issued by the League for the Fourth International at a demonstration against war on Iraq in Amsterdam, Netherlands on February 15.*

The imperialist rulers of the United States and its British ally are poised to carry out a horrendous slaughter in Iraq. Currently, the French, German, Belgian and Russian governments are maneuvering to avoid a new United Nations resolution explicitly authorizing war. Yet all the imperialists and their allies and flunkies backed Security Council Resolution 1441, which is the banner under which the massacre of the Iraqi people will be waged. Whenever Bush and Blair decide that they have had enough of the charade of UN "weapons inspection," their murder machine will be unleashed. Tens and hundreds of thousands are slated to die. The League for the Fourth International declares that this imminent invasion of Iraq must be fought by mobilizing powerful working-class action internationally, including labor boycotts of war materiel and workers strike actions against the war. *Iraq must be defended and the imperialists defeated!*

This war is not just about Iraq or just about oil, and it's certainly no "war on terrorism." As for "weapons of mass destruction," it is the imperialists and their allies like Israel who have vast arsenals of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and are prepared to use them. This is a war for imperialist world domination, in which the U.S. intends to nail down the "New World Order" proclaimed by Bush Sr. a decade ago in the wake of Gulf War I. It is therefore no surprise that inter-imperialist tensions are mounting, with France and Germany increasingly reticent to subordinate themselves to Washington. Now, a French-Russian initiative calls for sharply increasing the number of UN "inspectors" in Iraq as an "alternative to war"; another version is floated for bringing in thousands of UN "peacekeepers." But such a "peaceful" occupation of Iraq would still be an imperialist takeover under the fig-leaf of the United Nations.

French President Chirac and German Chancellor Schröder are quite simply opposed to a U.S. monopoly over the division of the spoils in the Middle East. At the last minute they may well abandon their opposition and send in their troops in order to get in on the action. At this very moment French paratroopers are in the Ivory Coast attempting to prop up the neo-colonial puppet regime there – the latest episode in French imperialism's long history of murderous interventions in Africa. Even as he distanced himself from Bush in his Thursday 13 February speech to the German parliament, Schröder hailed the 10,000 German soldiers who are at the core of the imperialist occupation police forces in Afghanistan, Kosovo and Macedonia. Indeed, these SPD/Green "pacifists" pushed through the German participation in the imperialist attack on ex-Yugoslavia in 1999.

Yet fake-leftists all over Europe are scrambling to hail these latest "peace" initiatives. The journalist Paul Foot, a prominent spokesman for the British Socialist Workers Party, thus hailed the bourgeois reactionaries Chirac and Putin and their call for the occupation of Iraq by imperialist troops with UN blue helmets. "Chirac and Putin were not alone even among heads of state. In Germany, Belgium and Greece, to name but three European countries, the people and their representatives think the same way," declares this self-proclaimed "socialist" (*London Guardian*, 12 February). Foot merely deplores the "absence in this sublimely moderate and sensible coalition of any representative of the British government or indeed the British opposition." Then "the people" would be in harmony with "their representatives" (the capitalist government), according to these sublimely reformist social democrats!

The League for the Fourth International has warned from the outset that the looming invasion of Iraq would be a "trigger for new world war." "Pentagon's 'First Strike' Strategy: Careening Toward World War III," headlined our 17 October 2002 statement. Today reactionaries and "progressive" bour-



Indymedia/Nederland

### Amsterdam peace demo, February 15.

geous politicians in the U.S. unite in bashing France and Germany. Liberal Democrats declare: "Had it not been for our military commitment, France, Germany and Belgium today would be Soviet socialist republics" (*New York Times*, 13 February). Meanwhile, their French counterparts talk of a Paris-Berlin-Moscow "Antiwar Axis" (*Libération*, 11 February). But rather than allying with one set of imperialists against another, to put an end to the endless cycle of imperialist war it is necessary to sweep away the capitalist system which spawns them. And where the popular-front antiwar movements around the globe look to bourgeois politicians, the LFI statement emphasized, "As opposed to bourgeois pacifism, we communists call instead for class war against the imperialist war."

This weekend's antiwar mobilizations throughout Europe are being organized on the basis of anti-American social patriotism, in order to pressure their respective bourgeois governments to oppose Bush/Blair's war plans. Foot's nakedly pro-imperialist aria was no aberration. Regrouped in the "European Social Forum," a kaleidoscope of "socialists," "communists" and pseudo-Trotskyists already declared in September of last year "we do have the chance to influence European governments". In Belgium, the antiwar protests are being organized by the "Stop U.S.A." coalition, led by the Stalinist PvdA (Party of Labor), whose aim is to pressure the European imperialists to break from Washington. As in World War I, we see the assorted reformists lining up behind "their own" bourgeoisies.

In the Netherlands, we have the "Platform Against the

'New War'" which calls upon the Dutch government "to end its support of this war" and supports the French and German imperialist "resistance" to Bush. The Platform spreads the illusion that imperialist governments can "contribute to democratic, diplomatic and non-violent means as the solution to international conflicts." Meanwhile 370 Dutch troops and Patriot missile units are to be sent to "defend" Turkey and Dutch F-16s bombard the Afghani population, in raids that killed more than a dozen civilians this week.

The pages of the "left" press like *De Socialist* put out by Internationale Socialisten are filled with denunciations of imperialism – mainly U.S. imperialism – and even warnings against relying on the UN, but all these groups are building an "antiwar" movement embracing bourgeois forces. The IS may denounce "Bush – Blair – Balkenende" but the essential criterion for them is whether or not [Dutch premier, Christian Democrat] Balkenende is following the American line. But for authentic Marxist revolutionaries the main enemy is at home! The fake-Trotskyists of Offensief reprint the 7 February manifesto of the Committee for a Workers International giving [German premier, Social Democrat] Schröder plus points for opposing Bush, but minus points for enforcing capitalist austerity at home – as if these are not the two sides of the same coin for this social-democratic representative of the interests of German capital. The drive to imperialist war is part of an all-sided attack on the living standards and democratic rights of working people.

The League for the Fourth International has called for workers action against the war on Iraq, including labor strikes and boycotting war materiel. With millions around the world outraged at the impending massacre in Iraq and with the example of the recent action by Scottish train engineers in refusing to move a freight train loaded with munitions bound for the Gulf, the perspective of class struggle opposition to the war is clearly not utopian. In contrast, the bulk of the left is intent on building a bigger, better and "broader" popular front antiwar coalition – that is, looking to the bourgeoisie rather than the working class.

Some left groups even give lip-service to the call for workers action. For example, the Vonk group, the Belgian section of Ted Grant's Committee for a Marxist International, talks of the "impact" of "ship-spotting." But in the face of the strategic transshipment of U.S. war materiel through Antwerp harbour, what Vonk means by this is small groups of antiwar activists wandering around the docks rather than fighting to mobilize the power of the organized working class. And no wonder, since it is buried inside the Belgian social democracy, and in fact makes workers action dependent on the good will of the social-democratic tops. Meanwhile, in response to representatives of the LFI, Antwerp's "socialist" trade union bureaucrats explain that these preparations for imperialist mass murder are giving dock workers employment. In fact, a fight for jobs in Antwerp, as in Rotterdam and elsewhere, means class struggle against both imperialist war and the bourgeoisie's schemes to "liberalize" port hiring. The struggle against the war must also mean a political struggle against the treacherous labor lieutenants of the bourgeoisie.

*continued on page 24*

## Rotterdam Worker/Immigrant Protest: Don't Move Weapons, Strike Against War!

On February 15, more than 80,000 opponents of war on Iraq marched in Amsterdam, Netherlands, part of a worldwide series of antiwar marches. It was the biggest protest against a foreign war in Dutch history, bigger even than the largest peace demonstration during the Vietnam War (January 1973 in Utrecht). Yet simultaneous with this outpouring of antiwar sentiment, the cabinet of Christian Democratic prime minister Jan-Peter Balkenende secretly gave the green light to U.S. transport of war materiel across the Netherlands to Atlantic ports for transshipment to the Near East. Some two dozen trains were scheduled to make the trek to the sea, while roll-on roll-off ships headed down the Rhine River. As the military trains with their death cargos appeared in the Dutch countryside there was an immediate outcry. A Greenpeace team on a rubber boat tried to block a U.S. military ship in Rotterdam harbor. The government mobilized the Marechaussee (the Military Police) to guard the ports and railheads.

As the American/British expeditionary force builds up for the invasion of Iraq, the Pentagon has been moving vast quantities of war materiel to the eastern Mediterranean and Persian Gulf regions. Tanks, helicopters, trucks, jeeps, armored cars and ammunition are stored at U.S. military bases in Germany, remnants of the anti-Soviet Cold War. Initially, much of the war cargo was shipped from the V Army Corps and 1st Armored Division through Belgium, but protests at the port of Antwerp were increasing. On February 16, direct action pacifists outside the town of Melsele brought a war train to a stop and chained themselves to the engine. Eleven protesters were arrested and the train went on its way, but U.S. authorities were looking for a more "secure" route. With the Austrian government nixing war transport because of the neutrality clause of its constitution and the French government balking in the UN over voting for war, they chose the Netherlands with its pliant "center-right" government.

The umbrella "peace" coalition, the Platform Against the "New War," called a national day of action against war transport for February 25. This was the anniversary of the 1941 February Strike against the Nazi deportation of Jews from the German-occupied Netherlands, traditionally a day for pious speeches by politicians (see page 7). For the most part, the national "action"



**Demonstration initiated by the League for the Fourth International in Rotterdam, February 25, calling for labor boycott of war materiel, strikes against the war.**

day against war transport consisted of pacifist gestures denouncing the impending war and leafleting. In Groningen, some 300 people gathered for a torch-light vigil at the railway station, while the NCPN (New Communist Party) presented a resolution to the provincial assembly. At Schipol Airport, where charter planes with U.S. troops heading for the Near East have made stopovers, about 40 people participated in a symbolic "citizens' inspection" and sit-in. The Socialist Party (which boasts of having 40,000 members) asked questions in parliament and called vigils. Seeking a more militant form of protest, an Action Group Against Military Transport went to the headquarters of the MTMC (Military Traffic Management Command) at Capelle aan den IJssel, near Rotterdam, and chained themselves to the gates.

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. It also emphasized that the war preparations were linked to racist harassment and repression directed against immigrants in the Netherlands, calling on the workers movement to demand full citizenship rights for immigrants, and that the bosses were taking aim at the right to strike. 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

VVI



**Demonstrators in Workers Initiative Against Weapons Transport protest at Rotterdam harbor, February 25.**

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).

A report on the action by the VVI and pictures of the demonstration appeared on the Indymedia.nl Internet site:

"Today, February 25, instead of passively commemorating the February Strike, a first step was undertaken to carry out in practice the principle of workers solidarity with the oppressed. At 3 p.m. in Rotterdam-Zuid, a demonstration was held against the planned war of mass murder and pillage against Iraq, aimed at mobilizing dock and rail workers in the port of Rotterdam, with its history of wildcat strikes, to defend Iraq.

"Behind a banner with the slogans, 'Boycott Weapons Transport!' and 'Workers Strikes Against the War!' some 50 participants, including Dutch, Turks, Moroccans and other immigrants, marched through the Tarwewijk area toward the port area of Waalhaven, four kilometers away. Our loud chants of 'Defend Iraq' and 'Boycott the weapons' echoed through the streets and attracted attention. This highly necessary step toward mobilizing the workers movement, immigrants and youth against the war on Iraq was undertaken by the Arbeiders Initiatief 'Stop Wapen Transporten' (Workers Initiative to Stop Weapons Transport), a united front initiated on a few days' notice by the Verbond voor de Vierde Internationale.

"Upon arriving at the pier, where a production facility of the Steinweg Handelsveem (which loads and unloads U.S. war materiel) is situated, we marched toward its gate. Our way was barred by a security guard with a watchdog and three police cars. An attempt was made to speak with the Steinweg workers, but this was refused, and with our loud voices we sought to send the message of international workers solidarity over the huge green gate.

"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. Our call for 'Full citizenship for all immigrants and their families' received loud applause. Plans were announced to get together in the near future to go beyond this initial act toward a boycott of arms transport and workers strikes against the war."

Recent events have underscored the very real possibility of mobilizing workers action against the imperialist war. But to achieve this, it is necessary to combat the betrayals of the pro-capitalist union misleaders and the pacifist illusions spread by the "antiwar" popular front. A February 28 VVI leaflet reporting on the Rotterdam worker/immigrant demonstration stated:

"Train cars carrying an arsenal of jeeps, heavy trucks and tanks for NATO arrive

daily in Rotterdam, bloody cargos of death and destruction aimed at the Iraqi people.

"This must be stopped! The working class has the power to make this happen. In Scotland, railway engineers stopped a munitions train in January. This last weekend, Italian rail workers and antiwar activists blocked a train with war materiel. There are numerous reports of significant opposition among workers of the Raillion freight company to transporting war goods. But the FNV (Netherlands Labor Federation) has declared that ... it has no position on the massacre of thousands upon thousands of Iraqis.

*continued on page 24*



**Verbond voor de Vierde Internationale**

**Oproep: Boycott de wapentransporten!**  
**Arbeidersstaking tegen de oorlog!**  
**Voor de nederlaag van de imperialisten!**

De wereld staat op het punt van oorlog. Miljoenen zijn verantwoordelijk en weedend over het verraad van de nieuwe imperialistische massa maatschappij, nu weer in Irak. Deze bloedige plannen moeten verslagen worden door de werkersklasse en de onderdrukten, zonder ook maar enig vertrouwen te hebben in de Europese imperialistische maatschappij. Het is een aanval op Irak uit eigen belang niet hebben uitgesloten. Na de aanval op Irak uit eigen belang niet hebben uitgesloten. Na de aanval op Irak uit eigen belang niet hebben uitgesloten. Na de aanval op Irak uit eigen belang niet hebben uitgesloten.

**VOOR INTERNATIONALE ARBEIDERS SOLIDARITEIT**

**DEMONSTRATIE**

**BOYCOTT DE WAPENTRANSPORTEN**

**ARBEIDERS STAKINGEN TEGEN DE OORLOG**

Mobiliseer de macht van de arbeiders beweging tegen de oorlog in en het racistische offensief van de kapitalisten op het thuisfront

Volledige burgersrechten voor alle immigranten en hun families

**Dinsdag 25 FEBRUARI om 15 UUR, onderaan bij METRO station ZUID-PLEIN, ROTTERDAM-ZUID.**

**WEES AANWEZIG!**

het Arbeiders Initiatief 'Stop Wapen Transporten'

## February 1941: Dutch Workers Struck Against Deportation of the Jews

The recent protests against the transport of war materiel through the Netherlands for the imperialist invasion of Iraq were called for February 25, the anniversary of the 1941 mass strike against the World War II German occupation regime and its deportation of Jews. The "February Strike" is annually commemorated in Amsterdam, including by bourgeois politicians, but is little known outside Holland.

The Netherlands were invaded by the Wehrmacht (German army) on 10 May 1940. The fighting was over after six days, culminating in the German bombardment of Rotterdam: the entire center of the city was destroyed, killing upwards of 30,000. Throughout 1940, Hitler's Reichskommissar, the Austrian Nazi Seyss-Inquart, escalated anti-Semitic repression. When Jews were banned from public employment in November, students launched protests, leading to the occupation of the universities by the Nazi SD. Jews were ordered to register with the occupation authorities.

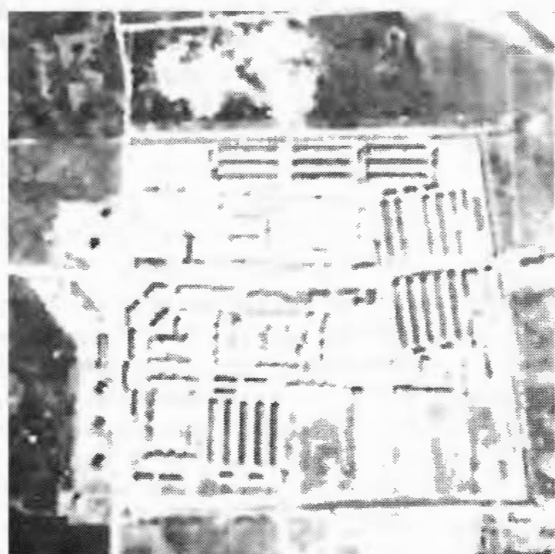
In early 1941, Dutch fascists of the NSB and its paramilitary thugs of the WA staged provocations in Jewish neighborhoods, smashing windows and randomly beating up Jews. Simultaneously, the occupation government began sending thousands of Dutch workers to Germany as forced labor, leading to protests. Members of battalions of unemployed workers sent into the countryside to repair dikes rioted over their starvation pay and miserable conditions. On February 9, fighting broke out against the Germans in Amsterdam; two days later there was a pitched battle in which 20 NSB fascists were wounded and a WA member later died. In reprisal, the Germans sealed off the old Jewish quarter and machine gun nests were set up in the surrounding streets.

On February 17, workers at the NSM shipbuilding company put down their tools when it was announced that a number of single workers were being sent to Germany; the strike quickly spread through the shipyards and wharves, and the measures were rescinded. On the weekend of February 22-23, German and Dutch Nazi paramilitary forces occupied the Jewish quarter and rounded up 427 young Jewish men in the Jonas Daniël Meijer Square, from where they were deported to the concentration camps of Buchenwald and Mauthausen. This manhunt sparked general indignation, and on the evening of the 23rd, district leaders of the illegal Communist Party of the Netherlands (CPN) decided to call for a strike.

Even before a call was issued, by the next afternoon (February 24) workers spontaneously went into the streets, with dock workers among the first to go out. In the evening the Communist Party held a protest demonstration of several hundred at the Meijer Square. That night the CPN ran off a mimeographed manifesto calling on the working people of Amsterdam to "Protest the Abominable Persecution of the Jews," and ending with the call "Strike!!! Strike!!! Strike!!!" The next day, February 25, the whole city ground to a halt, with some 300,000 people participating in the strike. Most street cars never left the depots; the few that did were waylaid by militant workers who sent them back to the barns. Shops closed and huge crowds gathered in the streets. That evening, the Germans sent in an SS Death's Head battalion, making arrests through the night.

The next morning (February 26), the strike at first seemed to be over, but in the afternoon the municipal works, ship-

*continued on page 24*



Left: Westerbork concentration camp in 1944. Right: Train carrying Jews from Westerbork to extermination camp at Auschwitz.

## Rotterdam protest...

*continued from page 22*

"Here the union bureaucrats are following the leadership of the Labor Party (PvdA) which junked its so-called 'opposition' to the war in order to jump into bed with the Christian Democrats (CDA) in a rerun of the 'Purple' cabinets [of the 'red' social democrats and 'blue' liberals which governed the Netherlands for most of the last decade]. Down with class collaboration! While Stalinist and social-democratic reformists call to 'Stop USA' and look to the European imperialists, the League for the Fourth International instead calls for the defeat of all the imperialists, not only the blood-soaked U.S. and British but also the Dutch imperialists who bomb the Afghan population with their F-16s and occupy former Yugoslavia in the name of NATO. "Imperialist war at home means racist raids and police surveillance everywhere, an assault on the entire multi-national, multi-ethnic working class. Dockers and railway workers are under attack by decaying Dutch capitalism. 'Liberalization' of the ports and more layoffs on the railways and at the ECT container terminals are threatened. The profit motive has meant that at the ECT Maasvlakte oil terminal in Rotterdam, six workers were recently injured because of a chemical leak. Unemployment and repression are hitting all workers.

"The war on Iraq is also a war on workers 'at home.' We must defeat the bosses' war in order to end the endless wars. We must crush the capitalist system that breeds death and poverty, by fighting for international socialist revolution. What's needed to turn things around is not a call on the good will of mankind, such as the Socialist Party does, but on the workers against this bloody war, to win our fellow workers to carry out genuine workers actions against the war. Instead of parading with candles, the League for the Fourth International has from the outset called for mobilizing workers power against the war."

—Verbond voor de Vierde Internationale (League for the Fourth International), 28 February 2003

## February 1941 Strike...

*continued from page 23*

yards, Fokker aircraft factory and railway freight yards went out. The strike spread to the Zaanstreek, Hilversum, Haarlem, Utrecht and elsewhere. After a couple of days it was suppressed by massive repression, and an attempt by the CPN to organize a strike the next month fizzled. The Nazi occupation authorities responded by arresting more than 100 workers and others thought to be "ringleaders." Yet two years later, in April-May 1943, half a million Dutch workers again struck against the occupation regime, when the Germans threatened to intern all former Dutch soldiers. Coal miners in Limberg, Phillips electronics workers in Eindhoven, agricultural workers in Friesland stopped work. The Germans responded by shooting down almost 100 people in the streets; another 80 were executed after summary trials.

The February Strike did not stop the decimation of the Jewish population: Dutch police and the Marechaussee (military po-

lice) helped the SS round up thousands, holding them in the Westerbork concentration camp until they were shipped east. Of 120,000 Jews in Holland before the war, barely 20,000 managed to escape the Holocaust by obtaining false papers and going underground with the aid and protection of fellow workers and neighbors. But the February 1941 strike and April-May strikes of 1943 demonstrated the tremendous strength and courage of the working class fighting against the most overwhelming odds. These strike movements could have laid the basis for a workers uprising at the end of the war, but what was lacking was revolutionary leadership. Following the Stalinist line of support for "democratic" imperialism, the CPN pushed a nationalist anti-German policy, dropped the demand for immediate independence of Indonesia and chained the workers to the Dutch bourgeoisie through the popular-front Resistance Council (RVV), thus aiding the return of the monarchy. ■

## Defeat All the Imperialists...

*continued from page 20*

It is important to understand that the war on Iraq is also a war on working people in every imperialist country, and on the immigrant sector of the proletariat in particular. It is not only Bush who has pushed through police state measures against immigrants under cover of anti-Muslim hysteria. The bourgeois reactionary Chirac and the social democrat Schröder are equally increasing police repression of immigrants and asylum seekers, just as in the Netherlands the shared anti-immigrant policies of Balkenende and the "socialist" Bos are the basis on which they are negotiating for a rerun of the "Purple" coalition. The fight for *full citizenship rights for immigrants and their families*, against the scapegoating of refugees is inseparable from the mobilization of workers and the oppressed against the war, but it is dropped by the fake lefts in their frenzied search for an alliance with "anti-war" social-democratic and bourgeois forces.

The politics of class collaboration further means accepting the imperialists' self-appointed right to police the planet and ultimately accepts the lie that the imperialists are capable of "humanitarian" interventions. We stand for the defense of Iraq as we stand for the defense of all colonial and semi-colonial countries against imperialist domination, without giving one iota of political support to Saddam Hussein, the butcher of leftists, workers and Kurds. The imperialists are the greatest threat to the peoples of the world, eclipsing the havoc that small-time dictators like Hussein and Islamic fundamentalists like Bin Laden and the Taliban can accomplish.

We fight on a class basis against imperialist war. We fight for the Iraqi working class and toilers to topple Saddam Hussein. We fight for working people throughout the Near East to overthrow their rulers. We call in Israel and Palestine for an Arab-Hebrew workers revolution and a socialist federation of the Near East. We fight in every part of the world for internationalist socialist revolution. The only real way to fight the capitalist-imperialist system that produces the war is to build parties based on the program of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. And that is why we seek to forge Trotskyist parties in Europe, in the United States, throughout the world. ■



Infophoto



Italian trade unionists of the CGIL federation and antiwar activists stop NATO war train outside Vicenza, February 22. *Mobilize the power of labor – For class war against the imperialist war!*

## Blitzkrieg and Resistance...

*continued from page 18*

ternational, standing on the program of the Russian revolutionaries V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky, have insistently called to *defend Iraq* and *defeat the imperialists*, first and foremost U.S. imperialism. This poses a struggle going far beyond the battlefield in Iraq. In the months and weeks prior to the invasion, the LFI agitated for transport workers from the docks of the U.S. West Coast to European rail and port workers to “*hot cargo*” (*refuse to handle*) war materiel. With the invasion under way, *workers strikes against the war* are all the more urgently needed – not ritual work stoppages and a parade but mobilizing proletarian power against the imperialist war machine and the capitalist governments waging the war. We say: *the enemy is at home*. The bloody U.S. onslaught underscores that Iraq has the right to any weapons it requires for its defense. The crimes of the imperialist rulers, who have slaughtered *millions* from Vietnam, Korea and Indonesia to Latin America, far exceed those of Saddam Hussein against the workers, leftists and oppressed of Iraq (and Iran); indeed, many of his crimes were carried out at the U.S.’ behest at a time when Hussein was Washington’s flunkey.

In our October 2002 statement, we noted: “The fight to defeat the imperialist war drive must be waged not only in Iraq but internationally, in particular in the imperialist countries, notably the United States.” While many opponents of the war on Iraq denounced the American Empire, they did not oppose *imperialism*, and thus they looked for support to the United Nations and European imperialists. “Peace” movements in the United States, Europe and throughout the capitalist world similarly sought “popular front” alliances with bourgeois politi-

cians, such as Democratic Party “doves,” to ensure that the struggle against the war didn’t “get out of hand.” Yet all the *Sturm und Drang* at the UN did not stop Washington from launching its war. And as soon as the shooting began, the Democrats saluted the Republican commander-in-chief who seized the presidency in a barely disguised judicial coup, declaring they “support the troops.”

Both capitalist parties in the U.S. are war parties, and all the imperialists are warmongers. Whether or not they support this war they all supported the preceding war on Afghanistan and two wars on Yugoslavia (1995 and 1999). French president Chirac travels to Algeria pos-

ing as a champion of “peace” in Iraq while dispatching troops to protect French interests in neo-colonial Ivory Coast. To defeat this war, it is necessary to mobilize the power of the working class against the imperialist system. These days, some leftists and labor bureaucrats bandy about empty talk of a “general strike against the war,” by which they mean a ritual work stoppage and march. But you can’t stop imperialist war simply by folding your arms and parading. A real general strike, indeed any combative mobilization of proletarian power against the imperialist war, will quickly threaten the capitalist governments waging that war and pose the question of *which class will rule*. In fact, the governments of three of Bush’s satraps in his “coalition of the willing” – Tony Blair in Britain, Silvio Berlusconi in Italy and José María Aznar in Spain – are shaky and could be brought down through sharp class struggle. That would quickly lead to a struggle for power.

In the late 1930s, when the Japanese imperialists launched a war on China and the Italian imperialists invaded Ethiopia, the liberals and Stalinist and social-democratic reformists all looked to the impotent League of Nations, as they today look to the UN. Then as now, the Trotskyists have uniquely fought to defend the victims of the imperialist attacks, and to defeat the imperialists. While liberals tried to ward off the attack on Iraq by claiming that North Korea was the “real menace,” the LFI urgently calls for defense of the North Korean deformed workers state against imperialist nuclear blackmail and attack, warning that *the imperialists* are the menace to the working people and oppressed. To defeat the warmongers, we must build revolutionary workers parties in the struggle to reforge the Fourth International, fighting to defeat the imperialists and defend the semi-colonial countries and deformed workers states they seek to conquer. ■

## Imperialist War on the Home Front

# Oakland Cops Shoot at Longshore Workers And Antiwar Protesters

APRIL 7 – This morning, police launched a brutal assault against antiwar demonstrators and dock workers in the port of Oakland, California, firing on the crowd of more than 500 with shotguns and wounding a number of those present. Six longshore workers were treated by paramedics. The cops were shooting rubber bullets, wooden dowels and bean bag rounds, tossing concussion grenades and using “sting balls” which spray BB-size pellets and a cloud of tear gas. But while police spokesmen insist these are “non-lethal,” dramatic pictures of injured protesters show they can cause great damage. A business agent for the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), Trent Willis, said enraged workers walked out after the attack: “They shot my guys. We’re not going to work today.” ILWU Local 10 business agent Jack Heyman was arrested along with 35 protesters and port workers.

This shows starkly what imperialist war means on the home front: increasing police-state repression. The Oakland cop attack underlines that Washington’s invasion of Iraq is also a war on U.S. workers, minorities, immigrants, leftists and supporters of democratic rights. According to an AP dispatch, “Police were trying to clear protesters from an entrance to the docks when they opened fire and the longshoremen apparently were caught in the line of fire.” Longshore unionists told *The Internationalist* that, on the contrary, the police aimed directly at the dock workers. And this is no isolated incident. San Francisco cops arrested more than 2,400 protesters during antiwar marches from March 19 to 22. Moreover, today’s attack was defended by liberal Oakland mayor Jerry Brown, just as liberal SF mayor Willie Brown has backed his cossacks.

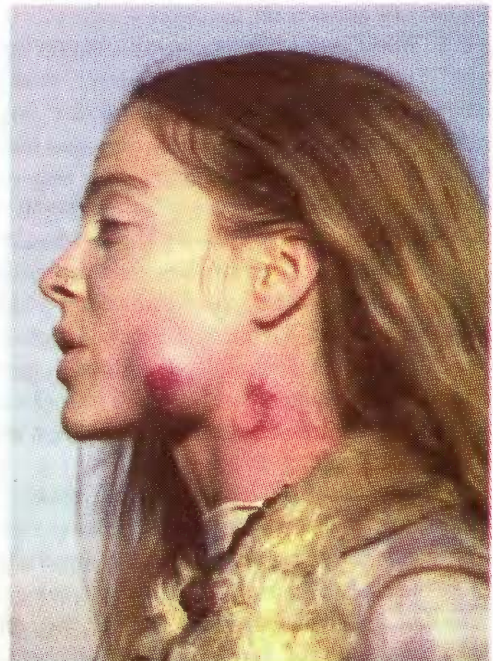
This is reportedly the first time police guns have been fired at protesters during recent demonstrations against the Iraq war, and the first time in a while that cops have shot at workers in the United States. But historical precedents come quickly to mind: the National Guard killing of four students at Kent State in Ohio in May 1970 as they protested the bombing of Cambodia, and the police murder of two striking longshoremen in San Francisco on “Bloody Thursday” in July 1934 that touched off a citywide general strike and was the key event in the founding of the ILWU. In fact, the use of murderous state repression against militant workers and opponents of imperialist war is standard operating procedure for the capitalist ruling class, and we will see more of it as the slaughter of the Iraqi people by the U.S. invaders intensifies. At the same time, brutal cop repression against a key sector of the working class could touch off some serious class struggle, including dock shutdowns against the racist police and the imperialist war.

**“Hot Cargo” War Materiel!  
For Workers Strikes Against the War!**



Tim Wimbome/Reuters

**Cop fires shotgun at antiwar protesters and longshoremen at the port of Oakland, April 7.**



Paul Sakuma/AP

**Demonstrator hit by police munitions during cop attack on antiwar protest at the Oakland docks, April 7.**

Paul Sakuma/AP



**Motorcycle cops confront demonstrators at April 7 antiwar protest on Oakland docks. Mobilize workers' power against U.S. imperialist invasion of Iraq. Hot-cargo war materiel!**

The Oakland police have always acted like an occupying army in this predominantly black and Hispanic city. It was in response to routine racist police brutality that Oakland became the birthplace of the Black Panther Party in the 1960s. Earlier this year, the city agreed to pay \$10 million in a suit against Oakland cops who beat suspects and planted drugs on innocent people. The Oakland port has long surpassed San Francisco's in economic importance, giving black, white, Latino and Asian longshore workers tremendous potential power, which under class-struggle leadership can put them at the head of the region's workers as well as the impoverished ghetto and barrio population. Today dock workers can play a leading role in sparking genuine struggle against imperialist war and racist repression, with reverberations around the globe.

While liberal Democrats wring their hands and beseech the government, this dramatic clash on the Oakland docks should drive home some hard truths about imperialist war. First, that there is no point in begging for "peace" from a government of war criminals who are turning Baghdad into a killing field in their drive to nail down U.S. imperialist hegemony. Appealing to the "conscience" and "morality" of the warmongers who run the United States is worse than futile. The second lesson is that these mass murderers must be *defeated*, by the only force that has the strength to bring the war machine to a halt, the international proletariat. The capitalist rulers in Washing-

ton understand this well. The very brutality of the crackdown on the Oakland docks shows how much they fear the power of the working class.

Yet the power of the working class requires revolutionary leadership to be effectively mobilized. The Internationalist Group has been calling, even before last fall, for workers action against the war on Iraq, which has never stopped since George Bush Sr.'s Gulf War of 1990-91. In particular, we have called on dock workers and rail workers to "hot cargo" (refuse to handle) war materiel, and for strikes against the war. While there have been some instances of this in Europe, notably in Italy (and by British train drivers), this has not

yet taken place in the United States. The ILWU has been on record against the Iraq war for some time now, as have the various Bay Area labor councils. What's needed now is not more paper motions but class-struggle action on the docks in solidarity with the victims of U.S. aggression. Bring out the power of the working class to defeat the bosses' war, in Iraq and "at home."

Today's demonstration on the Bay Area docks was called  
Tim Wimborne/Reuters



**Antiwar protester hit by police projectiles at port of Oakland, April 7.**

by the SF-based group, Direct Action to Stop the War, which focuses on various forms of civil disobedience. They called for a "community picket" of American President Lines (APL), headquartered in Oakland, which is a major carrier of war cargo to Iraq; and of Stevedoring Services of America (SSA), an outfit of professional strikebreakers, which has been awarded a \$4.8 million contract to operate the port of Umm Qasr in occupied Iraq. (SSA's big problem right now, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, 1 April, is that "there are almost no workers to unload ships.") While Oakland dock workers were being attacked by police, a score of antiwar activists sat down outside the New York headquarters of the Carlyle Group, a major war profiteer, whose board until recently included George Bush, Sr. and whose major investors included the bin Laden family of Saudi Arabia. NYPD riot cops arrested roughly 100 protesters and bystanders.

Direct Action demonstrators in Oakland carried signs declaring, "Shut

down the War Makers!" But how? Sit-ins are impotent against the armed fist of the capitalist state. Longshore workers, in contrast, have the power: send your cops against us, many said today, and we'll shut the port down! Yet the pro-capitalist bureaucracy that sits atop the unions does not want to take on the war makers and strikebreakers in Washington and Wall Street. The very reason for the existence of this privileged layer of labor misleaders is to conciliate exploited workers with their capitalist exploiters. While the ILWU votes anti-war resolutions, union tops under president Jim Spinosa have blocked efforts to stop the flow of war cargo, going out of their way to move military shipments during the bosses' lockout last October.

In the face of today's police attack, while seething longshoremen left the docks, ILWU spokesman Steve Stallone declared, "Our contract is that we are supposed to load those ships – and we have every intention of abiding by our contract." At a labor conference against union-busting last December, called in response to the government's use of a Taft-Hartley injunction ordering ILWU longshoremen back to work in October, Stallone blew up when an Internationalist Group speaker criticized him for boasting of loading war materiel during the lockout (see "Strike Against Taft-Hartley! Hot-Cargo War Materiel!" in *The Internationalist* No. 15, January-February 2003). A couple of days later, the Spinosa leadership rammed a sellout contract through a Coast Caucus of the ILWU longshore division. In contrast, many Bay Area dock workers sympathize with protesters against the war on Iraq. The ILWU drill team was prominent in a peace march of 10,000 in Oakland two days beforehand. But such peace parades, no matter how large, are politically bound to sectors of the capitalist (bourgeois) parties. Last Saturday, Democratic Congresswoman Barbara Lee was a featured speaker at the Oakland rally, sounding the "peace is patriotic" theme: "Jobs and housing are the real national security the United States needs, Lee said," reported the *Daily Californian* (7 April). Yet Congressional Democrats joined their Republican colleagues in voting massively for the war, for the \$78 billion supplementary war budget, for the U.S.A. Patriot Act intensifying internal repression. Democrat Bill Clinton bombed Baghdad in 1998. This is a bipartisan war of imperialist aggression: to defeat the war and the warmongers, it is necessary to break from the twin parties of American capitalism and build a revolutionary workers party.

In fact, the Democrats have been the main party pushing the Maritime Security Act (MSA), a draconian piece of legislation designed to militarize the docks and in the process gut the powerful longshore unions. Hard-won union gains that are key to the strength and very existence of the ILWU, like the union hiring hall, are targeted by the maritime bosses. While outfits like SSA set up their lucrative operations in U.S.-occupied Iraq, as the Nazis' Todt Organization did in German-occupied Europe in World War II, they offer their scab-herding services to U.S. bosses. But a determined class-struggle offensive by West Coast longshoremen could bust these union-busters, turn anti-labor laws like Taft-Hartley and

the MSA into dead letters, and strike a damaging blow against the imperialist war machine.

In recent weeks, after the dramatic actions by British and Italian railroad workers in January and February, various reformists and centrists have made limp calls for stopping (or more frequently, protesting) the transport of war materiel. But these calls lead nowhere: they only want to add a militant-sounding "labor" component to the "popular-front" peace coalitions and have no intention of challenging the capitalist system. In contrast to the empty calls of these class-collaborators and conciliators, the Internationalist Group and the League for the Fourth International, have sought to implement our calls for mobilizing working-class power against the war. The February 21 worker/immigrant demonstration initiated by the LFI at the Rotterdam docks in the Netherlands is a modest example.

In Mexico, our comrades of the Grupo Internacionalista have fought for strike action against the war, holding a protest rally March 27 with unionists of the Metropolitan University (UAM) in Mexico City on the slogans "Defeat the Imperialists! Defend Iraq! For Workers Actions Against the Imperialist War!" They GI also led the shutdown of a secondary school connected to the National University (UNAM), and led delegations of 30 students each from the UNAM which visited electrical and oil workers' job sites to talk about the need for strike action against the war.

In Brazil, the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil is agitating to include the call to defeat the imperialist war among demands of a public workers strike in the state of Rio de Janeiro, and in a national work stoppage against the anti-worker "pension reform" ordered by the popular-front government of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva at the insistence of the International Monetary Fund. At the initiative of the LQB, the Rio teachers union, SEPE, has called a statewide work stoppage for April 23 demanding freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal, the radical black journalist and class-war prisoner, who has raised his powerful voice from death row against the war on Iraq.

In the U.S., the IG has intervened on ILWU picket lines (during last October's lockout) and in meetings against the Taft-Hartley slave labor law and the war, insisting on the need to break with the capitalist parties, ditch class collaboration and forge an internationalist workers party that can lead the class struggle to victory. At this moment, building active solidarity with the West Coast longshoremen, once again in the crosshairs of the war makers and strikebreakers, and fighting for workers' action to stop the war cargo on the docks, is a key step in waging class war against the imperialist war.

*Drop all charges against the Oakland longshore and antiwar protesters!*

*Rip up anti-union laws and fight war repression through workers action! For workers defense against anti-labor attacks!*

*"Hot cargo" all war materiel! Strike against the imperialist war!*

*Break with the Democrats, dump the bureaucrats, forge a class-struggle workers party! ■*

Declaration of the  
**Rebolusyonyong Grupo ng mga Komunista**  
 on the War on Iraq

# Defeat U.S. Imperialism! Defend Iraq!

**Defeat the Aggression of U.S. Imperialism and the Local Bourgeoisie  
 on the Working Class and the Moro People in the Philippines!**  
*(Combat Imperialist War With Class War Through Proletarian Actions!)*

We print here the March 24 statement by the Rebolusyonyong Grupo ng mga Komunista (Revolutionary Communist Group) in the Philippines, which sympathizes with the League for the Fourth International.

The world is pushed again by U.S. imperialism, the so-called sole superpower of the world, into another war of aggression, which according to its own officials, will see the use of all kinds of powerful weapons (including the MOAB or “mother of all bombs,” that is the world’s most powerful conventional bomb, and depleted uranium bullets which causes cancer) which the U.S. arsenal has against Iraq. An imperialist war of aggression that could push mankind toward a new world war that is bloodier, and bigger than the past two World Wars and into nuclear brinkmanship. At the same time, under the guise of the Balikatan 03-1 “military exercises”, U.S. aggression troops along with Philippine troops have started military operations here in the Philippines as the “second front” of the “global war against terror”.

The Rebolusyonyong Grupo ng mga Komunista (RGK), along with other genuine revolutionary-Trotskyist groups in other countries, are calling for the defeat of the imperialist war of aggression by the U.S. in Iraq and to defend Iraq. The RGK for its part is calling for the defeat of the military operations that the U.S. and Philippine troops are waging in Mindanao and in other parts of the Philippines, and to defend the MILF and CPP-NPA which are now being targeted by these military operations under the Balikatan 03-1 exercises through workers action. The RGK is calling on the working people to defend themselves against the reactionary attacks from the Balikatan 03-1 military aggression.

## Aggression in Iraq Part 2:

### Nailing Down the Hegemony of U.S. Imperialism

Like the aggression in Serbia in 1996 by U.S. and its imperialist gang, under the auspices of the United Nations, the main reason for the imperialist invasion of Iraq is NOT to fight the so-called “axis of evil”, or simply because of oil (incidentally, only 12% of all the U.S. oil supply comes from the Middle East), or the “Weapons of Mass Destruction” for which the U.S. supplied the “seed” materials and technology to Hussein during the Iraq-Iran War, and especially, not just about Bush’s “obsession” to rid Hussein. Rather, *its aim is to once again force the whole world to accept and recognize the political,*

*military, and economic hegemony of U.S. imperialism, and that all who oppose or are planning to oppose this hegemony will be crushed and dealt with!*

The point of view by the U.S. bourgeoisie is now reflected by its new military doctrine of “pre-emptive strike” by the Bush gang, which goes back to the paper – “Defense Strategies for the 1990’s” written by then Secretary of War Dick Cheney. This document calls for preventing a challenge by all the perceived enemies of U.S. imperialism that includes: competitor imperialist countries (France, Germany and Russia) that did not want to join a U.S. dominated war on Iraq, the remaining deformed workers states of China, North Korea, Cuba and Vietnam and all movements and organizations that are “anti-U.S.” and anti-imperialist. This doctrine was implemented right after the collapse of the degenerated workers state of the Soviet Union in 1992 (which served as a counter-balance against imperialist ambitions of the U.S. for more than 70 years), and the “death of communism” triumphalism that paved the way for the new role of U.S. imperialism, that of the only superpower in the world.

Iraq, which is being run by a bourgeois-nationalist regime that is posturing as the leader of the Arab countries against Israel and the U.S., is the country that will be made an example of by the U.S. (after failing in 1991) to the whole world of how a country will be flattened and crushed if it does not follow the sole superpower-imperialist in the world, the U.S. That is why even if the other imperialist competitors (Germany, France and Russia) did not join the planned invasion, and even if the U.S. could only build a “coalition of the willing” (unlike in 1991) – including the “super-puppet” Philippine bourgeoisie now headed by Arroyo – it will still attack and crush Iraq just to show its force to the whole world.

As revolutionary Trotskyists, we call to defend Iraq against this lop-sided imperialist war that the U.S. is waging. As Trotsky said in what we see as a parallel condition during the 1930’s, when Japan invaded China:

“In the Far East we have a classic example. China is a semi-colonial country which Japan is transforming under our very eyes, into a colonial country. Japan’s struggle is imperialist and reactionary. China’s struggle is emancipatory and progressive.”

–Leon Trotsky, “On the Sino-Japanese War” (23 September 1937)



**U.S. troops patrolling on Basilan Island, June 2002, during visit by top Pentagon official Paul Wolfowitz.**

He also wrote that:

“The working class movement cannot remain neutral between those who wish to enslave and those who are enslaved. The working class movement in China, Japan, and in the entire world must oppose with all its strength the Japanese imperialist bandits and support the people of China and their army.”

– Leon Trotsky, “Pacifism and China” (25 September 1937)

It is very clear who is the enslaver and which is the country that is to be enslaved in the war of the U.S. against Iraq. That is why we call: **DEFEAT U.S. IMPERIALISM!! DEFEND IRAQ!!**

### **Balikatan 03-1: Aggression on the Working Class and Peoples of the Philippines by U.S. Imperialism and the Philippine Bourgeoisie**

On the other hand, under the guise of Balikatan “military exercises” 03-1, the war-minded militarists in White House are pursuing their “second front” of military aggression here in the Philippines by “assisting and training” the blood-drenched Philippine troops in “counter-terrorist techniques” which amounts to joint military operations against so-called terrorist groups. Among those that are to be pursued upon the recommendation of the warmongers in Malakanyang, are the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), and the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its armed wing the New Peoples Army (NPA).

By citing the MILF and the CPP-NPA along with the ASG (which was created originally by the “psychological terrorist” Intelligence Service – Armed Forces of the Philippines or ISAFP as a counter organization against the Moro National Liberation Front, MILF, and NPA) as “terrorist” groups, the bourgeois state that is headed presently by Arroyo, has now unsheathed its saber to threaten, harass, attack, and crush all the groups, organizations and supporters. *If for now, these are the groups that the bourgeois state is openly attacking, rest assured that the attacks would spread to other groups that are fighting the bourgeois state and imperialist domination. In the end, these attacks will focus on the basic organizations of*

*workers, peasants, youth, women, the Moro people and other tribal minorities.*

That is why even though the program of the CPP-NPA are very different – this group is a Maoist organization that still pushes the bankrupt theory of “socialism in one country” and the nationalist, anti working class “national-democratic revolution” – from that of the RGK (proletarian internationalism, worldwide socialist revolution/workers revolutions and permanent revolution), we are still calling to defend them. On the other hand, we are calling to defend the MILF, although we do not support its politics and its call to establish an Islamic State; instead, we recognize the MILF as one of the groups that fights for an *independent Mindanao as the right of the Moro peoples that were colonized by U.S. imperialism and the Philippine bourgeoisie.*

*The “war on terrorism” and the war against Iraq by the bourgeois state now headed by the warmonger Arroyo and U.S. imperialism now headed by the gangster Bush is only one of the keys to open the doors of the new class war that is being waged against the working class and the peoples of the Philippines and the whole world. THE ENEMY OF THE WORKING CLASS AND THE PEOPLES OF THE WORLD IS NOT IRAQ, BUT THE BIGGEST TERRORIST FORCE IN THE WORLD TODAY, U.S. IMPERIALISM!* In the Philippines, the enemy of the working class, peasants and all the other sectors is U.S. imperialism and the Philippine bourgeois class that holds power for over seventy years now after being granted semi-colonial “independence” by its U.S. imperialist master in 1935, and continually supported every action, decision and move its imperialist master makes.

### **Combat Imperialist War with Class War Through Proletarian-Centered Actions: Working Class’ Answer to the Imperialist Aggression in Iraq and the War Against the Working Class and the Peoples of the Philippines**

As proletarian internationalists, we must fight this new war of aggression by the U.S. and its puppet bourgeois class now headed by Arroyo, but what will be the right program to fight it?

To date, the most popular program in the struggle against this war is through “peace” and “anti-war” mobilizations calling on the bourgeoisie and the U.S. imperialists to stop the war and to talk through the differences through peaceful means and give way to the U.N. inspectors (which is actually an intelligence gathering operation by the C.I.A.) and the U.N. itself to intervene. This kind of program is currently pushed by almost all the left posturing groups (from the Stalinists, Maoists, pseudo-Trotskyists to the outright reformists) not only here in the Philippines but even in other countries. *But this kind of program is actually begging the local bourgeoisie and imperialism to be “compassionate” or “to have a human face”, that is, in essence, begging to slow down the pacing of attacks, suppressions and war on the working class and the peoples of the world. This is not compatible with the inherent*

*character of the ruling bourgeois class and imperialism that is pushed to compete and to dominate.*

The “peace” and “anti-war” program of left posturing groups is actually binding the working class and the peoples of the world to imperialism and the local bourgeois class. This kind of program also pushes the working class, peasants and other sectors especially the youth who are fed up with war and aggression by the U.S. and the local ruling class to the illusions of reformism. Reformism poisons the consciousness of the working class, its resolve to struggle against the capitalist system, and to struggle for socialism and workers revolution.

The RGK along with other genuine revolutionary Trotskyists in other countries calls for class war against this imperialist war of aggression in Iraq through working class centered actions that can lead to workers revolutions. We are also firm in our *resolve that only through workers revolutions can the war of aggression of the U.S. and other imperialist countries and its local ruling class be stopped*, and not through begging the bourgeoisie and imperialism to stop the war as the left-posturing groups are doing.

This class war centered on proletarian actions is calling on the working class to mobilize its inherent power – the power to stop the rolling of production – and is *independent of any strains of the politics of the bourgeoisie*. This includes: refusal to transport arms bound to Iraq, calling to stand for the military defense of Iraq and defeat the imperialist war of the U.S. in Iraq, and calling for workers strikes to fight the war of aggression.

In the Philippines where the local bourgeois class is tied by a thousand strands to imperialism, the RGK calls on the working class to:

- Call for the defeat of U.S. imperialism’s war of aggression and defend Iraq;

- Call for the defeat of the new military campaign of suppression by the bourgeois state and intervention of foreign troops in Mindanao and other parts of the Philippines and for the defense of the struggle against the colonialist military occupation;

- Recognize the right for independence from the Philippine state of the Moro people which has been continually suppressed under Spanish rule, by the U.S. colonizing troops who carried out horrendous mass murder (such as the 1906 Jolo massacre) when they arrived over 100 years ago, and under the semicolonial Philippine state;

- For a socialist federation of workers states of Southeast Asia which could enable the genuine emancipation of myriad of peoples and national minorities of the region;

- Fight the general clamp down on security by the state through workers actions and for working-class centered self-defense to thwart the attacks of the bourgeoisie and the state.

### **Genuine Revolutionary Party: Key to the Working Class in its Struggle to Free Itself from the Fake Left and the Bourgeois Class**

It is important that all the actions and calls of the working class should be independent from the “anti-war” and “peace” movements by bourgeois politicians and the bourgeoisie itself

since they are the class enemy. “Anti-war” groups of bourgeois politicians or capitalists (national bourgeoisie / liberal bourgeoisie / bourgeois opposition), are only against the fast and aggressive way that the war is going. It is also important to fight the schemes of the Stalinists, Maoists and other fake left groups to impose bourgeois “anti-war” politics on the working class because this only leads the working class to the poison and illusions of reformism. Such “popular fronts” only lead to defeat for the working people, as occurred in the “people’s power” movements of EDSA1 [1986, which brought down Ferdinand Marcos and replaced him with Cory Aquino as president]\* and EDSA2 [2001, which replaced Joseph Estrada with Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as president]. As opposed to class-collaborationist anti-war coalitions, the RGK calls for a fight against imperialist war through the mobilization of the proletariat on a revolutionary class program.

*That is why it is important to build a genuine revolutionary party of the working class* to ensure that the struggle of the class will be directed towards independent actions and fighting imperialism and the local bourgeois class. A genuine revolutionary party will make sure that all the actions of the working class will be independent of any bourgeois and fake left actions and calls for “peace”. *This will also enable the working class to stand-up for its class and struggle to wrest political power from the bourgeoisie and throw off the yoke of imperialism here in the Philippines* and not just be a part of the “bourgeois / national democratic” revolution where the working class is the “horse” and the bourgeoisie is the “jockey” (like what happened to EDSA1 and EDSA2).

A genuine revolutionary-internationalist party of the working class will make sure that the struggle for the victory of the working class not just be limited in the Philippines but also in other countries especially in the imperialist countries, so that *once and for all, the war between countries, the aggressions of imperialism and its local puppet ruling class against the working class and the peoples of the world, the continuous hunger and deprivation, the wanton destruction of the environment, and the 300 years of exploitation and oppression of capitalism on the working class and mankind will finally stop*. The RGK as part of the international Trotskyist movement is struggling towards this. Be a part of this historical struggle. **JOIN US!!**

*Defeat U.S. Imperialism!! Defend Iraq!!*

*For Class War Centered on Proletarian Actions Against the Imperialist War!!*

*Defeat the Military Suppression of the Working Class and the Moro Peoples in the Philippines!! Defend the CPP-NPA and the MILF and the Struggle Against Colonialist Military Occupation!!*

*For New October Revolutions of 1917 in the New Millennium!!*

*For a Genuine Revolutionary-Trotskyist Party in the Philippines, Part of the Reforged 4th International of Leon Trotsky!!*

**Rebolusyonaryong Grupo ng mga Komunista**  
March 24, 2003

For Class War Centered on Proletarian Actions Against U.S./British Imperialist Occupation of Iraq And Aggression by U.S. and Philippine Bourgeoisie Against the Working People!

## Break From the Popular Front of the Fake Left!

May Day Statement of the **Rebolusyonaryong Grupo ng mga Komunista (Philippines)**

The Rebolusyonaryong Grupo ng mga Komunista, along with the League for the Fourth International/Internationalist Group, is calling on the working class here in the Philippines and the whole world to combat the imperialist occupation of Iraq by the U.S. and Britain and the imperialist aggression of U.S. military troops in the Philippines. We call for class war centered on proletarian actions that will stop capitalist industry and the imperialist war and aggression, rather than symbolic actions to protest the war, such as are being peddled by left-posturing organizations and parties through the building of a "People's Front"/"Democratic Front". We also call upon the working class to fight for its political independence against the bourgeoisie and to lead the struggle against moves and actions of the Philippine bourgeoisie, currently headed by [President Gloria] Arroyo, which seeks to further tighten its rule here in the Philippines.

It is clear in the recent campaign against the U.S. imperialist war in Iraq that the rallies and protests by Maoists/Stalinists and other fake left – which formed various "Popular Front"/"People's Front" coalitions that included opportunists and bourgeois politicians – have not been effective in combating, much less stopping the imperialist war (which is actually an inherent characteristic of imperialism). It has not even prevented the entry of the mercenary troops of the U.S. imperialists to "aid" the blood-drenched AFP [Armed Forces of the Philippines] to attack and quash all groups that are fighting imperialism and the Christian-chauvinist Philippine bourgeoisie. And even if they repeatedly rally at EDSA [the major avenue near the presidential palace] to protest the enacting of the Anti-Terrorism Bill, the bourgeois state will always find ways to strengthen the grip of its rule over the working class, peasant, women, youth, the Moro peoples and the other tribal minorities. What the "popular front" formed by the fake left (including Maoists, Stalinists, social democrats, pseudo-Trotskyists, and other variants) carried out were only symbolical protests that did not, even a bit, stop the raging bull-like war machine of the U.S. and British imperialists nor the actions and attacks of the "super-puppet" Philippine bourgeoisie headed by Arroyo.

On the other hand, the left-posturing "underground" parties of the Maoist Communist Party of the Philippines/New Peoples Army (CPP/NPA) and the Marxist-Leninist Party of the Philippines/Rebolusyonaryong Hukbong Bayan (Revolutionary Peoples Army) that are calling for "People's Protracted War" and

"Class War Against the Imperialist Occupation" will also lead to a merry-go-round ride. Their concept of war does not recognize the real contradictions in class struggle and they see victory solely in terms of the military strength between the guerilla army and the AFP. Secondly, these Maoist parties continue to pursue the bankrupt theory of "guerillaism" – launching military actions against individual targets that do not bring down the rule of the bourgeoisie and lead to the seizure of political power by the working class. In addition, the war that these Maoists carry out is also based on the strength and extent of the "underground peoples front" – including the "national bourgeoisie," the class enemy of the working class – to fight imperialism and their own bourgeois class. This has been repeatedly proven a dead-end historically (Indonesia 1965, Chile 1973, and other bloody defeats) and would only result in the bourgeoisie wresting political power from the working class and in the end the destruction of workers organizations and parties.

This is also the essence of the program of the other "underground" Stalinist parties who try hard to inculcate into the consciousness of the working class the Menshevik theory that the main struggle of the class is "for democracy" or "for the neutralization of the local government of the bourgeoisie." Like the Maoists, these underground Stalinist parties also pursue the anti-Leninist concept of "guerrillaism." The only difference between them is their tactics on how to "smoothly" insert the bankrupt theories of Stalin so that it will not be the same terminology as the Maoists. Like the Maoists also, these underground Stalinist parties that pretend to be for the working class also ally with the enemy of the working class, the so-called "progressive"/"liberal" bourgeoisie to win the "democratic" struggle of the class. That is why the workers, peasants, women, youth and other sectors that are led or influenced by these parties have illusions that they can "pressure" the bourgeoisie and its state to give some of what they call partial demands of the "democratic demands." In the end, this program of the "labour," "socialist," "Leninist" parties eventually leads the working class towards reformism. Reformism slowly poisons the class, causing it to struggle for only the betterment of exploitation under capitalism, and to delay the struggle for workers revolution and socialism.

*These so-called "Popular Fronts," "Peoples Fronts" and "Democratic Fronts" do not and will not help in the struggle of the working class in its struggle against the bourgeoisie. Instead, they actually hinder the revolutionary struggle of the working class for the seizure of political power and for socialism. That is why it is important for the working class and the*



Bullit Marquez/AP



**Manila police attack antiwar protesters outside U.S. embassy, 28 January 2003.**

*whole of the working people to break from all forms of "Popular Fronts" – which the entire fake left continue to pursue – to ensure victory in the revolutionary struggle against imperialism and the bourgeois state headed by the "super-puppet" Arroyo.*

The working class, because of its nature of being present in every country that has industry, not having private property, and its social and economic role in the mode of production, is the only class that has the capacity to combat the class war of imperialism and the bourgeoisie. Through the leadership of its most advanced sector, the organized workers movement, it can stop and bring the whole capitalist system to its knees and combat the war waged by imperialism as well as the attacks and aggression of the Philippine bourgeoisie. What's needed are militant actions like work stoppages to protest the war and aggression, as well as refusal to handle war materiel bound for U.S. and British troops, including the troops of the "Coalition of the Willing," and strikes against the imperialists' occupation/war of rape and plunder in Iraq as well as against the aggression in the Philippines by mercenary U.S. troops and the Philippine bourgeoisie. These actions can be key in stopping the on-rushing train of aggression of the local and international bourgeoisies if the working class will fight for its leadership and its political independence from the "liberal" or "national" bourgeoisie that is also the class enemy

and from the posturing "communist" leaders and other variants of the fake left.

That is why it is important to struggle to build a genuine revolutionary party of the working class that will lead the working class and all the working people in the struggle for the political independence of the class. This is not reflected by the posturing leaders and parties of the Maoists, Stalinists, and all the other variants of the fake left. *A genuine revolutionary party of the working class must be patterned on the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky* – that led the victory of the first workers state created through workers revolution in 1917. Such a party will fight consistently to ensure that the struggle of the class and the working masses is directed not only against the imperialist war but also in leading the working class in the struggle to break from all variants of "popular fronts," a struggle for political independence and for workers revolution and the seizure of political power from the bourgeoisie.

The RGK and the LFI are fighting to build this party. We also call for the reforging of the Fourth International that was founded by Leon Trotsky in 1938, the world party of the international socialist revolution, to win new October Revolutions - the only successful workers revolution - in the 21st century. **JOIN THE RGK!!** The RGK and LFI are fighting for revolutionary regroupment of conscious revolutionary workers, women and youth that clearly see the bankruptcy of the organizations and parties that continue to reflect the theory and practice of Stalin, Mao and revisionist social democracy. We seek to intervene in the struggles of the working class and in the decisive moments of the class struggle. You can contact the RGK through e-mail at: [rgk7@hotmail.com](mailto:rgk7@hotmail.com). You can also contact the IG/LFI at [internationalistgroup@msn.com](mailto:internationalistgroup@msn.com).

**WORKING-CLASS, FIGHT FOR YOUR POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE FROM THE BOURGEOISIE AND ALL KINDS OF POPULAR FRONTS!!**

**FOR NEW OCTOBER REVOLUTIONS!!**

**FOR THE BUILDING OF A GENUINE REVOLUTIONARY-TROTSKYIST PARTY IN THE PHILIPPINES AS PART OF THE REFORGED FOURTH INTERNATIONAL!!**

**REBOLUSYONARYONG GRUPONG MGA KOMUNISTA**

April 30, 2003

### **Leon Trotsky on Defense of Semi-Colonial Countries Against Imperialist Attack**

"We must carefully distinguish between the imperialist countries and the backward countries, colonial and semicolonial. The attitude of the working class organizations in and toward these two groupings cannot be the same. The present war between China and Japan is a classic example. It is absolutely indisputable that, on the part of Japan, it is a war of rapine and that, on the part of China, it is a war of national defense...."

"The working class movement cannot remain neutral in a struggle between those who wish to enslave and those who are enslaved. The working class movement in China, Japan, and in the entire world must oppose with all its strength the Japanese imperialist bandits and support the people of China and their army."

"This does not at all suppose a blind confidence in the Chinese government and in Chiang Kai-shek. In the past, above all in 1925-27, the general was already dependent upon working class organizations in his military struggle against the Chinese generals of the North, agents of foreign imperialism. In the end, he crushed the working class organizations by armed force in 1927-28. We must learn the lessons from this experience which resulted from the fatal policies of the Comintern. In participating in the legitimate and progressive national war against Japanese invasion, the working class organizations must preserve their entire *political independence* of the Chiang Kai-shek government."

—Leon Trotsky, "Pacifism and China" (25 September 1937)

## Defeat Colonial Occupation...

*continued from page 7*

claiming to have the imprimatur of clerical authorities in the Shiite religious center of Najaf. The U.S. is trying to buy some of them, Iran is backing others. Any real fight against imperialism and the new colonizers will require a *class* struggle uniting the working people and oppressed of all the ethnic and religious/communal groups against the bankrupt remnants of the Baath, the religious reactionaries who would take the country back to the dark ages of medieval obscurantism, and the blood-drenched imperialist overlords who are now laying waste to Iraq after bombing and bleeding it for years.

### Fight for Workers Revolution in Iraq and a Socialist Federation of the Near East

Inside Iraq, the most aggressive political forces have been those of religious reaction. In southern cities, liquor store owners have been murdered. Female university students in Basra are harassed if they do not wear the Islamic *hijab* to cover their hair. Women in the conservative city of Najaf are now afraid to venture into the streets without the head-to-toe black *abbaya*. Rumsfeld declares that an Islamic fundamentalist regime in Iraq "isn't going to happen." Christian fundamentalist missionaries including Franklin Graham, who swore in George Bush II as president and declared Islam "a very evil and wicked religion," are gearing up to evangelize the "heathen" in Iraq, which could produce a Muslim backlash against the "infidels." Yet U.S. rulers, who claimed to support women's rights in Afghanistan, are financing Shiite clerics in Baghdad who denounce women for wearing cosmetics and Western clothing. From the 1950s on, the United States has had a conscious policy of supporting Islamic fundamentalists against radical Arab nationalists and Communists. The financing of the anti-Soviet mujahedin in Afghanistan by the Democratic Carter and Republican Reagan administrations was nothing new.

Today, there is broad opposition to the U.S.' presence from Shiites and Sunnis, Islamicists and Iraqi and Arab nationalists. *Fatwas* (religious edicts) from Washington bigwigs about not permitting an Islamic clerical regime may expose the "democratic" pretenses of the Bush regime. But U.S. rulers would dearly like some kind of Islamic front for their colonial rule. In any case, liberation of the working men and women of Iraq from their martyrdom cannot come through a political coalition with such arch-reactionaries. This was dramatically demonstrated at the time of the 1979 downfall of the shah of Iran. The vast majority of the Iranian left joined with the ayatollah Khomeini and the mullahs in a common front against the hated, U.S.-backed shah. On the morrow of their "victory," the Khomeinists turned on their "allies," stoning unveiled women, jailing thousands of leftists, hanging legions of Communists and mercilessly persecuting homosexuals, Zoroastrians, Kurds and other non-Farsi speakers. What was and is still needed in Iran, and is urgently needed in Iraq today, is an authentic communist party based on the Trotskyist program of permanent revolution, which intransigently fights against the imperialist

invaders and all the domestic reactionaries, from Hussein to the Islamic fundamentalists.

The Iraqi Communist Party was the sole political force which historically had significant support among the Kurds, Sunni and Shiite Arabs, as well as among Assyrian Christian and Jewish minorities. Yet its Stalinist program of "revolution in stages," condemned the ICP to decimation as it vainly sought to ally with one bourgeois force after another, from nationalist colonel Karim Qasim to the Baath party of Saddam Hussein. A recent UPI dispatch detailed how Hussein had long been a CIA "asset," going back to when he was part of a CIA assassination squad that tried to murder Qasim in 1959 in retaliation for his overtures to the Soviet Union. Qasim arrested the ICP leaders and persecuted party members. Later when the Baath party came to power, in a 1963 coup sanctioned by U.S. president Kennedy, Hussein immediately began hunting down Communists. The UPI reported:

"The CIA provided the submachine gun-toting Iraqi National Guardsmen with lists of suspected communists who were then jailed, interrogated, and summarily gunned down, according to former U.S. intelligence officials with intimate knowledge of the executions....

"A former senior U.S. State Department official told UPI: 'We were frankly glad to be rid of them. You ask that they get a fair trial? You have to be kidding. This was serious business.'

"A former senior CIA official said: 'It was a bit like the mysterious killings of Iran's communists just after Ayatollah Khomeini came to power in 1979. All 4,000 of his communists suddenly got killed'."

Yet despite the 1963 massacre of Communists, the ICP later accepted Hussein's offer to join a "national unity" government, only to be hit again by bloody repression.

The Iraqi CP kept repeating the bloody experience of the Chinese Communists, who on Stalin's orders they remained in coalition with the nationalist Kuomintang even as KMT leader Chiang Kai-shek was massacring them in Shanghai in 1927. Today, the imperialist media compare Hussein to Stalin, but his Baath regime more closely resembled the Kuomintang, whose murderous methods, paramilitary organization and nationalist anti-Communist political line (including cooperating with the imperialists) he imitated. Following the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s, in which the ICP was initially neutral and later split, and the 1991 Gulf War, the remnants of this once-strong party became part of the "Iraqi National Congress," a front set up and paid by the CIA. Instead of sidling up to Hussein, this put them in league with U.S. imperialism, Shiite Islamic fundamentalists and crooks like Chalabi! In the months leading up to the invasion, the ICP sought to hide its unsavory connections by joining peace demonstrations in London and elsewhere.

On the day the invasion was launched, the ICP appealed to UN secretary general Kofi Annan to end the war. Yet when U.S. troops took Baghdad, the ICP issued an April 10 statement declaring that "the fall of the hated dictator is greeted," while expressing pious hopes that the war would quickly end. At the same time they pretend to oppose the occupation, these "Communists" declared that "we hold the United States and Great

Britain, as occupying powers, fully responsible for safeguarding the lives and property of the Iraqi people." What hypocrisy! Genuine communists would fight to drive out the imperialists, not call on them to guarantee the property of Iraqi capitalists. The editorial of the ICP newspaper, *Tareeq Al-Sha'ab* (April 2003), called for an "interim patriotic and democratic coalition government," preceded by a United Nations administration of the country. So once again they call for a "democratic" (bourgeois) regime supervised by the UN tool of imperialist rule! The ICP are nothing but puppets of imperialism.

The Worker Communist Party of Iraq (WCPI) has a line to the left of the ICP. The WCPI did not join U.S. imperialism's Iraqi puppet "national congress," and it has sharply denounced the threat of Islamic fundamentalism. But in practical terms, their policies are similar. Like the ICP, the WCPI looked to building the popular-front "peace" movement in the West, complaining only that antiwar demonstrations in London included Islamic fundamentalist speakers. (What about the presence of bourgeois imperialist politicians?) The WCPI statement on the fall of the "fascist Baath regime" calls to "build a socialist republic by establishing the authority of masses' councils." But instead of calling for a regime based on workers councils, leading the peasantry and other oppressed sectors, a May Day speech by WCPI leader Rebwar Ahmad in Kirkuk explains that "toilers and progressive people in different neighborhoods should immediately form their own councils." This amounts to an appeal for a class-collaborationist "popular front" with "progressive" bourgeois elements, as in the antiwar movement in the West.

In an analysis of the present "complex and intricate" situation by WCPI spokesman Azar Majedi, under the heading "What is to be done?" it declares: "The best practical demand at present is the withdrawal of American and British forces and the intervention of the United Nations." Fight for a "socialist republic" through UN intervention?! This is bringing in the Stalinist concept of a "revolution in stages" by the back door. Thus in practice, both the Iraqi Communist Party and Workers Communist Party oriented toward building the popular-front "peace" movement, and both call today for the UN to take over in Iraq. Moreover, neither the ICP nor the WCPI fought to defend Iraq from the imperialist attack or to defeat imperialism. Instead of calling for determined resistance to the invaders – for *revolutionary war* against the imperialists that would also sweep away the Baath regime – they intoned platitudes about peace and stood by as the colonialists went about destroying Iraq. Indeed, the WCPI's labeling of the Hussein regime as "fascist" is its political excuse for allying with other bourgeois forces against it. In an exchange with the Internationalist Group at an antiwar march in New York City last December, WCPI supporters made clear that their objection was to the war and sanctions, not to political blocs with capitalist elements or appeals to imperialism.

The WCPI criticizes the British Socialist Workers Party of the late Tony Cliff for hobnobbing with Islamic fundamentalists, which directly threatens women in Iraq today. Indeed, when the issue of women's rights was acutely posed in the 1980s battle over Afghanistan, the anti-Soviet Cliffites hailed the U.S.-backed

*mujahedin* while Trotskyists hailed the Soviet Army intervention against the CIA's "holy warriors" who killed women teachers and imprisoned Afghan women in shrouds. Cliff & Co. even gave a "theoretical" justification for their support to Islamic fundamentalism, in an essay by Chris Harman, "The Prophet and the Proletariat" (*International Socialism*, Autumn 1994). The Trotskyists defended the bureaucratically degenerated Soviet workers state against imperialism, whereas the Cliffites labeled the USSR "state capitalist" and refused to defend it, thus siding with imperialism. (Similarly, the WCPI considers the Soviet Union under Stalin and his heirs to be a "state-ist and managed" form of "capitalist national economy.") And we point out that in no capitalist country of the region has the battle to free women from the veil been won as it was in Soviet Central Asia, despite Stalin's bureaucratic methods. From Afghanistan yesterday to Iraq today, the "Russian question" is key.

The struggle against Islamic fundamentalism, the fight for the liberation of women, the achievement of the emancipation of the Kurdish people are not possible under the rule of the bourgeoisie or the supervision of the UN. The Islamists feed off the desperation and abject poverty of the masses of the Near East and the obscurantism sponsored by the oil-rich reactionary regimes installed by the imperialists. Iraqi women will not be free until workers rule sweeps away the Islamic reactionaries and the bourgeois nationalists who conciliate them, establishing a socialist economy which lays the basis for genuine emancipation. The Kurdish people will not be united unless bourgeois rule is overthrown in all of the several capitalist states which oppress them. This can only come about by joining the myriad peoples, nationalities and ethnic groups in a common struggle for workers revolution, for a socialist federation of the entire region, including centrally a fight for Arab/Hebrew workers revolution in Palestine.

Under the bourgeoisie, Iraq – a country cobbled together by the British colonialists from several disparate regions – can only be ruled by a ruthless regime, whether nationalists like the Baath or the puppet monarchy, doing the bidding of their imperialist masters. When they slip the leash, as Qasim and Hussein did in different ways, they are eventually crushed while the working masses pay the price in bloody and years of starvation "sanctions." If the Sunnis were on top in Hussein's regime, now the terms of oppression are being reversed. Even an isolated "socialist republic" in Iraq would be prey to imperialist domination and conquest: the bankruptcy of Stalin's nationalist dogma of building "socialism in one country" has been proven. Only a truly internationalist communist party, a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard of the proletariat, can bring together the exploited and oppressed masses, overcoming national and ethnic hatreds on the basis of common revolutionary class interests and join their struggles with those of the workers of Europe, the U.S. and Japan.

*The fight to drive the U.S./British colonial occupiers from Iraq must be championed by the working class throughout the world. International socialist revolution, extending to the imperialist centers, is vital to the emancipation of the toilers of the East from colonial and semi-colonial slavery. ■*

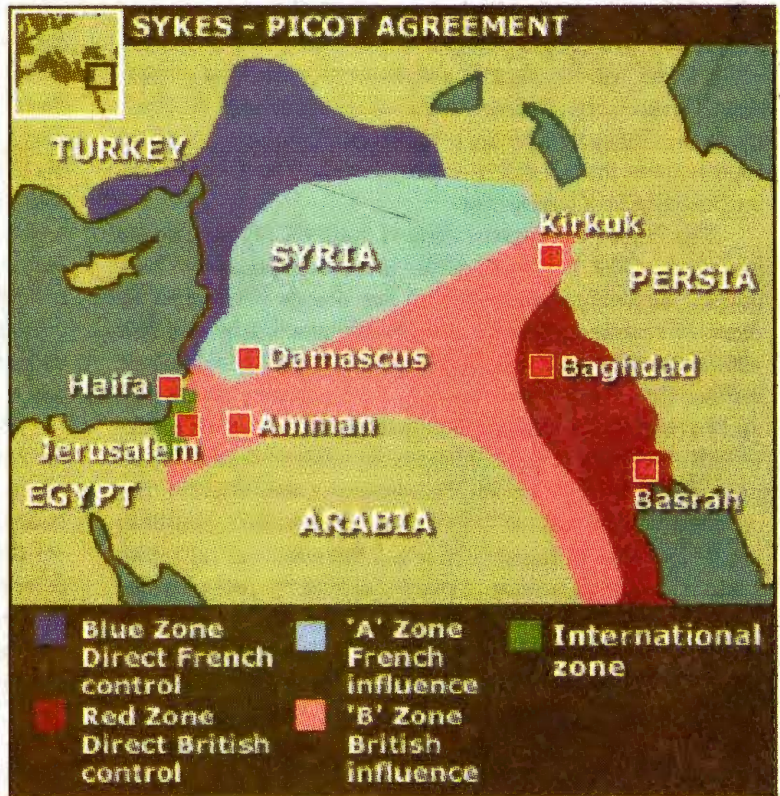
## Mr. Sykes and Monsieur Picot: How the Western Imperialists Carved Up the Near East

In a key scene of the film *Lawrence of Arabia*, a fictitious British diplomat confides in the notorious British adventurer and intriguer T.E. Lawrence: "Mr. Sykes is an English civil servant. Monsieur Picot is a French civil servant. Mr. Sykes and Monsieur Picot met, and they agreed that after the war, France and England would share the Turkish empire, including Arabia."

The war he was talking about was the first imperialist world war (World War I, 1914-18), and the Sykes-Picot Agreement for the division of the Near East was indeed signed by the French and British imperialists, with the approval of Tsar Nikolai II of Russia, in 1916. According to this secret robbers' pact, Palestine, Jordan and Iraq would go to Britain, while Syria, Lebanon and southern Turkey would go to France. With a few subsequent modifications (the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 eliminated tsarist Russia from the equation, while increasingly powerful U.S. imperialism demanded a cut of the booty from the cash-starved French and British), Sykes-Picot laid out the political and economic map of the post-WWI Near East.

A factor in the world capitalist crisis that led up to the first imperialist world war was the disintegration of the Ottoman – or Turkish – empire. At its zenith in the 17th century, this vast religious-bureaucratic state, ruled by sultans, extended from East Europe (almost up to the gates of Vienna) to the Arabian Sea. By the 19th century, the decaying Ottoman Empire was a constant battleground for the warring European powers – the Russian tsars sought to subdue it militarily; the French and English capitalists sought to exploit it financially, while shoring it up against Russian expansionism. Both sides took their toll through war and imperialism: by 1914, the Turks had lost control of the Balkans, Greece, Egypt and the rest of North Africa.

While the Ottoman Empire was still enormous – including most of what is now called the Middle or Near East – it was also



Map by BBC News

enormously in debt to the French and British capitalists, who ran the Turkish banks for their own profit. As the Turkish economy sank under the heavy weight of Western imperialist control, a nationalist movement known as the "Young Turks" arose, gaining adherents especially in the army. By 1908 the movement was strong enough to overthrow the British-controlled sultan. The "Young Turks," under their leader Enver Pasha, steered the Empire into an economic alliance with Germany. In 1913, Enver Pasha took power, and a year later he brought the Empire into the First World War on the side of Germany.

A little-discussed battleground of that war was Iraq – that portion of the Ottoman Empire then known as "Mesopotamia" (the Greek name for the region, meaning between the rivers, the Tigris and Euphrates). Petroleum had been discovered there in the late-19th century. As capitalist industrial production became increasingly reliant upon on this highly efficient new fuel, the Western imperialists – not only Britain and France but the United States as well – became increasingly intent on conquering the oil riches lying below the apparently barren deserts of the Ottoman East. Britain lost 40,000 soldiers in Mesopotamia during World War I battling the Turks for this prize.

Famed British agent T.E. Lawrence had some success in organizing Arabs to fight against the Turks. Lawrence supplied the Arabs not only with British arms, but British lies as

*continued on page 57*

### Colonial Client States in the Near East

Lord Curzon, the British foreign minister at the time of the post-World War I imperialist carve-up of the Near East gave the classic definition of a client state, such as the U.S. wants to set up now in Iraq. There should be, he wrote, an "Arab façade ruled and administered under British guidance and controlled by a native Mohammedan, and, as far as possible, by an Arab staff.... There should be no actual incorporation of the conquered territory in the dominions of the conqueror, but the absorption may be veiled by such constitutional fictions as a protectorate, a sphere of influence, a buffer state and so on."

–quoted in William Stivers, *Supremacy and Oil: Iraq, Turkey, and the Anglo-American World Order, 1918-1930* (Cornell University Press, 1982)

## The U.S.' Pretext for Imperialist War

# THE GREAT CHEMICAL WEAPONS HOAX

“One key argument for war was the peril from weapons of mass destruction. Now top officials are worried by repeated failures to find the proof - and US intelligence agencies are engaged in a struggle to avoid the blame.

The pressure is building to find Saddam's hidden arsenal and time is running out.

Last week the US flew 2,000 more experts into Iraq. The Iraq Survey Team will join 600 experts already there.... Yet at more than 110 sites checked so far they have found nothing conclusive. It has been an exercise in false alarms.... Having fought a war to disarm Iraq of its terrible weapons, neither the US nor Britain can admit that Iraq never had them in the first place. The search for weapons of mass destruction cannot be allowed to fail.

The search is especially vital for The Cabal. In the brave new world of post-11 September America, this tight group of analysts deep in the heart of the Pentagon has been the driving force behind the war in Iraq. Numbering no more than a dozen, The Cabal is part of the Office of Special Plans, a new intelligence agency which has taken on the CIA and won. Where the CIA dithered over Iraq, the OSP pressed on. Where the CIA doubted, the OSP was firm. It fought a battle royal over Iraq and George Bush came down on its side.

Yet many experts believe something will be found.... Finding nothing is unthinkable.”

—London *Observer*, 11 May 2003



**U.S. troops discover oil drums on April 7 near Karbala, announcing to “embedded” journalists that they could be chemical arms. Tests show: zero.**

On the evening of March 20, U.S. president George W. Bush ordered the dropping of “bunker buster” bombs on Baghdad in a blatant attempt to assassinate Iraqi president Saddam Hussein. On April 10, a Marine from Brooklyn placed the American flag over the head of a statue of Hussein in the Iraqi capital in a triumphant gesture of Yankee imperialist conquest. Three weeks was more than the Pentagon planners had anticipated, as they hadn't factored into their war games the guerrilla strikes by militias in the south against the Americans' vulnerable supply lines. But despite brave Iraqi resistance, the U.S. military juggernaut with its vastly superior firepower rolled on. Bombing thousands of Iraqis and mowing down survivors, they left a trail of death all along the road to Baghdad.

Little of this was reported in the news accounts by “embedded” journalists, who instead carried out their task of glorifying the fighting prowess of the “coalition” forces. One of the few half-way honest dispatches in the imperialist press reported:

“Throughout the march north across the desert, the human toll of war was evident, at the border outposts, in the streets of the village of Kifl, along the banks of the Euphrates, in bunkers along canals, and finally at the airport west of Baghdad.

“The corpses of scores of Iraqis lay in the sun, twisted, starting to rot. Some were in uniform; some were not. Most of the dead were young men, no older than the soldiers who killed them. Many were burned beyond recognition in vehicles destroyed by American air and artillery bombardments.

“For the soldiers of the First Brigade, most of them in their early 20's, it was their first experience of killing, their first encounter with death on such a scale. Some showed revulsion, a sense of unease, and concern about what their families at home might think. Others simply gawked, apparently impassive. A few became physically sick.”

—Steven Lee Myers, “Doubt and Death on the Drive to Baghdad,” *New York Times*, 13 April

Of course, readers of the Western press and viewers of Western television never saw the carnage, for such macabre scenes were carefully excised from the media coverage, mostly by the self-censorship of the patriotic press. You can probably count on the fingers of one hand the number

of Iraqi corpses that you saw in the sanitized virtual war beamed to the audience at home. “Image control” has become a key part of the U.S. military’s battlefield management. This is true not only for the fighting, but also of the batteries of war propaganda softening up the home front and battering reluctant imperialist allies. Key to this was the declared war aim, the *casus belli*.

## I. U.S. Pretexts for Colonial Invasion of Iraq

The Bush regime has had problems from the beginning in settling on the alleged purpose of this war. The day American bombs started falling on Afghanistan a year and a half ago, Vice President Dick Cheney declared that the war the United States was unleashing “may never end. At least, not in our lifetimes” (*Washington Post*, 7 October 2001). The invasion of Iraq is the second episode of Cheney’s “war without end” and the first under the Bush Doctrine of “preemptive war,” which the U.S. commander in chief announced at West Point last year. This was later elaborated as a *National Security Strategy of the United States* in September. Launching unprovoked wars of imperialist aggression is hardly new, of course. That, after all, was the main charge on which the Nazi leaders were prosecuted by the victorious Allies at the war crimes trials at Nuremberg following World War II. U.S. rulers have traditionally claimed to be waging defensive wars against an attack or intervening in a conflict in the name of lofty ideals (“war for democracy”). How, then, would they market the unprovoked war on Iraq?

Liberal critics made much of the fact that the Bush administration offered several different reasons for the invasion of Iraq. In one version, it was about retaliation for 11 September 2001 (“9-11”), even though the hijackers who slammed airplanes into the World Trade Center that day had no connection to Iraq. The reputed intellectual author of that attack, Osama bin Laden, called Saddam Hussein “an apostate, an infidel and a traitor to Islam.” According to the polls, the White House spin doctors managed to convince a majority of the U.S. population that Hussein was behind 9-11. But this wouldn’t sell well overseas. So they came up with version II, particularly for external consumption: that Hussein possessed monster weapons that threatened the world. This was the theme of the British government’s September 2002 White Paper, *Iraq’s Weapons of Mass Destruction*, a compilation of outright fabrications and outdated information lifted from a graduate student’s decade-old thesis. The introduction by Prime Minister Tony Blair declared that UN weapons “inspectors must be allowed back in to do their job properly...or the international community will have to act.” When Iraq let the UN inspectors return in November, this excuse fell flat. So they came up with version III: that the Hussein government was an oppressive regime and this was a “war of liberation” of the Iraqi people.

Now that U.S. general Tommy Franks has held his victory ceremony in Baghdad and the imperial viceroy, U.S. general Jay Garner, is ensconced in Hussein’s Republican Palace, it’s payback time. No matter that they haven’t captured or (apparently) killed the Iraqi strong man, or that the American “libera-

tors” were met by Kalashnikovs instead of crowds greeting them with flowers and kisses; forget about the mass demonstrations against colonial occupation. The war hawks are crowing “we told you so” against “lily-livered liberals,” imperialist doves and “cheese-eating surrender monkeys” (the French) who tried to delay the invasion by appealing to the United Nations. The doves respond by asking whatever happened to the fabled weapons of mass destruction (WMD) that Hussein was supposed to have, allegedly deployable “within 45 minutes of an order to use them” (Tony Blair)? “Where Are They Mr Blair?” headlined the *London Independent on Sunday* (20 April), adding: “Not one illegal warhead. Not one drum of chemicals. Not one incriminating document. Not one shred of evidence that Iraq has weapons of mass destruction in more than a month of war and occupation.”

The *London Guardian* (25 April) chimed in with a leader (editorial), “Credibility Gap Widens on Iraq’s Weapons,” lamenting “the signal failure so far to locate a warm-ish peashooter, let alone a smoking gun.” Across the Atlantic, the *New York Times* (26 April) editorialized: “This page agreed with the president’s conviction that there were world-threatening weapons in Iraq, if not the manner in which the United States went to war. We still tend to believe they are there” (“Assessing the Weapons Search”). But with “the most obvious storage sites coming up empty,” the *Times* editors gave the White House and Pentagon some pointers as to what might constitute a warmish peashooter: finding mustard gas or nerve agents in artillery shells and missiles would be ducky, but “precursor chemicals” alone just won’t do it. Next-best “would be evidence that Iraq was working with the smallpox virus”; alternatively, “even 15-year-old stocks of liquid anthrax would be alarming.” If that doesn’t pan out, “discovery now that Iraq had obtained either highly enriched uranium or weapons-grade plutonium... would be a real shock,” and “almost as disturbing would be full-scale enrichment facilities,” which might do in a pinch.

The *Times’* Idiot’s Guide to finding a justification for imperialist war underlines the fact that all the hoopla about Hussein’s hypothetical “WMD” was just a ploy to speed up the attack on Iraq (in the case of the hawks) or to slow it down (in the case of the doves). It never had anything to do with an illusory Iraqi “threat” to the imperialists – much less to the “American people” – but was only a cover for launching a horrendous slaughter. The job of UN “inspectors” was to find the excuse for the Pentagon to test drive its “Massive Ordnance Air Blast” (dubbed the “Mother of All Bombs,” or MOAB, for short, recalling the biblical prophecy in Jeremiah 48:42, “Moab will be



Brennan Linsley/AP



**U.S. soldier at fuel dump near Baiji. Initial reports claimed drums contained mustard gas and sarin nerve gas. Analysis showed: rocket fuel.**

destroyed as a nation because she defied the Lord”) which would truly carry out mass destruction. When the head of the UNMOVIC chemical weapons inspection operation Hans Blix came up empty-handed, the pretext was simply discarded and the bombs began falling. To liberal pleas to let the Blix boys back in, the response from Bush and Blair is: they had their chance, no way is the UN getting in on this act again.

Instead, the Pentagon had the *Times'* own (more or less) germ warfare “expert,” Judith Miller, “embedded” with the 75th Exploitation Task Force. Her assignment is to validate any pseudo-proof of Iraqi WMD the U.S. military “exploiters” come up with. But after visiting more than half the 150 sites on U.S. intelligence agency lists, she reported that “military experts said they now believed they might not find large caches of illicit chemicals or biological agents, at least not in Iraq” (*New York Times*, 25 April). Not to worry, say her handlers. “I think there’s going to be skepticism until people find out there was, in fact, a weapons of mass destruction program,” said George Bush in an interview on NBC-TV (24 April). “And so we will find them.” Just to make sure, they’re bringing in new teams of weapons experts, coordinated by the Pentagon’s Defense Threat Reduction Agency. This is the outfit which has been secretly developing a more potent strain of anthrax – for “defensive” purposes, of course. The DTRA will be assisted by two private companies, Raytheon Corporation (manufacturers of the Patriot “Scud-buster” missile which missed 80 percent of Iraqi missiles in Gulf War I) and the Kellogg, Brown & Root division of Vice President Dick Cheney’s Halliburton Corporation!

Rest assured that they will “find” something, even if it has to be planted, as is by now widely expected. The Bush war marketeers wouldn’t hesitate for a minute, given the stakes; indeed, that is doubtless why they are bringing in their back-up team. The only question is how crude a fabrication it will be. After all, these are the people who tried to pass off a forged memo from an official in the African republic of Niger about an Iraqi attempt to buy enriched uranium! (Niger has no facilities to enrich uranium, the official in question had been out of office for ten years, etc.) The warmongers in Washington clearly don’t give a damn whether they are believed. Their real war aim

is to demonstrate overwhelming U.S. power to secure untrammelled American imperialist hegemony in the New World Order proclaimed by George Bush Sr. The rest – war on “WMD,” war on terror, war of liberation – is eyewash. Hermann Göring, the Nazi Luftwaffe (air force) commander, explained it to an American intelligence officer in his cell in Nuremberg:

“After all, it is the leaders of the country who determine the policy and it is always a simple matter to drag the people along. ... Voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the peacemakers for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger.”

This is exactly the mindset of U.S. rulers today as they seek to “shock and awe” the world into submission to their *Diktat*. The unelected American president added the Bush codicil – “You can fool some of the people all the time, and those are the ones you have to concentrate on” – slyly modifying Abraham Lincoln’s famous dictum at the Washington Gridiron Club a few months after stealing the Florida vote and the 2000 U.S. election.

From a Marxist perspective, the whole hullabaloo about atomic, chemical and biological weapons that the Iraqis may have, could have or would have if they could, is nothing but a charade, sucker bait for the liberals who get queasy at the slaughter of imperialist war. As Lenin insisted in the first imperialist world war:

“Our attitude towards war ... is fundamentally different from that of the bourgeois pacifists (supporters and advocates of peace) and of the anarchists. We differ from the former in that we understand the inevitable connection between wars and the class struggle within a country; we understand that wars cannot be abolished unless classes are abolished and socialism is created; we also differ in that we regard civil wars, i.e., wars waged by an oppressed class against the oppressor class, by slaves against slave-holders, by serfs against landowners, and by wage workers against the bourgeoisie, as fully legitimate, progressive and necessary....

“For example, if tomorrow, Morocco were to declare war on France, or India on Britain, or Persia or China on Rus-

sia, and so on, those would be 'just,' and 'defensive' wars, irrespective of who attacked first; any socialist would wish the oppressed, dependent and unequal states victory over the oppressor, slave-holding and predatory 'great' powers."

– V.I. Lenin, *Socialism and War* (September 1915)

Leninists judge the character of a war by the class and national forces arrayed against each other. In the case of a war by an imperialist country, no matter how "democratic" it pretends to be, against a colonial or semi-colonial country, no matter how brutal and anti-democratic the current dictator, class-conscious workers are duty-bound to defend the oppressed nation and to fight for the defeat of the imperialist oppressor.

In the U.S. imperialist war on Iraq the League for the Fourth International stands on the side of Iraq, as Trotskyists did in Gulf War I as well. While denouncing Saddam Hussein, the butcher of Kurds, Shiites and communists, who was installed with the aid of U.S. imperialism and for years enjoyed Washington's support, we defended the right of Iraq's government to possess any weapons needed to fight the imperialists. That includes nuclear, chemical and bioweapons which the Pentagon has in superabundance and which American imperialism has repeatedly used against oppressed peoples and the civilian populations of its imperialist rivals, killing millions – far more than a tinpot nationalist dictator like Hussein could ever do. We opposed demands on Iraq to admit UN "inspectors," whose task was to trigger imperialist aggression (and who often were literally U.S. spies). And while giving no credence to squabbles between imperialist hawks and doves over Iraqi "weapons of mass destruction," we expose the falsehood and sophistry of the Great Chemical Weapons Hoax that was the main pretext for the imperialist war on Iraq.

The battle cry from Washington over Iraqi chemical warfare (CW), biological warfare (BW) and nuclear weapons pro-



ABC News

**U.S. military brought reporters to agricultural facility near Karbala, April 7, posting sign announcing drums contained poison gas. Initial claim: sarin and tabun nerve gas and blister agent lewisite. Result of testing: pesticide.**

grams is shameless hypocrisy coming from the mouths of the U.S. imperialists who nuked Hiroshima and Nagasaki, who used chemical weapons such as napalm and phosphorous bombs in Korea, who used napalm and Agent Orange on a massive scale in Vietnam. Besides which, the chemical arms which Iraq actually did obtain were supplied to it by Washington, to be used against Iranian forces in the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war. Iraq's chemical plants, now alleged to be "dual-use facilities," were built by none other than Britain and Germany. And in Iraq, chemical weapons were first used against the population by the British colonialists in suppressing a revolt in 1920. This is part of the hidden history of the Iraq war that the imperialist invaders are desperate to cover up.

## II. Britain Used Chemical Arms on 1920 Iraq Revolt

It all goes back to the seizure of the Near East by the Western powers during and after World War I. As Marxists declared at the time, that was not a war to "make the world safe for democracy," as U.S. president Woodrow Wilson sanctimoniously claimed. Rather, it was over the division of the world by the imperialists and the redistribution of their respective colonies. WWI saw the break-up of the Ottoman Empire in the Near East, whose capital Constantinople became Istanbul, the metropolis of modern Turkey. Out of the remnants of that decrepit empire, a series of artificial states were created which arbitrarily divided up and threw together various peoples of the Arab East under puppet monarchs imposed by the colonialists (see "Mr. Sykes and Monsieur Picot Carve Up the Near East," page 36). Under League of Nations "mandates," France got Syria and Lebanon, while Britain got Palestine, Jordan and Iraq. Naturally, the imperialist "democracies" didn't bother to consult the populations of the countries involved.

The birth of Iraq was presided over by Winston Churchill, an arrogant, brutal colonialist and imperialist who to this day is honored as a "statesman" in bourgeois histories. At the time

Churchill was British secretary of state for the colonies. He had earlier promised Arabian ruler Sharif Hussein to install his son, Feisal, as ruler of Syria. When the French grabbed Damascus in the diplomatic horse-trading, Churchill gave Feisal the lands formerly known as Mesopotamia, lying between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, as a consolation prize. Repeatedly from 1919 on, the population of what is now Iraq rose up against the Hashemite ruler and his British patrons. In June 1920, a full-scale rebellion broke out. British garrisons were taken by surprise as the revolt spread throughout the lower Euphrates valley. In August, the insurgents declared a provisional Arab government. But by February 1921, the revolt had been crushed, with between 8,000 and 9,000 rebels killed. This was accomplished mainly through the use of air power, by the Royal Air Force (RAF), which mercilessly bombed the insurgents using incendiary weapons and poison gas.

Before the outbreak of the rebellion, the RAF asked Churchill in 1919 for permission to use chemical weapons "against recalcitrant Arabs as an experiment." Churchill (then secretary of state for war) in turn asked experts if it would be



possible to use "some kind of asphyxiating bombs calculated to cause disablement of some kind but not death...for use in preliminary operations against turbulent tribes." He added: "I do not understand this squeamishness about the use of gas. I am strongly in favour of using poison gas against uncivilised tribes" for it will "spread a lively terror." General Sir Aylmer Haldane wrote that poison gas was more useful against the hilly Kurdish redoubts, while "in the hot plains...the gas is more volatile" (quoted in Geoff Simmons, *Iraq: From Sumer to Saddam* [MacMillan Press, 1994]). In fact, the weapons used by the RAF in its "civilizing mission" against the "turbulent tribes" were quite lethal. The British cabinet was squeamish, but Churchill argued that use of gas should not be prevented "by the prejudices of those who do not think clearly."

Eventually, poison gas was used on Iraqi rebels, with what the illustrious "statesman" described as "excellent moral effect" (quoted in David Omissi, *Air Power and Colonial Control. The Royal Air Force, 1919-1939* [Manchester University Press, 1990]).

The RAF was also used to bomb and strafe Kurds and Iraqis before, during and after the revolt. A series on the "Secret History" TV program of Britain's Channel 4 on "The RAF and the British Empire" (6 July 1992) interviewed a squadron leader, who said that if the tribespeople "were doing something they ought not to be doing then you shot them." A commander remarked: "If the Kurds hadn't learned by our example to behave themselves in a civilised way then we had to spank their bottoms. This was done by bombs and guns." A colonel with the Royal Artillery noted in his diary that the burning of Arab villages made "a wonderful sight at night." Earlier, Wing Commander Arthur Harris emphasized, "The Arab and Kurd now know what real bombing means in casualties and damage. Within forty-five minutes a full-size village can be practically wiped out and a third of its inhabitants killed or injured." The bloodthirsty Harris was later known as "Bomber Harris" (or, more to the point, Butcher Harris) during World War II, when he designed the infamous firebombing of Dresden, Germany in February 1945 (see article "U.S./British Massacre at Dresden," page 44).

As the Pentagon is doing today, Britain used the suppression of the Iraqi revolt in order to test out new weapons. Devices developed for use against tribal villages included forerunners of napalm, air-to-ground missiles and fragmentation bombs. An Air Ministry list included:



New York Times

**In March 1917, British commander Lt.-General Stanley Maude, issued a proclamation upon entering Baghdad (above) declaring that "Our armies do not come into your cities and lands as conquerors or enemies, but as liberators." British "liberators" proceeded to use poison gas against Iraqi rebels.**

"Phosphorous bombs. war rockets. metal crowsfeet [to maim livestock]. man-killing shrapnel. liquid fire, and delay-action bombs. Many of these weapons were first used in Kurdistan."

Gertrude Bell, the Oriental Secretary in the Colonial Office, described a demonstration of the new technology: "They had made an imaginary village...and the first two bombs dropped from 3000 feet, went straight into the middle of it and set it alight.... Then they dropped bombs all round it, as if to catch the fugitives and finally fire bombs which even in the brightest sunlight made flares of bright flame in the desert. They burn through metal and water won't extinguish them. At the end the armoured cars went out to round up the fugitives with machine guns" (quoted in Simons, *Iraq: From Sumer to Saddam*, which brings together reports of Britain's use of poison gas and terror bombing of the civilian Iraqi population).

Today the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, successor to the Colonial Office, professes horror at the suffering of the Kurds under Hussein's rule, which has "included the use of chemical weapons" (*Saddam Hussein: Crimes and Human Rights Abuses* [November 2002]). Yet this is the bloody history of the British imperialists who claim to be friends of the Kurds! In March 1917, the commander of the Anglo-Indian Army of the Tigres, Lt.-General Stanley Maude, issued a proclamation upon entering Baghdad declaring that "Our armies do not come into your cities and lands as conquerors or enemies, but as liberators" (Robert Fisk, "The West Has Been Liberating the Middle East for Centuries." *Independent* [London], 7 March). This is the fiery hell the imperialist "liberators" visited on the Iraqi people then, as they are doing again today.

### III. Spanish and Italian Imperialists Used Poison Gas in Africa

Britain was not the only "great power" to engage in indiscriminate bombing and employ chemical arms in their wars of conquest and colonial policing. Indeed, *all* of the imperialists in the current U.S.-led "coalition of the willing" have used so-called weapons of mass destruction against civilian populations.

*Spain* used poison gas against the Berber rebellion in the Rif region of northern Morocco. The revolt led by Abd el Krim began in 1921, and trounced the Spanish army in July of that year. In response, the Spanish air force "took reprisals against the homelands of tribes who joined the rebels and made lavish use of poison gas" (Omissi, *Air Power and Colonial Control*). When the rebels continued to advance, proclaiming an independent republic of the Rif, imperialist *France* dispatched 400,000 troops (led by Marshal Pétain, the future collaborator with Hitler) to aid the Spanish. Entire Rif villages were wiped out by French aerial bombardment and artillery. Today the French Communist Party (PCF) recalls that its forebears called then to stop "immediately the spilling of blood" (*L'Humanité*, 20 December 2000). Actually, this is a reformist rewriting of history as if the early Communists were nothing but a group of pacifists. At the time, the PCF proclaimed its solidarity with the independence fighters, organized dock workers strikes refusing to move war materiel to Morocco, and in October 1925 called a general strike against the colonial war.

In the mid-1930s, *Italy* under the fascist *Duce* Benito Mussolini notoriously used poison gas in its conquest and occupation of Abyssinia (now known as Ethiopia) in East Africa. In December 1935, the commander of the Italian expeditionary force, Marshal Pietro Badoglio, ordered the use of dichlorodimethyl sulfide (mustard gas) against the troops of Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie. In February 1936, Badoglio sent 200,000 Italian troops against the Ethiopians. As the Ethiopian forces retreated, some 6,000 were killed by poison gas in 600-pound bombs dropped from planes. Celebrating his victory at a ceremony in Rome that May, Mussolini declared: "At last, Italy has her empire... a civilizing empire, humanitarian

toward all the peoples of Ethiopia" (see Alberto Sbacchi, *Legacy of Bitterness: Ethiopia and Fascist Italy, 1935-1941* [Red Sea Press, 1997]).

Altogether a quarter million Ethiopians were killed in this colonialist slaughter. The response of many liberals and reformists (including the Stalinized Communist parties, by then wedded to the "popular front") was to beseech the League of Nations to intervene, just as today many forlornly looked to the United Nations as a brake on the U.S./British invasion of Iraq. But the UN's predecessor simply washed its hands of the question. In contrast to the Stalinists' illusory appeal to the "democratic" imperialists, Leon Trotsky, the founder of the Fourth International, who together with V.I. Lenin led the October 1917 Russian Revolution, called instead for the action of the workers movement in defense of Ethiopia:

"Of course, we are for the defeat of Italy and the victory of Ethiopia, and therefore we must do everything possible to hinder by all available means support to Italian imperialism by the other imperialist powers, and at the same time facilitate the delivery of armaments, etc., to Ethiopia as best we can.

"However, we want to stress the point that this fight is directed not against *fascism*, but against *imperialism*. When war is involved, for us it is not a question of who is 'better,' the Negus [the Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie] or Mussolini; rather, it is a question of the relationship of classes and the fight of an underdeveloped nation for independence against imperialism."

—"The Italo-Ethiopian Conflict" (July 1935), *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1935-36)*

Haile Selassie was no pseudo-progressive bourgeois nationalist, but presided over a regime that practiced slavery (particularly of subjugated minority peoples). Yet Trotsky insisted that the movement for the Fourth International defend Ethiopia against the Italian imperialists just as the Trotskyists today call to defend Iraq and defeat U.S. imperialism and its second-rate imperialist British, Italian, Spanish and Australian allies.

### IV. Korea and Vietnam: U.S. Chemical Warfare and Terror Bombing Kills Millions

Prior to the second imperialist world war, it was primarily the European powers who used poison gas to subdue their colonial subjects. After WWII, the imperialists of what the American war minister Donald Rumsfeld now calls "Old Europe" were increasingly replaced by U.S. imperialism, which took on itself the "white man's burden" of policing the so-called Third World. Chemical weapons were heavily used by the Pentagon's expeditionary forces in Korea and Vietnam. In fact, for decades the U.S. was the main producer, purveyor and user of chemical arms, and today it still has what may be the largest stockpile of bio-chemical weapons in the world. This was almost entirely hidden from public view until the 1960s

when the U.S.' use of CBW in Vietnam was exposed and investigative journalist Seymour Hersh published *Chemical and Biological Warfare: America's Hidden Arsenal* (Bobbs-Merrill, 1968). This has recently been updated by Judith Miller with Stephen Engelberg and William Broad in *Germs: Biological Weapons and America's Secret War* (Simon & Schuster, 2001).

As Harvard microbiologist Matthew Meselson notes in his review of Miller's book (*New York Review of Books*, 20 December 2001), just as the United States enrolled Hitler's rocket scientists in its missile programs after World War II, the U.S. also granted immunity from war crimes prosecution to scientists from the Japanese Army's notorious Unit 731 in

exchange for data on Japan's biological warfare program. That unit had attacked Chinese villages and towns with anthrax, plague and typhoid during the Sino-Japanese War. But it wasn't as if the imperialist Allies were above using biological warfare themselves. In 1944, a bomb factory was set up near Terre Haute, Indiana to produce British-designed anthrax bombs; Churchill had placed an initial order of 500,000 of the bombs. They were never used against Hitler's Germany because the Nazi regime fell before the plant came on line. Yet during the Cold War, the U.S. made extensive preparations for using anthrax bombs to attack the USSR. Cluster bombs were designed, each containing 536 biological bomblets, and tests releasing aerosols were conducted in Minneapolis, St. Louis and Winnipeg.

The Pentagon not only developed chemical and bioweapons, they used them.

### Korea

The Korean War is often referred to as the "forgotten war." Certainly, over the decades the imperialist media have done their best to cover up the war crimes carried out there by the United States, Australian and other imperialist military forces during 1950-53 under the flag of the United Nations. A hole in the curtain of ignorance was ripped by the revelations in a September 1999 AP report by courageous Korean journalists, who demonstrated in great detail how the U.S. Army slaughtered 400 or more Korean civilians huddling under a bridge at No Gun Ri on 26 July 1950. Despite efforts by "responsible" American media executives to impugn the U.S. soldiers who confirmed the massacre, and intense pressure from the Pentagon on them to recant their testimony, the facts of this cold-blooded mass murder have been established beyond any doubt.

Yet No Gun Ri was only one of many atrocities committed by the U.S. imperialist forces and their South Korean puppet army in this first major engagement in the anti-Soviet Cold War, a war that lasted almost half a century. Among many other cases, in the same month of July 1950 more than 1,800 Korean Communist political prisoners were executed in Taejon, South Korea and their bodies thrown into a mass grave. U.S. Army photos of this slaughter were long classified Top Secret. A South Korean admiral reported that 200 people were taken off shore from Pohong and dumped into the sea. Another classified document reported the execution in August 1950 of between 200 and 300 Korean prisoners, who were lined up on a cliff near Taegu and shot. Villagers in Dokchon reported that truckloads of prisoners were taken into the hills and shot. Declassified documents confirm that it was U.S. policy for fighter jets to strafe civilian refugee columns. Even before the outbreak of the Korean War, U.S. and South Korean forces massacred 30,000 to 60,000 civilians in suppressing the 3 April 1948 uprising on Cheju-do Island.

In North Korea, the U.S. policy of mass murder was carried out on an industrial scale. Napalm (jellied gasoline) and phosphorous bombs were systematically dropped in order to incinerate every city north of the 38th parallel (roughly marking the line between capitalist South Korea and the bureaucratically deformed



**U.S. puppet South Korean army massacred more than 1,800 Communist prisoners at Taejon in July 1950. Amsterdam housing project in October 1992, killing 43.**

workers state to the north). The North Korean capital was a particular object of Washington's murderous fury. On 11 July 1952, the U.S. Air Force dropped 1,400 tons of bombs and 23,000 gallons of napalm on Pyongyang, leveling more than 1,500 buildings and killing many thousands. The American bombers returned on August 4 and again on August 29 to finish the job. By that time there was literally nothing left to hit. And not just in the north. General Curtis LeMay described the devastation saying, "we eventually burned down every town in North Korea... and some in South Korea too. We even burned down [the South Korean city of] Pusan – an accident, but we burned it down anyway" (from the PBS TV program, *Race for the Superbomb*, January 1999).

It is well-known that General Douglas MacArthur unsuccessfully pushed to A-bomb Chinese and North Korean forces in Korea and even Chinese industrial centers north of the Yalu. It is seldom reported, however, that from the very beginning of the Korean War, in August 1950 U.S. president Truman moved ten B-29s loaded with atomic bombs to Guam, that Eisenhower moved them up to Okinawa in 1953 to force the Soviets to accept an armistice, and that the U.S. actively considered using atomic weapons throughout the war. More than 2 million Korean civilians and another 1.5 million soldiers were killed in the Korean War, overwhelmingly by the U.S. and its allies. Today, U.S. president Bush again threatens "pre-emptive" action against North Korea's tiny nuclear facilities, claiming they are a "threat" to the United States. In fact, it is U.S. imperialism which has not only threatened but carried out mass killings with chemical weapons in an attempt to obliterate North Korea.

As we stressed in "Defend North Korea Against Nuclear Blackmail and War Threats!" (*The Internationalist* No. 15, January-February 2003): *the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has the right to obtain any weapon it requires to defend itself against the imperialist mass murderers, and it is the obligation of every class-conscious worker and opponent of imperialism to defend North Korea against U.S. nuclear threats.*

*continued on page 46*

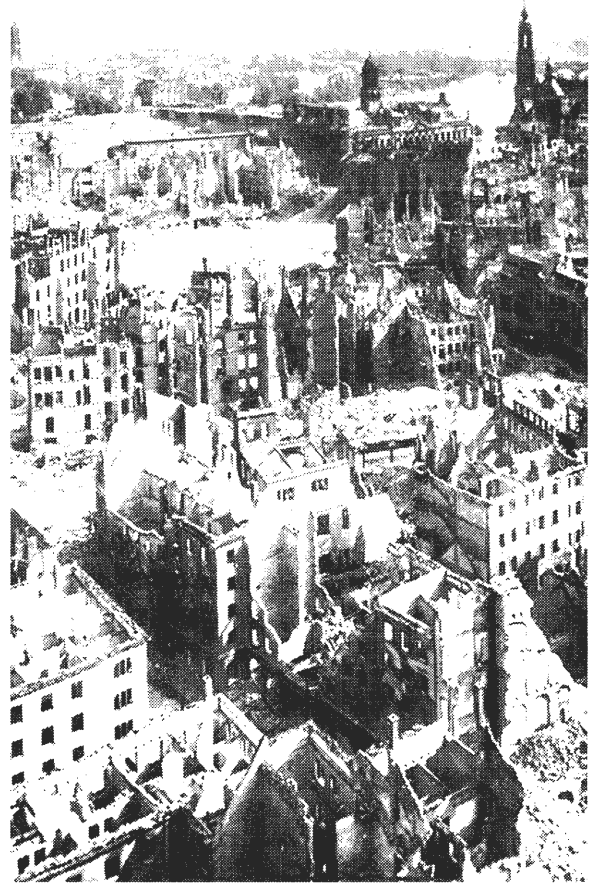
## U.S./British Massacre at Dresden

Mussolini's use of terror bombing in Ethiopia was inspired by the doctrines of Italian general Giulio Douhet, whose 1921 treatise, *The Command of the Air*, became the bible for the "strategic bombing" plans of all the imperialists, fascist and "democratic" alike. While such horrific plans could be tried out against Kurdish and Ethiopian peasant soldiers in hills and mountains, their ultimate target is the population of large urban concentrations, and the proletariat in particular. In 1920, at a time when many European rulers shook in fear of workers revolution "at home," the chief of the British Air Staff, Sir Hugh Trenchard, wrote that the Royal Air Force could even suppress "industrial disturbances or risings" in England itself (David Omissi, "Baghdad and British Bombers," *Guardian* [London], 19 January 1991). Churchill told Trenchard not to refer to this proposal again, but 20 years later, during the second imperialist world war, both the "Axis" and the "Allies" put Douhet's plans into practice.

Hitler was notorious for sending his Luftwaffe (air force) to annihilate Rotterdam, Holland in May 1940, killing 30,000 people in an effort to bomb the Dutch population into submission; for his bombing of the English cathedral town of Coventry later that year, which killed 500 in a single ten-hour raid; and for the London Blitz, lasting from September 1940 to May 1941, in which over 20,000 civilians were killed. The German military developed this into the doctrine of "*Schrecklichkeit*" (frightfulness), which was defined by Chris Cook's *Dictionary of Historical Terms* (1983) as the "deliberate policy of committing atrocities to subdue a subject people." This Nazi policy was the direct antecedent of the Pentagon's air war doctrine, "Shock and Awe," which was precisely intended to terrorize the Iraqi population into submission.

But even in World War II, the German fascist dictator was rivaled on this score by the imperialist Allies, both the British and the Americans, who between them slaughtered an estimated 635,000 German civilians with their terror bombing. R.H.S. Crossman (a right-wing social democrat and later cabinet minister, then in charge of psychological warfare against Germany for the Foreign Office) reports that in the early years of WWII there was a debate in the British government over the use of bombers against the German population. Fearing heavy casualties from a European landing, Prime Minister Churchill was willingly persuaded by the Air Marshalls that priority should be given not to opening a Second Front on the continent but to building bombers to pound German cities until the population had been, as Crossman put it, "systematically 'de-housed' and pulverized into surrender."

The bombing was deliberately aimed at terrorizing the German proletariat. A February 1942 directive to the Bomber Command contained the following Valentine's Day message: "You are accordingly authorized to employ your forces without restriction . . . (operations) should now be focused on the morale of the enemy civil population and in particular, of the industrial workers." Placed in charge of the command that car-



**Right: Center of Dresden after bombing by U.S. and British planes on 13-14 February 1945.**

ried out the raids was none other than "Bomber Harris," who got his start indiscriminately killing Iraqis.

The "democratic" British leader had no compunction about deliberately targeting the civilian population: "Now everyone's at it," Churchill was quoted as saying. "It's simply a question of fashion – similar to that of whether short or long dresses are in" (quoted in Mickey Z., "From Dresden to Baghdad: 58 Years of 'Shock and Awe'," *On-Line Journal*, 13 February). By July 1943, Harris had perfected the technique of firebombing to the point that the Allies were able to create a firestorm in Hamburg, killing 50,000 civilians. The bombers deliberately targeted densely populated areas rather than industrial or transportation districts; incendiary and high-explosive bombs were dropped, the latter in order to destroy metallic roofs. By concentrating fire in an area they could create an inferno, causing huge numbers of casualties not only from burns, but also from smoke inhalation, carbon monoxide poisoning and asphyxiation, as the oxygen was sucked out by the conflagration. This was not accidental, but deliberate mass murder.

Toward the end of 1944, the Allies caused firestorms in more than half a dozen German cities, culminating in the firebombing of Dresden on 13-14 February 1945, perhaps the

largest single massacre in history. The purpose was not to hit military or industrial objectives – there were few such targets in the area, no munitions plants, the rail yards were not hit – but to cause maximum casualties in order to intimidate the Soviets, whose army crossed the Oder River at the end of January headed for Berlin. An internal RAF memo said that Dresden was jammed full of “refugees pouring westwards.... The intentions of the attack are to hit the enemy where he will feel it most...and to show the Russians when they arrive what Bomber Command can do.” Air Marshall Harris designed the Dresden raid to first create a firestorm and then spread it with subsequent attacks to kill the survivors. Thousands of individual fires came together, whipping up huge winds and superheated air. Crossman writes:

“The fire storm transformed thousands of individual blazes into a sea of flames, ripping off the roofs, tossing trees, cars and lorries into the air, and simultaneously sucking the oxygen out of the air-raid shelters.

”Most of those who remained below ground were to die painlessly, their bodies first brilliantly tinted bright orange and blue, and then, as the heat grew intense, either totally incinerated or melted into a thick liquid sometimes three or four feet deep.”

–R.H.S. Crossman, “Apocalypse at Dresden,” *Esquire*, November 1963

Mickey Z. has an equally grisly account:

“Seventy percent of the Dresden dead either suffocated or died from poison gases that turned their bodies green and red. The intense heat melted some bodies into the pavement like bubblegum, or shrunk them into three-foot long charred carcasses. Clean-up crews wore rubber boots to wade through the ‘human soup’ found in nearby caves. In other cases, the superheated air propelled victims sky-

ward only to come down in tiny pieces as far as fifteen miles outside Dresden.”

After the first wave of British bombers came a second wave three hours later, designed to spread the fire to the huge open area of the royal park and to the great square in front of the railway station – places where thousands of survivors had fled – and to hit every one of the 19 hospitals in the city. Then, as the survivors (many of them crippled) were gathering their meager strength the next morning a third wave of bombers and fighters hit the city. This time the USAF strafed the royal park and the roads out of town, deliberately machine-gunning the defenseless crowds of refugees.

How many were killed? The figure of 225,000 was widely circulated; Crossman estimates upwards of 150,000. Fascist “historians” like David Irving have long pointed to the Dresden massacre in order to relativize the Nazi Holocaust of the Jewish people and to absolve the Nazi regime of its horrendous crimes. Yet the Dresden massacre was one of the most horrific war crimes in history, and one carried out by the “democratic” imperialists. For his services rendered to the British Empire, “Bomber” Harris later received a Knights Grand Cross from the Queen (as well as a Legion of Merit from the U.S.).

When news concerning the bombing of Dresden got out, it led to an uproar that had to be quieted by cynical denials that this was U.S. or British policy. But it was, and it continued, now against Japan. In March 1945, more than 100,000 Japanese were killed in a firebombing raid on Tokyo as “canals boiled, metal melted, and buildings and human beings burst spontaneously into flames” (John Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War* [Pantheon Books, 1986]). By August 1945, 58 Japanese cities had been firebombed and the bomber commander, General Curtis LeMay, had to curtail his raids because he had run out of incendiary bombs. After the war, Le May remarked “I suppose if I had lost the war, I would have been tried as a war criminal.” Instead he was promoted, eventually heading the Strategic Air Command, where he advocated a pre-emptive nuclear “first strike” against the Soviets. During the Vietnam War, Le May notoriously called to “bomb them [the North Vietnamese] back into the Stone Age.”

The firebombing of Japanese cities culminated in the atomic bombing of Hiroshima on 6 August 1945 and Nagasaki three days later, slaughtering more than 200,000 Japanese. The purpose was not to “hasten the end of the war,” as was claimed, for secret negotiations for Japanese surrender were already underway when the bombs were dropped. As in Dresden, these were not military targets: the horrendous death toll of the civilian population was the intended purpose of the raids. And as at Dresden; the key purpose of the A-bombing of Japan was to serve as a warning to the Soviet Union (which following the Red Army’s victory over Nazi Germany had just turned its forces against Japan) of the lengths to which blood-thirsty U.S. imperialism would go to annihilate its enemies. And indeed, in the subsequent wars against North Korea and Vietnam during the half-century long anti-Soviet Cold War, American armies and their puppet forces slaughtered some six million Koreans and Vietnamese. ■

Dave Davis/AP



**Tokyo after bombing by U.S. in March 1945. Incendiary bombs burned 200 km<sup>2</sup> of the Japanese capital, killing more than 100,000 people.**



U.S. napalm bomb strike in South Vietnam, 1966. U.S. dropped more than 338,000 tons of napalm (jellied gasoline) on Vietnam and killed more than 2 million Vietnamese during eight years of war.

## Chemical Weapons Hoax...

*continued from page 43*

### Vietnam

In Vietnam, the massive use of chemical warfare by the United States is notorious. The U.S. Air Force dropped over 338,000 tons of napalm on Vietnam between 1963 and 1971 as well as more than 100,000 tons of herbicides. The napalm had been "improved" over that used by the U.S. in Korea and the

sale. In the CIA-designed Operation Phoenix, U.S. commandos (including one commanded by former U.S. senator Bob Kerrey) deliberately murdered tens of thousands of Vietnamese (see "Drive Out War Criminal Bob Kerrey!" *The Internationalist* No. 10, June 2001).

U.S. imperialist rulers would dearly like the Vietnam War to be forgotten or relegated to the category of ancient history, but a quarter century later White House and Pentagon war planners are still trying to overcome the "Vietnam syndrome"

in the American population – that is, the revulsion at a dirty, *losing* colonial war. And revelations about the wanton slaughter carried out there in the name of "defending democracy" continue to surface. The latest is a study published in the British scientific magazine *Nature* (17 April) by Jeanne Mager Stellman of the Columbia University School of Public Health reporting that the quantities of defoliants used in Vietnam, and the concentrations of dioxin (2,4,5-T) were "up to four times as great as previously estimated." In a program originally known as Operation Hades (later changed to the innocuous-sounding Operation Ranch Hand), the Pentagon used not only Agent Orange but also significant quantities of the even more potent Agent Blue and Agent Purple in order to destroy crops in heavily populated ar-

**Planes spraying Agent Orange defoliant on Vietnam in 1966. Over 100,000 tons of herbicides (Agents Blue, Orange, Pink, Purple and White) were dropped on Vietnam in attempt to deprive Viet Cong of food and forest cover. New study shows 2 to 4 million people were sprayed directly with the chemicals which contained concentrations of dioxin more than 100 times greater than normal. In addition to killing many thousands, U.S. chemical warfare left legacy of half a million Vietnamese children suffering from birth defects, according to the *Wall Street Journal*.**



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eas of Vietnam ("food deprivation"). These poisons, whose concentrations of toxic chemicals were more than 100 times greater than commercial weed killers, were sprayed directly on at least 3,000 Vietnamese villages populated by 2 to 4 million people.

Hoping to obliterate the memory of its war crimes in Indochina, or at least to relativize them, beginning in 1975 the U.S. accused the Soviet Union of using chemical warfare in Southeast Asia. If the U.S. used Agent Orange, they charged, the Soviets used "Yellow Rain" (trichothecene mycotoxins). As Washington stepped up its war against the Soviet forces in Afghanistan in the early 1980s, a propaganda blitz was organized around this claim. In September 1981, General Alexander Haig, then Reagan's ambassador to the United Nations, announced with great fanfare that "the Soviet Union and its allies have been using lethal chemical weapons in Laos, Kampuchea, and Afghanistan." However, when a group of scientists led by Harvard molecular biologist Matthew Meselson looked at the evidence, they concluded that the "rain" was showers of yellow feces from swarms of giant Asian

honeybees (see Julian Robinson, Jeanne Guillemin and Matthew Meselson, "Yellow Rain in Southeast Asia: The Story Collapses," *Foreign Affairs*, Fall 1987, for a recounting of this saga). *U.S. imperialism tried to bury its own massive use of chemical arms in Indochina under a pile of bee shit.*

The U.S. chemical warfare against the Vietnamese people killed many thousands, and left a legacy of an estimated 500,000 children with serious birth defects (Peter Waldman, "Body Count," *Wall Street Journal*, 12 December 1997). Overall, upwards of 3 million people were killed in the U.S.' counterrevolutionary war on Vietnam, plus another 2 million in neighboring Cambodia and Laos. This horrendous death toll was justified with overtly racist arguments. The commander of U.S. forces in Vietnam, General William Westmoreland, claimed that, "The Oriental doesn't put the same high price on life as does a Westerner. Life is plentiful, life is cheap in the Orient" (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, 21 April 1975). The same grotesque arguments are used by the apologists for the U.S. imperialist invasion of Iraq today.

## V. U.S. and Other Western Imperialists Supplied Saddam Hussein's Chemical Weapons

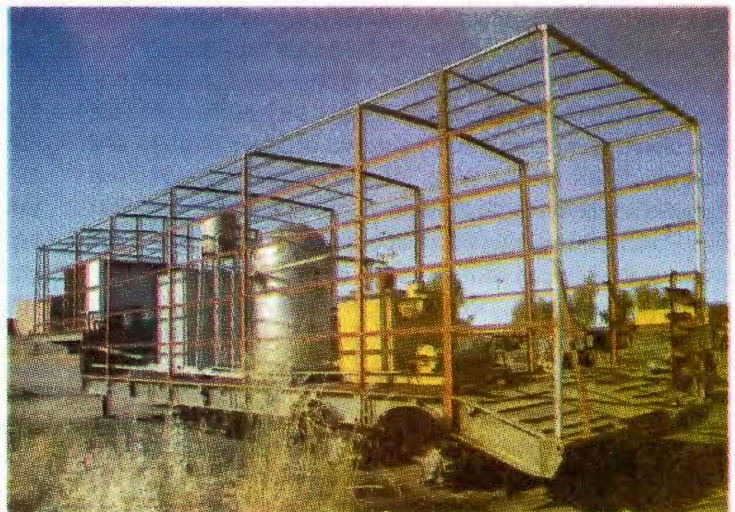
Long before the recent U.S./British invasion of Iraq, the charge that the Saddam Hussein regime had produced and used chemical weapons (such as mustard gas, VX and sarin), had the capability of producing biological weapons and was seeking to develop nuclear weapons has been bandied about by the imperialists to justify their unrelenting persecution of Iraq. This was the justification for the whole charade of United Nations inspection and more than a decade of murderous UN "sanctions" which killed over a million Iraqi children. During the 1990s, the UNSCOM "inspectors" were shot through with U.S. agents, who planted surveillance devices and sent back espionage data to Washington on Iraq's defenses. As we have emphasized, Hussein's Iraq had every right to procure or develop any weapon needed to defend the country against the imperialist onslaught, and expulsion of the "UN"/U.S. spies was more than justified. When UN inspectors were readmitted last year, they failed to uncover any CBW weapons at all and stated that everything indicated the Iraqi nuclear program had been shut down over a decade ago. Thereupon, Bush and Blair simply went ahead and ordered the attack anyway.

But beyond the bottomless hypocrisy and bushels of lies from Washington and London, *for years the imperialists actively supplied Iraq with chemical and biological agents, built the factories to produce CBW arms, fed Baghdad intelligence data on where to use them, and dispatched agents to the battlefields to check up on their usage.* Hussein's regime did possess and use chemical weapons against the

**Grasping at straws. U.S. arms inspectors' latest find: touted by *New York Times* as "mobile bioweapons lab," not-so-mobile hulk of a trailer near Mosul had no biological agents, only signs of ... bleach.**

Iranian army during the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War. This was a bloody slaughter between two reactionary capitalist regimes in which the workers and oppressed did not have a side. The Reagan administration in Washington early on backed Hussein's Iraq in order to block the spread of Ayatollah Khomeini's "Islamic Revolution"; then toward the end of the nine-year carnage, the U.S. secretly aided *both* sides in a cynical effort to produce a battlefield stalemate. Bits and pieces of information about the United States' deep involvement in Iraq's use of chemical weapons occasionally seep into the bourgeois press, but these snippets are quickly buried and the dots are not connected to show the whole picture.

After Baghdad's initial successes in the war with Iran, Tehran launched "human wave" attacks with tens of thousands of Iranian soldiers overrunning Iraqi positions. The focus of these attacks was the Fao Peninsula, the spit of land south of the Shatt al-Arab (the river formed by the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates), which is Iraq's only access to the sea. Washington



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was worried that if Khomeini's legions could storm across that narrow corridor, they could break into the vital oil-producing area of the Persian Gulf emirates and eastern Saudi Arabia (whose population is heavily Shiite). With a third the population of Iran, Iraq could not afford such heavy losses. As a last-ditch measure, Hussein began using poison gas. Last year when the Bush administration began citing Iraq's use of gas in the war with Iran as an argument for "regime change" in Baghdad, the *New York Times* (18 August 2002) published an article revealing that: "A covert American program during the Reagan administration provided Iraq with critical battle planning assistance at a time when American intelligence agencies knew that Iraqi commanders would employ chemical weapons in waging the decisive battles of the Iran-Iraq war, according to senior military officers with direct knowledge of the program."

It was long known that the U.S. supplied Iraq with satellite photography of the deployment of Iranian forces. But now the *Times* revealed a "highly classified program in which more than 60 officers of the Defense Intelligence Agency were secretly providing detailed information on Iranian deployments, tactical planning for battles, plans for airstrikes and bomb-damage assessments for Iraq." DIA operative Lt. Col. Rick Francona reported directly from the battlefield on Iraqi use of nerve gas. The senior DIA official at the time, Col. Walter Lang, said the U.S. was "desperate to make sure that Iraq did not lose" the war with Iran. "The use of gas on the battlefield by the Iraqis was not a matter of deep strategic concern," he said. The Pentagon "wasn't so horrified by Iraq's use of gas," said another veteran of the program. "It was just another way of killing people – whether with a bullet or phosgene, it didn't make any difference." But the *Times* article neglected to mention that the U.S. not only knew Iraq was using chemical weapons, but it also supplied the precursor chemicals to produce them as well as "starter strains" for biological weapons.

### Rumsfeld's Handshake with Hussein

Documents declassified in recent months revealed that by November 1983, Secretary of State George Shultz was receiving intelligence reports that the Iraqis were resorting to "almost daily use of CW" against the Iranians and that "Iraq has acquired a CW production capability, primarily from Western firms, including possibly a U.S. foreign subsidiary."<sup>1</sup> Yet simultaneously Ronald Reagan issued National Security Decision Directive 114 (26 November 1983) which declared that the U.S. would regard "any major reversal of Iraq's fortunes as a strategic defeat for the West." It was decided to reestablish diplomatic relations with Hussein. For this purpose, none other than Donald Rumsfeld (who had been secretary of war in the previous Republican administration of Gerald Ford) was dispatched to Baghdad in December 1983 where he cordially met with the Iraqi strongman (see photo) and informed him of



CNN

**Donald Rumsfeld (now U.S. secretary of war) warmly greets Saddam Hussein in December 1983. Rumsfeld was personal envoy of Ronald Reagan to arrange U.S. support for Iraq in war with Iran.**

Washington's new attitude. Rumsfeld was not a government official at the time but emphasized the importance of this "direct contact between an envoy of President Reagan and President Saddam Hussein."

Among other things, Rumsfeld pushed a project for a pipeline from Iraq to the Gulf of Aqaba in Jordan, next to Israel, to be built by Bechtel Corp, Shultz's former company. Rumsfeld was back in Baghdad in March 1984, meeting with Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz the very day the UN cited Iraq's use of chemical weapons against Iran; again he pushed the pipeline plan and offered Israeli support, to no avail (see Institute for Policy Studies, *Crude Vision* [March 2003]). In the wake of the U.S. invasion, Israel has raised the issue of a Baghdad-Haifa pipeline, and Bechtel (once headed again by Shultz) is in line to get the contract (*London Guardian*, 20 April). Accompanying Rumsfeld was National Security Council official Howard Teicher. In a sworn court affidavit in 1995, Teicher wrote that the United States "actively supported the Iraqi war effort by supplying the Iraqis with billions of dollars of credits, by providing military intelligence and advice to the Iraqis, and by closely monitoring third country arms sales to Iraq to make sure Iraq had the military weaponry required" (quoted in *Washington Post*, 30 December 2002). That weaponry included cluster bombs, supplied by a Chilean company at the CIA's request.

It was not just "third country" sales. The *Post* article cited a \$1.5 million order for pesticide chemicals from Dow Chemical, notorious for its production of napalm and Agent Orange for use in Vietnam. Approval was granted even though the export control officer noted that these chemicals would cause "death by asphyxiation." That was not all that U.S. companies supplied. In an article titled "Anthrax for Export" (*Progressive Magazine*, April 1998), William Blum noted that "private American suppliers, licensed by the U.S. Department of Commerce, exported a witch's brew of biological and chemical materials to Iraq," including bacillus anthracis, clostridium botulinum and dozens of other pathogenic biological agents. This was detailed in a staff report for U.S. senator Don Riegle of the Senate Committee on Banking on "U.S. Chemical and Biological Warfare-Related Dual Use Exports to Iraq" (7 October 1994). The report notes that these deadly

<sup>1</sup> These documents can be found on the Internet in the briefing book "Shaking Hands with Saddam Hussein: The U.S. Tilts toward Iraq, 1980-1984" (<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB82/index.htm>) on the site of the National Security Archive, a private group which has obtained large quantities of documentation of the American government's skullduggery around the world.



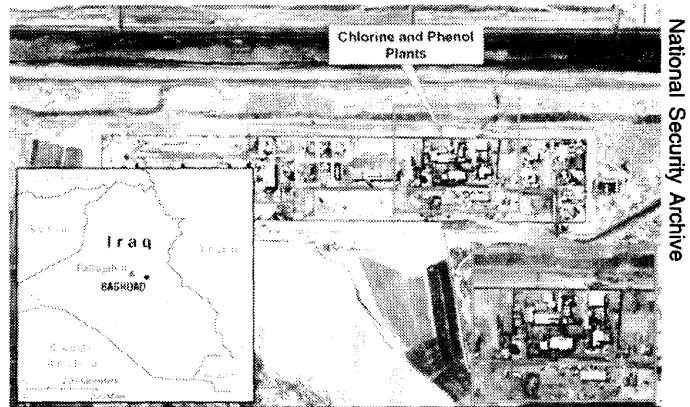
organisms “were not attenuated or weakened and were capable of reproduction,” and it adds: “It was later learned that these microorganisms exported by the United States were identical to those the United Nations inspectors found and removed from the Iraqi biological warfare program.”

So UN inspectors “found” exactly what the U.S. firms sent to Iraq with the permission of the U.S. government – some discovery! Yet to this day the *New York Times* (14 April), while admitting that the means for making Iraq’s chemical weapons “came primarily from Western companies years ago,” pretends that: “The data reveals that firms in Germany and France outstripped all others in selling the most important thing – specialized chemical-industry equipment that is particularly useful for producing poison gas.” So it’s supposedly the perfidious French and Germans at it again! But wait. Explaining an accompanying map, which lists no American firms, the writers state, “The countries of origin are compiled based on the exporter, not the manufacturer, because it was the exporter who decided to sell a sensitive item to Iraq.” So if the U.S. manufacturer exports it to Germany or France for re-export in order to evade U.S. export controls, as regularly occurred, or sends it via its own German or French subsidiary, for the *Times* this counts as a French or German export! This piece, from the Washington-based Wisconsin Project on non-proliferation, is the U.S. war propaganda machine at work again.

### Falluja 2: Britain’s Dirty Secret

In fact, not only did Monsanto and Dow Chemical and dozens of U.S. laboratories supply Iraq with materials for chemical and biological weapons, with full approval of the Department of Commerce, but the very industrial plants cited today by U.S. and British leaders as supposed proof that Iraq has “weapons of mass destruction” were built for Hussein with full knowledge that they could be used to produce CW arms. A case in point is the Falluja 2 plant 80 km. outside of Baghdad. Spy satellite photos of the plant identifying it as a chemical weapons site were published by the CIA, and Colin Powell featured it in arguing for an invasion of Iraq at the UN Security Council in February. The same plant figured prominently in last September’s dossier by Britain’s Joint Intelligence Committee, which claimed that the plant (rebuilt after the 1991 Gulf War) was “formerly associated with the chemical warfare programme.” What Blair didn’t say, but the London *Guardian* (6 March) later revealed, was that the Falluja plant was exported to Iraq by a British subsidiary of a German company, after approval by Margaret Thatcher’s cabinet over internal objections that it could be used to produce CW arms.

The *Guardian* exposé, titled “Britain’s Dirty Secret” shows



**Falluja 2 chlorine plant. CIA published satellite photos of plant, identifying it as chemical weapons site. UN inspection showed plant was inactive.**

that “British ministers knew at the time that the £14 million plant, called Falluja 2, was likely to be used for mustard and nerve gas production.” A Foreign Office minister objected to the sale, but he was overruled by the trade minister in line with London’s policy of backing Hussein against Iran. The plant was built in 1985 by Uhde Ltd., a British subsidiary of Uhde, GmbH of Dortmund, which in turn was a subsidiary of the German chemical giant Hoechst. Not only did the British government approve the deal, it granted an export credit guarantee and eventually paid Uhde (now owned by Thyssen-Krupp) £300,000 when Iraqi payments were interrupted by the Gulf War. If Falluja did produce chemical weapons before 1990, the responsibility is to be laid squarely on the doorstep of the British prime minister’s residence at No. 10 Downing Street.

Whether this was ever a poison gas plant is another question. Repeated UN inspections since last November reported that the plant was inactive. The plant formerly produced chlorine, which can be used to produce epichlorohydrin (a precursor to mustard) or phosphorus trichloride (a precursor of nerve gas). Yet chlorine is the key chemical for water purification, which is what Baghdad said it was used for. The Foreign Office argument in 1985 was that Iraq already had enough chlorine plants. But after the Gulf War, Iraq’s entire chlorine production capacity was destroyed, and the U.S. deliberately targeted Iraqi waterworks. The resulting contaminated water supply produced massive sickness and disease. The Falluja plant’s chlorine was desperately needed for water purification, and there is not a shred of evidence it was used for anything else in the last decade. Yet under UN sanctions, the U.S. refused to allow any import of materials for chlorine production. The Iraqi people paid the price with hundreds of thousands of deaths.

## VI. Iraqi Genocide of Kurds at Halabja?

The key evidence to back up the charge that Saddam Hussein “gassed his own people,” which in turn was the battle cry for the U.S./British attack on Iraq, is the death of several thousand Iraqi Kurds in the town of Halabja in March 1988. (A Kurdish researcher gave the estimate of 3,200 dead.) Various human rights groups who make a profession of pushing for

imperialist military intervention, from Yugoslavia to Iraq, have cited this to portray the Iraqi strongman as a Hitler-like figure, calling up the images of the gassing of Jews in the Nazi death camps. In his weekly radio talk of March 15, on the eve of the invasion, U.S. president George Bush declared:

“Fifteen years ago, Saddam Hussein’s regime ordered a



**Kurdish civilians killed in poison gas attack at Halabja, March 1988. Whose gas killed them? Kurds have been victims of Turkey, Iraq and Iran. Trotskyists call for workers republic of united Kurdistan in socialist federation of the Near East.**

chemical weapons attack on a village in Iraq called Halabja. With that single order, the regime killed thousands of Iraq's Kurdish citizens. Whole families died while trying to flee clouds of nerve and mustard agents descending from the sky. Many who managed to survive still suffer from cancer, blindness, respiratory diseases, miscarriages, and severe birth defects among their children. The chemical attack on Halabja – just one of 40 targeted at Iraq's own people – provided a glimpse of the crimes Saddam Hussein is willing to commit, and the kind of threat he now presents to the entire world. He is among history's cruelest dictators, and he is arming himself with the world's most terrible weapons."

In fact, it is *George Bush and his "regime"* (including both parties of U.S. imperialism) who are armed with a vast arsenal of the most terrible weapons and constitute a mortal threat to the peoples of the world. But given how this incident is waved as a bloody flag, we must ask what happened at Halabja. Was this genocide?

What is certain is that a large number of Kurdish civilians were killed by chemical weapons in Halabja. Photos show horrendous scenes of bodies all over town. What is not at all certain is whose chemical weapons killed them. This has been long disputed, not only by the Iraqi government. For the attack on Halabja took place in the middle of a bitter battle between the Iranian and Iraqi armies, with Kurdish forces participating on the Iranian side. Moreover, during the fighting over this town on the Iran-Iraq border, both sides used gas, as they were regularly doing at that time in battles from north to south. These facts are never mentioned by the U.S. and British governments, which makes their accounts suspect from the outset. Furthermore, Washington's current story conflicts with what Washington's spokesmen said at the time, when the U.S. (and others) said that it appeared that Iranian gas had killed the Kurdish civilians.

The fighting in Halabja began with a joint offensive of

Iranian Revolutionary Guards (*pasdaran*) and Kurdish guerrillas (*peshmargas*), which took the town on the night of 15 March 1988. The Iranians also claimed to have reached the strategic goal of their offensive, the nearby Darbandikhan Lake, whose dam controls a significant part of the water supply of Baghdad. The expected Iraqi counterattack came the next morning with artillery shelling from the north and air strikes. According to a technical analysis by Jean Pascal Zanders of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Later reports stated that Iraqi planes initially bombed the town with mustard agent. When the Kurdish civilians began to flee, the Iranians, thinking that they were

Iraqi troops, fired munitions filled with hydrogen cyanide (HCN)." A 23 March 1988 U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency report stated:

"Most of the casualties in Halabjah were reportedly caused by cyanogen chloride. This agent has never been used by Iraq, but Iran has shown interest in it. Mustard gas casualties in the town were probably caused by Iraqi weapons because Iran has never been noted using that agent."

A joint Dutch-Belgian team of Doctors Without Borders (Artsen zonder Grenzen, an affiliate of the French-based Médecins sans Frontières) which examined bodies a week later found that while there was evidence of mustard gas, many of the victims showed symptoms indicating a cyanide-based compound.

A later UN investigation condemned the use of poison gas against civilians at Halabja but did not determine which country was responsible. A number of sources confirm that most of the deaths were due to a cyanide agent, and also that Iraq did not use HCN at any point while Iran did. "Iraq relied more on persistent agents because it was on the defensive, whereas Iran had developed rapidly dissipating agents of the chlorine and cyanide types in order not to hamper its advances" (Zanders). Even reports accusing Iraq note that shortly after the attack, "Iranian soldiers flitted through the darkened streets, dressed in protective clothing, their faces concealed by gas masks," and that "The Iranians were ready for the influx of refugees. Iranian helicopters arrived... in the late afternoon and military doctors administered atropine injections to the survivors" (from the July 1993 Human Rights Watch report, *Genocide in Iraq*). Moreover, the Iranians immediately began bringing in journalists to take pictures of the Kurdish victims, who were left on the ground for days for filming.

All this was public knowledge for years, although almost never mentioned in the imperialist press, which for more than a decade focused on demonizing the Iraqi regime. It was raised again by an article in the *New York Times* (31 January 2003) by



Photos: Kurdistan Regional Government

**Children killed by poison gas at Halabja. Discoloration of many bodies indicates use of chlorine gas, which Iraq did not have at the time but Iranian army did.**

Stephen Pelletiere, who wrote:

"The truth is, all we know for certain is that Kurds were bombarded with poison gas that day at Halabja. We cannot say with any certainty that Iraqi chemical weapons killed the Kurds. This is not the only distortion in the Halabja story.

"I am in a position to know because, as the Central Intelligence Agency's senior political analyst on Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war, and as a professor at the Army War College from 1988 to 2000, I was privy to much of the classified material that flowed through Washington having to do with the Persian Gulf. In addition, I headed a 1991 Army investigation into how the Iraqis would fight a war against the United States; the classified version of the report went into great detail on the Halabja affair."

Pelletiere noted that treatments of the issue by those pushing for war against Iraq, such as an influential article by Jeffrey Goldberg ("The Great Terror," *New Yorker*, 25 March 2002), don't even mention the reports that Iranian gas may have killed the Kurds. Pelletiere's letter ends, "Until Washington gives us proof of Saddam Hussein's supposed atrocities, why are we picking on Iraq on human rights grounds, particularly when there are so many other repressive regimes Washington supports?" Certainly, this former CIA and Army analyst is "in a position to know."

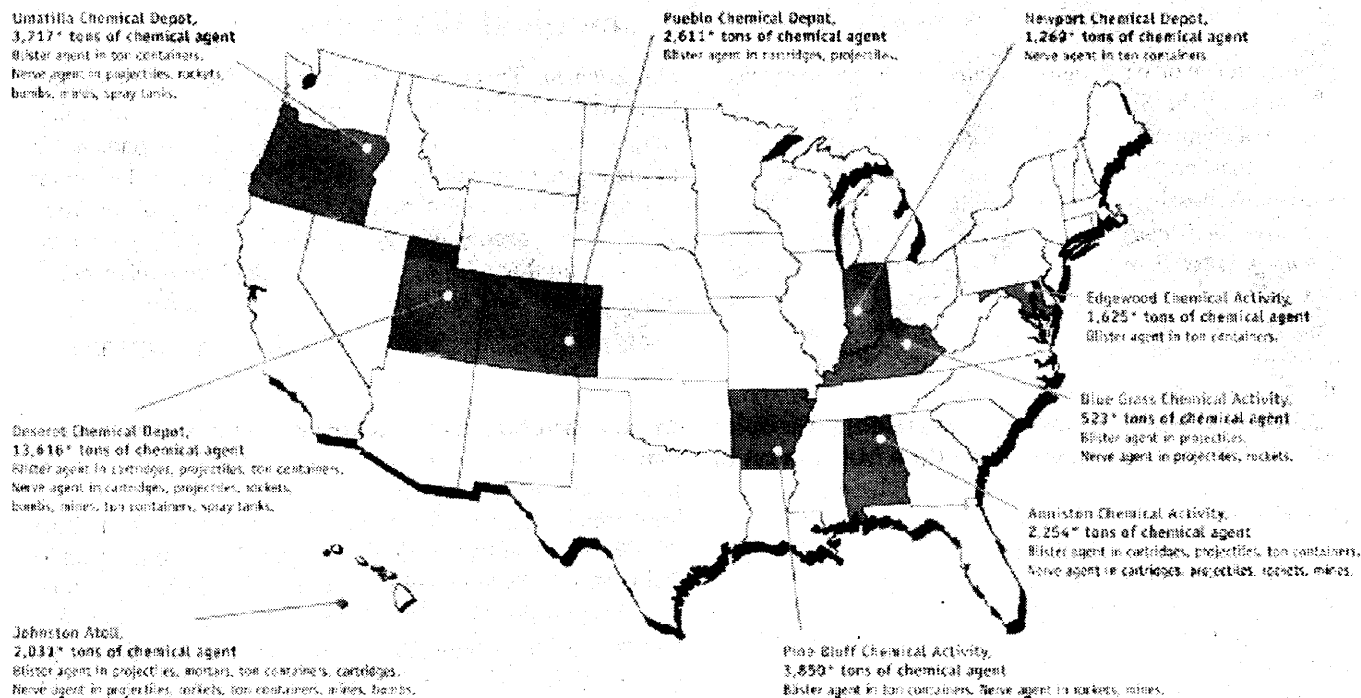
Most U.S. wars in the last century have used an incident supposedly demonstrating the enemy's perfidy in order to stampede the population into imperialist slaughter. The Spanish-American war which launched the U.S. colonial empire was fought on the battle cry of "Remember the *Maine*!" even though there is no evidence that the Spanish or Cuban rebels blew up the USS *Maine* in Havana harbor in 1898, and plenty to suggest either that the explosion was an accident or that the Americans may have blown it up themselves. The U.S. entered World War II after the Japanese "sneak attack" on Pearl Harbor, which top officials in Washington were amply informed was coming, but ignored in the expectation that an attack on "U.S. soil" would overcome antiwar sentiment. (They clearly underestimated the toll the attack would take on the U.S. Pacific Fleet.) In the Vietnam War, the Gulf of Tonkin incident, a supposed attack by North Vietnamese torpedo boats in August 1964 which never took place, was used to justify the bombing of Hanoi. And now, since the U.S. has

been unable to come up with any evidence that Iraq has had chemical or biological weapons for the last decade, Halabja is being used as the latest *casus belli* for Bush's invasion of Iraq.

With the present publicly available information, it is not possible to say definitively what took place at Halabja. But even if the Saddam Hussein regime were responsible for indiscriminately gassing and killing Kurdish civilians there, it is the height of cynicism for U.S. rulers to use this a "justification" for an American war on Iraq. Not only is Washington speaking with a forked tongue, having said at the time that Iran was responsible for the gas attack on the Kurds. As we have shown, the U.S. had been supplying Iraq with the chemicals and plants to produce the poison gas it was using in the Iran-Iraq war, and indeed, it was precisely in early 1988 that a Defense Intelligence Agency colonel was touring battlefields with Iraqi officers. It is a fact that Saddam Hussein's forces brutally repressed the Kurds in northern Iraq and the Shiites in the south. It is also a fact that the Iranian government, both under the shah and under the mullahs, brutally suppressed the Kurds in Iran, killing thousands. Where are the U.S. complaints about that? And it is an indisputable fact that Turkey has for decades suppressed the Kurdish population of Anatolia with unparalleled ferocity, killing over 40,000 and wiping thousands of villages from the face of the earth. Yet Turkey is a strategic ally, and the U.S. *justifies and actively participates in the repression of Turkish Kurds* (as do the "peace-loving" German imperialists).

Hussein's Ba'ath nationalist regime in Baghdad and Khomeini's Islamic regime in Tehran were together responsible for the carnage of the Iran-Iraq war in which over a million people were killed. But *so was the U.S.*, which armed both sides of this reactionary war. (Donald Rumsfeld's handshake with Saddam in 1984 was followed by Oliver North's present of a Bible, a cake and planeloads of Hawk anti-aircraft missiles to Iran in 1986.) As the Internationalist Group noted in our 20 March statement on the war on Iraq:

"The many crimes of Hussein are the crimes of the imperialists who backed him. And it will take revolution by the Iraqi workers, Sunni and Shi'ite alike, mobilized independently of and against the imperialist aggressors, to put an end to the likes of Hussein and his former patrons."



Map shows major U.S. chemical weapons stockpiles. (Map by Federation of American Scientists)

## VII. The U.S. Arsenal of Chemical and Bioweapons

Who is it that actually has chemical weapons today? In his State of the Nation speech to Congress on January 28, George Bush devoted a large section to his case for war against Iraq. He argued that: "Our intelligence officials estimate that Saddam Hussein had the materials to produce as much as 500 tons of sarin, mustard and VX nerve agent." This is chicken feed compared to the massive U.S. arsenal of CW weapons:

- As of July 1997, the United States had stockpiled 31,500 tons of mustard, VX and GB (sarin) weapons, in addition to untold quantities of "non-stockpile" chemical weapons to be found on military installations in 39 out of the 50 states.

Bush argued that "Saddam Hussein had upwards of 30,000 munitions capable of delivering chemical agents." Yet the U.S. not only has munitions *capable* of delivering CW agents:

- As of July 1997, the United States had stockpiled *more than 3 million* (3,095,000) already-assembled chemical weapons in the U.S.
- Moreover, 88,000 of these U.S. poison gas weapons are stored at the Pine Bluff, Arkansas chemical weapons center alone, near a largely black community, which has been a center of the U.S. CW weapons program since World War II. Even larger amounts are stored in other sites.
- 660,000 of these chemical weapons are stored in Anniston, Alabama, which is complaining that the mortar shells and rockets are leaking, and plans to burn them are a threat to nearby black neighborhoods.
- 780,000 chemical munitions are stored in Pueblo, Colorado, with its heavily Latino population.
- 1,100,000 chemical munitions (mainly GB) are stored in at

the Tooele ordnance depot in Utah. In the fall of 2000, the U.S. Department of Energy "conducted tests over Salt Lake City using a gas meant to mimic a toxic cloud" (*Los Angeles Times*, 8 October 2001). But any toxic cloud over the Desert Kingdom (Utah) isn't going to come from Iraq (or North Korea) but from the huge arsenal of sarin 25 miles from downtown.

In the State of the Union speech, Bush argued that "Saddam Hussein had materials sufficient to produce more than 38,000 liters of botulinum toxin." This is the main ingredient of the popular cosmetic surgery product Botox, and the U.S. produces vast quantities of it every year.

And, Bush argued, in 1999 "Saddam Hussein had biological weapons sufficient to produce over 25,000 liters of anthrax" (whatever that means).

- Yet U.S. Army scientists have been producing weapons-grade anthrax for years at the Dugway Proving Ground in Utah and at Fort Detrick in Maryland, even though the U.S. biological warfare program supposedly shut down in 1969. Moreover, this weaponized anthrax is "virtually identical to the powdery spores used in the mail attacks that have killed five people," as the *Baltimore Sun* (12 December 2001) revealed at the time of the post-September 11 mail attacks.

Meanwhile, the U.S. invaders in Iraq have so far come up with:

- Zero (0) sarin, mustard or VX chemical weapons;
- Zero (0) chemical munitions;
- Zero (0) botulinum toxin; and
- Zero (0) anthrax.

Which is not to say that they won't eventually "find" (that is, plant) some CW material in order to justify their invasion.

## VII. The Bush Gang and Chemical Weapons

The cynicism of Washington's claims that it had to invade Iraq because of the Saddam Hussein regime's hypothetical possession of chemical and biological weapons is underscored by the fact that, not only does the U.S. have huge stocks of such weapons, possibly the largest in the world, but *the Bush regime has consistently opposed international conventions outlawing possession and use of CW weapons!* In November 2001, U.S. representatives at a United Nations conference on the 1972 Biological Warfare Convention mounted a publicity operation to "name and shame" countries it claims were violating the treaty. Tops on the list were Iraq, North Korea and "probably Iran." As the Iraqi delegate rightly noted, this stunt meant the U.S. was "envisaging Iraq as a target, a second target for an attack" after Afghanistan. Yet only months beforehand, in July 2001, the chief U.S. negotiator walked out of a session preparing a protocol aimed at strengthening monitoring of the BWC. Washington's rejection of the protocol led to its demise. Many people wondered why.

Among the reasons given by the Bush administration was that it *opposed international inspection or even disclosure of American bioweapons facilities.* The U.S. had long claimed it had terminated all work on biological arms in 1969, but a couple of months after its dramatic walkout, the *New York Times* (4 September 2001) revealed that Washington was developing new germ weapons: the Defense Department built a small germ weapons plant at the Nevada nuclear test site; the Central Intelligence Agency developed a cluster bomb designed to disperse bomblets that would release germs in a mist; a Department of Energy program is testing the aerosol dispersal of "simulants," while its budget indicates plans to test "actual agents" (i.e., weaponized germs); and the Defense Intelligence Agency has been seeking to produce a more powerful strain of anthrax. The DOD, DOE, CIA and DIA programs are only the ones which have been leaked to the public. Beyond these specific projects, a number of scientists are now asking if "perhaps the United States rejected the protocol not just because it is conducting secret, offensively oriented 'biodefense' programs, but because it is committed to continuing and expanding them" (see "Back to Bioweapons?" *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, January-February 2003).

As for *chemical weapons*, U.S. war propaganda made much of the fact that Iraq didn't sign the Chemical Weapons Convention, negotiated in 1993. What Washington's disinformation mills didn't mention is that *the present inhabitants of the White House fought tooth and nail against U.S. ratification of the CWC.* At Senate hearings in April 1997, the speakers against the treaty banning chemical weapons included former (and present) secretary of war *Donald Rumsfeld*; former secretary of war (and current vice president) *Dick Cheney*; former deputy assistant (presently assistant) secretary of war *Douglas Feith*; and former assistant secretary of war (who was until recently chairman and is still a member of the Defense Policy Board) *Richard Perle*. Another prominent opponent of the CWC was the former deputy under (presently under) secretary of war

*Dov Zakheim.* This is precisely the gang of left-over hard-line Cold Warriors that has been pushing the U.S. war drive against Iraq, using the pretext that Saddam Hussein has, or had, or was trying to get, or had the materials to make, chemical weapons but was resisting international inspections of Iraqi facilities. *Yet the main argument these war hawks made against the CWC is that it would open the U.S. to the kind of inspections to which they were subjecting Iraq!*

### Israel's Chemical and Biological Warfare Program

But there was another reason behind their objections to the Chemical Weapons Convention. In Rumsfeld's Senate testimony he complained that the CWC "could conceivably disarm democratic, friendly, non aggressive nations, that either do not have chemical weapons, or if they have them would be most unlikely to use them against us" (Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearings, 8 April 1997). And who might that be? The answer is immediately obvious: *Israel.* These are all prominent members of the Zionist lobby in Washington: Feith was a campaign advisor for Israeli right-wing premier Benjamin Netanyahu; together with Perle was a co-author of the June 1996 policy paper "A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm" calling for Israeli domination of the Near East; Perle, Rumsfeld, Feith, Zakheim along with Elliot Abrams, Paul Wolfowitz and other current Bush administration officials jointly wrote a letter to then president Bill Clinton in February 1998 demanding that his bombing of Baghdad (Operation Desert Fox) be turned into full-scale war for "regime change" in Iraq.

Note also that while Israel signed the CWC, *it has not ratified it.* Why? As the Federation of American Scientists tersely noted, "Israel has nuclear and chemical weapons, and an offensive BW program." A big one.

We have written of the Israeli nuclear program, which includes *hundreds* of nuclear weapons and delivery systems



**Israel cargo jet crashed into Amsterdam housing project in October 1992, killing 43. Illnesses among residents and rescue workers sparked inquiry and revelation that El Al plane was carrying chemicals for deadly sarin nerve gas.**

capable of striking every country in the Near East (and the former Soviet Union), and whose scope has been known since it was revealed by the courageous Israeli nuclear technician Mordechai Vanunu in 1986 (see "Free Mordechai Vanunu!" *The Internationalist* No. 14, September-October 2002). A corner of the cloak of secrecy covering the Zionist regime's chemical and biological weapons program was lifted as a result of the 1992 crash of an El Al cargo jet after takeoff from Schiphol Airport in the Netherlands when it hit an Amsterdam apartment block, killing 47. Men in white suits were seen sifting through the debris. Up to 2,000 residents and firemen later reported health complaints. Six years later, the Dutch paper *NRC Handelsblad* (30 September 1998) published a cargo mani-

fest showing that the flight was carrying 800 kilograms of depleted uranium and the chemicals to make 190 liters of the nerve gas sarin. It was destined for the Israeli Institute of Biological Research at Nes Ziona. A biologist formerly associated with the IIBR told the *London Times* (4 October 1998): "There is hardly a single known or unknown form of chemical or biological weapon...which is not manufactured at the institute."

Given how the Israeli authorities reacted to Vanunu's revelations (kidnapping him and imprisoning incommunicado for the last 17 years), it's clear that the Zionist state and its defenders will go to great lengths to prevent any inspection of its chemical and bioweapons programs.

## VIII. Smash Imperialism Through International Socialist Revolution!

Much of the above has appeared in various publications. Liberals and reformists have written about how the British colonialists used poison gas in Iraq, how the U.S. and British air forces firebombed Dresden, how the United States napalmed Vietnam and poisoned the country with Agent Orange, how Washington knew of Hussein's use of chemical weapons against Iran, and even how the U.S. supplied Baghdad with chemicals and biological agents for its CW and BW programs in the 1980s. In each case, what they seek to show is the hypocrisy of the U.S. rulers as the latter go to war against yet another of their former Third World allies and puppet dictators. But they do not show the broader picture. There is plenty of hypocrisy coming out of the Bush and Blair propaganda machines, to be sure, but what this all shows, taken together, is that there *are* forces whose possession of weapons of mass destruction is a threat to humanity, who have used them against their own and many other peoples, and who are fully prepared to plunge the world into radioactive barbarism. *It is the imperialists, with U.S. imperialism in the forefront – not Saddam Hussein's Iraq – who constitute this clear and present danger to humanity.*

*It is not enough to expose the imperialists' boundless hypocrisy, it is necessary to fight to defeat them.* As Lenin and Trotsky stood with the Rif Berbers against French and Spanish colonialism in the 1920s, as the Fourth International defended Ethiopia against Italian imperialism in the '30s, as revolutionaries defended North Korea against the U.S. Army wearing UN shoulder patches in the Korean War of the '50s and fought for the victory of the Vietnamese Revolution in the 1960s and '70s, as Trotskyists hailed the Red Army in Afghanistan and supported its struggles against "holy warriors" (among them one Osama bin Laden) dispatched by the CIA against the Soviet Union in the '80s, as we stood with Iraq against the imperialists in the first Gulf War, defended Yugoslavia against the U.S./NATO war in 1995 (Bosnia and Croatia) and again in '99 (Kosovo), and defended Afghanistan in 2001, so it is necessary in this latest imperialist dirty war to *defend Iraq and mobilize the international working class to defeat the U.S. colonialist invasion and occupation.* So too it will be necessary to defend the North Korean, Vietnamese, Cuban

and Chinese deformed workers state against the next imperialist war that is already being prepared in the bowels of the Pentagon.

This history makes clear that the fight cannot be simply against a particular war, for the string of wars is unbroken. It cannot be in support of other imperialists, such as the French and Germans, who joined with the U.S. in its previous wars and who are today policing Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia and Afghanistan in the wake of American-led imperialist attacks. It cannot be in political alliance with "Third World" nationalists, who at best stood on the sidelines (where they were not secretly cooperating with Washington): they are only angling for a deal with imperialism. It cannot be in alliance with any capitalist political force, for this history makes abundantly clear that the cause of these wars is capitalist imperialism, and they will continue to occur until the imperialist system is overthrown. As we expose the hypocritical rhetoric spouted by the warmongers to grease their machinery of death, we must direct the struggle to mobilize the social force that has the power to defeat them: the international working class.

Reflecting on the horrors of the first imperialist world war, the German communist Rosa Luxemburg declared that the alternatives facing mankind were *socialism or barbarism*. Today, 85 years later, the war on Iraq constitutes a giant step toward a new inter-imperialist world war, only this time by forces armed with vast arsenals of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction. Rather than spreading treacherous pacifist illusions, which mislead and demoralize those who would wage a serious fight against the imperialist slaughter, the League for the Fourth International has called forthrightly for *class war against the imperialist war*. We also seek, within the limits of our very modest forces, to carry out and spark actions aimed at mobilizing the tremendous power of the working class. We fight to build revolutionary workers parties around the globe in the struggle to smash the imperialist system through workers insurrections at the head of all the oppressed. This was the banner under which Lenin and Trotsky led 1917 October Revolution in Russia and began the construction of the first workers state in history. *International socialist revolution is the only road to peace.* ■

## From Baghdad to Harlem and Oakland: Imperialist War Breeds Racist Cop Terror

# Alberta Spruill: Victim of NYPD Killer Elite

MAY 20 – It was 6 a.m. A squad of a dozen heavily armed cops prepare to storm a building in the middle of Harlem. They're supposedly looking for an arsenal of guns, stashes of drugs and vicious dogs. They get the word to go. Without warning, a battering ram breaks down the door of Apartment 6F at 310 W. 143rd Street. A deafening flash grenade is heaved into the apartment. What do they find? No guns, no drugs, no dogs, only a terrified Alberta Spruill, a 57-year-old city worker who was just about to leave for her job. She was coughing and screaming "I can't breathe, I can't breathe." The cops handcuff the quiet church-going black woman, but she tells them she has a heart condition. An ambulance is finally dispatched at 6:32. Upon arrival at the hospital at 8 a.m., an hour and a half later, Alberta was pronounced dead.

This was not a "tragic mistake," an "unfathomable incident," as New York Police Department commissioner Raymond Kelly and Mayor Michael Bloomberg claim. Alberta Spruill is dead because she was black. ***This was racist police murder!***

Police spokesmen claim that they've never had problems before. Why, they do these "no-knock" raids all the time. They've carried out 1,900 search warrants so far this year. It was carried out by the Emergency Services Unit, which is "specially trained" for such paramilitary raids. They claim that the grenades are "designed not to hurt people" and that they are a "tool of last resort" (*Daily News*, 17 May). Sure, they only kill people, and they've already been used 85 times this year. What that says is that this kind of Gestapo-like tactics has become second nature for the NYPD. Why did it take so long to get her to the hospital? And how many of those breaking-and-entering raids are carried out in white middle-class or upper-class neighborhoods below 96th Street in Manhattan? The capitalist media don't even bother to ask the questions. They don't want to know the answers. Their job is to cover up the cop terror.

Racist terror has been used against black people in Harlem and all over New York since time immemorial, from the days of slavery through the anti-draft race riot in the Civil War and the brutal repression of the "Harlem riots" of the 1960s. More recently, flagrantly racist mayors like Democrat Ed Koch and Republican Rudolph Giuliani would egg on the killers in blue (and the ESU stormtroopers in black uniforms). The media credit the current mayor and police chief for issuing an apology, contrasting them to Giuliani who regularly smeared the victims of cop killings, declaring that the Haitian Patrick Dorismond was "no choir boy." Right after taking office, Bloomberg said the likelihood of another cop execution like that of Amadou



Mariela Lombard/Daily News

**Members of Coalition of Black Trade Unionists protest in front of building where Alberta Spruill (inset) lived. Victim of racist cop terror was long-time member of DC 37, Local 1549.**

Diallo in the Bronx was "diminished" in his administration. But here it is again: wanton police murder. Apology or no apology, the fact is that Amadou was killed in a hail of 41 cop bullets and Alberta was killed by the terrifying explosion of a police grenade, just because they were "breathing while black."

Moreover, these police-state tactics are escalating in the climate set by (and often in direct connection with) the terrorist "war on terror" being waged by Washington, first against Afghanistan and now against Iraq. As U.S. soldiers fire into crowds of protesters in Baghdad and Falluja, the capitalist cops are running roughshod over blacks, Latinos, immigrants, workers and protesters "at home." In February you had massive cop harassment of half a million people who sought to march past the United Nations to protest the war on Iraq. Bloomberg's and Kelly's cops turned the East Side of Manhattan into a Stalag of police pens, using police horses to trample demonstrators and interrogating prisoners about their politics. Nor is the escalation of cop violence a local phenomenon. On the West Coast, antiwar demonstrators and longshoremen at the port of Oakland were set upon by shotgun-wielding police

who fired supposedly “non-lethal” rubber bullets, pellets and dowels point-blank into protesters at the beginning of April.

With the Fatherland Security department’s color-coded “terror alert” system (in which New York City is constantly on orange), the NYPD has its ongoing Operation Atlas. Troops armed with automatic rifles stand menacingly at subway entrances. For what? Someone is going to hijack the station and take it to Jersey? It’s only a matter of time until some youth is shot in the back with an M-16 for the “crime” of jumping a turnstile. (Meanwhile, the MTA cooks the books, handing hundreds of millions of dollars to the banks so they can claim a deficit and extort a fare hike from the pockets of poor and working people.) Throughout inner-city neighborhoods the police frenzy can be felt. Only three weeks ago, trigger-happy NYPD cops shot two black men dead on the streets of Brooklyn in the space of two days.

Meanwhile, the Bloomberg administration has launched an offensive against city workers. Friday was the day they handed out 2,000 pink slips telling long-time employees they no longer had a job. They started it off with a bang, leaving one city worker dead. The union bureaucrats whine that they have offered hundreds of millions of concessions to the city (just like their predecessors did in the bank-engineered “fiscal crisis” under Democrat Abe Beame in the 1970s, and under black Democrat David Dinkins in the ’90s). But they have done exactly *nothing* to bring out the power of labor to stop the wave of layoffs and cop terror. Instead, Municipal Labor Coalition leader Randi Weingarten of the United Federation of Teachers grotesquely parades around with the heads of the cops’ and detectives’ “unions.” We say: cops are not workers, they are the armed fist of the class enemy. We demand: *Police out of the unions!*

The list of black victims of the NYPD goes on and on: Eleanor Bumpurs, the Bronx grandmother gunned down in her home; Amadou Diallo, executed by an NYPD death squad on his doorstep; Patrick Dorismond, shot to death in a cop “sting” operation, and now Alberta Spruille, a city worker slain in her apartment by a NYPD Gestapo raid. Under Republicans and



John Marshall Mantel/AP

**CAPITALIST POLITICIANS DO “DAMAGE CONTROL”**  
**Sharpton shakes hands with Mayor Bloomberg in front of NYPD chief Kelly at funeral for Alberta Spruille.**

Democrats alike, whether with Giuliani insults or hypocritical Bloomberg “apologies,” the system of racist police terror continues. The press pats city rulers on the back because there has been little protest over the latest police killing (“A Response More Mournful Than Enraged,” *New York Times*, 19 May). They credit a “changing climate” and the “wait-and-see” attitude of Al Sharpton, among others. Black Democrat Sharpton declared when Bloomberg took office that it’s not just a different tone, “it’s a whole different sound system.” Now that he’s running for president and trying to look respectable and “responsible,” Sharpton soft-soaps the racist killer cops and calls instead for going after ... Osama bin Laden.

There should be an outpouring of mass outrage, bringing the workers movement and the oppressed into the streets against

“The cops asked nobody, neighbor on the floor or building worker, who was living in this apartment. They just broke down the door, threw in the grenade and here they come, Boom! Charge! Let’s go! We’re tough! Bulletproof fronts, great big guns. They crashed into her and put handcuffs on ....

George Bush is a Jesus freak and a television tough guy.

He wants Americans to replace the saliva in their mouths with blood. He creates the national atmosphere of hate and fear and crackdown and violence.

His creed of scathing contempt and preventive detention and pre-emptive bombing strikes at the smallest country he can find has turned this country’s life into dreadful fear and hate everywhere.

And in Harlem on Friday, it helped cause the death of Alberta Spruille, who worked every day of her life and went to church every Sunday.”

—Jimmy Breslin, *Daily News*, 18 May 2003

### **Defend African Immigrants!**

### **Ousmane Zongo, Amadou Diallo, Who’s Next?**

With sickening regularity, the NYPD has struck again. This time New York cops killed a woodworker from the West African nation of Burkina Faso during a raid on a Chelsea mini-storage facility. The police commando from Staten Island acted like it was in enemy territory, found a black man who didn’t speak English and killed him. We demand: *Full citizenship rights for all immigrants! For labor/black/immigrant protest against racist police terror!*





Harlem protest against cop murder of Alberta Spruill.

cutbacks and cop terror. To defeat the imperialist war and colonial occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq, to defeat the bosses' war on working people, oppressed minorities and immigrants in the U.S., it is necessary to mobilize the power of the international working class. Against bourgeois politicians from Bloomberg to Sharpton, we need to build a revolutionary workers party. Police brutality and racist terror are endemic to capitalism. It will take socialist revolution to sweep away the killer cops forever.

**“War on Drugs” Is War on the Ghettos, the Barrios and All Working People!**

**Oust the Bureaucrats,  
Break with the Democrats,  
Build a Revolutionary Workers Party!**

**Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!**

## Sykes and Picot...

*continued from page 36*

well – assuring them that by fighting alongside Britain, they were fighting for their own freedom. With the help of Arab fighters, the British were eventually victorious against the Turks from Jerusalem to Baghdad. However, as German/Polish Communist Karl Radek later remarked: “The truth is that British capitalism has grabbed Mesopotamia not in order to liberate the Arabs from Turkish oppression, but to liberate the Arabs from the petroleum which might have made them a rich nationality in the East” (address to the Congress of the Peoples of the East, 2 September 1920).

The Ottoman government surrendered to the Allies in October 1918, and the empire was formally dismembered with the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres, along the main lines of the Sykes-Picot Agreement. The agreement was not followed to the letter, however. In a brutal war waged against the Kurds, the British seized the former Ottoman province of Mosul. According to Sykes-Picot, Mosul (today the Kurdish area in northern Iraq) was supposed to come

under French control. But oil had been discovered there, the British had an army and an air force already in place, and there is no honor among thieves.

As they moved against the Arab and Kurdish masses to take control of the oil-rich regions, the British used machine-guns, artillery, and aerial bombardment to murder and terrorize the civilian population. The slaughter had the full support of the British “orientalists.” After the British army crushed the Arab revolt of 1920, “Lawrence of Arabia” complained in the London *Observer*, “It is odd that we do not use poison gas on these occasions.” And on the next occasion, in 1921, the British imperialists indeed used poison gas against Iraqi and Kurdish insurgents.

Among the artificial countries Britain created out of its portion of the Ottoman spoils was Iraq, which cobbled together three quite distinct Ottoman provinces – Baghdad in the center, whose population was Sunni Muslims; Basra in the south, which was largely populated by Shiite Muslims, and Mosul in the north, which was heavily Kurdish. The oil of the new country was divided among British, French, Dutch and American oil companies. (Standard Oil got a slice in return for U.S. backing of the new imperialist alliance against Soviet Russia.) The indigenous population wouldn’t get a drop of the “black gold” or the fabulous profits it produced.

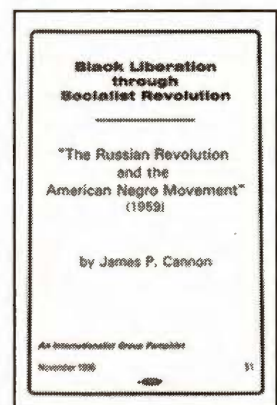
The world might never have known about the Sykes-Picot Agreement were it not for the Bolsheviks. On 8 November 1917, the day after the workers in Russia seized power for themselves, Lenin announced that the new Soviet government would conduct open diplomacy, as well as canceling and revealing all the secret treaties that the preceding Russian tsarist and Kerensky governments had been party to or knew of. Leon Trotsky was named commissar of foreign affairs, and two weeks later the Bolsheviks fulfilled their promise by publishing the treaties, Sykes-Picot included.

This action caused consternation among the imperialists, for it not only exposed their secret war aims but also their double-dealing, promising the same territories to two parties. In his June 1920 letter to British workers, Lenin later remarked that “without a revolution, we could never have obtained the secret documents of the predatory governments of the capitalist class.” ■

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## Spectre of Shachtman as SL/LRP Centrists Debate *Revolutionaries and the Test of War*

*The following leaflet was distributed at a May 10 debate between the Spartacist League and the League for the Revolutionary Party in New York City.*

The invasion and colonial occupation of Iraq by U.S. imperialism and its British junior partner spells untold misery for the Iraqi masses, who have gone through two wars and a decade of murderous United Nations sanctions. Meanwhile, the maneuvering among the erstwhile imperialist allies, now rivals, over the seizure of this oil-rich Near Eastern country has moved the world a giant step in the direction of a thermo-nuclear third world war. Wars and revolutions are the acid test for parties and leaderships, for as Trotsky wrote in *My Life*, "in history war has often been the mother of revolution." More specifically, in our epoch *imperialist war is the mother of socialist revolution*.

The utterly reformist politics of the bulk of "the left" in the United States were laid bare. Once again, various social democratic, Stalinist and Stalinoid outfits devoted themselves to building an "antiwar movement" bringing together "everyone who wants to say no to Bush's war," as the International Socialist Organization put it. What that comes down to is offering Democratic politicians a podium and a "peace" program that the most mealy-mouthed liberal could support, while policing the "movement" to keep "militants" in line. This is an example of what Trotskyists refer to as a "popular front," whose purpose is to chain the workers, minorities, students and leftists to one or another section of the bourgeoisie. Such class-colaborationist alliances are directly counterposed to sharp class struggle, and serve as a roadblock to revolution.

The pseudo-socialists who run the various competing coalitions try to lay low so as not to scare off the liberals. The Workers World Party, a Stalinoid group currently doing business as ANSWER (also via the International Action Center), organizes the more traditional liberal-left lash-ups, featuring former Attorney General Ramsey Clark and black Democrat Jesse Jackson. The Maoists of the Revolutionary Communist Party set up Not In Our Name (NION), a "peace movement" for the "me generation." The social-democratic ISO specializes in campus peace groups. Despite the organizational wrangling, the coalitions are barely distinguishable politically with their social-patriotic slogans – jobs not war, books not bombs, no (American) blood for (Iraqi) oil. Yet they have often been outflanked on the right by the flag-waving "peace is patriotic" crowd, such as United for Peace (UFP) and Win Without War (WWW), who call for "UN inspections" of Iraq, "support our troops," etc.

All of these coalitions (ANSWER, NION, UFP, WWW) pose as peace doves opposing the war hawks *on the bourgeois political terrain*. A headline in the ISO's *Socialist Worker* (11 April) sums it up: "A look at the twisted priorities

of Washington's war machine: Guns vs. butter." They say of Bush ignoring antiwar protests, "And he calls this a democracy?" (*SW*, 28 February) and wonder "What happened to the 'liberation'?" (*SW*, 4 April). In the face of the relentless U.S. war drive, they lamely chant, "Stop the War." But the liberals who talk of "our government" only worry about a *losing* colonial war. So once Baghdad was taken and it appeared that Bush could get away with it, the "movement" disappeared. The same happened in Vietnam as soon as U.S. troops were withdrawn, though the war lasted two more years. Sow bourgeois "peace" politics and this is what you reap. Their answer to the endless wars of U.S. imperialism is "2, 3, many antiwar movements." They quibble about policy and priorities instead of a revolutionary fight to bring down the capitalist system that generates the wars.

To the left of the reformists and liberals there are a number of groups which criticize the politics of the leaders of the "antiwar" movement. Two of them are debating in New York City on May 10, the Spartacist League (SL) and the League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP). Both say they defend Iraq against the U.S. invasion, they talk of socialism and workers revolution, and claim to be Trotskyists. However, in both cases they are centrists whose words do not match their deeds, and who do not present a revolutionary class opposition to the imperialist war. In important ways, they conciliate "their own" capitalist rulers. Although the SL and LRP have disputes, one standing to the left of the other on different issues, they also have an increasing number of common elements, which may help explain why this debate is taking place. Interestingly, behind the opportunist stances taken by one and the other one can discern the ghost of the anti-Trotskyist renegade Max Shachtman.

### LRP: Shachtmanism and Tailism

To begin with the smaller of the two, the LRP's Trotskyist pretenses are downright ludicrous. Here is an organization that declares that the Soviet Union ceased to be any kind of a workers state by 1939, just as Shachtman and his followers ran out of the Trotskyist movement screaming the same thing. The LRP holds that Trotsky's analysis in *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936) of the dual character of the bureaucratically degenerated workers state under Stalin was flawed by "errors" and a "central theoretical weakness." While the LRP makes mild criticisms of Shachtman's rightward evolution, they gloss over the fact that he was accompanied much of the way by LRP founder Sy Landy. That the LRP today prefers the term "statisfied capitalism" to Shachtman's "bureaucratic collectivism" and Tony Cliff's "state capitalism" makes little difference, for these anti-Marxist "theories" are merely the excuse for abandoning Soviet defensism. Marx taught that history progresses through

class struggles, and in a strike, war or revolution the bottom line, as the miners' song says, is *which side are you on*.

The LRP's lineage, methodology and politics place it squarely in the Shachtman/Cliff "Third Camp" of those who refused to defend the Soviet Union against imperialist attack when the chips were down: Shachtman in WWII, Cliff in the Korean War, and the LRP at the onset of the second anti-Soviet Cold War. Today the LRP strikes a militant pose, proclaiming in a March 21 leaflet "Defend Iraq – Defeat U.S. Imperialism!" But in Afghanistan in 1980, where Trotskyists *hailed* the Soviet military intervention there against the counterrevolutionary onslaught of Islamic fundamentalist *mujahedin* (holy warriors) financed, armed and led by the CIA, the Shachtmanite LRP *condemned* Soviet intervention and refused to defend the Soviet army and the weak Afghan reform regime in what it pretended was a fight between "two imperialist superpowers" (see the LRP's "Afghanistan and Pseudo-Trotskyism," *Socialist Voice*, Summer 1980).

The May 10 LRP-SL debate has been preceded by some polemics, in which the SL newspaper *Workers Vanguard* (17 January) takes the LRP to task for tailing after imperialist liberals in the "peace" movement and apologizing for Arab nationalism over the Palestinian struggle. The LRP responds with its usual classless paeans to "mass struggle." To be sure, it criticizes Democrats like Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton who appear on the podiums of "antiwar" demonstrations. But the LRP just wants to be up there on the platform with Jackson and Sharpton, giving a *left cover to this class collaboration*. Thus the LRP calls for building antiwar protests "to be built as genuine united fronts, where all voices are heard, including that of revolutionaries – not just those who support the Democrats and other pro-imperialist liberals. We also fight within the movement for proletarian leadership" (*Proletarian Revolution*, Spring 2003). In other words, the LRP declares that it helps build "united fronts" with pro-imperialist liberals who simply have tactical differences on the particulars of the war.

Where Trotskyists call to drive the bourgeois politicians out of protests against imperialist war, counterposing *class war* to their coalitions for class peace, these latter-day Shachtmanite worshippers of the mass movement want to get in on the action, "fighting" for "proletarian leadership" of these *bourgeois* "peace" coalitions. The LRP's fundamental objection to the ISO/RCP/WWP crowd is that they've been left out in the cold. Not to worry, if the LRP behaves and doesn't cause too many waves, the demo organizers will occasionally let them up there to spout off a little empty leftist rhetoric. The LRP, which was willfully blind to the class line dividing the Soviet Union from imperialism, doesn't see it anywhere else either. It's in the nature of Shachtmanism, and it would get in the way of their opportunist sidling up to the leaders of "mass struggle." Their line on the antiwar pop front is the same as their line everywhere else. In New York City, the LRP has repeatedly called on Sharpton to organize protests against this and that, chanting his trademark slogan, "No justice, no peace" while occasionally adding "no profits" and tacking on a few

criticisms of the Democrats as a fig leaf.

It's all *bourgeois pressure politics*, and it's the same program the LRP pursues in its work in the unions. Responding to the SL's polemics, the LRP boasts of "our well-known leadership in struggles within trade unions," which is a lot of baloney. What is true is that, in contrast to the SL, which hasn't undertaken struggle inside the mass organizations of the working class in years, the LRP does do some. But their work in the New York City subways is essentially that of left-talking bureaucrats. In February 2000, the LRP gave "critical support" to the New Directions slate in Transport Workers Union Local 100, a bunch of out-bureaucrats who got into office by suing the union in court, and got its supporter elected as a mid-level bureaucrat as a quid pro quo. The LRP made some pro forma criticisms of the ND suit, but it doesn't oppose dragging the unions into the bosses' courts *on principle*. Both in 1999 and against last year, the LRP called for a transit strike. But when two track workers were killed on the job in one week, the "Revolutionary Transit Worker" did *not* call for union safety committees to close down unsafe areas, and did *not* fight for immediate strike action to shut the system down – a glaring failure considering that their main supporter in the NYC subways is a vice-chairman of the Local 100 Track Division. Our criticism seems to have struck a nerve, since they responded with a frenzy of silly name calling.

As for tailing after Arab nationalism, the LRP has been doing this for years. The LRP does in fact call for "united Arab struggle," and even though it makes some criticism of Arafat & Co. (like it does of the leaders of the antiwar movement and the unions), this is a formula for "unity" with bourgeois Arab leaders – it can't mean anything else. The particular bone of contention in its polemic with the SL was the LRP's call on Arab governments to "put up or shut up – *send arms to the Palestinians!*" It argues that this was a "tactical exposure slogan," to expose the refusal of Egypt or Iraq to send guns to the *intifada*. But if the Arab bourgeoisies did send arms to the Palestinians, as they have in the past and Israel claims Iran recently attempted to do, how does that expose them? As opposed to the bourgeois politics of pan-Arabism pushed historically by former Egyptian leaders Gamal Abdel Nasser et al., the working masses of the Arab countries can assist the embattled Palestinians only if they wage revolutionary class struggle against their own bloody bourgeois rulers.

Particularly interesting in all this is the LRP's explanation that it had previously *opposed* the call on Arab capitalist governments to arm the Palestinians, but that it dropped its opposition because the "mass protests in solidarity with the Palestinians that swept the Arab states, burdened by illusions in their rulers' potential opposition to imperialism, showed us that we were mistaken"! So if nationalist and Islamic fundamentalist-led protests lead Arab masses to pressure their bourgeoisies, the LRP goes right along! This is a chemically pure expression of the tailism that is the lodestar of the LRP's politics: the masses' illusions spoke, and the opportunists answered. The LRP talk of "united Arab struggle" is a call to

return to the more militant posturing of the Arab nationalists of yesteryear. It also consciously excludes the Hebrew-speaking workers of Israel; and the LRP's line that they have no national rights can only assist the Zionist rulers. The revolutionary *proletarian* program in this pivotal region is to defend the Palestinian people and fight for Arab-Hebrew workers revolution, for a common workers state in a socialist federation of the Near East. This is the program of the Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International.

### Where Is the ICL Going?

The Spartacist League is a different kettle of fish. For almost three decades, the SL and its international tendency (the International Communist League) represented the revolutionary continuity of Trotskyism. But in the wake of the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union and the East European deformed workers states in 1989-92, the SL/ICL made a sharp turn to the right in the direction of abstract propagandism and desertion from the class struggle. The turn to defeatist abstentionism was accompanied by a purge in the leadership and the expulsion of long-time leading cadres who went on to found the IG. In the ensuing years, the SL has followed a revisionist course into left centrism, abandoning key programmatic tenets of Trotskyism and Leninism one after the other. This was driven home during the U.S. invasion of Iraq as the SL press *refused to raise the Leninist call for defeat of "its own" imperialist bourgeoisie*. This is no abstract question for simultaneously, it *dropped the demand for "hot-cargoing" war materiel* in the one place in the U.S. where the issue was concretely posed, the West Coast docks.

In fact, since the 11 September 2001 indiscriminate attack on the World Trade Center, the SL/ICL has not raised the slogan for the *defeat U.S. imperialism* in its war on Afghanistan and now Iraq. This places the SL *to the right of the LRP on the Iraq war*. It is also in direct contradiction with the SL's position on the Gulf War of 1990-91, when *Workers Vanguard* ran numerous headlines calling to "Defeat U.S. Imperialism, Defend Iraq!" (WV Nos. 516, 517, 518, 519). Before that it called to "Break the Blockade of Iraq! Defeat U.S. Imperialism!" (WV Nos. 512, 513). No more. To be sure the SL/ICL are still centrists and they call to defend Iraq, and after several weeks of hesitation in the fall of 2001 they called to defend Afghanistan against the imperialist attack. But what does defense of Iraq mean if it is not connected to a conscious struggle for the defeat of the imperialists, in Iraq and "at home"? The SL's paper "defense" of Iraq is essentially empty of content: WV neither called on Iraqis to resist (and barely mentioned it when they did) nor did it call for workers boycotts of war materiel and workers strikes against the war until *after* they had already occurred.

In 2001 and 2002, WV positively frothed at the mouth in attacking the Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International for calling for defeat of U.S. imperialism. First they claimed that our call "partakes of the view" that "imperialism is a 'policy' which can be altered by means of pressure,

presumably by some 'movement' on the streets," such as the antiwar parades. Simultaneously, it accused us of "Playing the Counterfeit Card of Anti-Americanism" and pandering to "Third World" nationalists for whom the 'only good American is a dead American'!" Accusing the IG of "anti-Americanism" in the middle of a war was a vicious smear that "partakes of" McCarthyite and Stalinist red-baiting of Trotskyists. Beyond that grotesque quality, it is quite remarkable that over the past two years, as the U.S. attacks and occupies first Afghanistan and now Iraq, the SL/ICL and the American bourgeois press have this obsession about combating "anti-Americanism." The LFI has fought politically against Third World nationalism while solidarizing with just outrage against Yankee imperialist oppression of semicolonial countries. We have polemicized against pseudo-leftists in Europe who denounce only U.S. imperialists, while exonerating and even appealing to the likes of Chirac in France and Schröder in Germany. But we do so in underlining our fight to *defeat* "our own" imperialist rulers and their war.

Not so the SL, which accuses the IG/LFI of "irrevolutionary phrasemongering." WV (17 January) sneers that over Afghanistan "the IG loudly and indignantly took us to task for supposedly 'flinching' in the face of jingoist war-mongering because we did not emblazon 'Defeat U.S. Imperialism!' across the front page of *Workers Vanguard*." Buried deep in the inside pages of the same issue, in a speech by WV editor Alan Wilde, we read: "Now, why do we fight for the defeat of U.S. imperialism in this and all its military adventures?" Oh, do they now? Much of the speech is devoted to explaining why it was okay for Lenin to call for a policy of revolutionary defeatism in World War I, but it's not for them today. "Revolutionary defeatism (that is, fighting for the defeat of all belligerent powers in a war through socialist revolution) and revolutionary defensism (standing for the military defense of a backward country against an imperialist or predatory power) are generalities that help to guide Marxists, but they are not dogmas," the speaker sagely observes.

Where have we heard that before? This is the classic subterfuge of those who would revise the revolutionary policy of Marxism. And the SL is not alone in its aversion to forthrightly calling for defeat of its own imperialism. In a pamphlet on *Afghanistan, Islam and the Revolutionary Left* (February 2002) Peter Taaffe, the leader of Britain's Socialist Party, writes:

"To call baldly and crudely for the 'defeat of US imperialism' and its coalition allies as an agitational slogan is wrong. When Lenin used the term 'revolutionary defeatism', as Trotsky subsequently explained, it was in order to clearly delineate revolutionary Marxism from opportunism following the betrayal of the German social democracy and their opportunist international co-thinkers at the beginning of the First World War. It was primarily a policy for the cadres to draw a clear line of separation between the revolutionaries and the opportunists. It was not a policy that could have won the masses to the banner of Bolshevism or to the revolution....

"Many ultra-left organisations are organically incapable

of understanding the approach of Lenin, Trotsky and the Bolsheviks. They take what have been essentially formulations used within the Marxist movement to sum up, delineate and clearly differentiate one idea or conception from another as an expression of what should be stated publicly."

Not baldly or crudely but privately (or perhaps on the inside page of a newspaper somewhere) one can be for defeatism, says this arch-opportunist, but heaven forbid that it should be "stated publicly." Any readers of the SL press will be struck by the similarities here.

Taaffe's former comrade in the British Militant tendency, Alan Woods (now a leader of Ted Grant's Socialist Appeal group), in his book *Bolshevism: The Road to Revolution* (1999) likewise denounces "the caricature of 'revolutionary defeatism' that is so often presented by empty-headed ultra-lefts," claiming that Lenin considered it "a fatal error to confuse the way revolutionaries see things with the consciousness of the masses." We might add that not only does the SL/ICL agree with Taaffe and Woods on deep-sixing the Leninist call for revolutionary defeatism, it also agrees with these out-and-out reformists in pooh-pooing any fascist danger in France or elsewhere (see "Pseudo-Trotskyist Lullabies," *The Internationalist* No. 14, September-October 2002).

To justify its blatant revision of the Leninist policy on fighting imperialist war, the SL argues that since "Iraq hasn't the military might to defeat an American invasion," the SL's call for "class struggle at home" is the "instrumentality" to achieve the defeat of imperialism, so it's okay not to call for its defeat. Where did Lenin or Trotsky *ever* say that the slogan of defeat of "one's own imperialism" depends on the military strength of the other side? In fact, they raised this call in innumerable cases (including impoverished Morocco vs. imperialist France, Ethiopia vs. Italy, etc.). As we have pointed out, when it comes to actual class struggle in the imperialist countries, the ICL has *not* fought to mobilize workers action against the war. We documented how the SL dropped the call for "hot cargoing" war materiel during the West Coast dock workers lockout last fall. *WV* responded with a lot of flim-flam about how they did too call for it (earlier), but finally admitted that they dropped it, blaming the workers' backward consciousness. In Scotland, train drivers refused to move munitions trains with cargo bound for Iraq in January, and the next month Italian unionists and antiwar activists blocked "trains of death" bound for NATO bases. The line of the ICL was not to fight for such actions beforehand but, as good tailists, to hail them after the fact.

The SL/ICL line on defeatism is not about "instrumentality" but about worship of the accomplished fact and bowing down before supposedly all-powerful imperialism, which are everywhere and always hallmarks of opportunism. And their tailism is not limited to the issue of the war, but now characterizes the SL's approach overall. In the New York subways, while the LRP called for a strike in 2002 (as did the IG), *WV* did not call for a strike until *after* the workers voted for it. Moreover, with its new policy of "passive radicalism"

(as Karl Kautsky characterized his own centrist politics), the SL has dutifully followed the dictates of the bourgeois courts. Thus when a New York judge in December 1999 issued an edict banning anyone from calling for a subway strike, the SL *dropped* its earlier strike call and put out a special leaflet calling to "Defend Labor's Right to Strike" (see "The Fight for a Class-Struggle Leadership in NYC Transit," *The Internationalist* No. 15, January-February 2003).

### The Spectre of Shachtman

We have shown how in parallel (but not identical) ways on a series of issues, the SL and LRP combine leftist rhetoric with opportunist practice. On Iraq, the SL/ICL drops the call for defeat of U.S. imperialism it had raised a decade ago in Gulf War I, and drops the call for labor boycott of war goods on the West Coast docks, while the LRP calls on paper for defeatism but does not fight for concrete proletarian action against the war. In NYC transit, the SL in 1999 drops its earlier call for a strike under pressure from the bourgeoisie and in 2002 does not call for a walkout until after the workers vote for it. The LRP, in turn, calls for a strike (on a purely economist platform) but "critically" supports out-bureaucrats who sued the unions to get into office. On Palestine, the SL criticizes the LRP's chasing after Arab nationalism; yet the SL/ICL also capitulates before the present consciousness of the masses by dropping its earlier call for an Arab/Hebrew workers state.

But beyond their differences, there are a growing number of similarities between the Spartacist League and the League for the Revolutionary Party. Behind this commonality stands the spectre of Shachtman. Recently, as the SL/ICL drops its longstanding programmatic positions on one issue after another, we have noticed that it has taken up in their stead a number of characteristic Shachtmanite positions. Thus in refusing to call for revolutionary defeatism in the present imperialist war against Afghanistan and now Iraq, it has taken over the arguments against this Leninist position put forward by the editor of the ISL's newspaper in the '50s, Hal Draper, in a three-part article on "The Myth of Lenin's Defeatism" published in Shachtman's *New Internationalist* between September-October 1953 and January-February 1954.

Draper's long and convoluted piece (used as internal education material by the ICL recently) argues that Lenin's call for defeatism was a conjunctural slogan inapplicable today. As the editors of *WV* borrow lines from Draper, they must know what they are doing. Shachtman's sidekick argued that defeatism was turned into a dogma as part of the anti-Trotsky campaign in 1924 and "canonized" by Stalin in 1928, and that in the 1930s Trotsky, who had opposed Lenin's line in World War I, now wishing to appear orthodox, tried to sidestep this by "bowdlerizing" Lenin and "juggling words" to redefine defeatism to mean not "wishing defeat" for "one's own country" in imperialist war (as Lenin argued) but instead referring to "military defeat resulting from the growth of the revolutionary movement." And Draper ends his article saying:

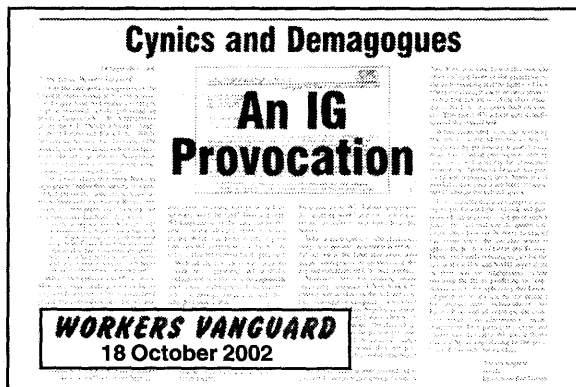
*continued on page 70*

# Poisonous "Provocateur" Baiting from the SL

For the past two years, ever since 11 September 2001, as the U.S. bourgeoisie stepped up its war drive the Spartacist League has been reeling. After refusing to call for the defense of Afghanistan while the Pentagon was preparing its attack, the SL (and the International Communist League, of which it is a part) has since refused to call forthrightly for the defeat of "its own" imperialist rulers as the U.S. ravages one "Third World" country after another.

The Internationalist Group and the League for the Fourth International, in contrast, have taken a stand from the outset for defense of Afghanistan and Iraq and for the defeat of U.S. imperialism. In response to our polemics against their abandonment of the fundamental Leninist position on fighting imperialist wars against colonial and semi-colonial countries, the SL newspaper *Workers Vanguard* has responded with an escalating series of smears, distortions and outright lies.

They started off their current frenzy accusing the IG/LFI of "Playing the Counterfeit Card of Anti-Americanism" (*WV*, 26 October 2001). In case anyone missed the implication, the article spells out its out: "the IG's purpose is otherwise; it is playing to a different audience, one of 'Third World' nationalists for whom the 'only good American is a dead American'." We asked, what does it mean to accuse Trotskyists in wartime of pandering to anti-Americanism, and specifically people who want Americans dead? In their next issue (*WV*, 9 November



2001) they sneered at the "IG's r-r-revolutionary phrasemongering" in calling for defeat of U.S. imperialism. More recently, it was the IG's "oh-so-revolutionary calls for the defeat of U.S. imperialism" (*WV*, 17 January), and our "oh-so-militant sloganeering" for insisting on calling on U.S. longshoremen to "hot-cargo" military shipments for the war on Iraq last fall, while the SL ostentatiously *abandoned* this call just when the issue was posed on the West Coast docks (*WV*, 14 February).

But in this welter of vituperation, an article last fall in *Workers Vanguard* (18 October 2002) stands out for its truly grotesque and poisonous accusations. "An IG Provocation" screamed the headline, throwing in "Cynics and Demagogues" for good measure. What "provocation"? A letter from IG spokesman Abram Negrete to the editor of *WV*. The letter (printed below) protests an article in a previous issue in which the SL peddled lies and stereotypes about Latino workers taken from the mouths of bosses trying to pit blacks and Latinos against each other. *WV* hamhandedly tried to pretend their article didn't say what it said. They quote our statement that "according to *WV*, Latino immigrants do 'grueling work' and ask 'nothing in return' in order to win favor from the bosses." This, according to *WV*, is an "absurd fabrication." But look at the sentence from their original article that they then quote back at us:

"In the precarious circumstances they live in, undocumented

## Letter to *Workers Vanguard*

29 September 2002

To the Editor, *Workers Vanguard*

Over the past weeks supporters of the Internationalist Group and of the Spartacist League have had heated exchanges over a shameful article published in *Workers Vanguard* No. 786 (6 September) under the title "South Chicago: Snapshots of Latino and Black Life." While bemoaning the very real divisions in the working class, this article echoes and promotes the ideology that the bourgeoisie uses to set different sectors of the oppressed against each other.

The article states that many Mexican immigrants, "rather than seeking to organize to fight for the same entitlements" as black Americans and Puerto Ricans, say "well, we immigrants want to work, we don't want any handouts." It goes on:

"In the workplace, many Mexicans hold a perception that blacks have a bad work ethic. Upon probing them to define what they mean, I have found that their conception of a 'bad' work ethic amounts to wanting to have better wages, a shorter and less intensive workday, and better and safer conditions at the workplace!"

What is this garbage about how "many Mexicans" supposedly don't want better wages and conditions? This is no isolated phrase, but a central theme of the *WV* article. It proceeds to lecture: "Mexican workers could stand a whole lot to gain by adopting the very 'work ethic' that many now despise!" As if it's a question of a "work ethic" rather than the brutal realities of capitalist exploitation! The article then presents an anecdote about a boss who reportedly stated "that she prefers to hire Latinos because blacks 'don't like to work'" while her Mexican employee, "beaming with pride, just ate up every word she said." Over and over, *WV* keeps repeating the same claims, this time coming straight from the boss's mouth. What it is doing is retailing the very lies and stereotypes that the bosses use to divide the exploited and oppressed.

With all its talk about the so-called "work ethic" question, *WV* willfully obscures the fact that it is the *capitalists* who force undocumented immigrants into low-paying, dangerous and dirty jobs. Just look at this:

"In the precarious circumstances they live in, undocumented Latino immigrants tend to take comfort in the illusion that, if they just prove to the bourgeois rulers that they are essential to American capitalist society – by doing grueling work

Latino immigrants tend to take comfort in the illusion that, if they just prove to the bourgeois rulers that they are essential to American capitalist society – by doing grueling work for pitiful wages in dangerous conditions and paying taxes faithfully while asking nothing in return in the way of benefits – then the capitalist rulers will somehow be convinced to grant them full citizenship rights.”

Any reader can see that we accurately described this passage. *WV* pretends that we object to them “daring to express the ugly truth about racism in America,” and that we ludicrously believe “that Latino workers are somehow immune to the influence and pressure of bourgeois society,” etc. Nonsense. What we criticized the *WV* article for was repeating stereotypes about Latino workers that come straight from the bosses who seek to set one section of the working class against another. This goes way back.

In the 1920s, for example, a spokesman for California farmers told a Congressional committee: “The Mexican is...a man who gives us no trouble at all. He takes his orders and follows them.” A Texas congressman told the committee: “They are a very docile people” (House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Hearings on Seasonal Agricultural Laborers from Mexico*, 1926). Writing from San Quentin, where he was imprisoned on “criminal syndicalism” charges for organizing Filipino, Mexican, Japanese, black and white farm workers, an International Labor Defense activist described the bosses’ divide-and-conquer technique:

“They play one against the other by cutting the wages of the Mexicans and telling them that the Filipino workers have agreed to take their jobs at a few cents less. When they want to cut *their* wages they tell them that the Mexicans want to work for less.”

–Frank Spector, *Story of the Imperial Valley* (ILD pamphlet, 1931)

for pitiful wages in dangerous conditions and paying taxes faithfully while asking nothing in return in the way of benefits – then the capitalist rulers will somehow be convinced to grant them full citizenship rights.”

So according to *WV*, Latino immigrants do “grueling work” and ask “nothing in return” in order to win favor from the bosses.

What a grotesque lie! The chauvinist image you present unmistakably reflects the outlook of the labor aristocrats, who accuse immigrants of undermining the pay and conditions of U.S.-born workers.

Moreover, from the ongoing union organizing campaign of New York City greengrocer workers to the militant janitors’ unionization campaign – which tied up the streets of Los Angeles as immigrant unionists resisted wave after wave of brutal police attacks – the class struggle gives the lie to the picture you present. (In case the L.A. janitors’ battles have slipped your mind, they are portrayed in Ken Loach’s recent film *Bread and Roses*.)

As an immigrant worker pointed out at a recent Internationalist Group forum in New York, it is vital to win this new layer of the proletariat to the understanding that the fight for black liberation is central to every aspect of the class struggle in the U.S., a country built on slavery. What the *WV* article

## Letter From Esteban Volkov

Mexico City, 11 April 2003

It is a sign of having gone completely off the rails ideologically when parties that claim to uphold the socialist project and ideas of Leon Trotsky use the methods of Stalinism, such as settling political differences by means of defamation and slanders against members of their own organization, or against other parties that fight for the same cause, rather than polemic and the straightforward discussion of differences.

A clear example of this are the accusations of being a provocateur, hurled without evidence by the Spartacist League against the North American Trotskyist Abram Negrete, member of the Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International, who has a long record of struggle.

Unfortunately, we see here a situation quite analogous to the one of which the late Bolivian comrade Julio Bacherer was a victim. These methods and procedures must be banished from the workers movement.

Esteban Volkov

The same technique is used today by sweatshop bosses in New York’s garment industry trying to set Mexican and Ecuadoran workers against their Chinese and Korean class brothers and sisters.

Unable to respond to our criticism, *WV* resorts to the crudest and vilest of smears. Not only do they call our letter a “provocation,” they refer to the author as “the repulsive strutting demagogue and provocateur Negrete [who] has taken to demonstrably pulling off his glasses, as if looking for a fight”! This is far worse than the kind of slimy *ad hominem* personal attack that

does cuts directly against this crucial task.

When confronted with the revolting *WV* article, some SLers try to brazen things out by pretending it doesn’t say what it says, while others claim nothing you say could possibly be chauvinist because the Spartacist League has protested anti-immigrant laws. Many resort to what is now your main form of “argument”: change the subject, quick.

It is incredible that a newspaper claiming to put forward the outlook and program of communism could print such a piece. The fact that you do speaks volumes about how far *Workers Vanguard* has come since the decades when it upheld the politics of Lenin and Trotsky. From vehemently refusing to call for the defeat of the U.S. and NATO imperialists in their war on Afghanistan (while smearing the IG as pandering to “anti-Americanism” for upholding this Leninist position) to renouncing the demand for unconditional independence for Puerto Rico and all colonies, the common thread is an adaptation to social-chauvinism. In a particularly crass and blatant way, this latest *WV* article shows that the SL is capitulating to the pressures of “its own” ruling class.

Abram Negrete

for the Internationalist Group

has become the SL's stock-in-trade as they abandon revolutionary Marxism. It is an accusation of being someone who provokes violence, an *agent provocateur*. "Provocateur"-baiting, cop-baiting – these are the filthy techniques of opportunists who want to hide their capitulation to the bourgeoisie by character assassination of those who uphold revolutionary principle. *Any Trotskyist will immediately recognize the technique, for "provocateur" is exactly the accusation that was leveled at Trotsky and his followers in the 1930s by Stalin and the Stalinists.*

Comrade Abram Negrete is widely known on the left in the United States and Mexico and in the SL/ICL. He has been a politically active Marxist since high school, and was a member of the Spartacist tendency for 23 years. He was a member of the National Committee of the Spartacus Youth League. He was an active trade-unionist on the West Coast for nine years. He was a member of the Spartacist League Central Committee. He founded the ICL's Mexican section and led the work there for eight years. He was a member of the International Executive Committee of the ICL. He wrote numerous articles for *Workers Vanguard* and internal documents which can be found in internal bulletins of the SL and ICL. He was the editor of *Espartaco*, and was made editor of the Spanish edition of *Spartacist* – for one issue, before he was expelled, along with other long-time Spartacist leaders who went on to found the Internationalist Group. For that matter, his family was persecuted for their leftist views during McCarthyism, when the FBI regularly visited their house.

While he was in Mexico, comrade Negrete worked closely with Esteban Volkov, Leon Trotsky's grandson, as the representative of the ICL on various tasks concerning the Trotsky Museum in Coyoacán. This included organizing the comrades' work on the museum, helping with historic photos, arranging for supervision of extensive repair work on the monument to Trotsky. He spoke at numerous events at the Museum, including sharing the platform with Volkov. He obtained Volkov's endorsement for the campaign to free Mumia Abu-Jamal, and a statement from Volkov denouncing the murder of ICL comrade Martha Phillips in Moscow ("Martha Phillips, heroína revolucionaria," *Espartaco* No. 3, Summer-Fall 1992). We print on page 63 a letter from Esteban Volkov denouncing the ICL's vile accusation against comrade Negrete and the practice of "settling political differences by means of defamation and slanders," saying these "methods and procedures must be banished from the workers movement."

We cite this information to show that our comrade Negrete is well-known and respected as a revolutionary. What does WV offer as proof for its outrageous charge of "provocateur"? That he wrote a protest letter to *Workers Vanguard* and...he took off his glasses. If that constitutes "looking for a fight," what do you suppose tying your shoes signifies, or scratch-

ing your head? Ironically, comrade Negrete (along with another Mexican comrade) was attacked in Mexico City at the National University campus in 1994 when the leader of the Lambertiste organization knocked his glasses off (see *Espartaco* No. 6, Winter 1994-95).

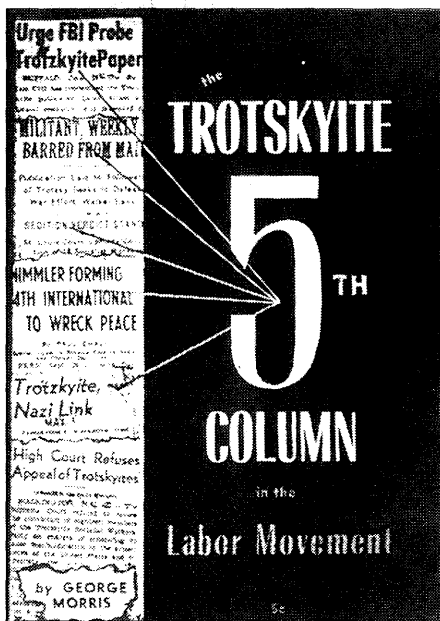
The SL accuses us of "encouraging and justifying violence against political opponents in the workers movement," for "what else could be the IG's purpose in screaming that we are 'anti-Latino chauvinists' at immigrant rights demonstrations, if not to incite violence against us?" This is an utter lie. We did not scream, nor even say that the SL was "anti-Latino chauvinist," or try in any way to set demonstrators against them. In fact, those we spoke to about the WV article were the SLers present. *We challenge the Spartacist League to produce even one statement from an independent witness saying that we tried to incite people against them. They cannot produce such a statement for we never did any such thing.*

On the other hand, our readers will be well aware that accusing an opponent organization of "provocation," calling its leaders "provocateurs" and falsely accusing them of inciting violence could well set the stage for an attack against that organization, in which the victim would then be accused of "provoking" violence. In Argentina, for example, where such charges are thrown around with abandon, there have been at least two such incidents in the last year.

Volkov was part of an international commission that investigated the case of J.P. Bacherer in Bolivia, who was accused

by Guillermo Lora of being a stool pigeon and expelled from Lora's POR. Volkov personally experienced the persecution of his grandfather who was accused by the Mexican Stalinists of being a provocateur. When Trotsky was granted asylum in Mexico in 1937 after years of being hounded from one country to another, a hysterical anti-Trotskyist campaign was launched by the Mexican Communist Party (PCM). As the campaign reached fever pitch, a typical Stalinist tract was the 1939 pamphlet *Espías y provocadores* (Spies and Provocateurs) which proclaimed that "Trotskyism has ceased to be a political current within the working class."

In the United States, the Communist Party regularly branded the Trotskyists as provocateurs, saboteurs, disrupters and the like. During World War II, Stalinist hack George Morris produced a pamphlet, *The Trotskyite Fifth Column in the Labor Movement* (1945), in which he accuses the Socialist Workers Party of "sabotage" for opposing the wartime no-strike pledge. He starts out his diatribe saying that "Trotskyite" literature "bristles with phrases that sound 'Socialist' and 'r-r-revolutionary,'" exactly the phrase WV uses against the Internationalist Group. A strike at an aircraft factory in Pennsylvania is called a "Trotskyite



**Stalinist hack red-baited Trotskyists as "provocateurs" for opposing World War II no-strike pledge.**

*continued on page 71*





Photos from Cuban TV

Hijacker threatens kidnapped passenger on ferry boat with a knife to the neck (left), 3 April 2003. Passengers jumped over board to safety as Cuban security forces stormed the boat (center). Child rescued from hijacked ferry (right).

## Defense of Cuba...

*continued from page 72*

contras in the failed coup against bourgeois nationalist colonel Hugo Chávez. In their policy review, Bush & Co. decided to push for a “transition to democracy” in Cuba. These are code words for counterrevolution. What they mean by democracy is the dictatorship of capitalism; their talk of freedom means “free markets” and enslaved workers.

One result of the policy shift has been to sharply restrict Cuban immigration to the U.S. Although Washington agreed with Havana in 1994 to accept 20,000 Cubans a year, only 7,200 entry visas were issued last year and barely 500 so far this year. This is a deliberate attempt to provoke the kind of hysteria that the Democratic Clinton administration instigated at the height of the economic crisis in 1994, leading hundreds of *balseros* (“raft people”) to sail out into the Florida straits. Over the last seven months there have been seven hijacking incidents, a sharp increase. Meanwhile, a new chief of the U.S. Interests Section (equivalent to an embassy, since Washington broke diplomatic relations with Havana in the early '60s), James Cason, has been ostentatiously conspiring with pro-U.S. “dissidents” in Cuba as a deliberate provocation.

When he took over last fall, Cason vowed to “bring freedom and democracy” to Cuba. He told a press conference in Miami that he regularly meets with the National Cuban-American Foundation and other organizations of the gusano exiles (the counterrevolutionary “worms” who fled Cuba after the revolution overthrew the U.S.-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista).

- In early February, Cason held a meeting in the ambassador’s residence with 21 members of Cuban counter-revolutionary groups which are on the U.S. payroll.

- On February 24, he staged a press conference at the home of one of the “dissident” plotters to denounce the Cu-



José Gotita/AP

**Cuban family protests hijacking of ferry boat in Tinaja, near where boat was docked after rescue of passengers, 3 April 2003. Sign says: Down with Terrorism!**

ban government for violating “freedom of conscience,” “freedom of expression” and “human rights.”

- On March 12, another meeting in the ambassador’s residence with 18 counterrevolutionaries.
- On March 14, yet another meeting, this time an all-day session at the Interests Section (embassy) itself.

In addition to provocatively turning its diplomatic representation into the headquarters of a counterrevolutionary conspiracy, Washington has been pouring dollars into the effort to overthrow the Cuban government. More than \$22 million has been funneled to Cuban anti-Communist groups since 1997 by the U.S. Agency for International Development, including \$8 million for promoting “solidarity with activists in Cuba,” \$1.6 million to “non-governmental organizations” in Cuba, \$2.3 million to a Center for a Free Cuba, \$1.2 million to a Center for Support of Dissidents, etc. Some 7,000 radios have been distributed set to receive the CIA’s “Radio Martí,” on which the U.S. spends over \$25 million a year.

## Liberals Go Ballistic Over Repression of Counterrevolutionaries

On March 19, as Bush was about to launch the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Cuba arrested 75 of the plotters who had been conspiring with the U.S. "diplomats." Almost immediately, as if on signal, a Cuban DC-3 aircraft was hijacked to Key West by terrorists who held knives to the throats of the pilots. American authorities announced they would grant bail to the hijackers and refused to return the aircraft, as required under a 1995 agreement with Cuba. With this encouragement, on March 31 another Cuban plane was hijacked. Then on April 2, a ferry boat was seized with 50 passengers on board and headed toward Florida. When the boat ran out of fuel, the hijackers threatened to shoot two passengers, who then jumped overboard in rough waters to escape their tormentors. As Cuban navy boats rescued them, other passengers jumped from the ferry as well.

In early April, summary trials were held of the 75 arrested conspirators and the ferry boat hijackers. Ten Cuban intelligence agents who had infiltrated the counterrevolutionary groups testified about the plotting in the U.S. Interests Section. Proof was given of thousands of dollars received from the U.S., including receipts. Official passes were exhibited giving the defendants "free passage" at any time of day or night to enter and move about the U.S. diplomatic enclave. Evidence was shown of their collaboration with well-known CIA agents. These mercenary "dissidents" were given sentences ranging from eight to 26 years in prison for secretly receiving funds from their U.S. paymasters and collaborating with the former colonial masters to reassert Yankee control of Cuba. Ten people were found guilty of hijacking the ferry, and the three main hijackers were sentenced to death; they were executed on April 11.

Washington predictably howled over the repression that it had brazenly provoked. But the Bush administration's feigned outrage soon received reinforcement from a chorus of condemnation by a number of prominent liberals. On April 23, the Cuban Policy Forum, a group headed by former U.S. secretary of state William Rogers which opposed the embargo, disbanded in protest over the executions and jailings. Leftish intellectuals began circulating statements denouncing Cuba's supposed suppression of dissidence. Portuguese Nobel Prize-winning author José Saramago, a former friend of Castro, wrote that "from now on, Cuba can follow its own course, and leave me out."

Saramago was followed by the Uruguayan Eduardo Galeano and the Mexican Carlos Fuentes. Prior to the court verdicts a letter from 62 American and European intellectuals had called on the Castro government to release the so-called "peaceful opponents and independent journalists." Among the signers were the writers Günter Grass, Mario Vargas Llosa, Jorge Edwards and the Mexicans Carlos Monsiváis, Enrique Krauze and (former foreign minister) Jorge Castañeda. After the sentences, 50 Spanish artists and intellectuals signed a statement condemning the repression, including Joan Manuel Serrat, Pedro Almodóvar, Ana Belén and other reputed "progressives." They professed their "solidarity with the Cuban people" while joining the hue and cry instigated by Washington.

In the U.S. at least two different petitions have been circulating. One, promoted by *The Nation* magazine, denounced Cuba's "brute repression" of "independent thinkers and writers, human rights activists and democrats" which supposedly showed that the Cuban government is "just one more dictatorship." Its signers include prominent social democrats, Greens and red-baiters, including Bogdan Denitch, Stanley Aronowitz and Todd Gitlin. A second petition, circulated by a newly formed Campaign for Peace and Democracy, adopts a more leftist-sounding tack, declaring that they oppose the occupation of Iraq, U.S. intervention in Latin America, etc., and also protest the repression in Cuba. This includes some of the same signers but also a roster of "progressives" including Noam Chomsky, Naomi Klein, Michael Lerner, Immanuel Wallerstein, James Weinstein, Cornel West and Howard Zinn.

Like Washington's provocations against Cuba, these petitions are closely connected to the war on Iraq. The first petition doesn't even mention the U.S. invasion (thus including those who support the war), and the second one "evenhandedly" declares "we condemned the brutal Saddam Hussein regime, and we oppose the United States occupation of Iraq" (but not the war). This "third camp" position is no accident, for the main writer and organizer of the petition was one Joanne Landy. During the Cold War, this right-wing social democrat and follower of the anti-Trotskyist renegade Max Shachtman played a leading role in organizing support for the U.S.' favorite anti-Soviet counterrevolutionaries, putting out a bulletin in support of Solidarność and backing the CIA's mujahedin against Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. She opposed the Chinese and Vietnamese revolutions and has long advocated the violent overthrow of the Cuban government. As a reward for her counterrevolutionary services to U.S. imperialism, she has been made a member of the Council of Foreign Relations.

Yet another petition is circulating internationally, this one in support of Cuba. It was read at the May Day celebration in Havana by Pablo González Casanova, former rector of the National University of Mexico, and was signed by Gabriel García Márquez and other leftist intellectuals of a more nationalist bent. This appeal "To the Conscience of the World" warns that the present war of words against Cuba could easily become the pretext for an invasion. Yet its defense of Cuba is purely on the basis of "universal principles of national sovereignty, respect of territorial integrity and self-determination" and of defense of "the international order" threatened by the domination of "a single power" as a "consequence of the invasion of Iraq." U.S. imperialist hegemony of course predates the invasion of Iraq, but this is an appeal to supporters of other imperialist powers (such as France and Germany) who hesitated over the Bush government's blatant go-it-alone policy summed up in the "doctrine" of "preemptive war."

In fact, many of the signers of the petitions denouncing the Cuban government's actions have supported various of Washington's wars in the name of "human rights," such as recent wars on Yugoslavia and Afghanistan, while others waffled. (Indeed, Cuba abstained in the UN in the vote on Gulf War I.) In contrast, revolutionary Trotskyists called on the Viet Cong to

take Saigon, hailed the Soviet Army's fight against the CIA's "holy warriors" in Afghanistan, called for stopping Solidarność counterrevolution and have defended Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq against imperialist war. We fight for the defeat of the imperialists across the globe by seeking to mobilize the power of the working class for international socialist revolution. And contrary to the Castro bureaucracy's illusory policy of "peaceful coexistence" with the imperialists, as followers of Trotsky and Lenin we stand four-square for the internationalist defense of the Cuban Revolution against imperialism.

### **Fake Lefts Split: Pro-Imperialist "Democrats" and Castro Cheerleaders**

It is not only the openly social-democratic reformists and liberals who have joined the chorus against repression in Cuba. In France, the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR) of Alain Krivine published a disgusting article titled "Cuba: We Know, So What?" (*Rouge*, 24 April), in which these pseudo-Trotskyists say they know that imperialist "democrats" denounce the lack of democracy on the island and that the Bush government practices state terrorism. "We know all that, so what?" They declare that "defense of elementary democratic rights and freedoms are not dishes à la carte," that they are "against any crimes of opinion," that they are against the death penalty which is "morally intolerable and politically ineffective," and that they "totally condemn the parody of justice that has just taken place" in Cuba. There is not even a hint of proletarian class program in this statement. It has nothing in common with Trotskyism and everything in common with bourgeois liberal "morality." And not surprisingly, like the liberals, the LCR called on the NATO imperialists to intervene in Yugoslavia in the name of "human rights."

The decaying "international" the LCR is part of, which calls itself the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USec) although it is neither united nor Trotskyist, has a slightly softer version of the same pro-imperialist policy in a May 14 declaration. In that statement, the USec declares the Cuban government's methods to be "unacceptable from a revolutionary democratic point of view." Their self-definition as "revolutionary" democrats speaks volumes about the social-democratization of the followers of the late Ernest Mandel. A few years ago the French LCR debated changing its name to something more appropriate, but couldn't decide whether to strike the word "communist" or the word "revolutionary," and ended up doing nothing, out of lethargy. "Undeniably, Cuba is in an even more difficult situation than in the past," the USec admits, but this does not permit using the "unacceptable death penalty" and other "extreme repressive methods." So here we have the ostensibly Trotskyist USec, which apologized for and defended the jailing of the Cuban Trotskyists in the 1960s, now objecting to extreme repressive methods against counter-revolutionaries openly working with U.S. spy agencies.

In standing for military defense of Cuba against counter-revolution, the Internationalist Group declares that the repression against the U.S.-linked conspirators and terrorists in Cuba is utterly justified. They are imperialist agents, not "dissidents."

They are not exercising the freedom of opinion or right of expression but plotting the restoration of capitalism in cahoots with the U.S. ambassador, working out of the U.S. embassy and receiving bundles of U.S. dollars for their efforts. As Trotskyists we have long opposed the death penalty in Cuba, as we do in the United States and everywhere in the world. We give no political support to the Castro bureaucratic regime and have denounced the 1990 Stalinist show trial and execution of Cuban general Arnaldo Ochoa, carried out in an effort to curry favor with the U.S. in the "war on drugs." But the masterminds of the ferry boat hijacking were engaged in a *counterrevolutionary act of war* as part of escalating U.S. threats against Cuba. Not to have responded decisively to this provocation would have facilitated U.S. attempts to whip up hysteria such as led to the wave of raft launching in the early 1990s, or the Mariel exodus a decade earlier. Only this time, in the wake of the war on Afghanistan and Iraq, the U.S. is poised to use such a frenzy to intervene militarily seeking to extirpate the Cuban Revolution with blood and fire.

Our communist program is counterposed to the vast bulk of the self-proclaimed socialist left, which *politically* supports the Cuban government while constantly seeking to gain popularity by building "popular fronts" *with precisely the layer of liberals who are now howling about repression in Cuba*. Thus Nat Weinstein of the ostensibly Trotskyist organization Socialist Action laments that "Chomsky's proud antiwar record has been marred by his anarchist bent toward equating the heinous deeds of the oppressor imperialist state to the defensive actions of its victims in the Cuban workers' state" (*Socialist Action*, May 2003). Yet despite his sometime "anarchist" pretensions, Chomsky has been trumpeted by the Democratic Socialists of America as one of their members and is at bottom a petty-bourgeois liberal who wants the United States to pursue a different policy. That is in fact the program of the various "antiwar" coalitions which seek a more "humane," more "people-friendly" imperialism.

Groups such as the Workers World Party, Socialist Workers Party and Socialist Action who regularly hail the Castro regime praise the fairness of the trials of the counterrevolutionaries. They were defended by 54 lawyers, many of their own choosing, more than 3,000 people attended. Certainly this compares favorably to another 624 prisoners in Cuba ... the detainees being held by the United States in a prison camp in the base the U.S. illegally occupies in Guantánamo. Their names have not been released, they have not been charged with any crime, they are held incommunicado and are denied contact with any legal defender, and (if they are not simply held indefinitely) they will face a military tribunal where they have no rights. But that comparison hardly makes Cuba a model of socialist rectitude. For example, the Castro regime jailed the Cuban Trotskyists for a decade and a half, briefly released them, and then jailed them again in a prime example of Stalinist bureaucratic arbitrariness and repression of revolutionaries.

Marginally more "critical" than the Castro cheerleaders of the SWP and WWP, Socialist Action notes that Bolshevik rule was based on soviets, or councils, directly elected by the work-

Photos: José Goitia and Cristóbal Herrera/AP



ing people, while “Cuba has yet to create similar institutions of direct working class rule.” But the absence of revolutionary workers democracy is not simply a blemish on the regime. The Cuban deformed workers state which was established through the expropriation of the foreign and domestic capitalists in 1960-61 is a state qualitatively similar to that of the bureaucratically degenerated Soviet Union under Stalin and his heirs. The fight to establish genuine *soviet* rule of workers councils that defend the gains of the revolution and seek to extend them requires a political revolution by the Cuban proletariat against the narrow Castro bureaucracy which grew out of the petty-bourgeois guerrilla army and has monopolized political power ever since.

This struggle can only be successful if it is led by an authentically Leninist-Trotskyist party, which fights on the basis of the Bolshevik program of international socialist revolution. Castroism, like all other variants of Stalinism, embraces a nationalist and conservative ideology of building “socialism in one country.” But as communists from Marx and Engels to Lenin and Trotsky have insisted, socialism can only be built internationally, at the highest level of development of the productive forces. As long as the revolution is nationally limited, particularly in an economically less developed country, it will be prey to the tremendous economic pressures of imperialism – whether through an economic blockade or through the operation of the “free market.” In Cuba, the machinations of the



**A million people demonstrate in Havana on May Day under the slogan of “Defense of Socialism and the Revolution.” Sign says “No to Fascist Warmongering.” Trotskyists defend Cuba against internal and external counterrevolution, while warning that socialism cannot be built on one embattled island but instead requires fight for workers revolution throughout Latin America and in the “belly of the imperialist beast,” the United States.**

Miami gusano mafia and their agents or the intrigues run out of the U.S. Interests Section may be contained by an efficient intelligence apparatus. But as the collapse of the Soviet Union and Soviet bloc deformed workers states underlined, repression cannot indefinitely stave off the economic power of imperialism.

As Trotsky wrote of Stalin’s Russia, “Military intervention is a danger. The intervention of cheap goods in the baggage trains of a capitalist army would be an incomparably greater one” (*The Revolution Betrayed* [1936]). Or as Karl Marx put it 90 years earlier, “this development of productive forces... is an absolutely necessary practical premise because without it want is merely made general, and with destitution the struggle for necessities and all the old crap would necessarily be reproduced.” He added that the universal development of the productive forces “makes each nation dependent on the revolutions of the others” (*The German Ideology* [1847]).

### **Smash Imperialism Through International Socialist Revolution!**

The economic pressures of imperialism on Cuba are seen not only in the millions of dollars which enter the country from relatives in Miami or the U.S. government in Washington. They also encourage the development of pro-imperialist elements in the Castro bureaucracy itself. The recent May Day march in Havana, which again drew a million participants, had as its main slogan “defense of socialism.” Yet a year ago, Roberto Robaina was purged as foreign minister on charges of hobnobbing with foreign capitalists. Robaina became foreign minister in 1993, at the time that Castro decided to permit the free circulation of the U.S. dollar, a step constituting a grave threat to the collectivized Cuban economy. Robaina was closely iden-

tified with that policy of "opening" the island to capital, which exacerbated social tensions on the beleaguered island. Together with Robaina a number of upper-level functionaries involved with these policies were expelled from the Communist Party, the political organization of the bureaucracy. But they are only the tip of the iceberg, and more pro-capitalist elements undoubtedly exist.

Because of the island's small size and exposed location, just "90 miles from Florida," Cubans are acutely aware that their fate depends on world developments. But while the Castro regime occasionally dabbled (several decades ago) in promoting petty-bourgeois guerrilla warfare elsewhere in Latin America, its Stalinist-nationalist program was frontally opposed to proletarian internationalism. It looked to the peasantry, not the working class, whose power it feared, and when struggles took on a mass character posing the possibility of revolution, such as in Brazil in the early '60s, Castro (and Guevara) cut them off in order not to inconvenience friendly popular-front governments. Moreover, while showing interest in the situation of blacks in the U.S., Cuba never sought to encourage revolutionary struggles in the United States, which are key to any revolution in the hemisphere.

So long as Cuba remains in national isolation (far greater now than when the Soviet Union still existed and Havana benefited from substantial Soviet supplies of oil), it will be constrained to play on and exploit contradictions between the imperialist powers. But following the demise of the Soviet Union, the core of the Castro regime's policy has been to look to the European and Latin American bourgeoisies as a counterweight to the United States. Havana also sought to offer its services to the U.S., first in the "war on drugs" and later in the "war on terrorism," in a vain attempt to "peacefully coexist" with the imperialist giant next door. But the Washington Cold Warriors and Miami *gusanos* are bent on counterrevolution, and to stop them it is necessary to defeat them. This cannot be accomplished by appealing to the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois "friends of Cuba," who are now up in arms over the repression of counterrevolutionaries, or by looking to other bourgeois governments.

In contrast to the Stalinist-nationalist illusion of "building socialism in one country" and its programmatic counterpart internationally – "revolution in stages" (beginning with a "democratic" bourgeois stage) and "popular fronts" to head off workers revolution – Trotsky put forward the perspective and program of *permanent revolution*. Summing up the experience of two Russian Revolutions (1905 and 1917), Lenin's comrade-in-arms and the founder of the Red Army noted that in the imperialist epoch, the period of capitalism's decline, even elementary democratic demands cannot be accomplished by the bourgeoisie, as at the time of the great French Revolution. Instead, achieving *national liberation* from the yoke of imperialism, *agrarian revolution* against the latifundistas, and *democracy* for the working masses can only be brought about by the victory of *workers revolution*, supported by the impoverished peasantry and other oppressed sectors.

Such a revolution requires the leadership of a Leninist-Trotskyist communist party to come to power, and it must be

extended to the advanced capitalist (imperialist) countries if it is to go forward to building a classless socialist society, which can only be built internationally on the basis of plenty and not the penury of a besieged island. In contrast to the impossibility of a "socialist Cuba" alone, Trotskyists fight for a federation of Caribbean workers republics in a socialist united states of Latin America. Rather than looking for "alliances" with the likes of Mexico's Coca-Cola capitalist president Vicente Fox or others of Washington's neo-colonial satraps, revolutionaries look to the millions-strong proletariat throughout the continent. In the face of threatened invasion of Cuba by the Bush war hawks and their *gusano* partners, it is necessary to look not to the liberal intelligentsia but to working people, blacks, Latinos, immigrants and other sectors oppressed by the same bourgeoisie as threatens Cuban workers.

Cuba has made important social gains compared to any other country of Latin America. The lowest infant mortality rate in the continent, equal to that of the United States, and substantially less than that in New York City or Washington. Universal literacy and education. Universal health care far better than that available to the poor of the U.S.' inner cities and even than that available to the middle classes of much of the continent. But these gains are mortally threatened by the advance of counterrevolutionary forces from within and without.

A revolutionary workers party must be built in Cuba that can defend and extend these gains. It can only be built in the struggle for a reformed Fourth International, the continuation of the Communist International of Lenin and Trotsky. It must be infused with the internationalist spirit of the founder of Cuban communism, Julio Antonio Mella. In a letter from Havana prison in December 1925, Mella wrote:

"The unity of America has already been made by Yankee imperialism. The Panamerican Union is the International of the future political empire whose only capital is Wall Street and whose royalty is made up of the kings of the various industries. The unity of America which the most elevated minds dream of at present is the unity of our America, of America based on social justice, of free America, not of exploited America, colonial America, America which is the fiefdom of a few capitalist companies served by a few governments that are simply agents of the imperialist invader. This unity of America can only be realized by the revolutionary forces who are enemies of international capitalism: workers, peasants, Indians, students and vanguard intellectuals. No revolutionary at the present time can cease to be an internationalist. That would be ceasing to be revolutionary. No program of renovation, or for the destruction of any tyranny, can take place without a joint action of all the peoples of America, including the United States....

"Considering that the enemy called imperialism outside the United States is capitalism inside that nation, it is necessary to extend this united front beyond the Rio Grande. It is necessary to form a single army of all those exploited by Wall Street."

—Mella: *Documentos y artículos* (Instituto Cubano del Libro, 1975)

## Test of War...

*continued from page 61*

“Bury the dead. The tradition of Lenin’s defeatism was born in a political mistake in 1904-5; it was revived in confusion in 1914, to be shelved without stock-taking in 1917; it was revived in malice and reaction in 1924; it was turned into a hollow phrase by ‘explaining away’ in the ’30s; it was ignored in the ’40s; and now in the ’50s any war policy based on it can only be disorienting – or worse. It can only stand in the way of a clear, ‘full,’ uncompromising Marxist anti-war position, the position of the Third Camp.”

The Shachtmanite “Third Camp,” as we have written, was only a way station on the road to the “first camp” of support for imperialism.

Discussing the ICL’s post-1995 discovery that the Stalinists supposedly “led” the counterrevolution in East Germany and the Soviet Union during 1989-92, and were allegedly poised to do so again in China, we noted that this was fundamentally counterposed to the Trotskyist analysis of the Stalinist bureaucracy as an unstable layer that capitulates to the pressure of imperialism, preparing the way for and opening the door to capitalist restoration. The SL’s new line effectively wiped out the contradictory dual character of the bureaucracy, turning it into a purely counterrevolutionary force, we wrote, and pointed to the parallel to Shachtman’s 1940 discovery of a “Stalinist counter-revolution” that destroyed the workers state through “the seizure of power by a counterrevolutionary bureaucracy.” We headlined our article, “ICL Still Caught Between Shachtman and Trotsky” (*The Internationalist* No. 11, Summer 2001). First over Stalinism and counterrevolution, now over Leninism and defeatism: but these are not the only instances in which the SL has taken over elements from Shachtmanism.

At the core of Shachtman’s break from Trotskyism was his capitulation before American imperialism as it became the strongest imperialist power in the world before and after WWII. Similar pressures are at work today in the U.S.-dominated New World Order. In the 1950s, another example of the Shachtmanites’ progressive evolution toward outright embrace of U.S. imperialism was their line on Puerto Rico. We have written about how the SL abandoned its longstanding demand for unconditional independence for the U.S.’ Caribbean colony, which until the recent invasion of Iraq was the largest remaining colony in the world (see “ICL Renounces Fight for Puerto Rican Independence,” *The Internationalist* No. 6, November-December 1998). Basing themselves on the results of colonial plebiscites in which pro-independence forces received few votes, the SL now argues that it is only for the “right” of Puerto Rico to self-determination and no longer “advocates” independence. It turns out that the very same line was taken by Hal Draper in an article on “A Socialist Policy on Puerto Rico” (*Labor Action*, 29 March 1954), from which the “new” *Workers Vanguard* takes key arguments. Draper writes:

“The fundamental demand on behalf of the Puerto Rican people which cannot be argued away by any genuine democrat or liberal (not to speak of socialist) is the continuing right to self-determination. A U.S. socialist orga-

nization cannot put independence for Puerto Rico in its own platform.... An American socialist government’s duty would be to make it possible for the Puerto Rican people to express their desires in a free and unfettered vote on their relationship to the mainland...

“Independence, many Puerto Rican fear not without justice, would deprive it immediately of the benefits, which are now necessary to its distorted economy, of its present inclusion in the U.S. economic structure.”

What this comes down to is an acceptance, supposedly in the name of “democratic” respect for the will of the Puerto Rican people, of the continuation of colonial domination of the island. Such “socialist” colonialism as advocated by Shachtman/Draper’s ISL in the 1950s and now by the SL/ICL today is a pro-imperialist policy contrary to everything Lenin and Trotsky stood for. It is directly counterposed to the program of the Communist International, whose famous “21 conditions” included requiring of parties in countries that possess colonies that they demand “that their imperialist compatriots should be thrown out of the colonies.” With their new line, the SL/ICL would not have made it past the door of the Comintern. And it should by now come as no surprise that *the SL shares its social-colonialist line on Puerto Rico with the LRP*. Indeed, the LRP’s article “Self-Determination, Independence and Revolution” could have been ghost-written by WV, for it contains identical phrases, e.g.: “Today, while we defend the right of self-determination, we do not advocate secession” for Puerto Rico (*Proletarian Revolution*, Winter 2000). In reality, it all goes back to Shachtman.

This is underlined by the fact that the same position on Puerto Rico is taken by the ISO, the other group in the U.S. whose heritage goes back to Shachtman (via the International Socialists). While the LRP and the SL pose as “hards,” the mushy social democrats of the ISO show where such lines lead. While the SL and LRP criticize the Democrats on the “peace” rally platforms, the SL no longer characterizes them as popular fronts (having now decided that this is impossible in the absence of a mass workers party) and for weeks uncritically praised black Democratic Congresswoman Barbara Lee, the darling of the San Francisco Bay Area pop frontists, for voting against war on Afghanistan (WV failed to mention that Lee voted for the \$40 billion war budget).

We are reminded of Lenin’s remark in “The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution” (April 1917):

“Only lazy people do not swear by internationalism these days. Even the chauvinist defencists, even Plekhanov and Potresov, even Kerensky, call themselves internationalists. It becomes the duty of the proletarian party all the more urgently, therefore, to clearly, precisely and definitely counterpose internationalism in deed to internationalism in word.”

That is what the Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International has sought to do in raising the Leninist program for defense of Afghanistan and Iraq and defeat of the imperialist invaders. We not only call for but also have sought to organize, within the limits of our forces, working-class action against the imperialist war. We seek to build a party that embodies the revolutionary program of Lenin and Trotsky and fights to reforge the Fourth International as the world party of socialist revolution. ■

## Poisonous Baiting...

*continued from page 64*

provocation." Morris goes on about how Teamster union president Dan Tobin viewed the Minneapolis Trotskyists as a menace to the U.S. and the Soviet Union. (Tobin played a key role in railroading the Trotskyists to jail for their revolutionary opposition to World War II). Morris adds:

"The July, 1944, issue of the *Teamster* expressed gratitude for a column of this writer in the *Daily Worker* which exposed as Trotskyites the provocateurs in the C.I.O. union who almost succeeded in embroiling the Michigan C.I.O. and the Teamsters in general retaliation strikes."

If he were still alive, maybe George Morris could get a job writing for *Workers Vanguard*. But his spirit lives on.

Or take the notes by Comintern leader Georgi Dimitrov on a November 1937 meeting with Stalin and the Chinese Communist Party leader Wang Ming: "To strengthen by all possible means the struggle against Trotskyites (in the dec[ree]). That is not sufficient. Trotskyites must be pursued, shot and destroyed. They are world-wide provocateurs. Most malicious agents of fascism!" The Belgian Stalinist Ludo Martens, in his book *Another View of Stalin* (1995), which is circulated by the Progressive Labor Party, repeatedly refers to "the *provocateur* Trotsky." Such examples could be cited *ad infinitum*, for this was a standard charge against the Trotskyists.

The Spartacist League echoes these charges today because they are opportunists and centrists and do not care whose arsenal they are borrowing from in their lurch to the right. But do they even believe such lying charges themselves? They don't care.

Thus on March 20, at a demonstration against budget cuts at Hunter College, a Spartacist youth leader came up to comrade Negrete to ask him to request of the demonstration organizers that they allow an SL speaker, which our comrade did. A year earlier, when there was a move to throw SLers out of a meeting of the CUNY-4-ALL student coalition, comrade Negrete put a stop to this exclusionist call by denouncing it and going through the room demonstratively lining people up to defend the SL, physically if necessary, for which the SL members thanked him. In the fall of 2001 at an antiwar forum at New York University, comrade Negrete stood outside with the SL protesting their exclusion by the International Socialist Organization.

Who exactly is using or threatening violence here? At Internationalist Group forums, we have routinely given the Spartacist League multiple speakers during the discussion period. At SL forums the IG is allowed no more than one speaker. And when at a Spartacist League forum on China at Columbia University an Internationalist Group comrade asked to be called on after being ignored continuously while four different SLers spent their speaking time denouncing the IG, the SL grabbed her and manhandled her out of the room as six other IGers left in protest.

The IG has always defended the SL against attacks because of our opposition on principle to violence and political exclusion in the workers movement, and we shall continue to do so. The

degenerating SL has abandoned such principled politics. From the very first article in *Workers Vanguard* (5 July 1996) trying to justify the bureaucratic expulsion of the long-time leading SL cadres, the SL's "polemics" against the Internationalist Group have reeked of anti-Trotskyist smears, slanders and frame-ups. Periodically, they throw in phrases suggesting that the SL is preparing to write the IG out of the workers movement, with all that would imply. Thus the article on the third conference of the International Communist League writes that "these renegades are capable of exiting the workers movement entirely" (*Spartacist* No. 54, Spring 1998). To this is now added the charge of "provocation" and "provocateur."

The Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International have upheld the Trotskyist program through the test of war, as the SL has abandoned one key programmatic position after another: dropping the call for independence for Puerto Rico, dropping the call for defeat of U.S. imperialism in wars on semi-colonial countries, dropping agitation for "hot cargoing" war materiel. Like opportunists everywhere, the SL blames its own capitulations on a supposed qualitative regression in the consciousness of the working class. Their revisions have a common thread, adaptation to the pressures of their own imperialist bourgeoisie.

Readers of *The Internationalist* know that the IG and LFI have always polemicized programmatically against revisionism, not stooping to the dirty methods that are the coin of the realm for opportunists of all stripes. We have responded judiciously to the anti-communist smears, personal attacks, lies and amalgams heaped upon us, for we will not allow ourselves to be sidetracked from the struggle to forge an authentic Leninist vanguard party. Contrast this with the increasingly frenzied slanders of the SL as it tries to cover its tracks in its flight from Trotskyism.

Where is the SL going? That is the question. They have lost their bearings in the class struggle, but know their own opportunist appetites all too well. As centrists they can't admit them, yet, so they project them on others. The real motive force is the pressure of the bourgeoisie. ■

## Corrections

In *The Internationalist* No. 15 (January-February 2003), three lines of text were inadvertently dropped between pages 39 and 40. The passage affected should read:

"Today, a representative for them repeated this, and the union leadership has promised to continue to do so, in other words to show the American ruling class its loyalty to this war in raining death and destruction on the people of Iraq. And that has to stop!

"The war materiel must be stopped, and it is the working class that has the power to do it, not just here but internationally."

In the same issue, the final sentence of the article "For Class War Against the Imperialist War" (on page 23) should read: "Ultimately the only way imperialist war can be eliminated is not through endless 'antiwar movements' with bourgeois politicians but through international socialist revolution led by a Trotskyist Fourth International."

**U.S. Threats Over Crackdown on Counterrevolutionaries  
Liberals, Reformists Join Imperialist Hue and Cry**

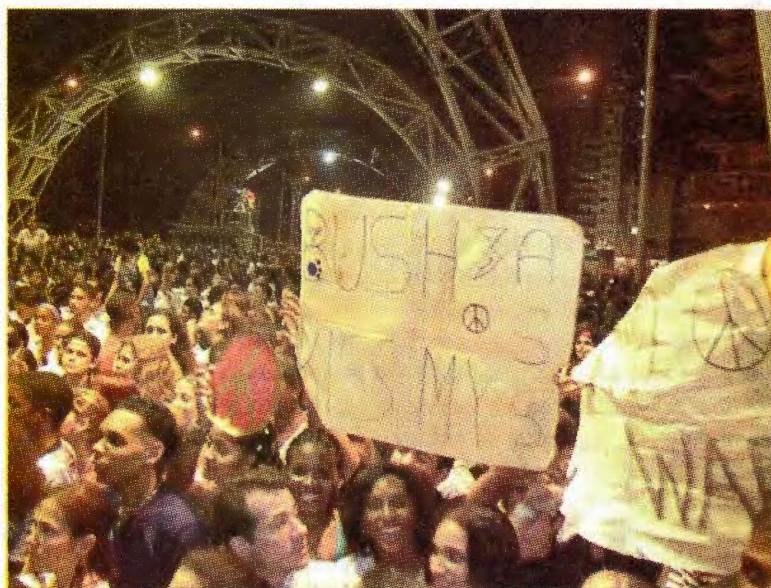
**For Revolutionary  
Internationalist Defense of Cuba!**

MAY 17 – For the past two months, there has been a dramatic increase in U.S. provocations and threats against Cuba. A rash of hijackings is followed by an outcry over Cuba’s repression of counterrevolutionary plotters. Fantastical charges of Cuban “biological warfare” are resuscitated. Last week the U.S. expelled 14 Cuban diplomats; next week Bush is scheduled to announce drastic new measures tightening the travel ban and economic blockade. This is not just stepped-up harassment, it’s preparation for war: Washington is itching to give Cuba the “Iraq treatment.” The imperialist warmongers must be defeated, and it will take class war to do it.

For the Bush regime, the war didn’t end with the U.S. taking of Baghdad. Now they want to “take back” Havana. For the last four decades, American rulers, Republicans and Democrats alike, have shown their unrelenting hostility to the Cuban Revolution, seeing its very existence as a direct threat to U.S. domination of Latin America. The purpose of the vicious 40-year-old U.S. embargo, which has cost more than \$70 billion in lost trade, has been to strangle the rebel Caribbean island economically. But the Yankee imperialists have manifestly failed in their attempt to bully and starve the Cuban people into submission.

Now the White House and Pentagon are gearing up for more “robust” action against Havana. The escalation of imperialist hounding of Cuba is directly tied to the invasion and colonial occupation of Iraq. And while the Bush gang gnashes its teeth over the Castro regime’s suppression of counterrevolutionary plotters, a layer of liberals and left intellectuals in the U.S. and Europe have been bleating over repression in Cuba. This hue and cry demonstrates that their objections to the Iraq invasion were only tactical: they want a “soft” version of imperialist domination – in the Cuban case, a kind of “counter-revolution lite.”

It is precisely to this layer that Fidel Castro has appealed over the years in pursuing the pipe dream of “peaceful coexistence” with imperialism. But as the war hawks in Washington rampage, the pacifist doves have taken flight. The fickle liberal bourgeois “friends of Cuba” are friends no longer. Various reformist leftists and Latin American nationalists have responded by calling for support for Cuba’s sovereignty and



Cristóbal Herrera/AP

**Cuban youth protest invasion of Iraq outside U.S. Interests Section in Havana, 22 March 2003.**

right to self-determination. Posing the issue in purely “democratic” terms misses that what is at stake is the fate of revolutionary gains, however bureaucratically deformed.

What is posed here is not just intensified U.S. hostility but a very real threat of war on Cuba. Many in the current administration in Washington would make the overthrow of “Castro’s Cuba” the centerpiece of a second Bush term. Attempts to conciliate them are illusory. Genuine communists call for all-out defense of Cuba against counterrevolution from without and within. Trotskyists fight to smash the imperialist stranglehold by international socialist revolution throughout Latin America and extending into what José Martí called the “belly of the beast,” the heartland of Yankee imperialism.

**Escalation of U.S. Provocations**

The current uproar began with a reevaluation of Washington’s Cuba policy undertaken by the White House a year ago. The point man was Otto Reich, an ultra-rightist Cuban exile who in the 1980s was in charge of stonewalling Congress over the Reagan administration’s “contra” war against Sandinista Nicaragua. Last year Reich was caught conspiring with Venezuelan

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