

For Class Struggle Against U.S. Capitalist Rulers!

Iraq: U.S. Occupiers Out Now!

When George W. Bush ascended to the presidency, he announced that God had chosen him to accomplish a mission. Today, many would say that even the president's divine benefactors seem to be fed up with him. Steadily rising U.S. casualties in Iraq and the administration's racist indifference to the victims of Hurricane Katrina drove its approval ratings to new lows. On top of this has come the indictment of a vice-

presidential aide for trying to cover up the outing of a CIA agent, as well as criminal investigations of a widening pool of Republican Senators and Congressmen for corruption.

Last month, Democratic Congressman Jack Murtha, a longtime hawk who voted for the Iraq war, called for a speedy redeployment of U.S. troops out of Iraq. It is widely understood that Murtha was speaking for a section of

the military hierarchy that is fed up with the White House. As Iraq spirals ever more out of control the military brass is worried about the armed forces being stretched thin, while enlistments are declining. Following Murtha's pronouncements, an increasing number of bourgeois politicians, mostly Democrats, have been pushing for some kind of "exit strategy"—from the three liberal Congressmen who voted for immediate

withdrawal to Hillary Clinton, who now declares that the Iraqi elections scheduled for December 15 "should, if successful, allow us to start bringing home our troops in the coming year." As popular support for Bush plummets, the Democrats see a clear opportunity to boost their fortunes in next year's Congressional elections and the 2008 presidential campaign.

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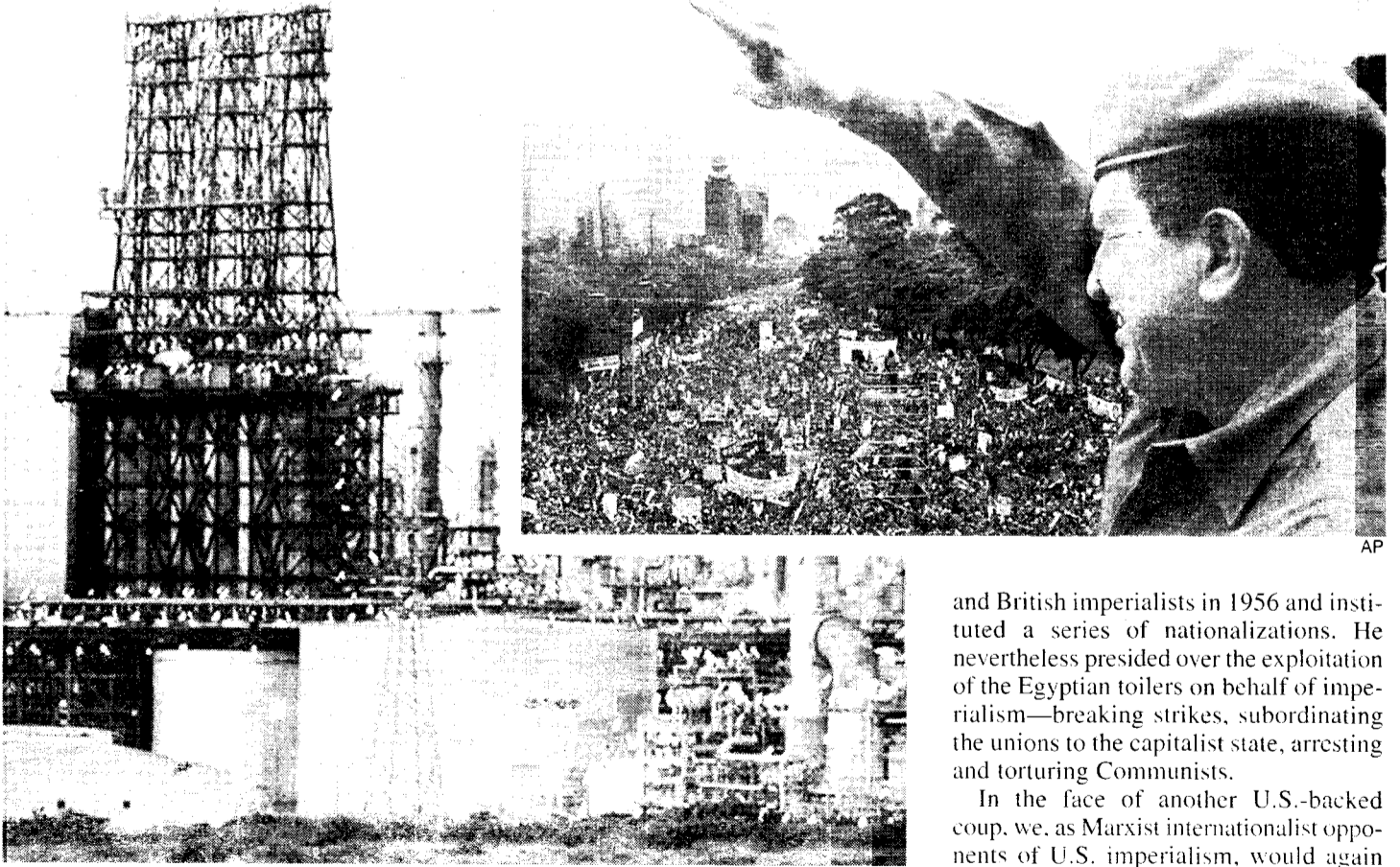
Venezuela: Populist Nationalism vs. Proletarian Revolution

U.S. imperialism continues to pose a clear and present danger to the government of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela. Since being elected president in 1998, Chávez has survived a short-lived coup (in 2002), a months-long effort by a section of the Venezuelan bourgeoisie to shut down oil production, and a well-financed recall referendum, all backed by Washington. And if it were not bogged down in Iraq, the Bush gang might well have organized further provocations.

The very things that have made Chávez a thorn in the side of the arrogant U.S. rulers have made him an idol for masses of impoverished barrio residents in Venezuela and for large numbers of young leftists around the world. Chávez has called Bush an imbecile (*pendejo*) and ostentatiously embraces Washington's chief nemesis in the Western Hemisphere, Cuban leader Fidel Castro. Chávez has condemned the U.S. occupation of Iraq and denounced the "neoliberal" economic policies promoted by the U.S. in Latin America and elsewhere. He has launched social programs benefiting the rural and urban poor in Venezuela and embarrassed the Bush administration by offering to provide relief for the dispossessed people of New Orleans. Most recently, through its CITGO affiliate, Venezuela has begun supplying the poor of the Bronx and parts of Massachusetts with cheap gas and oil for heat this winter.

This last January, when Chávez, speaking under the auspices of the imperialist-funded World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil, proclaimed that capitalism must be "transcended" through socialism, his largely leftist audience burst into delighted soccer-style chants of "Olé, Olé, Olé, Chávez, Chávez." But Chávez is

White House Vendetta Against Chávez



Oil refinery in Puerto La Cruz, Venezuela, world's fifth-largest oil producing country. Top right: Populist strongman Hugo Chávez speaks to massive demonstration in Caracas, 2004.

no socialist. A former army colonel now head of the capitalist state, he is an *enemy* of the struggle for socialism—i.e., the fight for workers revolution to expropriate the bourgeoisie. In fact, Chávez is very much in the mold of a string of bourgeois military officers who have come to power on the basis of nationalist populism, from Col. Juan Perón in Argentina

in the 1940s to Col. Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt in the 1950s. In the 1950s and '60s, as Soviet-backed nationalist movements swept the semicolonial world, virtually every Third World capitalist demagogue claimed to be a "socialist" or "Marxist-Leninist" of some description. Nasser promulgated "Arab socialism," seized the Suez Canal from the French

and British imperialists in 1956 and instituted a series of nationalizations. He nevertheless presided over the exploitation of the Egyptian toilers on behalf of imperialism—breaking strikes, subordinating the unions to the capitalist state, arresting and torturing Communists.

In the face of another U.S.-backed coup, we, as Marxist internationalist opponents of U.S. imperialism, would again call on the working class to mobilize in military defense of the Chávez government (see "CIA Targets Chávez," WV No. 787, 20 September 2002). At the same time, we politically oppose the bourgeois-nationalist Chávez regime. In regard to the 2004 recall referendum organized by the regime's right-wing opponents, we argued for abstention rather than a no vote, which would have been an expression of confidence in Chávez. As we wrote in "U.S. Imperialism's Referendum

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MTA, City Gear Up Against TWU NYC Transit Workers Must Prepare to Strike

NEW YORK CITY, December 5—As the December 15 expiration of its contract approaches, Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 100 is in for a hard fight against the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) bosses and capitalist politicians. Backing the MTA, Republican governor George Pataki is threatening to hammer the union with the state's Taylor Law, which bans public employee strikes, in order to push through attacks on pensions and working conditions that aim at the heart of this powerful, multiracial workforce. These threats are retailed by the big business media, with an MTA official telling the *New York Post* (29 November), "A strike would *cripple* the city—but it might *kill* the union." The 33,000-strong Local 100 can defeat this anti-labor assault, but it will take a hard *class-struggle* fight.

The TWU's power lies in its capacity to bring the finance capital of the world to a halt by shutting down NYC subways and buses. A strike authorization vote will likely happen at a December 10 mass union meeting. Transit workers have repeatedly expressed a grim determination to fight the MTA's attacks, knowing full well that the Taylor Law threatens the union and individual union members with massive fines and jail sentences. It will take hard struggle *defying* anti-labor laws and relying on the strength of the whole labor movement to defeat the union-busters and win the right to strike. As we wrote in "TWU Must Fight Bosses' Attacks!" (WV No. 859, 25 November), "Key to smashing the Taylor Law is forging a fighting alliance with all of NYC labor at the head of the city's working masses and its ghetto and barrio poor."

The TWU, with its predominantly black and immigrant membership, is connected to every part of New York City. A success-

**November 29:
Local 100 transit
workers rally at
207th Street
shop gate as
contract
deadline looms.**



United Labor Action Can Smash Taylor Law!

ful fight against the MTA's vicious disciplinary procedures—dubbed by unionists "plantation justice"—would resonate with all minorities and all labor. Against efforts by the MTA and City Hall to pit the public against the union, the TWU could win massive support by resurrecting its historic demand for free mass transit.

The need to prepare a strike, which means preparing for battle against not only the MTA but also the capitalist government, runs straight into the question of the union leadership. TWU members

have been chanting "No contract, no work" at shop gate rallies. Too often NYC teachers and city workers have worked without a new contract, sometimes for years. Local 100 president Roger Toussaint says that a strike "is an option that we will not take off the table. There's the law and then there's justice. We want justice" (*New York Times*, 3 December).

But as one transit worker told WV, "Toussaint is blowing hot air to the press and cold air on the workers." Local 100 members remember that Toussaint, newly elected to office, talked militant in the 2002 contract battle, only to shaft workers with a sellout sealed with a bear hug with MTA chief Kalikow. This capitulation to the MTA brass and the bourgeois state flowed directly from the labor bureaucracy's program of class collaboration, which sees allies for the workers in the politicians and government of the capitalist enemy. At a November 29 union rally at a bus depot, Toussaint brought in Democrat Jesse Jackson, whose role is to *defuse* social struggle. Jackson says he might get involved in the NYC transit discussions. In Los Angeles in 2000, he came in to help scuttle a four-week strike, resulting in a settlement that reinforced a divisive multi-tier wage scale.

What the Local 100 leadership is not doing is preparing the membership for a hard struggle against the attacks on their jobs and benefits. The November 29 protest was one of a series of atomized Tuesday "days of action" at shops and depots that the Local 100 tops have substituted for mass union rallies. The December 10 meeting will be the first mass union gathering all year. What the Local 100 tops do instead is push the union's role in providing "security" in the subways, expressing the Toussaint bureaucracy's support to the government's "anti-terror" drive. The "war on terror" is nothing but a pretext for cracking down on immigrants and opponents of government policy at home and for imperialist war against Afghanistan and Iraq. Its ultimate target is the labor movement.

Among those opposing the Toussaint leadership are individuals such as Car Maintenance Division vice president Ainsley Stewart and executive board member Martin Goodman, who is supported by the reformist Socialist Action group. However much they claim to be for a "real fight" for workers' interests, Stewart and Goodman were part of the New Directions outfit that helped propel Toussaint into office and whose hallmark was *suing their union opponents in the bosses' courts*. In fact, Stewart and four other vice presidents are currently suing Local 100. This treacherous policy did not stop self-proclaimed "militant" Eric Josephson, who is supported by the fake-socialist League for the Revolutionary Party, from giving Toussaint "critical support" in 2000. The courts are the very agencies that would impose massive fines on the union and its members for violating the Taylor Law. Their intervention into union affairs only serves to place the union under the thumb of the capitalist state. Courts out of the unions! Labor must clean its own house!

The kind of leadership labor needs is one based on the policy of class struggle and its corollary—the political independence of the working class from all the parties and state agencies of the capitalist enemy. This means a struggle to break the political chains forged by the trade-union tops to the capitalist Democratic Party and to build a workers party committed to the fight for a workers government. Workers make society run. When workers rule society, transport and industry will be ripped out of the hands of the greedy capitalist exploiters and put at the service of all. ■



TROTSKY

Latin America and Proletarian Class Independence

The bulk of the left hails Venezuela's bourgeois populist strongman Hugo Chávez as an anti-imperialist and ally of the workers and oppressed. Commenting on the 1930s bourgeois-nationalist Mexican regime of Lázaro Cárdenas, who nationalized imperialist oil holdings and carried out limited land reforms, Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky stressed that only the socialist revolution of the proletariat, leading the peasantry and urban poor, can emancipate the region from

imperialist subjugation. This perspective of permanent revolution, based on the political independence of the proletariat from all wings of the bourgeoisie, was verified by the Russian Revolution of October 1917.

Latin American society, like every society—developed or backward—is composed of three classes: the bourgeoisie, the petty bourgeoisie, and the proletariat. Insofar as the tasks are democratic in a large historical sense, they are bourgeois-democratic tasks, but the bourgeoisie here is incapable of resolving these democratic tasks, as the bourgeoisie was incapable in Russia or in China.

In that sense, during the struggle for the democratic tasks, we oppose the proletariat to the bourgeoisie. The independence of the proletariat even in the beginning of this movement is absolutely necessary....

This is the period in which the national bourgeoisie searches for a bit more independence from the foreign imperialists. The national bourgeoisie is obliged to flirt with the workers, with the peasants, and then we have the strong man of the country orientated to the left as now in Mexico....

Now the Fourth International recognizes all the democratic tasks of the state in the fight for national independence, but the Mexican section of the Fourth International is in competition with the national bourgeoisie before the workers, before the peasants. We are in permanent competition with the national bourgeoisie as the only one leadership which is capable of assuring the victory of the masses in the fight against the foreign imperialists.

—"Latin American Problems: A Transcript," 4 November 1938,
Writings of Leon Trotsky: Supplement (1934-40)



LENIN

WORKERS VANGUARD

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Stop Execution of Stanley "Tookie" Williams!



Tookie.com

As the scheduled December 13 execution of Stanley "Tookie" Williams approaches, California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger will hold a clemency hearing on December 8. Williams, a leader of the Crips gang in his youth, has since become renowned for his anti-gang writings. On November 30, the California Supreme Court denied a defense motion to reopen the case. As the clock ticks, Williams' supporters in the Save Tookie Committee (www.savetookie.org) are planning numerous rallies and protests, including showings of the movie "Redemption," which is based on Williams' life. On November 23, anti-death-penalty activists protested Los Angeles radio station KFI-AM, which is broadcasting a vile, racist "Tookie Must Die/Kill Tookie" hour every day. The Partisan Defense Committee sent the following letter to Schwarzenegger on November 29.

* * *

The Partisan Defense Committee opposes the execution of Stanley Williams by the state of California scheduled for 12:01 am on December 13. Capital punishment is an act of state-sanctioned murder that shows the brutality of this

class-divided and race-biased society. We stand for the complete abolition of the death penalty, which is the barbaric legacy of medieval torture and, in racist America, of chattel slavery. The primary victims of this legal lynching in the U.S. are black people like Stanley Williams.

The case of Stan "Tookie" Williams is a prime example of the racist travesty that is American "justice." Williams' 1981 conviction on four counts of murder during two robberies was engineered by a prosecutor who has been twice censured by the California State Supreme Court for discriminatory behavior. Williams' prosecution included racist jury rigging—all prospective black jurors were struck, resulting in a virtually all-white jury; the prosecutor grotesquely told jurors that their view of the defendant in the courtroom was like seeing a "Bengal tiger in captivity in the zoo" whose natural habitat was South Central Los Angeles.

A former leader of the Crips gang, Williams maintains that he is innocent of the murder charges. He was convicted largely on the basis of circumstantial evidence and the hearsay testimony of witnesses who themselves faced felony charges. The "star" witness, who testified that Williams had confessed in jail, was later

proved to be a paid police informant. One witness had his ribs fractured and later said he was so scared he would have told the police anything; even the prosecution has admitted that it was an "illegal interrogation." Other evidence at the crime scene includes fingerprints and a boot print that have never been identified. A forensics expert has called the ballistics testimony offered by the police "junk science at best"; there is no conclusive evidence that the shotgun shell recovered at the scene came from Williams' gun.

Courts have denied four *habeas corpus* petitions to reopen the case based on new evidence uncovered since the trial. On October 11 the U.S. Supreme Court rejected Williams' appeal based on the blatant racism of the prosecution. On November 10 Williams' attorney filed another *habeas corpus* petition attempting to obtain information about ballistics, crime scene evidence and records about witnesses who testified against Williams in return for immunity or other benefits. But the state of California has accelerated the execution date and moved Williams to the execution holding pen at San Quentin.

Now famous for his anti-gang writings, Stanley "Tookie" Williams has been nominated five times for the Nobel Peace

Prize. He has written nine books attempting to deromanticize gangs, crime and prison and is the author of an internationally known autobiography. A 2002 *amici curiae* brief on his behalf was signed by the ACLU, Arab American Attorneys Association, NAACP, SCLC of Greater Los Angeles, and the San Francisco La Raza Lawyers Association, among others. On November 19 more than 1,000 people protested at San Quentin, demanding an end to the death penalty and clemency for Williams, and 32,000 have signed a petition in his favor. But Williams' bid for clemency has been met with an ugly smear campaign. Williams' attorneys have charged "official misconduct" against Vernel Crittendon, a San Quentin spokesman, for stating that he suspected Williams of orchestrating gang crimes. In fact, a 2004 San Quentin report cleared Williams of gang involvement.

We demand: Stop the execution of Stanley Williams! Abolish the racist death penalty! ■

Lynne Stewart Denied New Trial

In a sweeping 54-page ruling issued on October 24, United States District Judge John Koeltl rejected defense motions to overturn the verdict and upheld the convictions of leftist attorney Lynne Stewart and her Arabic translator, Mohamed Yousry, and paralegal Ahmed Abdel Sattar. In a case stemming from Stewart's legal representation of the Egyptian Islamic fundamentalist cleric Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman, the three were convicted on February 10 in New York City on frame-up charges of conspiring to provide material support to terrorism and to defraud the U.S. government. In a separate ruling, Judge Koeltl, who presided over the seven-month-long trial, also rejected Stewart's claim of right to an untainted jury. Koeltl dismissed a juror's written statements that she voted against her conscience to convict Stewart because she felt coerced and feared for her life, as well as evidence that another juror had admitted to being biased in favor of the prosecution.

Lynne Stewart's conviction is a frontal attack on the Sixth Amendment right to an attorney and the free speech rights of us all. Abdel Rahman is serving a life sentence for conspiracy to blow up New York City area landmarks. The prosecution of Stewart, Yousry and Sattar was based on hundreds of hours of videotaped and recorded discussions between the sheik and his attorney that are supposed to be free from government snoops. The "material support to terrorism" charge is a witchhunter's dream: Donating money for tsunami relief that is later used to rebuild an Islamic school in Indonesia could land you in the Feds' anti-terror web. In this case, Stewart's alleged material support to a terror "conspiracy" consisted of making the views of her imprisoned client known to a Reuters journalist, in violation of the patently unconstitutional restrictions (Special Administrative Measures—SAMs) placed on Stewart as a condition of being allowed to meet with her client. Openly speaking to a major international news agency is some "conspiracy"!

The Lynne Stewart case sets the dangerous precedent that attorneys can be prosecuted for the alleged crimes of their clients. The aim is not only to scare away

any lawyer from defending a client with unpopular views but to criminalize dissent. As we stated at the time of Lynne Stewart's conviction: "If nobody can get a lawyer to zealously defend him from prosecution, then fundamental liberties, from the right to a trial and an attorney, to even the right of free speech and assembly, are choked" ("Lynne Stewart, Mohamed Yousry, Ahmed Abdel Sattar Convicted—Outrage!" WV No. 842, 18 February).

The vendetta against Lynne Stewart is a centerpiece of the government's "war on terror," which is a pretext for a modern-day witchhunt against all who are perceived as standing in the way of the aims of the capitalist government. Her prosecution represents an escalation of the rulers' attack on democratic rights won through massive struggles, including two bourgeois revolutionary wars in this country (the War of Independence and the Civil War). It is crucial to be clear that the attacks on civil liberties are not

solely the work of the Bush gang. Indeed, the Democrats criticize the Republican White House mainly for failing to prosecute the "war on terror" more effectively. The SAMs that strip prisoners of elementary rights to communicate with the outside world, and which Lynne Stewart is accused of violating by defending her client, were implemented under the Clinton administration.

A cornerstone of the "war on terror" is the government's assertion of its right to throw anyone it deems an opponent behind bars without rights to an attorney, free speech or other protections supposedly guaranteed by the Constitution. The prosecutors in the Stewart case ranted that by letting the words of her client get out beyond the prison walls, Stewart had performed a "jailbreak." The supposed "jailbreak" consisted merely of public expression of Abdel Rahman's views.

In adopting the prosecution's claims, Judge Koeltl's ruling guts the right to free speech. His decision states: "The First

Amendment lends no protection to participation in a conspiracy, even if such participation is through speech." Koeltl cited an earlier ruling by Judge Mukasey in Abdel Rahman's trial that "speech is not protected by the First Amendment when it is the very vehicle of the crime itself." While speech is judged the vehicle of the crime, even the U.S. attorneys who prosecuted the case admitted that *no crime occurred*, that no terrorist attack resulted from this fabricated "conspiracy." Stripped of the camouflage of legal jargon, the "crime" here is speech that the government deems counter to its interests.

This case is also rich with political hypocrisy. Whether speech is judged a criminal activity depends on the political interests and machinations of the U.S. government. U.S. Attorney Patrick J. Fitzgerald (today's darling of the liberals, and others, for his investigation into the outing of CIA agent Valerie Plame) testified

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Holiday Appeal Benefits for Class-War Prisoners

Bay Area

Sunday, December 11
2 to 6 p.m.

Oakland YWCA Tea Room
1515 Webster Street

For more information: (510) 839-0852
P.O. Box 77462
San Francisco, CA 94107

Los Angeles

Saturday, December 10
2 to 6 p.m.

Mount Hollywood
Congregational Church
4607 Prospect Avenue

For more information: (213) 380-8897
or e-mail:
partisandefense-la@sbcglobal.net



New York

Friday, December 9
6 to 11 p.m.

—New Venue—

District Council 1707, 14th Fl.
75 Varick Street
(North of Canal St.)
Take #1, A, C or E to Canal St.)

For more information: (212) 406-4252
P.O. Box 99, Canal St. Sta.
New York, NY 10013

Chicago

Sunday, December 11
3 to 7 p.m.

United Electrical Hall
37 S. Ashland (at Monroe)

For more information: (312) 563-0442
P.O. Box 802867
Chicago, IL 60680

Toronto

Saturday, December 10
7 to 10 p.m.

Steelworkers Hall
25 Cecil Street
(near Queens Park Sta.)

For more information: (416) 593-4138
P.O. Box 314, Station B
Toronto, Ontario M5T 2W1

This is not charity—it's a duty and an act of solidarity with those in prison. Their fight is our fight!

SPONSOR: PARTISAN DEFENSE COMMITTEE

In Honor of Our Comrade Elizabeth King Robertson

Our comrade Elizabeth King Robertson died on October 12. In an obituary published in *Workers Vanguard* No. 857 (28 October), we wrote: "Over the course of more than 30 years as a professional revolutionist, Lizzy excelled as an organizer, propagandist and editor." She was a patient mentor and inspiration for younger comrades. At the time of her death a few weeks before she was to turn 54, she was a full member of the Spartacist League Central Committee and of the International Executive Committee of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

Memorial meetings for comrade Lizzy have been held around the world, including in New York City on November 12 and Oakland, California on November 20. Photographs and documents illuminating her life and work were on display on both coasts. As is the custom in the communist movement, comrades gathered at the gravesides of past revolutionaries to lay wreaths or raise a glass in her honor, including at the grave of Karl Marx in London, East Berlin's memorial to Rosa Luxemburg and other socialists, and at the graves of heroic Soviet spies Richard Sorge and Ozaki Hotsumi in Tokyo. Tributes to Lizzy were received from all over the world from present and past members of the ICL, including some politically now very distant, as well as from a former colleague of Lizzy's in the Cambridge Tenants Organizing Committee.

More than 20 members of her family, as well as former schoolmates from the Brearley girls school, attended the memorial in New York City. Comrade Emily from the Bay Area, a longtime friend and political collaborator of Lizzy's, noted that Lizzy was "a Jewish girl from Queens, transposed to Park Avenue and the Upper East Side of Manhattan at age ten after the death of her mother, Barbara." Lizzy attended the exclusive but academically challenging Brearley. She was a New York City debutante, but one who became a professional revolutionary. In a testament to the deep loyalty Lizzy inspired, Amanda, a friend from those early school days, spoke movingly of their lifelong friendship and of the last gathering of her old friends only months before Lizzy's death. During that reunion, Lizzy, she said, characteristically insisted on going horseback riding.

Lizzy's father, Henry King, addressed the New York memorial with great dignity and even a touch of humor. He said he had told Lizzy that "I had not subscribed to the work of this group—and I don't—but I did feel that Lizzy made a really strong contribution, and that in her own development as a person she had succeeded. And no matter what it is you do in life, if you can succeed the way Lizzy did, as being a contributor, as being loyal, as being smart, that to me was wonderful."

The outpouring of tributes to Lizzy struck several themes. A major one was her commitment to the struggle for women's liberation through socialist revolution. Lizzy's ability to thoughtfully apply our Marxist program to the real world with its complexities, contradic-



tions and ever-shifting factors was appreciated by both our newest recruits and the most senior members of our Central Committee. Comrade Seymour wrote that because Lizzy had "an intelligence that was simultaneously receptive and critical," he regarded her, as did many comrades, "as a kind of intellectual editor."

Many comrades referred to Lizzy's painstaking work in developing our democratic-centralist organizational rules and to her presentation "On the Origins and Development of Leninist Organizational Practices" (*Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 54, Spring 1998). This, combined with her astute assessments of personnel, led some comrades to compare her, with all historical proportions guarded, to the Bolshevik organizer Yakov Sverdlov. As Kathleen, an organizer trained by Lizzy, put it: "In Lizzy there was a perfect amalgamation of simple humanity and humor with hard communist principles."

We print below the memorial tribute to Lizzy delivered in Oakland by George Foster on behalf of the Spartacist League/U.S. Central Committee, as well as excerpts from speeches by Amy Rath, editor of *Women and Revolution*, and by Lital Singer and Maryan Thompson, two young women organizers trained by Lizzy.

* * * * *

George Foster: Comrades, friends and family members, we are all gathered here today to honor the memory

of Elizabeth King Robertson, a professional revolutionary and member of our party for over 32 years. Her death after a six-year battle with cancer is a keenly felt loss to our close-knit international, and as well a devastating loss to her family—Jim Robertson, Martha and Martha's children Rachel, Sarah and Kenneth—and to her parents Henry King and Mary King and the rest of the King family, whose participation with us in a memorial meeting held last week in New York City was greatly appreciated.

As one of the founding members of our Boston Local, I've known Lizzy since she joined us. So let me talk a bit of her political life. Thirty-two years ago in Boston, as a 21-year-old New Left radical activist, Lizzy decided to join the Spartacist League's youth group, the Revolutionary Communist Youth. Young people of that day were radicalized by the Vietnam War, the struggle for black freedom and also for women's liberation. The *Roe v. Wade* decision was only a few months old when Lizzy joined. And throughout her life she remained a dedicated fighter for women's liberation through socialist revolution.

Prior to joining she had been active in the Cambridge Tenants Organizing Committee (CTOC), a tenants' rights group trying to defend working-class and minority families being pushed out of housing in Cambridge by various university real estate developers. The CTOC organized sizable demonstrations and rent strikes and mobilized large numbers of Cambridge residents to intervene in city council meetings. Lizzy was, I believe, the CTOC's full-timer/office manager. Was she supposed to be going to school instead? I don't know. To have such a young person playing such a large role was typical of the times, but impressive as well—an early indication of her capacities.

Around that time, the largest left group in Cambridge was the Progressive Labor Party, and they had been active around the CTOC. But I am sure that outfit, with their terrible line on the woman question, Stalinist bluster and thuggery and, above all, glorification of ignorance, would not have appealed to Lizzy. Instead she joined us and committed herself to the cause of the revolutionary emancipation of the working class and the program of Trotskyism. As Trotskyists, we base ourselves on the experience of Lenin and Trotsky, on the Bolshevik-led Russian Revolution of October 1917, and as well on the struggle by Leon Trotsky and the international Left Opposition against the degeneration of that revolution, a degeneration presided over by J.V. Stalin with his anti-revolutionary dogma of "socialism in one country." As Trotskyists, we stood for the unconditional defense of the gains of the October Revolution against imperialism and/or capitalist counterrevolution, while simultaneously seeking to mobilize a workers political revolution to oust the anti-revolutionary bureaucracy whose policies endangered those gains and short-circuited revolution internationally.

We recruit to our party based on agreement with our Marxist principles and acceptance of party program. So when Lizzy told us of her class background, which was one of considerable economic advantage and privilege, it was noteworthy but not a matter of concern. The Leninist party necessarily must have elements of both declassed revolutionary intelligentsia and the most politically advanced layers of the working class. Neither Marx, Engels, Lenin nor Trotsky were proletarians in origin; all were "traitors," in a sense, to their class origins. In fact, Lizzy's "advantages," a good education and a sense of duty, responsibility and self-confidence instilled by her parents and teachers, were put to very good use by her. She had a very keen sense of humor, and also, always, great poise and seriousness.

As a result of significant recruitment in Boston, by late 1973 we were able to establish a branch in Detroit, then the center of the largest and most militant sector of the U.S. labor movement. Lizzy was among those who volunteered to transfer, and when she arrived there, she was elected youth organizer. Many years later, she told me how much she enjoyed being Detroit youth organizer, and I agreed that politically the city and campuses were really interesting back then, but couldn't resist joking that it couldn't have hurt that she was one of the few women in an overwhelmingly male local, and that most of the comrades were understandably totally infatuated



November 12 memorial meeting in New York City concluded with singing of the "Internationale." WV Photo

with her. She just started laughing at me, and said, "So what's wrong with that?"

Another story: In the summer of 1974, we had a national meeting on a campus located near Detroit. Most of the comrades rented rooms at the campus, but four from California couldn't afford to stay there. So when they came into town in their car, they were put up in a large house where a number of Detroit comrades lived, including Lizzy—something at the time we used to call a commune. Now, two of those comrades were, while young, mothers of young children and rather hard-bitten types. Well, the commune was in a rough neighborhood, and when the comrades got inside, the two moms were appalled. The interior resembled something out of a bad teen movie. But then they opened a door and found a neat, clean bedroom complete with a real bed and a nightstand on which there was a Plexiglas cube in which a comrade had mounted a lot of photos of a rather large family. Needless to say, it was Lizzy's room, something they were able to ascertain the next day at the conference by matching her face to the family snapshots.

It was in Detroit that Lizzy completed her training to become a legal stenographic reporter. This stood her in good stead as a way of earning her living, and she continued to work as a court reporter until her debilitation from the cancer surgery made that impossible. We all have a picture in our heads of this very well-groomed and tiny woman lugging a very heavy stenographic machine, which must have weighed 25 percent of her total body weight, to and from work. Again, her training and professionalism in this field was put to good use in the party—recording meetings and editing and producing party bulletins.

Her job as a court reporter gave her a very good sense of the courts, law and the legal system, which proved very valuable in legal defense work. Lizzy had a very keen intelligence, and had she been so inclined, she would have been a very effective attorney. And those of us who knew her know one would not want to be cross-examined as a hostile witness by Lizzy. As it was, she was a fierce defender of Marxist principle.

After Lizzy moved to New York around 1976, she was elected National Organizational Secretary of the youth. She helped coordinate the activities of the youth branches and worked on the youth press. In contrast to a couple of "precious" young male editors at the time, she did not disdain the technical side of producing the paper. By the time she became Political Bureau secretary in the summer of 1978, she had served her apprenticeship. As a young organizer and youth activist, she had gained valuable experience dealing with trade-union questions in the heavily black city of Detroit, she had learned an exacting skill, had served as a national youth leader and learned to issue propaganda, put out a youth paper and organize its distribution.

A short while after she became PB secretary, she and Jim got together. She was both his loving companion and his closest political collaborator until her untimely death. Lizzy was clearly the best PB secretary we ever had, both in terms of sheer technical capacity, organizational skills and political acumen. She helped shape and organize political discussion, and she played a central role in facilitating communications between our center and SL/U.S. local committees, as well as our international. And this was a high-stress job—actually having to be ready at any time, and I do mean any time, to assist in intervening and engaging in struggles, external and internal, to try to decide what could and should be done with the often very meager resources at our disposal. As a lapsed physicist, let me share with you a quip from Richard Feynman, who let the cat out of the bag:

Young Spartacus

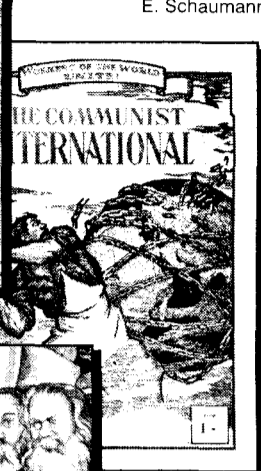
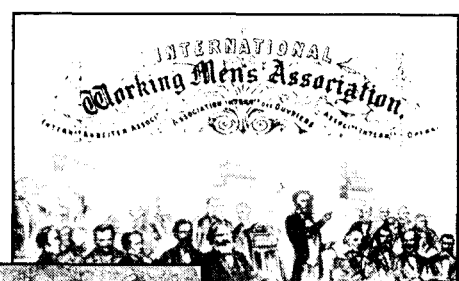
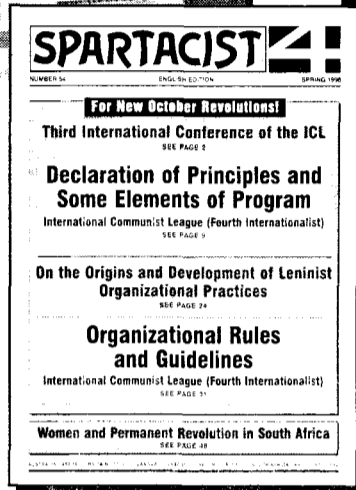


Left: Lizzy at Wayne State University protest, Detroit, 1974. Above: Lizzy at February 2003 antiwar demonstration in San Francisco.



Robertson Family

Lizzy's work on ICL's Organizational Rules and Guidelines drew on history and traditions of the international Marxist movement.



Verlag Kurt Desch



Diego Rivera

From top: Founding of First International, 1864; congress of Second International's German section, 1875; publication of Third International, 1919; Leon Trotsky, leader of Fourth International founded in 1938, depicted in Diego Rivera mural.

"Physics," he said, "is what physicists do late at night." Well, Trotskyism is what Trotskyists do late at night.

Lizzy's responsibilities entailed a lot of travel, discussion, inquiry and explaining points of program and organization to various comrades, local committees and sections. But through this, Lizzy acquired a very comprehensive understanding of the cadre and component parts of the ICL and Spartacist League/U.S., which made her invaluable in deciding questions of what personnel to allocate to address what task. It is also why she played a very large role in a number of nominating commissions, charged with evaluating the capacities of comrades nominated to leadership bodies at various of our national conferences.

Lizzy was, as well, in charge of indexing the bound volumes of our press and additionally was editor of internal party discussion bulletins. Minutes of meetings, our press and our discussion bulletins—these are the documentary history of our tendency. And as Leninists, we strive to be the historic memory of the working class, and to distill from such experiences and struggle the principles and program to guide us in our activity. There is no other way to test our understanding and guide our future actions and intervention as a disciplined party acting on a clear line, and there must be a record, so that we can

evaluate what we understood and where we went wrong. To do otherwise is not to be a Marxist, but to repeat empty formulas as *ex post facto* justification for whatever activity you undertake. For us, principles, theory and program, i.e., consciousness, are indispensable.

Lizzy was a very modest comrade. When she was first proposed to become a full member of the SL/U.S. Central Committee, she was unsure of her qualifications—she saw her main talents as lying on the organizational and administrative side of things. But the delegates at our 1983 National Conference thought otherwise and did elect her. It was a very wise choice: she was selected for her sober political judgment and keen insights as well as her remarkable organizational capacities.

In the Spartacist League, we understand there is no such thing as a 100 percent leadership. Jim has argued that if we can manage to be right 70 percent of the time, we will be doing very well indeed. And Lizzy would be the first to admit that she made her share of errors. But what was truly remarkable about her was her absolute lack of subjectivity or personal defensiveness in addressing such errors, both her own and others. Her concern was to get at the root of questions, to understand, and based on that understanding, to move forward.

These qualities of hers were best expressed in a letter sent to me by a comrade from the Bay Area:

"There are three concrete lessons I am very aware I learned from Lizzy (though how well or not is of course not her responsibility). The first two are central to the building of effective Leninist collectivity and Jim has demonstrated them to me as well: listen carefully to every comrade, because reason is not the exclusive property of anyone; and (relatedly) the conclusions of properly prepared collective debate of a political question are much more likely to approximate right than any single comrade's opinions (including not least one's own!). The third lesson is more personal, the result of a fight Lizzy in particular waged with me over the course of some years...the difference between moral imperative and dialectical materialism, between moralistic judgment and materialist understanding."

Additionally the comrade closes her letter: "To ease my conscience in regard to Lizzy's own wishes to be seen for what she was, I must add that she was a slow reader and not a good speller."

The last six years of Lizzy's life, after she discovered she had cancer, are both grim and inspiring and give us a true measure of her character, her revolutionary will and her humanity. She underwent chemotherapy, two extremely difficult and painful operations and radiation treatment. I believe she had the very best medical treatment available through the intervention of her father. But ultimately it was to no avail. The hopes of her family,

continued on page 6

An International Salute



Comrades in Berlin laid wreath in Lizzy's honor at memorial for Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht and other socialists, November 6. Spartakist

Around the world, cadres of the International Communist League gathered to remember our comrade Lizzy. "Yesterday afternoon we went to Trotsky's grave to honor Lizzy," wrote the Grupo Espartaquista de México on October 16. "It was a beautiful clear day and the colors of the garden and the red flag were at their most intense." Comrades sang the international workers anthem, the "Internationale," concluding with cries of "Viva la camarada Elizabeth—Viva! Viva la LCI! Viva!" The GEM wrote, "We left a vase of red roses as a commemoration and finished at our regular bar in Coyoacán."

The Spartacist Group Japan held a memorial at Tama cemetery on November 12, where Richard Sorge and Ozaki Hotsumi are buried. These heroic Soviet spies were hanged on 7 November 1944, the anniversary of the Russian Revolution. As a comrade wrote, "We sang the 'Internationale,' in three languages, as we raised glasses of vodka at Sorge's grave, and cups of sake at Ozaki's."

The comrades of Spartacist South Africa met in Soweto at a memorial to Hector Pieterse, a student slain in the anti-apartheid struggles. In Paris, our French section held a tribute at the Wall of the Communards in

Père Lachaise cemetery. In London, the Spartacist League/Britain met at Karl Marx's grave in Highgate cemetery. Other sections plan memorials, including an educational weekend in Italy. Condolences were also received from Colombo, Sri Lanka, "to salute and honour the memory of our beloved Comrade Lizzy, who spent time with us in the late '70s."

At the memorial held by our German comrades of the Spartacist Workers Party, a speech was given by Lizzy's longtime comrade Janis, who said: "It is fitting that we are here to lay a wreath for her at the Memorial to the Socialists in East Berlin, formerly the DDR [German Democratic Republic]. Here, where, among others, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, leaders of the Spartakusbund, are buried." She continued, "It is here that the pro-socialist part of the German proletariat recognize their best traditions. Despite the lie of the 'death of communism,' a hundred thousand people come here every year on Lenin-Liebknecht-Luxemburg day." Janis concluded, "Lizzy is gone. Her post is painfully empty. Other, young comrades must come forward to learn how to build a revolutionary party. You young comrades inherited this honor and duty." ■



Workers Hammer
Karl Marx's grave, Highgate cemetery, London, November 20.



Espartaco
Leon Trotsky's grave, Coyoacán, Mexico, October 15.



Spartacist Japan
Richard Sorge's grave, Tama cemetery outside Tokyo, November 12.

Elizabeth King Robertson...

(continued from page 5)

friends and comrades were cruelly dashed—the cancer at some point metastasized and resulted in a very painful death.

Yet it was in this period that Lizzy struggled with great will, effectiveness and determination to defend the programmatic and organizational integrity of the party. The October Revolution was the signal political event of the 20th century, resulting in the overthrow of capitalism and creation of the world's first workers state. The demise of the October Revolution in 1991-1992 was a historic defeat for the international working class, ushering in a period of reaction and great difficulties for proletarian revolutionists. Most notably, we have to struggle anew to win the workers of the world to the banner of Marxism.

Our great difficulties in this period have been expressed in political disorientation and associated organizational disarray, matters about which we have written in our press. It was in these circumstances, on a number of issues of principle, program and tactics, that comrade Lizzy forcefully intervened to keep us the party she had originally joined, the party of the Russian Revolution. She did this with clarity, great energy and astounding determination, while suffering both physical disability and great pain, when much of her decreasing reserves of energy were spent on frequent visits to doctors and therapy.

Lizzy's obituary published in *Workers Vanguard* notes that her strength was in tackling the intersection of political principles with concrete social reality: coming up with tactics and slogans to express our program. That is very true, but it was an expression of both a lifetime of

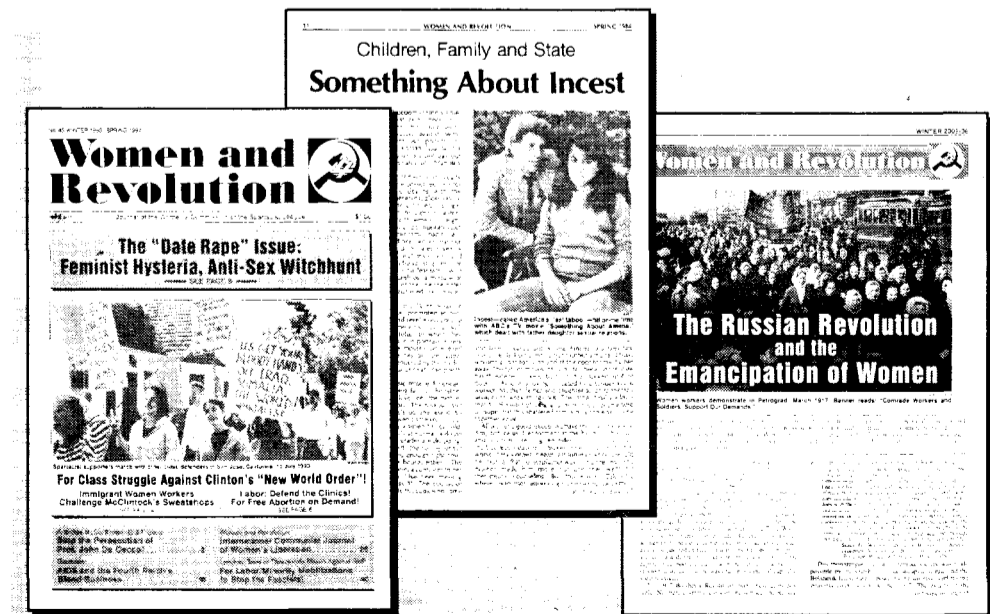
experience and very hard work.

V.I. Lenin, the founder of the Bolshevik Party, noted that it's far more difficult to be a revolutionary in periods of reaction than revolution. At a speech memorializing the Bolshevik organizer Yakov Sverdlov, he noted that during the difficult period of preparation for revolution there arises an inevitable gulf between theory, principle and program, and practical work, and that the Bolsheviks suffered from too deep an engrossment in theory abstracted from direct action. That is why we define ourselves as a fighting propaganda group, one that struggles to find opportunities, however modest, to intervene in struggle and test our program, organization and cadre.

Early on after his return to Russia in 1917, Lenin cited a line from Goethe's *Faust*: "Theory, my friend, is gray, but green is the eternal tree of life." It was a polemic

against those who did not understand that political theory is an abstraction from experience, and that such theory, divorced from an analysis of the actual developments, runs the danger of degenerating into empty sloganeering. At issue here was the decision to struggle to embark on the course which led to the victory of the October Revolution. That capacity to grasp the green eternal tree of life is a rare quality, but it's absolutely necessary to transform revolutionary program to living reality. And that's how Lizzy lived her life, and that, as well as her friendship, beauty, compassion and courage, is what we shall miss.

In the Transitional Program, Trotsky writes: "To face reality squarely; not to seek the line of least resistance; to call things by their right names; to speak the truth to the masses, no matter how bitter it may be; not to fear



A selection from Lizzy's significant contributions to ICL publications. Left to right: *W&R* No. 43, Winter 1993-Spring 1994; *W&R* No. 28, Spring 1984; forthcoming issue of *Spartacist*.

obstacles: to be true in little things as in big ones; to base one's program on the logic of the class struggle; to be bold when the hour of action arrives—these are the rules of the Fourth International." That is what Lizzy embodied, and we honor her best by honoring those rules.

* * * * *

Amy Rath: Lizzy's last contribution to the party's work was "The Russian Revolution and the Emancipation of Women," in defense of the road of October, for the *Women and Revolution* pages in the upcoming *Spartacist*. For her, the article was key to getting out the message of the truly radical vision of human society that the Bolsheviks fought for, to educating this younger generation in the road of Lenin and Trotsky.

Lizzy was an exemplary member of the editorial board of *W&R* since 1979, concerned about every aspect of the paper: from editorial policy and broad political questions, to sales, to the grind of getting it out. Lizzy always had at least a finger, if not her whole arm, in each article. The most ambitious were a collective product, sometimes described by our critics as "editing by mass democracy." While our methods could certainly have been improved, such articles require that kind of collaboration and Lizzy was key to making that work. Sometimes she provided a crucial insight. Sometimes it was thoughtful advice on untying some knotty problem of politics or personnel. Sometimes it was a few well-considered touches on an almost finished piece. And sometimes it was an in-depth edit job, taking in the points of our eccentric editorial body and turning a draft into a cogent political statement. But Lizzy was never so dedicated to editing that she didn't take time off now and then to take in a Lakers game.

Lizzy's area of expertise was the thorny issue of human sexuality in its diversity, articles like "Something About Incest," "The Uses of Abuse" and "The 'Date Rape' Issue," which are featured on the display about *Women and Revolution*. And it's fitting that Isaac Deutscher's famous remark about "hunger, sex and death" as the three tragedies besetting man is also featured on the display. As Deutscher says, "Hunger is the enemy that Marxism and the modern labor movement have taken on." But *W&R* was pitched to cover the human condition writ large. The woman question touches the human being in all of us, and so Lizzy liked to say that *W&R* is the "sex and death" desk.

Acting as the tribune of the people—protesting every act of oppression, no matter what layer of society it hits—can put you in some pretty unpopular spots in these days of the anti-sex witchhunt. Time after time, Lizzy had her finger on the hot-button questions that were socially explosive and about which we have something unique and powerful to say. In "Uses of Abuse," "Something About Incest" and "Date Rape," as we later summed up:

"We explored some of the ambiguities of sexuality in a society where the deformities of class inequality and racial and sexual oppression can lead to a lot of personal pain and ugliness. We pointed out that while the abuse of children is a vicious and horrible crime, many 'illegal' sexual encounters are entirely consensual and devoid of harm per se. The willful conflation of everything from mutual fondling of siblings to the heinous rape of an infant by an adult caretaker creates a social climate of anti-sex hysteria in which the perpetrators of real violence against children often go free. And we insisted that the sexual proclivities of a group-living mammalian species such as our own are patently ill-suited to the rigid heterosexual monogamy which forms the ideological foundation of the institution of the family, reinforced by organized religion."

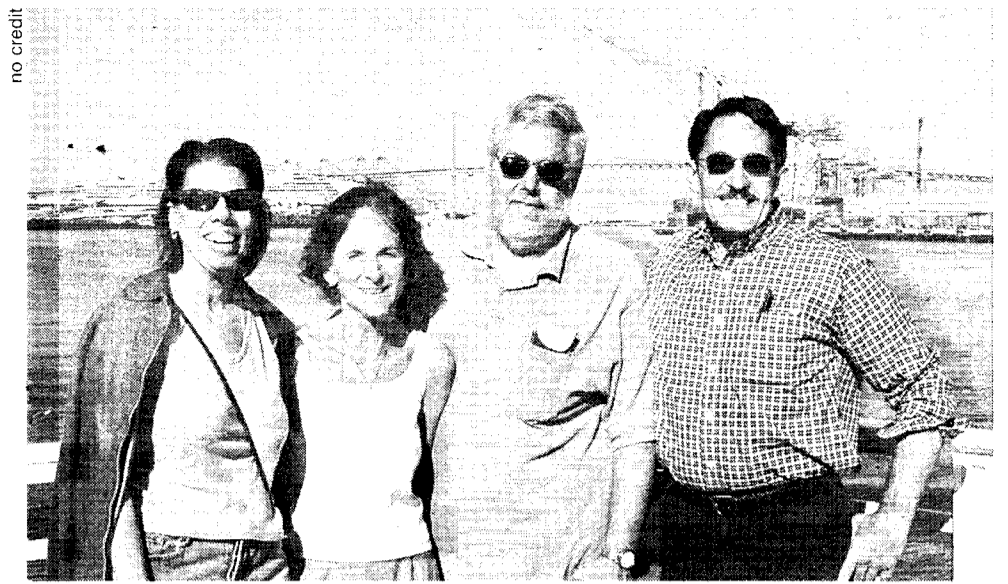
—"Satan, the State and Anti-Sex Hysteria,"
W&R No. 45, Winter-Spring 1996

Our position is summed up in the concept of *effective consent* as the guide in all sexual matters and opposition to state interference in private life. We do not condemn any kind of sexuality or sexual act per se—what counts is that it is *consensual*.

After we published "Date Rape," we received letters from a few outraged feminists canceling their subscriptions. I could say that that article lost us more readers than any other in the history of our tendency! So we knew that our paper was being read by its intended audience, and that we had hit our target hard enough to get an active and angry response. And Lizzy personally was quite delighted and proud. We also had to have a fight with a few youth comrades over the question, and Lizzy made a clarifying political intervention into the discussion that's printed in a bulletin, and this is some of what she said:

"The reason that we talk about questions of sexuality is that often these questions are politicized, usually not by us but by the bourgeoisie, by some element of society, that takes questions that are normally of a secondary interest and makes them political questions that we not only *can* comment on but, in certain circumstances, *must* comment on and must take a position on."

In grappling with the tangled issues of sex and society, we sometimes arrived at a position only after extensive party debate. The article "The Agony of AIDS" (*Women and Revolution* No. 35, Summer 1988) is one example, and Lizzy played a leading role in an important party discussion that began in the Political Bureau. It was a chal-



Lizzy with comrades at Los Angeles port.

lenge to address the emergence of this deadly disease, which has been politically charged from the beginning.

In this article, we took up the controversy over the closing of the gay bathhouses in San Francisco at the beginning of the AIDS epidemic. Our first response in 1984 had been, as we said in our 1988 article, "a knee-jerk reaction." We wrongly demanded: "Government Out of the Baths!" according to the principle of opposition to state interference in private life. But this public health emergency was about *life and death*. You don't cite the First Amendment when the Fire Department is hacking through your walls to stop a fire. In reconsidering our position, we wrote: "The problem is that there are two principles here which are always in tension: public health vs. individual rights. Which one has more weight at any given moment can only be decided by examining the particular health threat posed." And this was a key party discussion on the nature of the state.

Lizzy also played a key role in the piece on the traditional practice of female genital mutilation which took on the liberal and leftist advocates of cultural relativism, which rejects and opposes the rational humanism of the Enlightenment as a form of Western cultural imperial-

ensure revolutionary continuity. Lizzy was a remarkable example and inspiration to young cadre. In the early 1990s, the party made a decision to reinforce the Los Angeles Local, and Lizzy was assigned to be the Central Committee's representative to the local. Thus began a period of close collaboration with Los Angeles comrades that would span a dozen years.

I was a young and inexperienced organizer of the Los Angeles Local for two years, starting in 2003. In this capacity, I benefited from working closely with Lizzy. Los Angeles is a sprawling metropolis, and discussions in the local over how to implement our program have often centered around the fight against the oppression of the black population, defense of the large Latino immigrant population and the tensions between blacks and Latinos in the city. Lizzy helped us understand the need to make immigrant rights and immigrant workers a key part of the work of the local, and at the same time, the need to win Latinos and immigrants to an understanding of the central importance of the fight for black liberation.

During the many class battles in Los Angeles in the past few years, such as the longshore workers lockout, the UFCW grocery workers strike and transit strikes, Lizzy's main intervention was to warn us *against* the constant pressure to merely run from picket to picket. In addition to bringing our Marxist perspective to the workers, she urged us to bring those battles to students and youth, building support for workers' struggles on the campuses, bringing students to the picket lines and seeking to win youth to be lifelong partisans of the working class.

In a city that can easily lead one to forget about what's happening elsewhere, comrades treasured Lizzy for helping us to be better internationalists. As difficult as it is to be an organizer, consulting with Lizzy was always my favorite part of the job. She told me on numerous occasions to keep politics first. She advised us on how to deal with our tasks as a small local in a big city with a lot going on. She wrote: "The answer...is not to decide nothing and then do everything, necessarily half-heartedly and badly. You need to figure out what you *must* do first and do it, and then see if you can also tackle some of what you *want* to do—but that implies that you *agree* both on the vital and the desired. This can only be done through fighting out your differences which, if guided by a set of *programmatic* criteria, you will probably find are not that far apart."

* * * * *

Maryan Thompson: Lizzy trained me as Bay Area organizer. Lizzy served as the political chair of the Bay Area branch for the last five years. Lizzy greatly appreciated comrades' political input. Lizzy did a good job of circulating the ideas of members who were less likely to put pen to paper. When Lizzy became increasingly ill, one of the main assignments that she tried to maintain was coming into the Oakland office to talk with comrades and see what was on their minds.

Lizzy sat on the Bay Area executive committee for many years. She would bring in the flats of *Workers Vanguard* for exec members to review. She thought that a major task of the leadership was to prepare the local on how to discuss the new issue of the newspaper. Lizzy was generally very involved in our sales operation precisely because she understood that a central part of being a fighting propaganda group is getting out your paper. Lizzy strove to do regular sales. I was often on daytime sales with her. Sometimes we sold to sparsely attended union meetings and a couple of trade unionists would buy our paper. Lizzy thought that the sales were worth it because of those individuals and because of the thought and preparation that went into the sales.

She always had at least one youth member that she was meeting with regularly to discuss Marxist texts. She made what started out as a very difficult book, *The Development of the Monist View of History* by Plekhanov, one of my favorites. ■



Photos displayed at New York and Oakland memorials show Lizzy speaking for the ICL in January 2005 and February 1993.

ism. At its extreme, this doctrine leads to rationalizing the most barbaric anti-woman practices in tradition-bound patriarchal societies.

The current *W&R* article in *Spartacist*, which is still on the newsstands today, about the U.S. government-sponsored "sex slave" hysteria about immigrant prostitutes, was also the product of an international discussion on the impact of the counterrevolution on the status of women. This discussion—again, where Lizzy played a leading role—reconfirmed our opposition to laws against the "crimes without victims" like prostitution, gambling and drug use, resulting in an important addition to the Labor Black League program and the Spartacus Youth Club's ten-point program.

To end, I'd like to quote Plekhanov, which to me sums up what Lizzy's life in the party was all about: "Freedom is giving all in the service of your aim."

* * * * *

Lital Singer: One of Lizzy's great legacies was the political investment that she made in many youth, in particular in the Bay Area and Los Angeles, in order to

Venezuela...

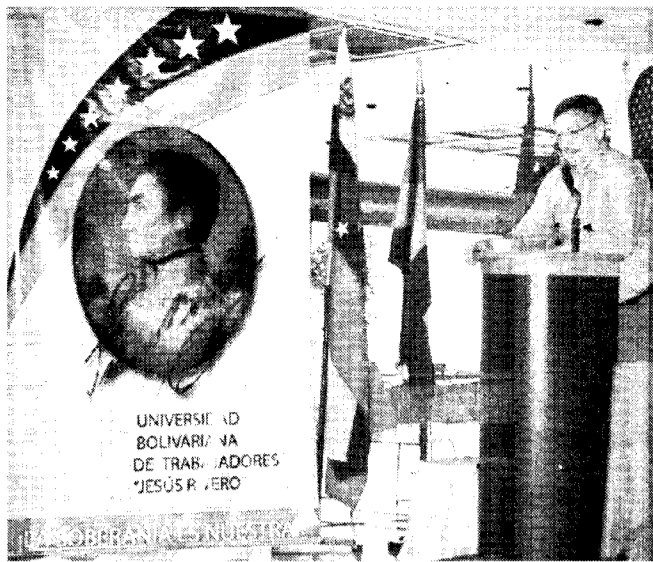
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Ploy Fails—Populist Capitalist Ruler Chávez Prevails” (WV No. 831, 3 September 2004): “The immediate perspective that is urgently posed is not only to oppose U.S. imperialist incursions into Venezuela and elsewhere, but to fight to shatter the support of the workers movement to either Chávez or the opposition, and to forge a revolutionary internationalist workers party to lead the working class to power.”

In contrast, the vast majority of self-described socialists and revolutionaries act as the “leftist” marketing department of Chávez’s “Bolivarian Revolution.” Foremost among these is Ted Grant’s British-based International Marxist Tendency (IMT), now led by Alan Woods, author of a paean titled *The Venezuelan Revolution—A Marxist Perspective* (2005). While other opportunists offer the occasional criticism of Chávez, Woods and his outfit actually boast of being “Trotskyist” advisers to the left-talking *caudillo*. In foisting Chávez off as a champion of the poor and oppressed, *the IMT et al. help set workers up for slaughter*. Tying the working class and its organizations to any bourgeois ruler only serves to impede independent working-class struggle. In opposition to groups like the IMT, Marxists seek to prepare the Venezuelan working class to effectively combat the murderous forces of bourgeois reaction, whether led by Chávez or his bourgeois opponents.

Chávez and Imperialism

Examining the arguments used by fake Marxists like the IMT to justify their support to the “Bolivarian Revolution” will



In Defence of Marxism

April 2005: Fake-Trotskyist Alan Woods, chief left booster of bourgeois-nationalist “Bolivarian Revolution,” speaking at solidarity conference in Venezuela.

Aside from the point that Chávez did not (and does not) “start from a socialist standpoint,” every statement in this passage is false or misleading. We will address later in this article the notion that “the leadership of the Cuban revolution” should be a model for Latin American revolutionaries. For now it is enough to show how the IMT’s comparison of Castro’s Cuba with Chávez’s Venezuela twists the facts into a pretzel. When Castro’s rebel army marched into Havana on 1 January 1959, the bourgeois army and the rest of the capitalist state apparatus that had propped up the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship collapsed in disarray. By the time Castro declared Cuba “socialist” in 1961, the Cuban bourgeoisie and the U.S. imperialists and their CIA and Mafia henchmen had all fled and every bit of capitalist property down to the last ice cream vendor had been expropriated. What was created in Cuba was a bureaucratically deformed workers

officer who boasts of his *zambo* (mixed African and indigenous) heritage. Chávez serves the class interests of the Caracas bourgeoisie—and, through that class, world imperialism. While speaking of “restlessness in the boardrooms” over the regime’s populist policies, a *New York Times* (3 November) article headlined “Chávez Restyles Venezuela With ‘21st-Century Socialism’” reported soberly: “So far, no noticeable exodus of foreign companies operating in Venezuela has occurred. Banks and oil companies are making record profits thanks to oil prices that have left the country, the world’s fifth-largest exporter, awash in petrodollars.”

In his Porto Alegre speech, Chávez was quick to assure the Venezuelan bourgeoisie and its imperialist overlords that his is not “the kind of socialism that we saw in the Soviet Union”—i.e., a planned, collectivized economy based on the overthrow of capitalist rule—which he denounced as “state capitalism” and a “perversion.” He made it very clear that his friendship with Cuba’s leader did not extend to its collectivized economy, saying, “Cuba has its own profile and Venezuela has its own.” He lauded and identified with Brazil’s Lula, the one-time populist who enforces imperialist-dictated austerity measures. In short, as Chávez declared on his *Alo Presidente* TV show on May 22, his vision of “21st-century socialism” is “not in contradiction with private companies, it is not in contradiction with private property.”

Indeed. And so long as capitalist private property prevails, the masses will remain subject to exploitation and oppression, and economic development will be subordinated to the dictates of the world capitalist market, particularly the imperialist oil monopolies. There can be no permanent amelioration of the plight of the urban and rural poor without the smashing of the capitalist state and the overthrow of the capitalist social order, leading through a series of proletarian revolutions internationally to a global classless order in which all forms of exploitation and oppression have been eliminated.

Trotsky and Permanent Revolution

This understanding animated the October Revolution of 1917. Led by the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky, the workers of Russia—organized around their own class interests and through democratically elected workers councils (soviets)—swept away the capitalist state and replaced it with a workers state. The Bolshevik-led workers stood at the head of all the oppressed, not least the vast army of poor and landless peasants, and saw their revolution as the opening shot of a necessarily international struggle of labor against the rule of capital.

This is a far cry from what happened in the Cuban Revolution, where Castro’s July 26 Movement consisted of peasant guerrillas and declassed petty-bourgeois intellectuals who had become estranged from the bourgeoisie and were independent of the proletariat. Under ordinary conditions, the Castroite rebels would have followed in the footsteps of countless similar movements in Latin America, wielding radical-democratic rhetoric to reassert bourgeois control. It was only as

a result of exceptional circumstances—the absence of the working class as a contender for power in its own right, hostile imperialist encirclement and the flight of the national bourgeoisie, and a lifeline thrown by the Soviet Union—that Castro’s petty-bourgeois government was able to smash capitalist property relations.

The existence of the Soviet degenerated workers state was crucial in this, providing economic assistance and a military shield that helped stay the hand of the imperialist beast just 90 miles away. Unlike the Soviet Union, where the original revolutionary and internationalist program of October was trampled underfoot by a conservative, nationalist bureaucracy that usurped political control in 1923-24, in Cuba the workers state was bureaucratically deformed from its inception.

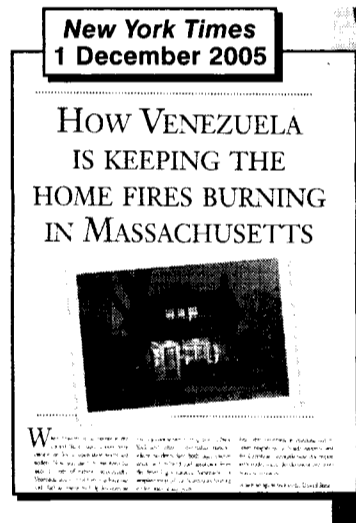
In overthrowing capitalist rule, the Cuban Revolution stopped the plunder of the island by the imperialists and the local bourgeoisie. As with the Soviet degenerated workers state when it existed, we call for the unconditional military defense of Cuba and the other remaining deformed workers states—China, North Korea and Vietnam—against internal counterrevolution and imperialist attack. It is the Stalinist Castroite bureaucracy that undermines the defense of Cuba, not least by coying up to and providing a “revolutionary” cover for all kinds of anti-working-class capitalist regimes. As we state in the International Communist League “Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program” (*Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 54, Spring 1998):

“Under the most favorable historic circumstances conceivable, the petty-bourgeois peasantry was only capable of creating a bureaucratically deformed workers state, that is, a state of the same order as that issuing out of the political counterrevolution of Stalin in the Soviet Union, an anti-working-class regime which blocked the possibilities to extend social revolution into Latin America and North America, and suppressed Cuba’s further development in the direction of socialism. To place the working class in political power and open the road to socialist development requires a supplemental *political* revolution led by a Trotskyist party. With the destruction of the Soviet degenerated workers state and consequently no readily available lifeline against imperialist encirclement, the narrow historical opening in which petty-bourgeois forces were able to overturn local capitalist rule has been closed, underscoring the Trotskyist perspective of permanent revolution.”

Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution, confirmed by the Russian Revolution, holds that in those countries where capitalism emerged belatedly, the tasks historically associated with the bourgeois-democratic revolutions of the 17th and 18th centuries can only be carried out under the class rule of the proletariat. No matter how radical-sounding their political representatives, the bourgeoisies in the backward countries are too weak, too fearful of the rising proletariat and too dependent on the imperialist order to resolve the problems of political democracy, agrarian revolution and independent national development.

In its own way, it is rather appropriate that the capitalist demagogue Chávez idolizes Simón Bolívar, a man described by Karl Marx in a February 1858 letter to Friedrich Engels as “the most dastardly, most miserable and meanest of blackguards.” As Marx makes clear in a contribution on Bolívar written for *The New American Cyclopaedia* of 1858, the founding father of Latin American nationalism embodied many of the attributes of the late-emerging semicolonial bourgeoisie of South America. He was venal, corrupt, cowardly and imperious. He repeatedly deserted his troops under fire, stabbed his comrades in the back and relied on the forces of British imperialism for his victories. Following his first triumph in 1813, he allowed himself to be publicly honored, drawn in a carriage by 12 young ladies from the first families of Caracas, and proclaimed himself “dictator and liberator of the western provinces of Venezuela.”

The Bolivarian “Marxists” of the IMT turn permanent revolution on its head, arguing that if a bourgeois formation is



Joseph P. Kennedy II carrying fuel oil hose to kick off program providing cheap Venezuelan fuel to low-income Massachusetts residents, as described in newspaper ad.

help clarify the difference between populist nationalism and authentic proletarian Marxism. In a 1 March article on their Web site (www.marxist.com) titled “President Chavez Reaffirms Opposition to Capitalism,” IMT spokesman Jorge Martin asserts that when he came to power in 1998, “Chavez did not start from a socialist standpoint. He was committed to solving the problems of inequality, poverty, and misery of millions of Venezuelans. But he initially thought that could be done within the limits of the capitalist system.” Martin continues:

“Since President Chavez was seriously committed to solving these problems, the oligarchy, en masse, went over to the side of armed insurrection against the democratically elected government....

“It has been this rich experience of the revolutionary movement, faced with the constant provocations of the ruling class, that has pushed Chavez and many in the Bolivarian revolutionary movement to draw the conclusion that ‘Within the framework of capitalism it is impossible to solve the challenges of fighting against poverty, misery, exploitation, inequality’....

“This dynamic of action and reaction of the Venezuelan revolution reminds us in a very powerful way of the first years of the Cuban revolution. In a process of attack and counter-attack, the leadership of the Cuban revolution, which did not start with the intention of overthrowing capitalism, was forced, in order to solve the most pressing needs of the masses, to overthrow capitalism.”

state. In contrast, Chávez came to power and rules *at the head* of the capitalist state, the Venezuelan bourgeoisie is alive and kicking, and the imperialists continue to carry on a thriving business with Venezuela, White House threats and provocations notwithstanding.

Chávez’s principal concern upon coming to power was to “solve the problem” of the country’s faltering oil profits, the lifeblood of the Venezuelan bourgeoisie. He moved immediately to discipline the oil workers union and to otherwise increase the efficiency of the state-owned oil industry, while pressing the OPEC oil cartel to jack up prices. It was for such efforts, and to enforce political stability, that Chávez was initially *supported* by much of the ruling class. This included not least his former comrades in the military high command, who were instrumental in restoring him to power after the 2002 coup. As oil prices climbed, Chávez did siphon off some of the enormous profits to finance a series of social measures: tripling the budget for education, setting up free health clinics and free food distribution programs for the poor, etc. But the aim of such measures is not to effect, but rather to *deflect*, a social revolution—by binding the dispossessed masses more firmly to the Venezuelan state.

However much the lily-white Venezuelan oligarchy may detest this upstart junior



AP

really committed to fighting for democracy, it can somehow overcome its historic limitations and achieve not only democracy but even socialism. Thus IMT spokesman Jorge Martin writes, "The central idea of the theory of Permanent Revolution is that in colonial and ex-colonial countries the struggle for the bourgeois democratic tasks, if it is pursued to the end, must lead (in an uninterrupted or permanent manner) to the socialist revolution." The programmatic essence of permanent revolution is the struggle for the *class independence of the proletariat* from all wings of the semicolonial bourgeoisie—no matter how "progressive" or "anti-imperialist" their proclamations. That struggle can be realized only through forging a revolutionary, internationalist workers party in opposition to all variants of bourgeois nationalism.

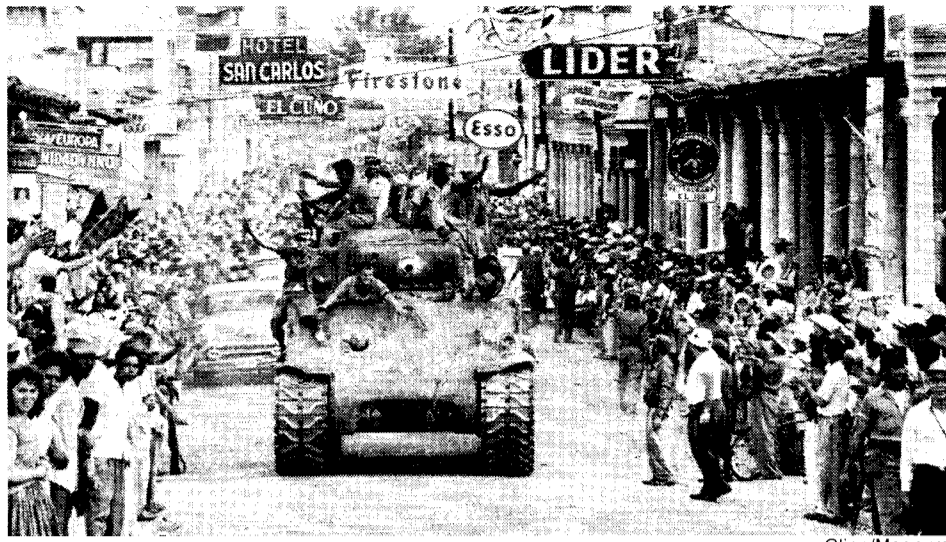
Reform vs. Revolution

The task of Marxists is to rip the "socialist" mask off the Chávez regime, to warn that he represents the class enemy. If the IMT's opportunist competitors do not simply fawn over Chávez and his "Bolivarian Revolution," they nevertheless join in depicting the left-talking *caudillo* as a potential, albeit partial and unreliable, ally of the working class. Thus Peter Taaffe's British-based Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) lauds Chávez for launching a "debate on the development of socialism" that is "crucial for the further development of the Venezuelan revolution" but complains that, "unfortunately," Chávez "has no perspective of spreading a socialist revolution to other [!] countries of Latin America" ("Venezuela: Socialism Back on the Agenda," 6 October).

Then there is the League for the Fifth International (L5I) centered on the British Workers Power group, which titles a chapter in its *Anti-Capitalism: A Rough Guide to the Anti-Capitalist Movement* (2005) "Hugo Chávez: A New Leader for the Anticapitalist Movement?" Polemicizing against admirers of the Mexican Zapatistas who believe that it is possible to effect social change without taking power, the L5I writes:

"Chávez at least shows that genuine reforms cannot come by pleading, which have brought the precious few results for the Mexican peasants, but rather come from seeking to take hold of power. Chávez's faults lie in his unwillingness to destroy all those elements of the Venezuelan state—the judiciary, and police above all—which hamper and frustrate progress."

Chávez will not destroy the agencies of repression that are at the core of the bourgeois state—the judiciary, the police, the prison system and, "above all," the army—because he *administers* the bourgeois state. Sweeping away the dictatorship of capital in Venezuela means sweeping away the bourgeois regime through *proletarian* revolution, not lecturing the capitalist strongman as though



Glinn/Magnum

Rebel army led by Castro enters Havana, Cuba, on New Year's Day, 1959.

he were a wayward apprentice. Indeed, as his left camp followers complain, Chávez has not even purged many individual recalcitrants from his military and police command, as happens after almost every Latin American coup.

Under its patina of pseudo-Leninist rhetoric, the L5I promotes the essence of social-democratic reformism—the notion that the bourgeois state need not be smashed on the anvil of proletarian revolution but can be reformed into serving as an instrument of social transformation. In Britain, Workers Power's home terrain, this has historically taken the form of slavish loyalty to the pro-capitalist, parliamentarist Labour Party (in which the IMT's British group remains deeply buried). In Venezuela, it means whitewashing the fact that populist strongman Chávez is the class enemy of the proletarian struggle for socialism.

Populism, Neoliberalism—Two Sides of a Coin

The popularity of Chávez and his "Bolivarian Revolution" among idealistic young leftists—and wizened opportunists—must be understood against the backdrop of the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union. Among radical youth, nurtured by more than a decade of "death of communism" propaganda from the "left" and the right, the October Revolution is widely perceived to have been a "failed experiment." They reject as well the Marxist understanding that the working class is the unique agency for social revolution against the capitalist order. Moreover, capitalism has, by and large, been equated with that particular set of economic policies known as "neoliberalism"—widespread privatization of public facilities, destruction of social welfare programs, untrammled imperialist aggrandizement.

The recent history of Venezuela amply demonstrates that neoliberalism and populism are nothing but two faces of the same coin, sometimes carried out by the

same bourgeois regime in different periods. Carlos Andrés Pérez of Democratic Action (AD), for example, is remembered as the president who nationalized oil and mining in the mid 1970s and also as the president who introduced IMF shock treatment. AD spouted social-democratic rhetoric and controlled the corporatist CTV trade-union federation. Buoyed by a surge in oil revenues in the 1970s, the bourgeoisie amassed enormous wealth. At the same time, the AD and the bourgeois, pro-Catholic COPEI party, which was at different times the AD's rival and its partner, presided over the highest wages for workers anywhere in Latin America, as well as extensive price controls and subsidies for food, transportation, education, health care and other necessities.

But in the 1980s, the oil boom turned to bust and the huge imperialist debt bomb exploded, leading to a plunge in living standards for working people, massive cuts in social services and other strin-

companies and made significant land distributions to the peasantry in the 1930s. He also broke strikes and subordinated the working class through the corporatist CTM labor federation. In a May 1939 article titled "Nationalized Industry and Workers' Management," Trotsky noted:

"In the industrially backward countries foreign capital plays a decisive role. Hence the relative weakness of the *national* bourgeoisie in relation to the *national* proletariat. This creates special conditions of state power. The government veers between foreign and domestic capital, between the weak national bourgeoisie and the relatively powerful proletariat. This gives the government a Bonapartist character of a distinctive character. It raises itself, so to speak, above classes. Actually, it can govern either by making itself the instrument of foreign capitalism and holding the proletariat in the chains of a police dictatorship, or by maneuvering with the proletariat and even going so far as to make concessions to it, thus gaining the possibility of a certain freedom toward the foreign capitalists."

Bonapartism in Venezuela

In Venezuela, AD founder Rómulo Betancourt, who talked of socialism, governed in league with the military in the 1940s and purged the unions of Communists, turning the CTV into a tame corporatist labor adjunct of AD. Reading from the same script, Chávez advanced social reforms aimed at consolidating a base of support among the plebeian poor. His aim was to use this base as a battering ram not only against his enemies in the oligarchy but particularly against the CTV labor federation, whose top leadership was not only part of AD but also tied to the CIA through the AFL-CIO labor bureaucracy in the U.S.

Under the battle cry of bringing "democracy" to the CTV, Chávez sought to bring the unions to heel. He assumed



Hugo Chávez embracing Fidel Castro in Bolívar City, Venezuela, 2001.

gent austerity measures. The portion of the population living below the poverty line nearly doubled, from 36 to 66 percent, between 1984 and 1995. As industry and agriculture declined, large numbers of formerly unionized workers and the rural dispossessed were driven into the low-wage "informal economy," trying to eke out an existence as street vendors, servants, temporary workers, etc. The rate of trade-union membership dropped from 26.4 percent in 1988 to 13.5 percent in 1995, leaving the CTV as the preserve of a relatively privileged layer of oil and other public-sector workers.

In 1989, Pérez introduced his *paquetazo*, the "big package" of austerity measures. This provoked mass protests, the *Caracazo*, which were brutally suppressed. In an essay in *Venezuelan Politics in the Chávez Era* (ed. Steve Ellner and Daniel Hellinger [2003]), Kenneth Roberts writes:

"The combination of social polarization and political detachment proved to be highly combustible after 1989, as Venezuelans turned on the political establishment and threw their support to a series of independent leaders and protest parties. By the end of the 1990s, widespread disillusionment produced a ground swell of support for the consummate political outsider: a former paratrooper commander who captured the popular imagination by leading a failed coup attempt against a discredited democratic regime."

These were classic conditions for the emergence of a populist strongman like Chávez.

Another example of a Latin American populist nationalist was Mexico's Lázaro Cárdenas, who nationalized foreign oil

office in 1998 declaring that the CTV "must be demolished" and tried, unsuccessfully, to ram through a union-busting referendum two years later. For their part, the notoriously pro-imperialist CTV union tops joined with the oil bosses and other anti-Chávez sectors of the bourgeoisie and military in the botched 2002 coup and the lengthy strike/lockout in the oil industry that began later that year.

In April 2003, the Bolivarian Workers Force (FBT) in the CTV and other *chavista* union bureaucrats set up a new union federation under the umbrella of the government. The Unión Nacional de Trabajadores (UNT—National Union of Workers) garnered fully 76.5 percent of labor agreements signed in 2003-04, according to Chávez's Ministry of Labor, while the CTV captured a bare 20 percent. The UNT has now won the favor of the UN's International Labor Organization and the pro-imperialist Trades Union Congress tops in Britain. It has also been enthusiastically touted by the fake left internationally, including those groups that offer some tepid criticism of Chávez himself. In particular, such groups hail the occasional plant occupations and the UNT's call for "*cogestión*" (misrepresented as "workers control") as evidence that the "Bolivarian Revolution" is not simply a product of government policy but is driven by working-class struggle at the base of Venezuelan society.

Socialist Worker (5 August), newspaper of the U.S. International Socialist *continued on page 10*

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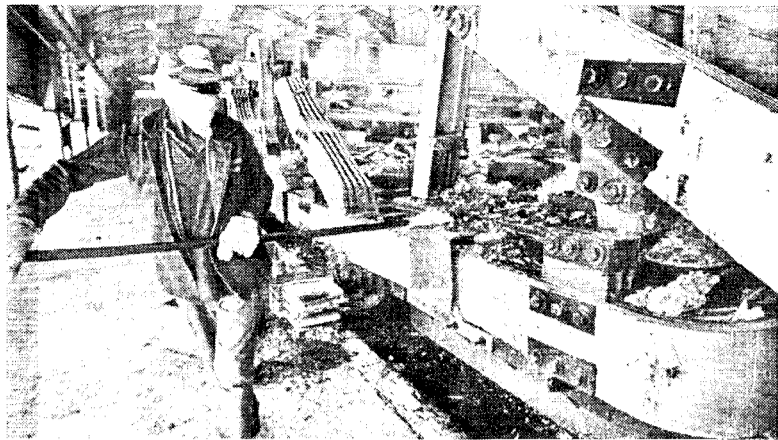
Venezuela...

(continued from page 9)

Organization (ISO), reported rhapsodically that UNT leaders had called for the "formation of a mass workers party that can fight for the socialist revolution in Venezuela." Striking a slightly more critical pose, the Internationalist Group (IG) writes in the *Internationalist* (September-October 2005): "The UNT has adopted socialist language, and even criticizes government plans for 'co-management,' calling for 'workers control.' However, none of the main sectors of the UNT has adopted a revolutionary program aiming at preparing the socialist revolution. Rather they seek to pressure the Chávez government to the left." Particularly coming from the IG, this is a rather mild way of describing a union federation that was established under the wing of the Chávez government.

You would not know it from reading its latest article, but the IG was singing a different tune in a November 2000 article titled "Against Chávez, the Stock Market and the IMF—Venezuela: Mobilize Workers Power to Defeat the Anti-Union Referendum!" That article, which appeared in Spanish on its Web site, depicted the Venezuelan populist as simply a stooge of the Caracas stock exchange and the imperialists and played down the dangers of U.S. imperialist intervention, as well as the CTV's organic ties to the bourgeois AD and its historic connections to the CIA's "labor" fronts in Latin America.

What particularly caught our eye at the time was that the IG did *not* describe the



Rochkind/Polaris



Prensa Presidencial

Left: State-owned Alcasa aluminum mill, where workers elect some managers and directors. Right: Chávez with workers at Invepal paper factory following January nationalization of bankrupt company. "Co-management" schemes help prop up bourgeois order.

collaboration of the Ministry of Labour," according to a report by Jorge Martin (www.handsoffvenezuela.org, 26 September). A resolution passed there talked of "the historical struggle for the emancipation of the working class," "socialism as the hope of the oppressed classes of the world" and the need to expropriate the means of production. Prefacing all of this fiery rhetoric was an abject promise to "ratify the leading role of our president Hugo Chavez Frias in this democratic and participatory revolution." All talk of socialist revolution and a mass workers party is simply hot air in the absence of a struggle for *the complete and unconditional independence of the proletariat from the capitalist state and its political parties.*

The "Cogestión" Scam

In trumpeting the scam of "cogestión" (co-management), which is promoted by

Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay," he wrote:

"The management of railways, oil fields, etc., through labor organizations has nothing in common with workers control over industry, for in the essence of the matter the management is effected through the labor bureaucracy which is independent of the workers but, in return, completely dependent on the bourgeois state."

In Venezuela today, the main example of "workers control" is the paper supplies factory Venepal (now Invepal). Formerly employing 1,600 workers, by the time this bankrupt company was nationalized in January, only 350 workers remained. The company, in dire straits since 1997, had simply not been able to restart production after supporting the 2002 lockout against Chávez. The workers finally turned to Chávez, who went on to nationalize the company. However, the company was to be directly run initially by the state, and only at a later stage would it be converted to a co-management structure between workers and the state under the direct supervision of Labor Minister María Cristina Iglesias. Six months after the IMT originally cried "socialism!" over the Venepal nationalization, the *Granites* were forced to acknowledge in an Internet article (18 July) that "the leaders of the union have taken the step of disbanding the union and are hoping to buy off the state's stake in the company so that they can be the sole owners and keep any profits from production" (Jorge Martin, "Chavez Announces Expropriation of Closed Factories").

Another example of "co-management" is the ALCASA aluminum mill in Ciudad Guayana, whose board now includes two directors elected by the workers and four appointed by the state, according to a report in the *Militant* (15 August), newspaper of the U.S. Socialist Workers Party. One local leader of the Sintralcasa union said that he was not for wholesale nationalization, explaining: "We depend a lot on the U.S. economy, so we're not for bringing down the empire." Another said, "Now that we have co-management, the union no longer speaks only of raising wages" and continued, "we have to increase production and lower costs."

The ISO's *Socialist Worker* assures its readers that "cogestion has nothing in common with socialdemocratic co-management." In fact, that is essentially what it is, a variant of what is known in Germany as *Mitbestimmung* (co-determination), implemented through

plant councils (*Betriebsräte*) that by law, if not always in practice, include representatives of management. Perhaps even more pertinent to the situation in Venezuela is the example of "autogestion" (self-management) in post-colonial Algeria in the early 1960s. The Union Générale des Travailleurs Algériens (UGTA) organized independent workers' self-management committees in the factories and on the agricultural estates abandoned by the departing French colonialists. Fearful of a challenge to its rule, the very left-talking bourgeois-nationalist FLN (National Liberation Front) regime of Ahmed Ben Bella pushed through the institutionalization of self-management and ever greater state regimentation of the UGTA. Once the power of the working class had been shackled, the "socialist" Ben Bella was ousted through a palace coup.

A central role in the betrayal of the Algerian workers was played by Michel Pablo, who served as an adviser to the capitalist FLN government. Pablo's pamphlet *World in Revolution* boasted that he "helped codify and institutionalize self-management in Algeria, and draft the Algerian Reform Law and economic and social policy in the country between 1962 and 1965" (see "They Never Learn," *WV* No. 86, 21 November 1975). Some years earlier, as a central leader of the Trotskyist Fourth International (FI), Pablo authored the liquidationist program that was responsible for the destruction of the FI. Today, Alan Woods' IMT, whose political lineage goes right back to Pablo, aspires to play Pablo's role in Venezuela.

History will reserve a harsh verdict for those "leftists" who promote one or another left-talking capitalist *caudillo*. The way forward for the downtrodden throughout the Americas does not lie through painting nationalist strongmen as revolutionaries and populist forays as revolutions. It lies instead in constructing national sections of a reformed Fourth International in the spirit of uncompromising revolutionary hostility to any and all kinds of capitalist rule. South of the Rio Bravo, such parties will have to be built in political struggle against widespread illusions in populism and nationalism. In the United States, the belly of the imperialist beast, a revolutionary workers party will be built in the struggle to break the proletariat from the Democratic and Republican parties of capital and to replace the pro-imperialist AFL-CIO tops with a class-struggle leadership. ■



Viktor Bulla

Working class in power: Putilov factory workers meet to elect representatives to Petrograd Soviet, 1920.

CTV as corporatist, an omission all the more remarkable given its use of that label as a justification for *not* defending the Mexican CTM labor federation against government attack. We observed: "Given its history of lining up behind 'anti-imperialist' nationalists from Mexico to Puerto Rico and beyond, one could have expected the IG to cozy up to the nationalist-populist Chávez" ("IG on Venezuela: Opportunism Makes Strange Bedfellows," *WV* No. 787, 20 September 2002). Having finally sniffed which way the wind is blowing, the IG is now racing to place itself on the left flank of the Bolivarian Revolution fan club. The IG now consigns the CTV to the dustbin.

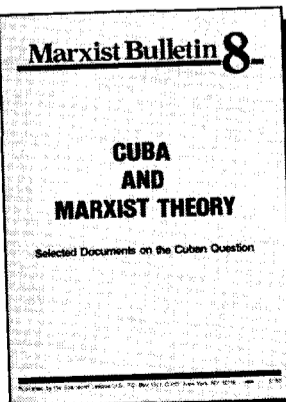
The UNT leaders certainly talk a more radical line than the CIA-connected CTV tops, but they are no less tied to the capitalist government. In September, the UNT and FBT organized a "political education workshop" in Caracas "with the

Chávez and the UNT as "workers control," the reformist left helps strengthen the stranglehold of the capitalist state over the Venezuelan labor movement. In the U.S., the Workers World Party exults that "Workers Are Taking Control in Venezuela": "Everywhere in Venezuela today workers are forging ahead with new formations of workers' organization. They are taking over factories here, experimenting with co-management there. Workers are challenging the old class relationships and coming to a collective realization of their historic role in the struggle for socialism" (*Workers World*, 5 May).

In Marxist terms, workers control is not an institution, nor is it a demand to be raised for implementation by the bourgeoisie. It is dual power at the point of production in a revolutionary crisis—i.e., the workers have the power to veto management actions they oppose. It can only end in the workers seizing state power through a socialist revolution or in the capitalists reasserting their power through a counterrevolution. What is being passed off as "workers control" by the cynical pro-Chávez "left" is in fact a scheme to *institutionalize class collaboration* and more tightly bind the workers organizations to the capitalists and their state. There is nothing new in this. In Trotsky's unfinished 1940 article "Trade

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Workers Vanguard skips an issue in December. Our next issue will be dated January 6.



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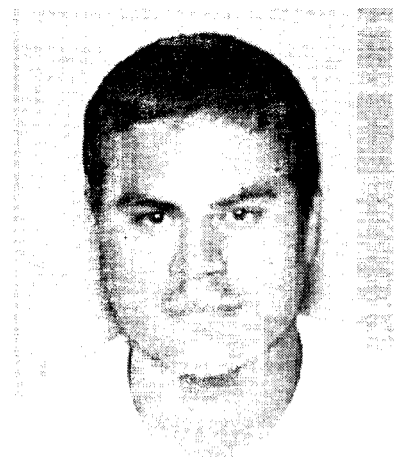
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Feds Concoct New Charges Free Jose Padilla Now!



Reuters

Down With "War on Terror"!

For over three years starting in 2002, Jose Padilla, a U.S. citizen, has been imprisoned in military brigades without charges or any way to challenge his detention. He was not even allowed to see a lawyer during his first year in captivity. The Feds sought to justify his detention with one outlandish cover story after another. First Padilla was held as a "material witness" in a "terror" investigation. Then, when the government was required to either charge or release him, it designated Padilla an "enemy combatant" who planned to set off a "radioactive" dirty bomb on U.S. soil, or blow up apartment high rises with natural gas. Later the government claimed that he fought for Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. But in a dramatic turnaround, on November 22 the Bush administration hit Padilla with a federal criminal indictment in Miami based on a completely new theory that he was a bit player in a vague "conspiracy" to support terrorism in Bosnia, Kosovo, Somalia and Chechnya!

The transparent motivation behind the indictment is to avoid a decision in the U.S. Supreme Court on Padilla's "enemy combatant" designation. Last year in the case of Yasser Esam Hamdi, a U.S. citizen captured in Afghanistan and imprisoned without charges as an "enemy combatant," the Court ruled that "a state of war is not a blank check for the president" and that Hamdi must have a "fair opportunity to rebut the government's factual assertions." At the time, however, the Court refused to hear Padilla's case on the flimsy ground that his *habeas corpus* petition was filed in the wrong court.

After the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld Padilla's "enemy combatant" designation in September, he appealed to the Supreme Court. The criminal indictment is meant to bypass a Supreme Court decision and thereby preserve the government's ability to hold—indefinitely and without charges—anyone deemed an "enemy combatant." In the face of this move, the Fourth Circuit said it would not authorize Padilla's transfer from military

to Justice Department custody until the government explains "the different facts that were alleged by the President to warrant Padilla's military detention" as compared with "the alleged facts on which Padilla has now been indicted." The court also suggested it might vacate its September ruling on Padilla.

Explaining why the new indictment does not include the "dirty bomb" scenario, White House spokesmen admit that those charges could not be proved in court. Indeed, the government's "evidence" against Padilla would have been challenged on the grounds that it was obtained by *torturing* detainees! The lawyer for one man accused of being Padilla's accomplice stated that his client simply "signed a confession saying whatever they wanted to hear, which is that he worked with Jose Padilla to do the dirty bomb plot. He says that's absolute nonsense, and he doesn't know Jose Padilla" (*New York Times*, 24 November).

The only overt acts by Padilla that are mentioned in the indictment are his application for a U.S. passport and his supposed attempt to get admitted to an Afghan "Mujahideen" training camp. For this he faces a possible life sentence. The charges against four others indicted as co-conspirators are just as bogus. Apart from setting up various Islamic charities, they are alleged to have been overheard on phone calls using words like "zucchini" and "soccer equipment," which the government claims must be code words for weapons of mass destruction. The Justice Department has already made clear that if Padilla wins an acquittal in his Miami criminal trial, the Feds will just *reinstate* his "enemy combatant" classification and throw him in the brig again!

The stakes in the Padilla case are deadly serious. *Amici curiae* (friends of the court)

briefs submitted by the Spartacist League and Partisan Defense Committee in 2003 and 2004 on Padilla's behalf stressed that in this case the Bush administration was asserting "nothing less than the right to disappear citizens."

Our briefs denounced the "war on terror" as a "pretext to increase the state's police powers and repressive apparatus, constricting the democratic rights of the population." We explained that the Padilla case threatened to roll back rights of citizenship that had been won through generations of social struggle, including civil war: "If the imperial President is upheld, Padilla's detention threatens to become the Dred Scott case of our time, a declaration that 'Citizens have no rights that the government is bound to respect'."

The government's somersault over the Padilla case has been seized upon by liberal bourgeois mouthpieces as another example of how Bush administration policies are undermining the global "war on terror." In response to the new indictment, the *New York Times* (23 November) intoned: "If Mr. Padilla was seriously planning a 'dirty bomb' attack, he can never be held accountable for it in court because the illegal conditions under which he has been held will make it impossible to do that.... This is hardly what Americans have had in mind hearing Mr. Bush's constant assurances since Sept. 11, 2001, that he will bring terrorists to justice."

Bush's liberal critics are chiefly concerned with refurbishing U.S. imperialism's "democratic" pretensions in the wake of the Abu Ghraib torture scandal and revelations that the CIA has repeatedly kidnapped people and taken them to be tortured in European hideaways. In October, the Senate passed a bill supposedly prohibiting the government and its CIA hitmen from engaging in torture or other "cruel" and "inhuman" methods used against detainees, drawing howls of protest from Vice President Cheney. But the utter hypocrisy of the Senate was shown on November 15 when it voted 84 to 14 to take

away the Guantánamo Bay detainees' right to file *habeas corpus* appeals to challenge their conditions, including torture!

Behind its "democratic" facade stands the capitalist state's machinery of organized violence: armed bodies of men—the cops and military, with their adjuncts of the courts and prisons—committed to defending and enforcing capitalist rule against workers and the oppressed. This is no less true when the bourgeois state is administered by the Democrats.—Consider the repeated attempts by the Kennedy administration to assassinate Castro, or the 1969 assassination of Black Panther Party leaders Fred Hampton and Mark Clark in Chicago under Democratic mayor Richard Daley, part of the FBI's deadly COINTELPRO campaign against black militants.

Congress is currently tinkering over provisions of the draconian USA Patriot Act—the centerpiece of the government's attacks on civil liberties that passed with overwhelming Democratic support—that are up for renewal at the end of the year. The *Washington Post* (6 November) reported that under the Patriot Act, the FBI has issued over 30,000 secret "national security letters" each year to obtain personal data from phone companies, libraries and other sources, without even a hint of court supervision.

At the onset of the "war on terror," we warned that the government's repressive measures, directed initially at Muslims and immigrants, and trampling political dissent along the way, would necessarily broaden to include black people and the integrated labor movement. At the same time, what the U.S. capitalist rulers get away with will largely depend on the level of social and class struggle in this society. Workers, fighters for black rights and all defenders of civil liberties must demand: Free Jose Padilla! ■

Stewart...

(continued from page 3)

that former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, former attorney for Sheik Abdel Rahman, also violated the SAMs by conveying his client's views to the press. Why wasn't Clark prosecuted? Because, as Fitzgerald put it, his was a "noble" violation. Clark publicized Abdel Rahman's support to a ceasefire between fundamentalists and the U.S.-supported Mubarak dictatorship in Egypt; Stewart publicized his second thoughts about that.

Lynne Stewart was targeted on the basis of her political beliefs and lifetime of legal practice in defense of victims of government repression. This case illustrates again how "conspiracy" prosecutions provide legal cover for repression of the government's political opponents when the state can find no evidence of criminal activity. Organizing labor unions was once deemed a conspiracy against "free trade."

Although the post-September 11 "war on terror" hysteria was in the foreground of the prosecution of Lynne Stewart, the real purpose of the "anti-terror" measures is to enhance the arsenal of state repression against the labor movement and black people in this country. It is significant that Judge Koeltl based his Orwellian ruling that constitutionally protected speech is "actually unprotected" on the prosecution of black communist Bill Epton. Epton was convicted of "conspiracy to riot" for organizing the Harlem Defense Council (HDC) to defend black Harlem against murderous

police attacks in the spring and summer of 1964. For our vigorous defense of Epton and the besieged black community, *Spartacist* editor James Robertson was hauled before the grand jury.

Since Judge Koeltl revived the Epton persecution in an effort to send Lynne Stewart and Mohamed Yousry to the clink for decades, it is useful to recall the eloquent words of Bill Epton himself in his statement to the court:

"We ask you, who are the criminals? Who makes 'laws' and when their same 'laws' make it possible to dissent, turn around and either re-write them or ignore them? Who persecuted and attempted to destroy the trade unions in the name of 'national security'? Who jailed those people who dared speak out against their oppressive system? Who framed and murdered the Rosenbergs in the *true tradition of Hitlerite Germany? This was all done by the United States government!*"

The world's biggest terrorist is the U.S. government, and its Democratic and Republican party rulers and spy agencies are the ones who should be tried by their victims as the animators of a terror conspiracy. Abdel Rahman was one of the Islamic fundamentalist clerics working with the U.S. in its *jihad* against the Soviet Red Army and its allied government in Afghanistan. Uniquely on the left, the Spartacist League *hailed* the Red Army intervention in Afghanistan and later denounced then-Soviet premier Gorbachev for *pulling out* to appease U.S. imperialism and vacating the field for the woman-hating *mujahedin*. With the Soviets out, the U.S. turned its back on its holy warriors and then got bit, hard, by the very monsters it created. The

U.S. imperialists then launched a campaign against their erstwhile allies.

In "FBI Provocateurs in World Trade Center Bombing" (WV No. 591, 7 January 1994), we wrote of Abdel Rahman's prosecution:

"We have no love lost for Sheik Rahman and his Afghan contras, but we nevertheless defend those who were caught in the web of government provocation against this witchhunt prosecution which aims to cover up the *government's* crimes. The 'conspiracy' and 'sedition' laws exist to be used against striking unionists, leftists and oppressed minorities, while the conspirators in power in Washington go free."

The recent decision in the Lynne Stewart case is a setback, but not unex-

pected. *There is no justice in the capitalist courts!* It is in the direct interest of the labor movement to mobilize vigorous public protest and defense of Stewart, Yousry, Sattar and all victims of capitalist repression.

Sentencing is scheduled for Friday, 24 February 2006. Lynne Stewart and Mohamed Yousry face more than 20 years behind bars, effectively a life sentence for Stewart. Sattar faces life imprisonment. **Rally 9:00 a.m. outside the courthouse in Thomas Paine Park, Centre and Worth Streets in lower Manhattan. Pack the courtroom! Drop the charges against Lynne Stewart, Mohamed Yousry and Ahmed Abdel Sattar!** ■

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Iraq...

(continued from page 1)

New York Times columnist Bob Herbert reflected the liberal consensus when he wrote in a 28 November column: "We need to cut our losses in Iraq.... The war is not sustainable." An editorial in the radical-liberal *Nation* (28 November) stated that the Iraq war is "the single greatest threat to our national security." At bottom, what worries Bush's bourgeois opposition is that the administration's particular savagery and incompetence in Iraq are fomenting new terror attacks and harming U.S. imperialism's long-term strategic interests.

From the beginning of the Iraq war, many Democrats complained that the overstretched military was unprepared to pursue more important targets, such as the North Korean deformed workers state. Since the September 11 terror attacks, U.S. imperialism has been diverted from its strategic pursuit of capitalist counterrevolution in China, the most powerful of the remaining societies where capitalism was overthrown. It is the duty of the international proletariat to defend these societies—China, North Korea, Cuba and Vietnam—against military attack and capitalist restoration.

The Bush regime sold the Iraq war as a



Spartacist contingent at March 2004 Chicago protest against occupation of Iraq. WV Photo

porous munitions, an incendiary weapon that burns flesh down to the bone. No wonder the military is paying Iraqi journalists to publish favorable coverage of the occupation. Back home, the U.S. rulers do it another way, using such stalwarts of the "free press" as the *New York Times* and its ace reporter Judith Miller to spread the administration's lies. Meanwhile, with the U.S.-orchestrated trial of Saddam Hussein under way, one can assume that the thousands of

tionary workers party essential for the victory of the proletariat will emerge.

Only Socialist Revolution Can End Imperialist War

As Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin explained, under imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism, there is an inevitable drive toward war—colonial wars as well as wars among the imperialist powers themselves (e.g., World Wars I and II). The invasion of Iraq was designed to ensure Washington's strategic dominance in the oil-rich Near East to the detriment of its imperialist rivals and to display the U.S. rulers' power to ride roughshod over any "bad guys" who get in their way.

Rejecting the Leninist understanding of imperialism, Workers World Party (WWP), the International Socialist Organization (ISO) and the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), organizers of the main demonstrations against the U.S. occupation of Iraq, reinforce the liberal illusion that the murderous, profit-driven capitalist system can be reformed to serve human needs. They promote slogans such as "Healthcare not Warfare"—as though the task is to convince the capitalist rulers to reorder their priorities. The reformists act to retard the political consciousness of the working class and radical-minded youth, opposing the road of socialist revolution as the way out of imperialist war.

From the onset of the Iraq war, the ISO and other self-proclaimed socialists organized protests whose demands would be acceptable to those capitalist politicians (e.g., Barbara Lee, Dennis Kucinich, Al Sharpton) who opposed the war because they deemed it was not in the best interests of U.S. imperialism. Very revealing is the slogan commonly promoted by the various antiwar coalitions, "Bring the Troops Home." This slogan is meant to evoke sympathy for the U.S. armed forces, serving to clean up the tarnished image of U.S. imperialism. U.S. troops in Iraq are the enforcers of a vicious occupation that, by some estimates, has cost the lives of 100,000 Iraqis. The photo of Lyndie England, dog leash in hand, is a graphic reminder of the routine brutality meted out by imperialism's military enforcers.

Now, the RCP is organizing for a State of the Union protest in January to demand that "Bush himself step down and take his regime and his whole program—including this brutal and reactionary war—with him" (*Revolution*, 27 November). What then? The RCP gave its answer in its recommendation for the 2004 elections: "Vote for Kerry if you feel you really have to" (*Revolutionary Worker*, 29 August 2004).

In a 2 December *Socialist Worker* article, the ISO strikes a more leftist pose, referring to the Democrats and Republicans as "two ruling-class parties that start from the same assumption that U.S. global and regional interests must be preserved, but bicker over the best strategies to accomplish that." The ISO concludes, "We have to organize an opposition independent of the Democrats and their cynical maneuvers." Speaking of cynical, this statement comes from an organization that endorsed and helped build every major antiwar protest, all of which were premised on appealing to bourgeois-liberal opponents of the Bush adminis-

tration. The ISO wants an "independent" opposition to...more effectively pressure the Democrats. That's the tack they followed during the 2004 presidential election in backing capitalist politician Ralph Nader, who made clear that his goal was to pressure the Democrats to the left.

The Left and the Iraqi "Resistance"

The various antiwar coalitions set up or supported by the reformist left refused to call for the defense of Iraq against U.S. imperialism during the war. Now the ISO and WWP hail the insurgencies in Iraq as a "national liberation movement." Behind this seemingly leftist posture stands the same old Democratic Party lesser-evilm. The reformists' cheerleading of the "resistance" is in no small measure dictated by the fact that every blow against the U.S. in Iraq redounds against Bush, serving to play to the Democrats' advantage.

There is no unitary "resistance" in Iraq but rather disparate groupings organizing guerrilla attacks on U.S. forces—and often against rival insurgent groupings as well as civilians from the myriad religious and ethnic populations. When the insurgents strike against the U.S. imperialist occupiers, they are striking against the greatest enemy of the world's proletariat and oppressed. Such acts coincide with the class interests of the proletariat. However, as we wrote in "The Left and the 'Iraqi Resistance'" (WV No. 830, 6 August 2004):

"We do not imbue the forces presently organizing guerrilla attacks on U.S. forces with 'anti-imperialist' credentials and warn that in the absence of working-class struggle in Iraq and internationally against the occupation, the victory of one or another of the reactionary clerical forces is more likely to come about through an alliance with U.S. imperialism. We are intransigent opponents of the murderous communal violence against other ethnic, religious and national populations oftentimes carried out by the very same forces fighting the occupation armies."

Should the Iraqi proletariat raise its head, it would face not only the savagery of the imperialist occupiers but also the brutality of the reactionary Muslim fundamentalists and bourgeois-nationalist Ba'athists that dominate the "resistance" hailed by reformist "socialists."

Iraq is not a nation, but a patchwork of peoples and ethnicities—primarily Kurds, Arab Shi'ites and Arab Sunnis—carved up by the British imperialists out of the Turkish Ottoman Empire at the end of the First World War. There is no possibility of equitably resolving the national and communal conflicts that beset Iraq (and the Near East as a whole) short of the overthrow of bourgeois rule in the region through workers revolutions and the establishment of a socialist federation of the Near East. That task demands the forging of Marxist workers parties that champion the rights of women and all ethnic and national minorities.

Here in the U.S., it is the multiracial working class that has the power to bring down the most dangerous enemy of all humanity, the U.S. ruling class. What is needed is to forge a revolutionary workers party, a U.S. section of a reformed Fourth International. Only when the proletariat seizes power will imperialist slaughter, material scarcity and ethnic bloodletting be put to an end and the construction of an egalitarian socialist society begin. ■



Baghdad, 1983: Saddam Hussein greets Donald Rumsfeld, an emissary of the Reagan administration.

cakewalk, promising that U.S. troops would be greeted as "liberators." The fact that American casualties are producing a sense of shock within the military elite reveals a mentality resembling that of a cop rather than a soldier. The job of a soldier is to kill and be killed. The job of a cop is to kill and not be killed. That the military brass feels jolted by some 2,100 dead troops shows that they think they can invade, conquer and occupy whole countries without suffering consequences.

The brutality carried out by U.S. forces and their Iraqi underlings is in the very nature of colonial occupations. When a secret prison run by the Iraqi interior ministry was recently uncovered, it confirmed what had already been known—that the Shi'ite-dominated U.S. puppet regime in Baghdad is running death squads and a network of secret torture chambers, especially targeting Sunnis. Last month it came to light that when the U.S. military leveled the city of Falluja a year ago, it used white phos-

Communists slaughtered in his and the Ba'athists' rise to power, as well as his collaboration with Donald Rumsfeld during the Reagan administration, will *not* be among the evidence used against him.

From the occupation of Cuba and the Philippines beginning in the late 1890s to U.S. imperialism's dirty counterrevolutionary wars in Korea and Vietnam to Iraq today, lies and torture have been standard operating procedure for America's rulers. When Democratic politicians complain of U.S. forces' use of torture, they are really complaining about the Bush administration's ineptness—what is normally carried out in secret is now public. They worry that the U.S. rulers' pretenses of fighting for "human rights" and "democracy"—as well as Washington's international alliances—are being undermined. Thus, revelations that the CIA's international network of secret prisons and torture centers may extend to East Europe have set off a diplomatic firestorm.

In the lead-up to and during the invasion of Iraq, we took a side for its military defense against U.S. imperialism while politically opposing the bloody capitalist regime of Saddam Hussein. Today we demand the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Iraq, the Near East and Afghanistan. Setbacks to the imperialists' depredations in Iraq serve the interests of workers and the oppressed internationally.

Ultimately, the solution to the suffering of U.S. imperialism's victims depends on the struggle of the American proletariat to overthrow the capitalist order through socialist revolution. From the onset of the Iraq antiwar protests in 2002, we have stressed the need for class struggle against the capitalist rulers at home. This perspective requires a political fight against the pro-capitalist labor misleaders who chain the proletariat to its capitalist class enemy, not least through supporting U.S. "national interests." It is out of working-class and social struggle and through the intervention of Marxists that the revolu-

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GUIDE TO THE SUBJECT INDEX

• This subject index covers issues of *Workers Vanguard* published during 2005, from issue No. 839 (7 January) through the end-of-the-year issue No. 860 (9 December). During this time, *WV* was published biweekly, except skipping three alternate issues in June, July and August, and skipping the last issue in December.

• The fullest listing is by SUBJECT. Subject headings are arranged alphabetically. Entries are listed chronologically with two exceptions: all entries comprising a series are listed together immediately following the first entry of the series; corrections immediately follow the relevant entry. An asterisk (*) after the page location of an entry indicates that a correction follows.

• Entries are listed under subject heads. In some cases, subject heads are broken down into subcategories. These subcategories are listed immediately after the initial subject head and preceded by a dot (•). The numbers following each entry headline give the issue number, date and page number(s) for the article. Thus:

Labor: Organize Wal-Mart!, #851, 8 July (16, 10, 11) means the headline of the article, issue No. 851, dated 8 July 2005, beginning on page 16 and continuing on pages 10 and 11.

• No entry is listed twice; refer to cross-references for guidance in locating the subject head for particular articles. Cross-references are of two types: those following the word "see" deal centrally with the subject head; those following the words "see also" are related articles. Subject heads in cross-references are separated by a semicolon, while subcategories of subject heads are separated by a comma. Thus:

Padilla, Jose—See Civil Liberties: General, Padilla Case. means that articles about Jose Padilla can be found by going to the subject head **Civil Liberties** and looking

under the subcategories **General** and **Padilla, Jose**.

• Individuals mentioned in articles are usually not listed separately unless the article is primarily about the given person. Foreign political organizations are generally listed under appropriate countries, while U.S. political organizations are listed under their organizational names.

• Articles relating to foreign countries are listed under geographical headings and not normally under any other subject heading. Articles which deal centrally with U.S. foreign policy will be found under **U.S.: International Relations** or under the relevant geographical heading. Those articles that refer to the U.S. occupation of Iraq will be found under **IRAQ: U.S. War and Occupation**.

• Articles on protests or repression that take place on a campus will generally be found under the subject of the protest or repression. Repression on miscellaneous subjects will be found under **CAMPUS REPRESSION**.

• The periodic columns by death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal are listed under the subject heading **ABU-JAMAL** in the subcategory **Message from Death Row**; articles on his case and the campaign to free him are in the subcategory **Defense Campaign**.

• Articles under the *Class-Struggle Defense Notes* (CSDN) masthead are by the Partisan Defense Committee, a class-struggle, non-sectarian, legal and social defense organization associated with the Spartacist League.

• Abbreviations used in entries are:

C: Correction
CSDN: *Class-Struggle Defense Notes* article
E: Editorial Note
L: Letter
R: Review
S: Series
W&R: *Women and Revolution* article
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BLACK QUESTION—And see Abu-Jamal: Defense Campaign; AIDS; Civil Liberties: Cases; Death Penalty; Education; Fascism; Immigration; Labor; Labor Black Leagues; Los Angeles; Mexico; New Orleans; New York City; Partisan Defense Committee; Quote of the Week; Science. See also Abu-Jamal: Message from Death Row; Auto Workers; California; U.S.: General.

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