

# PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION



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Re-create the  
Fourth International!

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## Imperialist Debacle in the Middle East

Israel's barbaric war against Lebanon this past summer turned into the latest in a series of setbacks for the imperialist powers in the Middle East. The U.S.-led occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq face ever-growing levels of armed resistance. Now Israel has been forced to retreat from Southern Lebanon, its aura of invincibility shattered. Despite their enormous superiority in wealth and weaponry, U.S. imperialism and its main Middle Eastern ally have been subjected to a stunning defeat.

Why are the imperialist powers floundering? And what is the reason for the increasing turmoil in the world, in the Middle East above all?

In this article we will show that underlying the blood-soaked clashes across the Middle East – over oil, religion, politics, borders and many other vital issues – is the imperialists' need to intimidate and even terrorize the workers and poor of the region, in order to maintain and deepen their exploitation. The struggles in Iraq and Lebanon are the latest examples of how the quakes that rock the surface of world events are produced by the underlying conflict of the two decisive forces of society: the exploited and oppressed of the world, on the one hand, and the ruling capitalist classes, on the other.

But without a genuine revolutionary communist leadership, the working class is unable to play an independent role. Instead,



*Lebanese youths look on airport hit by Israeli bombs.*

the masses turn from one leadership to another, from secular nationalists to religious clerics, in a desperate effort to find a way out. These leaderships, however, are dependent on capitalism for their privileged position and cannot represent a real alternative to imperialism.

Only the working class can lead the anti-imperialist struggle to victory. In this article we will outline the theory and some proposals to help carry this out. Tragically, it is obvious that workers' socialist revolution is not an immediate prospect in the Middle East today. But if revolutionaries don't begin now to build the proletarian internationalist party, the key to the solution, and arm it with a strategy for liberation, the descent into unceasing war and barbarism will engulf the Middle East and the world.

### IMPERIALISM AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Pro-capitalist Western political commentators often refer to upheavals in the Middle East as just the latest eruptions of age-old

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# COFI/LRP Report

## ANTI-WAR RALLIES

In July and August, the League for the Revolutionary Party participated in numerous demonstrations in New York, Chicago and Washington, DC against Israel's murderous attacks on Gaza and Lebanon. These protests ranged in size from a few dozen to tens of thousands (August 12 in DC). Our slogans and placards included, "Defend the Palestinian and Lebanese Resistance!" and "For a Palestinian Workers' State, From the River to the Sea." During the larger events we led hundreds of people in revolutionary chants. In Chicago, the largest and most militant rally (about 4000) took place in Tribune Plaza and in front of the nearby Israeli consulate on July 22. Our placards, "All Israel is occupied territory!" and "Stop Israeli Terror in Lebanon and Gaza!" had considerable support, particularly among the more youthful of the Palestinian and Lebanese protesters. For excerpts from our leaflets, see p. 16.

In Melbourne, Australia, a COFI supporter joined protests against the Lebanon invasion. The major call from the podium was for United Nations intervention. There were speakers from both the Democratic Socialist Party and the International Socialist Organization; they did not join in urging the U.N. to move in, but they failed to openly oppose this back-up plan for imperialist intervention.

Iraq war protests in the U.S. continue to be diverted again into the dead-end of Democratic Party electoralism, as they were in 2004. The largest recent demonstration, about 30,000 people in New York in April, was a far cry from the hundreds of thousands that came out before and at the start of the war in 2003, and in Washington in September 2005.

## IMMIGRANT RIGHTS ACTIONS

The May Day immigrant rights marches in New York and Chicago drew huge and enormously energetic turnouts. Our leaflet opposing both the outrageously racist Sensenbrenner bill and the only slightly less draconian McCain-Kennedy bill stood out in stark contrast to the pro-Democratic Party leadership. (See the article on p. 36.) In Chicago, our large red flag also drew considerable interest. In New York, the demand for Proletarian Revolution was particularly high.

Over the Labor Day weekend, Chicago LRPers joined a several-thousand strong demonstration in Batavia, in front of the office of House Speaker Dennis Hastert. Hundreds of marchers had traipsed the 45 miles from Chicago's Chinatown. Exuberantly chanting, they were met by speeches, some of which sounded militant but which almost invariably concluded by calling for a march to the polls on November 7.

We also participated in protests against the Minutemen, the outfit that patrols the Mexican border to hunt down immigrants and turn them over to federal authorities.

In New York a pro-Minuteman group, New Yorkers for Immigration Control and Enforcement (ICE) has been promoting a racist backlash against the immigrant rights movement. On June 23, ICE held a picket outside the Manhattan bookstore run by the Revolutionary Communist Party. The counterdemonstrators outnumbered the pickets by about 50 to 15, but the RCP played a shameful role in their own defense, doing nothing to cohere the protest and even handing out a leaflet inviting members of ICE to visit their website and come into their store for discussion. The LRP took the lead in organizing chants, "La Lucha Obrera No Tiene Frontera" (The Workers' Struggle Has No Borders) and "Workers of the World Unite, Smash the Racist Parasites."

On October 7, an ICE picket at the Mexican Consulate in New York was countered by a demonstration called by several anarchist-minded groups. After a slow start, 50 people straggled in to outnumber ICE and their Minuteman allies. But this time our class-based chants were ignored by the anarchist majority in favor of cutesy alternatives like "Welcome to New York, Now Learn Spanish." A shameful moment came when the cops arrested one demonstrator: the contingents from the International Socialists (ISO) and Progressive Labor (PLP) panicked and fled, although the PLPers returned shortly to continue protesting the racists.

The Minutemen also picketed the Mexican Consulate in Chicago the same day. Here the counter-protest was called by the ISO, which had the largest presence; the Minutemen were outnumbered by 150 to a dozen or so. Before they skulked off under police protection, the Minutemen did score a point against liberals by chanting "Obama voted for the fence, let's make him pres-

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## *How to Reach Us*

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# **Political Crisis in Mexico: Defend the Oaxaca Popular Assembly!**

by Jeff Covington

As we write, the workers, indigenous and other oppressed people of the state of Oaxaca, Mexico, organized in the Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca (known as APPO in Spanish), continue to control the city of Oaxaca. They have held the city for nearly four months now, in the face of the constant threat of repression by the armed forces of the Mexican government.

The events in Oaxaca have unfolded at a time of massive political upheaval in Mexico. In the presidential election in July the candidate of the right-wing bourgeois National Action Party (PAN), Felipe Calderón, was declared the winner of the election by a tiny margin over Andrés Manuel López Obrador of the populist bourgeois Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD). There was strong evidence of widespread fraud in the ballot count and other fraud at polling stations throughout Mexico, but the government refused to conduct a vote-by-vote recount.

Massive demonstrations of as many as a million people took place in Mexico City in July, and a protest tent camp (plantón) occupied the center of the city throughout August and the first half of September. Incumbent president Vicente Fox of the PAN, in two extraordinary concessions of weakness, was unable to deliver his State of the Union address to the legislature at the beginning of September, nor to perform the traditional “cry of independence” in Mexico City’s Zócalo (central square) on Mexican Independence Day, September 15.

López Obrador has called for a Constituent Assembly and an alternative government that truly represents the people. But he is committed to capitalism, so his promises to stand against the rich are inherently false. Further, he is dangerously misleading his followers by suggesting that the revolutionary changes they want can be accomplished peacefully. The events in Oaxaca prove otherwise.

## **THE OAXACA UPRISING**

The Oaxaca uprising began June 14, when the hated state governor, Ulises Ruiz, ordered a bloody pre-dawn attack by 3,500 state police against the strike of the Oaxaca teachers’ union, whose protest camp had occupied a large part of downtown Oaxaca since May 22. The 40,000 strikers and their supporters fought back, and after several hours they drove the police out of the city. Two days later 300,000–400,000 people – well over half the population of the city and 10 percent of the population of the state – came out for a mass march in support of the strike, building on two previous mass marches in June. The next day, June 17, organizations supporting the strike convened the first meeting of the Popular Assembly.

Oaxaca is the poorest state in Mexico and has the country’s largest indigenous population, over 60 percent of the state’s people. The teachers’ strike won mass support by demanding a higher minimum wage for all of Oaxaca – Mexico’s reactionary system of “zonification” of states sets lower minimum wages for poorer states. This minimum wage demand, more than the wage demands for the teachers themselves, was most intolerable to Ulises Ruiz and the state government.

APPO and the teachers’ union have taken over government buildings and set up barricades around the city to stop attacks by vehicles full of government-backed thugs. They have taken over several of Oaxaca’s radio stations, and a women’s march on August 1 seized control of Oaxaca’s official state TV and radio stations. For three weeks the strikers and their supporters controlled the state TV broadcasts. Ulises Ruiz’s forces could not take back control of

the TV station, so they attacked it with automatic weapons, destroying equipment and knocking it off the air August 21. While Ruiz does not have the forces to challenge the Oaxaca uprising directly, ambushes and drive-by shootings by paramilitary forces have killed at least five supporters of the uprising. A number of strikers and members of APPO were still being held as political prisoners.

At this moment APPO, the striking teachers, and all the workers, indigenous and oppressed people of Oaxaca who support them face the imminent threat of a military assault by the federal government of Mexico. The government has amassed as many as 20,000 troops, along with helicopters and tanks, at the Oaxaca airport and in nearby cities, in addition to the over 5,000 regular forces stationed throughout Oaxaca and along the border areas of the adjacent states of Puebla and Guerrero. At the same time, agents of Ulises Ruiz inside Oaxaca were likely responsible for provocations such as throwing explosives at banks and even hacking to death an anti-strike teacher with an ice pick, blaming the acts on APPO supporters in an attempt to build public support for a military crackdown.

Since the June 14 police attack, the resignation of Ulises Ruiz has been the central demand of the strike. A proposal to end the strike and the uprising that the government tried to negotiate with APPO leaders and teachers’ union leaders in September, which did not include the resignation of Ulises Ruiz, was rejected by the mass base of APPO and the ranks of the strikers. At the same time they organized a 19-day mass march of thousands of strikers from Oaxaca to Mexico City.

The ranks of APPO and the strikers rejected on October 7 another proposal the government had made the day before, but teachers’ union leaders and APPO leaders made an agreement with the government October 9 which would give control of the city back to the government in exchange for such minimal demands as creation of a civilian council to monitor the police. The agreement would leave the central demand for the removal of Ulises Ruiz unresolved. As a cover for their retreat, the union leaders and APPO leaders will have the marchers to Mexico City camp outside the Senate until it removes Ulises Ruiz.

## **BOURGEOIS PARTIES**

The uprising in Oaxaca has put pressure on all three parties of the Mexican capitalist ruling class: the PAN, the PRD and the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). All three are bourgeois parties that can offer no alternative to the existing political system or to Mexico’s subordination to United States imperialism. They all see the uprising of the masses in Oaxaca as a threat. But it has divided them because of the particular relationship of each party to U.S. imperialism’s superexploitation of Mexican workers and oppressed people, and because of each party’s immediate political situation.

To maintain itself in power, the PAN depends on its alliance with the PRI, the party that ruled Mexico for 70 years until Fox’s election in 2000. While the PRI’s candidate was not a serious fac-

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tor in this year's presidential election, the PRI still has an iron hold on power in many states and municipalities, as well as in the bureaucracies that control many of Mexico's biggest labor unions. That is why the PRI is an essential ally for the PAN, a party representing openly pro-imperialist interests with few ties to the workers and oppressed masses, which would be too weak to rule on its own in an oppressed nation such as Mexico.

The PRD, on the other hand, represents former elements of the PRI who stand for incorporating the masses into the system by doling out occasional concessions. The PRI abandoned that program after the end of the post-war global economic boom in the 1970s: they could no longer make those concessions while meeting the demands of U.S. imperialism. The PRD program is even more impossible to implement today. That is why it is capable of making promises to the workers as an opposition party, but wherever it has actually come to power at the state or municipal level, it has attacked the workers and the unions just like the PRI and PAN. In the most outrageous recent example, the PRD government of the state of Michoacán ordered its police forces to join in the deadly armed assault on the striking steelworkers occupying the Sicartsa steel mill in the city of Lázaro Cárdenas in April.

The Oaxaca uprising has put great pressure on the PAN-PRI alliance. The Fox government prefers to use negotiations to gradually undermine the uprising and restore government control without a military attack. A military attack in Oaxaca could ignite other mass struggles in Mexico and destabilize a government already shaken by labor unrest and the election protests. The Fox government would have preferred to offer the resignation of Ulises Ruiz to restore its control peacefully if it could.

But Ulises Ruiz is one of the local strongmen who form the backbone of the PRI's political power. For the PRI, the political fate of Ruiz is of paramount importance in this struggle. If the government sacrifices him, any of the rest of the PRI's local strongmen could be next. That is why the PRI is calling for an immediate federal military attack on the workers of Oaxaca: it is the surest way a hated ruler like Ruiz can hold onto his position. Because the PAN needs the PRI as its ally, Fox cannot dismiss

these demands. These conflicting pressures are what has made it so difficult for the Mexican government to put an end to the uprising of the workers, indigenous and oppressed people of Oaxaca.

The uprising has put pressure on the PRD as well. The APPO leaders and teachers' union leaders supported Lopez Obrador in the presidential election by calling for a "vote against the PAN and PRI," and Lopez Obrador has given lip service in support of the call to stop a military attack on Oaxaca. But the eight PRD state legislators in Oaxaca itself were committed only to saving their own privileges: in a secret session of the state legislature September 28, they joined the entire body in unanimously approving changes to the state constitution, so that next year's legislative elections are postponed until 2011, and the governor's election is postponed from 2010 to 2012. When this became known, leaders of the PRD in Oaxaca were compelled to demand the expulsion of the legislators from the party. Their actions in power were undermining workers' illusions in the PRD's empty promises of support.

### REVOLUTIONARY LEADERSHIP

The League for the Revolutionary Party in the U.S. defends the Oaxaca Popular Assembly against all the threats and attacks by the state and federal government of Mexico and the three parties of the Mexican bourgeoisie. We know that behind all of the attacks stands U.S. imperialism, the main enemy of all workers and oppressed people of the world.

As communists, we are obliged to warn that all the bourgeois parties are also class enemies. The present leaders of APPO have supported the bourgeois PRD in the elections and have tried to make unacceptable compromises with the government. The danger of betrayal continues. Defense against the threat of government attacks requires spreading the struggle beyond Oaxaca – but the idea of workers and oppressed people seizing industries and land nationwide, the way they have seized the city of Oaxaca, terrifies the PRD. To advance the struggle, therefore, the most class-conscious workers and oppressed people of APPO should begin building a revolutionary socialist working-class vanguard party independent of all the bourgeois parties and dedicated to the overthrow of capitalism. ●

*October 22, 2006*

## Remember the Hungarian Revolution!

Fifty years ago this autumn, the Hungarian working class rose up against the USSR's occupying army and the Hungarian Stalinist pseudo-socialist puppet regime. Together with the rural population and the bulk of the Hungarian army, the workers chased the Soviet army out and routed the murderous secret police.

For several weeks, workers' councils, elected in every workplace effectively ruled the country, ran production and distribution and organized mass armed resistance to the Stalinists. To advance the revolution the councils needed to complete their seizure of state power and spread the revolution internationally. But they failed to break with the short-lived nationalist government of the reform-Stalinist Imre Nagy.

A re-invasion by the USSR imposed a new Stalinist regime and crushed the revolution brutally. The U.S., British, French

and other "democratic" imperialists denounced the invasion and repression but discreetly assured the USSR's rulers that they would not interfere.

Most of the remnants of the Trotskyist Fourth International supported the revolution, but this was undermined by their theory that the Stalinist countries were already workers' states. Many regarded the Nagy government as an instrument of "socialist democracy" rather than a barrier to workers' power.

The Communist Parties internationally were devastated by the Hungarian revolution and the "secret speech" by Soviet chieftain Nikita Khrushchev that revealed many of Stalin's counterrevolutionary crimes. Mao Zedong shattered many illusions in his proletarian and revolutionary credentials by condemning Khrushchev for not crushing the Hungarians with suffi-

cient brutality.

The Hungarian revolution remains an inspiration to authentic communists and class-conscious workers everywhere. In October, the New York LRP held a forum to commemorate the revolution and draw the necessary lessons.

Hungary in 1956 showed the revolutionary capacity of the working class, despite state repression and brainwashing. It showed that workers can rule society. It clearly revealed that Stalinism in power is anti-working class, and that the Stalinist Soviet Union was imperialist and a key component of world imperialism. And it showed the crying need for a proletarian revolutionary party to fight against nationalist and populist illusions, and to make the proletariat conscious of the need to seize political power as a class in order to build a genuine socialist society.

# Protest Execution of Iranian Gays! U.S. Imperialism: Hands Off Iran!

*The following statement was distributed as a leaflet by the League for the Revolutionary Party on July 19, 2006 in New York as part of a protest on the first anniversary of the execution of two young gay men in Iran*

We are here to commemorate the hanging of Mahmoud Asgari and Ayaz Marhoni, two young gay men in Meshhad, Iran, a year ago today. They were only 17 years old at the time of their execution. Mahmoud and Ayaz's sole crime was to love each other; the Iranian government's accusations that they had raped a younger boy are a stereotypical slander. Routinely in Iran, gay men are framed on a range of trumped-up charges punishable with death.

The murders of Mahmoud and Ayaz inflame us to fight against many an injustice: against the vicious, often murderous, oppression faced by gay men, lesbians, and transsexual and transgendered people; against the barbarous use of the death penalty by capitalist states; against religious obscurantism, used throughout the world to rally support for oppressive regimes.

Yet particularly in the United States, a nation whose rulers invade and destroy nation after nation in defense of their imperialist rule, we must never fall into the deadly, chauvinist illusion that we live in a more refined, civilized part of the world. The memories of Mahmoud and Ayaz live as a standing rebuke, not only to the mullahs and politicians of Iran who bear direct responsibility for their killing, but to imperialist capitalism, which extends its bloody grasp throughout the world.

## ALL-AMERICAN BIGOTRY

In the United States, gays, lesbians and the transgendered are no longer – and not yet again – subject to state-sanctioned murder solely for who they are. But their lives are often imperiled by murderous bigots, and when they are killed these crimes are too often winked at by the powers that be. Here in New York City alone, over the last four years, the murders of Rodney Velázquez, Brian Boothe and Rashawn Brazell remain unsolved. Nationally famous cases, such as the killings of Matthew Shepard and Gwen Araujo, are rare not because of the viciousness of the crimes but because their killers were caught, arrested, tried and convicted.

The disdain of homophobic cops who fail to investigate such crimes is not a matter of a few bad apples; nor can it be overcome through sensitivity training. As institutions charged with social control and defense of property, the police and courts have a clear bias in favor of those regarded as “respectable.” Excluded from having a legally recognized family, gays, lesbians and transgendered people labor under the burden of having to prove their legitimacy. A small minority of the rich or famous can buy their way partially out, but the majority of working-class gays face a double oppression.

The fight over gay marriage rights is only the latest battleground in the struggle for social inclusion, and it will not be the last. The resistance, shared by Republicans and Democrats – the “Defense of Marriage Act” was signed by Clinton – to full, equal marriage rights for gays and lesbians sends the message that this is a group of people who are not fully human.

## THE BARBARIC DEATH PENALTY

The U.S., with 60 executions in 2005, was exceeded only by China, Iran and Saudi Arabia. These four nations – a statified capi-



*LRP placards at the July 19, 2006 protest in New York.*

talist country under fake-socialist tyranny, a clerical-fascist regime, a stiflingly conservative monarchy, along with our supposed “democracy” – are responsible for 94% of the world's executions.

Capitalist rulers use the death penalty as a means of terrorism against their populations. It is used to single out social scapegoats. In Iran, gays are a target, and so Mahmoud and Ayaz suffered their tragic fate. In the U.S., the death penalty confirms and reinforces the central role of racism in our society: 80% of all death row inmates are Black or Latino.

Much outrage has been justifiably focused on the fact that Mahmoud and Ayaz were minors. Even if one accepts the dubious charges against them, or the even more doubtful notion that we can trust any capitalist state to decide on matters of life and death, the notion that those held too young to vote or hold full civil rights can be held criminally responsible and pay the ultimate price is widely met with great repulsion. Since 1990, only eight countries have executed those who were minors at the time of their alleged crimes. The U.S. and Iran are at the top of the list, with Iran only matching the U.S.'s numbers in 2005. In March 2005, the U.S. Supreme Court narrowly decided to end the practice, finally. Iran's crime of today is the U.S.'s crime of just yesterday.

## RELIGIOUS OBSCURANTISM

The regime in Iran is a clerical-fascist government in which ultimate power rests with an unelected “Supreme Leader” and the clerical “Council of Guardians.” This regime came to power by hijacking and then crushing the workers' revolution of 1979, which overthrew the U.S.-backed monarchy of the Shah.

Successive U.S. governments have remained hostile to Iran, and the imperialist “war on terror” is widely perceived as a war on Muslims. But the U.S. ruling class is happy to work with reactionary Islamists in defense of its own imperialist interests. The U.S.-backed monarchy in Saudi Arabia uses its conservative Wahhabi brand of Islam to justify its rule. In U.S.-occupied Afghanistan, the Taliban were driven out. But the *sharia* courts, with their laws oppressing women, gays and the population at large, were secured in place. In Iraq, the U.S.'s closest collaborators are the Shi'ite religious parties, whose militias attack women,

students and any workers who mobilize in defense of their rights.

The bourgeoisie was once a progressive class striving for enlightenment. Now that it has secured its rule throughout the world finds it more profitable to keep the people mired in ancient prejudice. Recent decades have seen a rise in fundamentalism in all regions and religions. Perhaps the most cynical turn among capitalists has been their self-stupefaction, the widespread turn from a scientific to a superstitious world view. In the U.S., this has been a bipartisan turn as well, with Bush's shows of religiosity finding a more eloquent counterpart in Barack Obama's calls to "embrace Christ." Iran's president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, recognizing a somewhat kindred spirit in the White House, recently wrote Bush suggesting that a common religious outlook could serve as the basis for some form of collaboration! Its dismissal by Bush reflects not any intrinsic clash between Bush's Christianity and Ahmadinejad's Islam but U.S. imperialism's overriding drive to secure its dominance in the Middle East. Iran is simply in the way.

### IMPERIALISM RESPONSIBLE

The presence of U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, two countries bordering Iran; the imperialists' blatant double standard, in which Israel's stockpile of nuclear weapons, an open secret, is winked at while Iran's nuclear power program is harassed and condemned; repeated threats, by U.S. and Israeli leaders, to attack Iran through bombings and worse: All these have helped Iran's rulers bolster their once faltering popularity by encouraging a surge of national pride. Like many nationalist leaders, Iran's rulers seek scapegoats for social unrest among "degenerate" and "cosmopolitan" elements in the population; in Iran as in many other parts of the world, gays have felt the brunt of this attack.

In fact, the attack on Iranian gays is an affront to the history of the peoples of Iran. Same-sex love can be documented in their cultures going back for thousands of years. This is true for all the world's cultures, because it is an essential part of the human condition, merely one form among many that our species' potential for sharing and compassion manifests itself. The mullahs' fantasy of a pure Iranian Islamic identity, rigidly heterosexual, male dominant, and without troublesome class divisions, is an invented tradition designed to keep the people of Iran in line.

In the Middle East especially, repressive pro-imperialist rulers have encouraged Islamism, in hopes of sapping support for any working-class communist alternative. The long history of Stalinist pseudo-communists in betraying anti-imperialist struggles, as well as the unattractive reality of the stultified capitalist societies they hailed, made this all the easier. Islamist leaders, in order to place themselves at the head of mass struggles, often make use of distorted anti-imperialist language. But fundamentally, as capitalist forces, their aim is to seek accommodation with the imperialists.

U.S. imperialism, already drenched in blood from its conquests in Afghanistan and Iraq, is indirectly responsible for the crimes of its local Islamist sometime-rivals-sometime-allies. Rulers whose crimes include the tortures at Bagram and Abu Ghraib, the concentration camp at Guantánamo and the massacres and rapes at Haditha and Mahmudiya have no moral right to com-

plain about the crimes of the Iranian regime.

### NO TO CHAUVINISM!

Winning the trust of our fellow workers in and from the Middle East demands that workers in imperialist countries take a stand against the racist attacks by our rulers. Unfortunately, some European and American leftists, including some who have supported the call for this demonstration, see imperialism and Islamism as more or less equal enemies, and sometimes even side with the former against the masses in the Islamic countries.

For example, when a right-wing Danish newspaper published a series of cartoons portraying the Prophet Muhammad as a terrorist, it was a racist attack on the peoples of the Middle East and South Asia, spreading the "terrorist" blood libel. It was also a religious insult; as Marxists we are not religious, but we seek to overcome religious influence through dialogue and shared experiences of struggle, not insults directed at the masses. These racist and religious insults reflect the rising tide of imperialist chauvinism against the Islamic world and immigrants from there, rampant in the U.S. and Europe. While calling for no state bans, genuine Marxists opposed the cartoons on these grounds.

Some leftists, however, focusing on the calls of some Islamist leaders for new laws against "blasphemy," chose to see the protests against the cartoons not as self-defense against chauvinism but an attack on "free speech." Peter Tatchell, the spokesman for the British gay rights group OutRage! which called for this protest, was one such, a position that put him in the position of marching alongside notorious union-busters like the "Freedom Association" in a so-called "March for Free Expression." Politics, when not based upon principled opposition to *all* forms of bigotry and chauvinism, can make for strange bedfellows.

### SOCIALISM OR BARBARISM

Humanity is at a crossroads. Capitalism's continued rule offers humanity nothing but more wars, executions, mass acts of terror and grinding exploitation and poverty. But the international working class, the one class with no essential interest in oppression or exploitation, has the potential to put an end to capitalist barbarism. If it rises up to overthrow the capitalists in revolutions the world over, it can take hold of the productive power of the world economy to put an end to poverty and build a world of abundance for all. It can lead a political struggle against the racism, chauvinism and sex and gender oppression that thrive in capitalism's world of want. The choice is socialism or barbarism – whether the barbarism of a local thug or of a world-straddling emperor.

To prepare our class for its revolutionary role, the most politically conscious workers – those who seek a world cleansed of oppression, in which humanity can reach its fullest potential – must come together in an organization prepared to fight for that goal: a revolutionary party. Such a party works to expose the role of all leaderships that try to make peace with the capitalist system and thereby condemn us to the continued growth of barbarism. It fights against all types of backward consciousness that only foster divisions in the ranks of the oppressed and exploited. It engages in every struggle; at all times it says what is. It tells the truth.

Only by building such a party internationally can the working class prepare itself for the titanic task of undoing the disasters the capitalists keep making – and building a new world in their place.

**Defend Gay Rights and Gay Lives!**

**Defend Iran from Imperialist Attack!**

**Workers and Oppressed of the World, Unite!**

**Build the Revolutionary Party of the Working Class!**

**Re-Create the Fourth International!**

### *Letters Welcome!*

We invite readers of *Proletarian Revolution* to send letters to the magazine. Names will be withheld on request. Write us at

P.O. Box 1936, Murray Hill Station,  
New York, NY 10156, USA.

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# Imperialism

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conflicts and prejudices. Nothing could be further from the truth. The current fighting that takes the form of religious, ethnic and national strife is really focused on the modern concerns of capitalist profit-making and the struggle for economic and political power on the world stage.

As everybody knows, the Middle East is the site of the world's largest oil supplies, which power the international economy. That tremendous wealth is exploited by a handful of giant oil companies and the local ruling classes that serve them. Meanwhile, the region's peoples live in desperate poverty. Thus the Middle East is the focus of the most explosive tensions of capitalist imperialism.

Imperialism is now fundamental to the capitalist system. For over a century, to afford concessions to the combative masses at home, the capitalists have relied on super-profits derived from exploiting the natural resources and labor of what became known as the "Third World." This propelled the race between the great powers for colonies, which culminated in two world wars for the redivision of the world economy.

Under colonialism, lines were drawn on maps and states declared according to the rival interests of the great powers – often with complete disregard for the disparate peoples that were alternately grouped together and divided into would-be nation-states. Certain religious and ethnic minorities were recruited by the colonialists to act as local henchmen in ruling over the masses, and the stage was set for years of bloody conflict.

By the end of the Second World War, with rising working-class and nationalist movements for independence in the colonies, the imperialists were forced to abandon direct rule abroad. They turned instead to neo-colonialism: granting formal independence to the colonies and relying on local ruling classes to act as compradors – intermediaries enforcing the imperialists' basic interests in exchange for a small slice of the system's power and profits. But this neo-colonial solution was not without its contradictions. The comprador rulers chafed against the limits of imperial domination, on the one hand, and pressure from the masses, on the other. During the Cold War, many sought to play the competing Western and Eastern powers against one another to modestly expand their own slice of power.

In this post-World War II period, the Middle East rose to strategic prominence as the world's primary source of crude oil – just when the region's major colonial power, Britain, was withdrawing from its role as colonial overlord. Fortuitously for imperialism, Israel was at the same time founded as a colonial-settler state in Palestine; and the imperialists, now led by the United States, soon adopted the Zionist state as their regional enforcer. The region developed as a system of police states dividing and oppressing the region's masses, with Israel as its prison-warden.

This system of neo-colonial divide-and-rule proved highly effective for the imperialists; it could be adapted to the various upheavals that took place. Thus in 1970, when the Jordanian monarchy was threatened by a Palestinian uprising, the Israeli military rushed to its aid, helping it brutally suppress the revolt in the "Black September" massacre. When the Shah's U.S.-backed dictatorship in Iran was overthrown in a popular revolution (which was hijacked by Ayatollah Khomeini's Islamic fundamentalists), the U.S. supported Saddam Hussein's Iraq in its war with Iran to weaken both states as regional powers.

With the world's profit-making stagnating and economic rivalries intensifying, the U.S. ruling class thought it could take advantage of the September 11 terrorist attacks to dramatically

escalate its dominance of the Middle East and its control of the region's oil by conquering Iraq. But it underestimated the popular hatred of imperialism, and by overthrowing Saddam it unintentionally overturned the delicate balance of regional rivalries and repressive forces that served to keep them down. In Iraq, the imperialists have come to miss Saddam's dictatorial rule over the Shi'ites and Kurds. They also miss Saddam's role in checking Iran's aspirations for greater regional power. The invasion of Iraq, aimed at defeating mass opposition to imperialism, has served to trigger a major escalation in anti-imperialist struggles.

## ISRAEL'S BLOODY BLITZKRIEG

An enormous step forward was taken recently when huge protests broke out across the region against Israel's invasion of Lebanon. Hundreds of thousands demonstrated in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt, electrified by the news that Israel's war aims were being thwarted by the guerrilla fighters of Hezbollah.

The justifications Israel gave for its invasions were patently false. (See page 16.) The attacks were planned well in advance, in conjunction with the U.S. One major purpose was to maintain Israel's occupation of Palestine and the subjugation of its Arab population without concessions. Last year Israel withdrew from Gaza, leaving the Palestinians trapped in what amounts to the world's largest concentration camp. The assaults on Gaza and Lebanon served to delay the promised removal of a number of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, and they relieved the immediate international pressure on Israel to continue negotiations with the Palestinian Authority.

Second, the invasion was designed to cripple the Hezbollah guerrillas who, after a decade and a half of fighting, had finally forced Israel to leave Lebanon ignominiously in 2000. The U.S. also welcomed the idea of smashing Hezbollah, since the organization's growing political strength threatened to undermine the new Lebanese government's puppet relation to U.S. imperialism.

Israel badly miscalculated by raining destruction not only on Hezbollah or the Shi'ite population that supported it, but on the entire Lebanese people, their government and infrastructure. Israel's aim was to stir up a civil war by the Sunnis, Druze and Christians against Hezbollah, but the result was to turn most Lebanese (and most of the world) against the blitzkrieg. Washington not only gave Israel the green light to attack but continually resupplied the Zionist forces with a full range of weapons, including anti-civilian cluster bombs that were used in a blatant effort to depopulate the Shi'ite region of southern Lebanon. And they used their diplomatic power in the United Nations to buy time for the Israeli butchers.

For all that, Hezbollah kept fighting, and world opinion mounted against Israel's blatant crimes. The growing protests made America's lieutenant regimes in Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Iraq fear they would be toppled if the war went on. So Washington and Jerusalem were forced, at least for the moment, to accept a shaky cease-fire brokered through the U.N. A U.N.-sponsored occupation force was called in to save Israel's face and at least nominally to prevent Hezbollah from threatening Israel's border.

The defeat inflicted on the Israelis and their American supporters was won at a huge cost: the terrible suffering of the Lebanese people. Nevertheless, their victory has fueled the spirit of rebellion now growing among the masses of the Middle East and the Muslim world in general.

## THE IRAQ DISASTER

The U.S. encouraged and backed the Israeli attack, not only to support the imperialist aims of its junior partner but also for





*Baghdad protest after murderous U.S. raid on Shi'ite stronghold.*

broader imperial needs of its own. The crisis in Iraq is central. The U.S. looked to the Lebanon war as a battlefield where the masses of the Middle East could be handed a decisive defeat and put back in their place.

For the Iraq occupation is a disaster. For all its blather about democracy, in the end the U.S. relies chiefly on overpowering force to pacify the country. The occupation has made daily life for the masses terrifying; the body count has risen to dozens and even hundreds daily. Basic services that the Iraqi people were promised by their conquerors have never been restored, oil production is below pre-invasion norms and the economy remains a shambles. Vicious attacks by Shi'ite and Sunni militias against each other's populations are increasing.

The U.S. officials and troops also live in fear; those on top huddle for protection inside their "Green Zone" in Baghdad. Attacks against U.S. and its coalition forces have doubled in the past two years, reaching 800 weekly. We foresaw from the start that the occupation would become a quagmire the U.S. could not extricate itself from. (See *Proletarian Revolution* Nos. 67 and 68.) The current mood of the U.S. ruling class was described vividly in an article posted by the political author Robert Dreyfus:

**What's happening in Washington now is that the establishment political class – and that includes the military, moderate Republican and Democratic members of Congress, the jabbering pundits and op-ed writers, and the bulk of the thinktank denizens – are coming to grips with the stark fact that the war in Iraq is over. And that the United States has lost.** (*TomPaine.com*, Sept. 8.)

Why has this come to pass? Everyone knows by now that the reasons the U.S. gave for invading Iraq – weapons of mass destruction, Saddam Hussein's alleged support for Al Qaeda – were bogus. The real reasons were to show the world – its imperialist rivals, its subordinate compradors, and above all the masses – who was boss, and to control the oil spigot in specific. These justifications remain, and that is why leading Republican and Democratic politicians, from conservative to liberal, insist on "redeployment" if not "staying the course" – they can't stomach the thought of real withdrawal even in the face of disaster. (See *PR 77* for details.)

But it is one thing to oust a third-world dictator; it is another to control and exploit a divided and hostile population. Saddam's brutal regime not only suppressed the once-militant and socialist-minded working class but also held together Iraq's conflicting populations of Sunni Arabs, Shi'ites and Kurds. Without that iron-fisted rule, and with the U.S. unable to make its proclaimed "democracy" a reality (see below), Iraq descended into chaos.

Most of the guerrilla resistance to the American imperialists

has come from Sunnis, with both religious organizations and the secular forces involved. Among the latter, pro-Saddam Baathists are probably the largest. The Shi'ites are also a threat. In 2004, there was an armed rebellion by the Mahdi Army led by the anti-U.S. cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, an event that opened the possibility of a united bloc against the occupation. (See *PR 71*.) This revolt was betrayed by the leading Shi'ite cleric, Ayatollah Sistani, and the other Shi'ite parties, who preferred to use the Shi'ites' majority status to deal with the U.S. and run the occupation governments. In this they were aided by the ambiguous role of Sadr himself.

The Shi'ites remain divided. The secular politicians led by Ahmad Chalabi and Iyad Allawi are discredited pro-imperialist hacks. The Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) has been the

most powerful cleric-led force and has installed Nouri al-Maliki as prime minister. Since Maliki has to answer to Washington whose army keeps him in power, he must make at least hollow overtures to the Sunnis to get their support for his government. But SCIRI is allied with other Shi'ites who want the Sunnis suppressed. At the same time, Maliki relies on the support of Sadr and his increasingly popular militia, as well as that of neighboring Iran. Maliki also needs the Kurdish bourgeois parties, which are under continuous mass pressure to declare an independent Kurdistan. Thus he sits uneasily atop a divided and corrupt government based on a rickety structure of barely balanced forces.

Sadr's popularity is based on his appeal to low-paid Shi'ite workers and the unemployed as well as lumpen-proletarians. They regard him as their champion in a war against the Sunnis and the occupation. Sadr wants to avoid open warfare with the Americans and is happy to let Maliki bear the brunt of the anger of the Shi'ite masses. But his combination of radical rhetoric with military inaction against the U.S. has led to accelerating discontent within the ranks. Today, Sadr and other Shi'ite forces have had to defend themselves against attacks by U.S. and even reluctant Iraqi government forces, highlighting the precariousness of the situation.

## AFGHANISTAN AND IRAN

Along with Iraq, the "liberation" of Afghanistan has also been coming apart. Resistance has increased, as have deaths among U.S. soldiers and the NATO forces who are replacing them. As we write, reports multiply that while the Taliban was easily defeated by the U.S. and its allies in 2001, it and its allies have grown in political and military sophistication. They have studied the methods of the Iraqi insurgents and may now have regained control over half the country. The resurgence is growing because the U.S. and the government it installed have failed, despite abundant promises, to reconstruct the country after decades of civil wars.

The imperialists' Iran policy is also shaky. The influence of the Iranian Islamic regime, unpopular at home, has expanded since the U.S. plowed deeper into the region in 2001. The invasion of Afghanistan not only pushed aside the hostile Taliban government but allowed Iran to ally itself with friendly warlords near its border. Likewise, the takeover of Iraq benefited Iran in that it demolished Iran's enemy, Saddam Hussein, and with him the traditional domination of Iraq by Sunni Arabs. Since Iraq has a Shi'ite majority, America's need for a "democratic" facade led to a series of governments led by Shi'ite politicians; their uneasy alliances with both Iran and the U.S. meant further enhancement of Iranian clout.

Tehran was thus able to thumb its nose at American power



and expand its nuclear enrichment program, which over time could produce nuclear weapons and thereby create a new balance of power in the region. Each diplomatic attempt made by the U.S. to threaten the Islamic regime was met with defiance by President Ahmadinejad and “Supreme Leader” Khamenei. Instead of undermining the regime, the U.S.’s interference made the Iranian people, despite their discontent, identify more strongly with their rulers against the imperialists. The Lebanon war led to the same result. The U.S. and Israel had figured that taking out Hezbollah would send Tehran a message and force it to back down, but Hezbollah’s triumph has boosted Iran, even making the right-wing populist Ahmadinejad a celebrity on the world stage.

### THE WIDER CONFLICT

In the heady days after its takeover of Iraq, Washington was enveloped in clouds of media puffery hailing “the American Empire.” It used to be that only Marxists argued that the U.S. is imperialist; in 2003 that term of oppression and superexploitation was proclaimed proudly by ruling-class spokesmen: Rome, the British Empire and now the U.S. Disdaining even his fellow imperialists, George Bush II boasted that the U.S. could go it alone as the one remaining superpower.

That was then. Now that the juggernaut has been braked, the masses of workers and poor have glimpsed a bit of their potential to resist. Condoleeza Rice’s boast in Beirut of “the birth of a new Middle East” turned out to be “Mission Accomplished II.”

Iraq remains the center of unrest, but the mounting confrontations cannot be confined there. The Sunni-Shi’ite conflict reverberates throughout much of the Muslim world. If Iraq breaks apart, Iran would inevitably be drawn into the civil war; and the Sunni Islamist royalists of Saudi Arabia could not allow Shi’ite Iran to intervene without also taking part. Jordan, Syria, the Emirates and Egypt could also be engulfed. A drive for independence by Iraqi Kurds would inescapably spark fellow Kurds in Turkey, Iran and even Syria to step up their struggles for self-determination. An actual threat of independence would mean, at minimum, a Turkish invasion of Iraq to stem the tide.

The Sunni-Shi’ite split has further dimensions that the Israeli invasion of Lebanon brought into relief. In the first days of the war the Al Qaeda leaders kept silent, but reports indicated that their policy was a plague on both sides, the Shi’ite Hezbollah and the Zionists. When the skilled defensive war waged by Hezbollah captured the imagination of the Arab masses, Sunni as well as Shi’ite, Al Qaeda came out in defense of Lebanon. But significantly it avoided even mentioning support for Shi’ite Hezbollah. The hostility between the two organizations continues.

The U.S.’s allies in the region reacted much like Al Qaeda. The rulers of Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan issued immediate statements on the invasion that nominally supported Lebanon but were openly critical of Hezbollah. Clearly they were trying to whip up the Sunni/Shi’ite division to divert their increasingly restive masses. Already unhappy over Washington’s embrace of a Shi’ite government in Iraq, they tried the sectarian gambit. The maneuver was foiled by Hezbollah’s success, which forced the comprador regimes to stop their criticism. The refusal of the Sunni masses to be diverted won the day, at least for now.

The fragility of the major Arab regimes is shown by the fact that none of them can embrace even bourgeois democracy. This is not because of the nonsense purveyed in the U.S. and Israel about the Arab character or the Muslim religion. The regimes are too precariously balanced to contemplate such a transformation.



*Israel's apartheid wall, built to imprison Palestians and seize territory.*

Hezbollah is the one Arab force that has gained influence. Contrary to U.S. and Israeli propaganda, Hezbollah is an ally of Iran, neither a tool nor an ideological copy. It openly admires the reactionary Iranian theocracy and regards itself as religiously subordinate to Ayatollah Khamenei. But Hezbollah is relatively modern for a clerically dominated group: it does not impose extraordinary restrictions on women, does not seek to ban literature and does not persecute other ethnic or religious groups, for example. One reason why Hezbollah and its leader Hassan Nasrallah have wide appeal is that its Shi’ism was consciously played down during the war. The strength of Hezbollah’s call for Sunni-Shi’ite unity lies in the fact that underneath the religious, sectoral and national divisions, the masses of the Middle East want to end the internecine war and to find a way to unite in the struggle against imperialist domination, exploitation and poverty.

### ISRAEL, IMPERIALISM’S ADVANCE GUARD

The varying degrees of hostility toward Israel exhibited by the various Arab regimes are more smoke than fire. They all seek to redirect the rebellious hostility of the Arab masses toward Israel and away from the bourgeois ruling classes. The Arab rulers tie the workers of their countries to them by pointing to the very real Israeli threat.

Israel is a colonial-settler state created on lands seized from Palestine and the Palestinian Arabs. It has been an enclave of Western imperialism since its birth in 1948, serving its own interests as well within the Middle East. Its very existence as a Jewish state in territories that had an Arab majority compels it to behave brutally and has made it universally hated by the masses of the region as a bloody symbol of the imperialist West that oppresses and superexploits them.

Many Jews escaping anti-Semitism and Nazism in Europe fled to Palestine, not because they were Zionists (advocates of an exclusively Jewish state in Palestine) but because they had nowhere else to go. The Zionist ruling class forged them into a nation through incessant wars against the persecuted and dispossessed Arabs. Israel owes its very existence to its embattled pariah status, which binds its classes together. The myth that Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Hezbollah want to literally drive all Jews into the sea is an important key to Israel’s stability.

Another factor binding the Jewish workers to their bourgeois masters is the justification of the legitimacy of the Israeli state



*Hezbollah soldiers on parade in 2002. Disciplined force held off Israeli blitzkrieg.*

through its supposed connection with the ancient Hebrew kingdoms in Palestine. To maintain this myth Israel must not only defend its original boundaries but maintain the ideal of extending them to encompass all of Palestine. Israel inherently cannot allow an independent Arab state in Palestine or a secular state based on equality between Jews and Arabs. It must continually act to prevent the return of Palestinians to their lands, which would end its character as a Jewish state and therefore its reason for existence.

That is why Israel sought to sidetrack the negotiations with the Palestinians that had been forced on it by international pressure. Even Palestinian bantustans, much less a Palestinian state, would be a dangerous concession, given the inevitable drive of the Arab masses to rule their own lands. The constant atrocities committed on the Palestinians must continue for Israel to maintain its existence as an apartheid state. Thus for the Zionist bourgeoisie, the acts of Palestinian suicide bombers and Hezbollah missiles attacking civilians are a godsend. The Hezbollah attacks prior to the invasion had been provoked by Israel and were only a minor annoyance; nevertheless they were played up as a real threat.

The fact that Hamas, despite its rhetoric, has attempted to reach a compromise with Israel must be ignored, just as Israel steadfastly ignores all of the overtures made by Syria. And over the years, the attacks on the Palestinians prevented even the heavily compromised Egyptian and Jordanian rulers from further embracing Israel: that too would have damaged Israel's sense of constant embattlement. While there can be little doubt that the Israelis wanted to crush Hezbollah, it is doubtful that they wanted to totally eliminate it. Removing the danger of Hezbollah as an attacking force on its border was one thing; removing it as a useful threat was another.

## **THE IMPERIALIST MATRIX**

Although the entire pattern of events in the Middle East reflects the dominance of imperialism over every state in the region, various national and sectoral leaderships have learned how to maneuver between the powers in order to advance their own interests. The major reason why Iran has been able to stare down the U.S., at least for a time, is that the Iraqi resistance has tied up so much of the American military. But Teheran has also been able to play off the big capitalist powers against each other.

The U.S. is still economically stronger than the other imperialist powers, but its lead has receded. It maintains its dominance

because it has the strongest military. With this advantage it seeks to enhance its chokehold over the world's supply of energy, a critical factor governing the conduct of its rivals. For their part, the Middle Eastern oil-producing countries have used this resource to gain leverage among the imperialists, which has gained them considerable financial rewards. They gain all the more from the still high price of crude oil – caused, among other factors, by the instability created by the imperialist wars in the Mideast.

France has taken the lead in distancing itself from the U.S., particularly over the invasion of Iraq. France also uses diplomacy to slow down U.S. aggression towards Iran. Russia and China have formed a bloc in part to check the growing American penetration of central Asia and the former Soviet colonies there. (China, while not an imperialist power in the Marxist sense because it is itself subjected to massive superexploitation, nevertheless has such ambitions and to a degree possesses the economic and military strength to carry them out.) Both Russia and China have strong economic ties to Iran and have maintained an informal alliance with the Islamic regime; in particular, Iran has secured arms from them that it funneled to Hezbollah. The U.S. attempt to present a united imperialist front confronting Iran's nuclear ambitions has been blunted by the Russians and the Chinese, who are blocking anything more than a slap on Tehran's wrist.

The U.S. remains the sole superpower, but Washington's allies are also its rivals and potentially its outright enemies. Over time, World War III is inevitable unless socialist revolution intervenes. The fires burning in the Middle East may turn out to light the spark that ignites that conflict.

Even when some regional forces like Hezbollah or Iran can successfully set back particular attacks, they cannot break free of the world economy dominated by imperialism. The matrix of relationships in the Middle East – among the imperialists, between the great powers and the oppressed nations, and between the laboring classes and the rulers – is governed by the laws of motion of capitalism in general and the long-term period of stagnation since the end of the post-World War II boom, in particular. (This background and capitalism's underlying laws of motion are explained in our book, *The Life and Death of Stalinism*.)

## **U.S. IMPERIALISM AT HOME AND ABROAD**

Contrary to various conspiracy theories, the U.S. ruling class did not welcome the September 11 attack – for one thing, because it exposed the vulnerability of American imperialism. But the Bush administration quickly seized the opportunity given by the popular support he and his party gained as the defenders of U.S. security. Bush immediately proclaimed the “war on terror” and warned of the dangers supposedly posed by the “axis of evil,” Iraq, Iran and North Korea.

The “terrorist” label was stretched to include enemies everywhere, in order to justify each move. Thus the secular nationalist regime of Saddam Hussein was linked to its arch-rival, Al Qaeda, and the public swallowed the lie for a time. But the strategy had

its drawbacks, too. Hamas and Hezbollah were lumped together with Al Qaeda as a single terrorist cabal – “different faces of the same threat,” as Bush put it in one of a spate of speeches against “Islamic fascism” in early September. But there were obvious differences and hostility between the first two and Al Qaeda. The Bush strategy made it impossible to play these mutual enemies against each other.

Bush’s amalgam is not only false, it is a shameless cover-up. Iran for years was actively opposed to both Al Qaeda and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan that shielded it – after all, Osama bin Laden & Co. regard the Iranian Shi’ites as infidels. Meanwhile the U.S. had been instrumental in creating the Taliban, through the auspices of the Pakistani intelligence service, as a weapon against the Soviet forces in Afghanistan in the 1980’s. Even after the Soviets withdrew, the U.S. continued to accommodate to the Taliban if not support it. Zalmay Khalilzad, currently the U.S. pro-consul (“ambassador”) in Iraq who formerly occupied the same post in Afghanistan, viewed the Taliban as a force for stability when he was a Defense Department consultant in the early 1990’s. In 1998, after the Taliban seizure of power, Khalilzad urged the U.S. to “re-engage” with their regime because of its “common interests” with the U.S., namely combating Iran and building a gas pipeline across Afghanistan. (*Washington Post*, Oct. 7, 1996.) Along with Reagan’s cozying up to Saddam Hussein during the Iraq-Iran war of the 1980’s, this history shows that the real appeasers of “Islamic fascism” are sitting in high places in Washington.

The terrorist cabal was invented as a replacement for the Cold War, in the hope of again binding the working class to the rulers under the theme of “national unity” against a powerful external threat. The ignominious collapse of the Stalinist USSR and its bloc made necessary a new threat. Hence the war against the “axis of evil” and Al Qaeda. The “war on terror” enabled Washington to invade Afghanistan and thereby spread its influence to central Asia, and it served as a cover for the invasion of Iraq.

At home, it enabled the capitalists to undermine legal rights and civil liberties, and it served as the excuse for slashing social service budgets at all governmental levels. The anti-terror campaign aimed to offset the growing frustration and anger of the working class over its declining standard of living and its growing fears about employment, indebtedness and unaffordable medical care. It is nevertheless important to note that for all the patriotic trumpeting, even the reactionary wing of the ruling class knew it could go only so far in attacking the working class. It wisely refused to launch a draft even though its need for more cannon fodder became more and more obvious. It made forays against social security but hastily drew back when masses reacted negatively. Its attacks on other social welfare services, taking over where Clinton had left off, were persistent but cautious. The ruling class certainly wants to deepen exploitation at home as well as abroad, but it still must proceed with care lest it awaken the sleeping giant.

### PERMANENT REVOLUTION

Leon Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution has been confirmed once again, unfortunately by its negation. The theory postulates that with the arrival of a powerful working class onto the stage of history, the national bourgeoisies in the less advanced countries would not be able to carry out fully the bourgeois democratic revolution – land to the peasants, democratic elections, political independence, rights of workers to organize, etc. – since doing so would endanger not only imperialist property but their own holdings as well. Among other reasons, their room to maneuver was constrained by imperialism and their property was

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interpenetrated with imperialist property. Consequently the bourgeois nationalists would seek leverage at the expense of the imperialists, but they would never fundamentally break with them. That is, when push came to shove the nationalist compradors facing working-class revolt would line up with the imperialists. Only socialist revolution by the working class could secure real democratic gains by overthrowing capitalist rule, creating a workers’ state and spreading the struggle internationally.

The negative side of the theory is that if the working class does not seize power, the democratic rights demanded by all the oppressed classes will not be achieved. And that is what the recent history of the Middle East is demonstrating.

This negative confirmation is not something new. Since the colonial revolutions of the post-World War II period, various middle-class and bourgeois reform parties and populist leaderships like the Baath in Iraq and Syria, Nasser in Egypt and Kaddafi in Libya promoted the idea that the nationalist revolution would produce bourgeois not-so-democratic democracy and political and economic gains for the people. Within the working class they were supported by the official Communist (Stalinist) Parties and others on the centrist left. The failure of these leaderships to deliver the masses from imperialist superexploitation turned the workers and the other toilers away from these populist pseudo-socialist beliefs, allowing religious leaders from the middle and upper classes to gain strength.

Under George Bush II, the impossibility of bourgeois democracy in the face of imperialism has been proved at a different level. Almost from its beginning over a century ago, U.S. imperialism has proclaimed its mission to be the spreading of democracy. In part this claim was a facade to prettify the horrors imperialism brought to its victims. It also gave cover to the U.S.’s drive to end outright colonialism, since American capitalism wanted to compete for markets in the colonies of their European rivals. In any case, American imperialists took it at face value, in contrast to most of their European counterparts. It became an arti-

cle of faith that incorporating the middle strata and the upper layers of the working class into a share of governmental office would be a far better device for stabilization than overt repression.

Bush brought this faith to the Middle East in the baggage of his armies. Iraq in particular was supposed to become a democracy that would serve as an example for nearby autocratic regimes, Saudi Arabia and Egypt in particular, warning the rulers that they had better carefully follow suit or perish. In reality, what the U.S. meant by “democracy” was really pluralism – governments that would incorporate all ethnic and religious sectors by rewarding them according to the electoral strength of their voting blocs. The religious and secular leaders of each group would get tangible benefits while their worker and peasant followers got promises. The resulting regimes would make unnecessary dangerous dictators like Saddam, who could get out of hand: they would serve better to bind society together and forestall unrest and rebellion. Such a wheeling and dealing “democracy” would also make imperialist economic penetration far easier than under more centralized rule.

But democratic bourgeois rule requires much more than removing a dictator or two. The imperialized countries obviously lack the wealth that enables ruling classes in the rich countries to accede at times to working-class pressure and allow for the development of a thick middle-class layer together with a sizable labor aristocracy. In addition, they lack the national unification that was brought about by bourgeois democratic revolutions against pre-capitalist systems. Stable, pluralist, bourgeois democracy can only be built if those factors are present, and they decidedly are not in the Middle East.

In the name of imposing its pseudo-democracy, the U.S. encouraged Iraq’s sectoral divisions to advance its divide-and-conquer strategy among the laboring classes. These have blown up in its face. The social upheavals that otherwise would have taken the form of class struggle are now expressed through sectarian and sectoral detours. In Iraq the situation has reached the point where the immediate future offers no possibility for either pluralism or a return to dictatorship. (There are mutterings in Washington that a new strongman ruler to replace Saddam would have been a better strategy than Bush’s imagined “democracy.”) Spreading civil war and partition are the only alternatives unless the working class advances the reconstitution of the proletarian alternative.

## THE POPULIST FORCES

Especially after Hezbollah’s success against Israel, the leadership of the Middle Eastern masses is increasingly in the hands of populist forces. The religious populists of Hezbollah, Hamas and the Mahdi Army hold to a variation of the populist ideology that is spreading around the world. Populism promises control over the state by “the people” so that they can obtain material benefits. It submerges the class struggle and seeks to unify workers, peasants, lumpenproletarians and the middle strata under a program and leadership derived from the interests of deprived sections of the bourgeoisie and the middle class. Hamas and Hezbollah are well known for their social work and welfare programs. They deliver a variety of reforms and promise more once they have state power.

Despite their rhetoric, however, the sectoral and nationalist populists are *not* fundamentally opposed to imperialism: like the comprador rulers, they seek accommodation and better peace agreements – even with Israel – rather than all-out conflict. Hamas has never attacked Americans and calls on the United States to play an even-handed role between the Palestinians and the Israelis. Sadr in Iraq tries to avoid open clashes with the

American occupiers, to the degree that he can and still retain control of his base. His deputies serve in the facade of a parliament attached to the facade of a government in Iraq. Even Iran’s Ahmadinejad, who hurls anti-Semitic diatribes against Jews and Israel, talks of ending Israeli rule not by driving the Jews into the sea but through the ballot box, after Palestinians have secured the right to return to their ancestral homeland. What all of them want is a better deal with imperialism, not its eradication.

This goal was sharply expressed in a statement by the supposedly anti-U.S. Syrian government on September 12, after Syrian forces had been praised by Condoleeza Rice for suppressing an armed attack on the U.S. embassy in Damascus:

**It is regrettable that U.S. policies in the Middle East have fueled extremism, terrorism and anti-U.S. sentiment. What has happened recently in Lebanon, the Palestinian territories and Iraq is exacerbating the fight against global terrorism. The U.S. should take this opportunity to review its policies in the Middle East and start looking at the root causes of terrorism, and broker a comprehensive peace in the Middle East.**

An elegant job of nailing the U.S.’s pretensions. But the Syrian rulers, like their counterparts across the Middle East, clearly hope that the U.S. will seek more accommodations in the region rather than subordination. It will not happen.

Likewise, populism in general is doomed. This is a time when the middle strata are losing ground everywhere, because capitalism is losing its ability to prop up the center by doling out sops and reforms. The post-World War II secular nationalists could not deliver on their promises of democratic control, reforms and welfare; all the less can the religious nationalist-populists of today. High oil prices may serve temporarily to fuel welfare programs, but that also depends on the stability of the world imperialist economy. And the world economy is in deepening trouble.

Many pseudo-socialists today designate populism as the first stage of a movement that will culminate in socialism. Populism does reflect the growing revolt against the deprivations caused by imperialism, but its false consciousness detours and pre-empt the class struggle. Like reformism, it is not a step forward in the development of revolutionary consciousness: it is counter revolutionary. Working-class communists stand with all those who fight the imperialists. But we are internationalists who give no political endorsement to sectoral or nationalist ideologies or leaderships.

## THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTIONARY ALTERNATIVE

The class struggle between the capitalist rulers and the exploited workers is the fundamental drive within the system. Capitalists can continue to exploit and rule without fully understanding the workings of their society. But the working class needs consciousness of how the system operates and its own revolutionary capacity, if it is to emancipate itself and all of humanity. Above all, its proletarian leadership, materialized in the form of the vanguard party, must be fully conscious. Seeking truth is therefore vital. Marxist workers know that just like other human beings, we become conscious of reality through life experience and struggle, not just in the classroom. Marx insisted that only through struggle itself can the working class fit itself for power. People from other classes, witnessing the struggle of proletarians, might come to socialist views, but it was the workers themselves who must liberate themselves through revolutionary consciousness.

The present movement in the Middle East encompasses middle class, peasants and lumpenproletarians as well as employed and unemployed workers. Both its present bourgeois rulers and its populist misleaderships must be exposed and cast aside before

they choke off the struggle. This will take time, but revolutionary consciousness does not occur as a sudden epiphany; it develops among different layers of the working class at different times and at different speeds. Since consciousness and class solidarity both develop through clashes with opponents of workers' power, the fight against the misleaders is integral to the success of revolutionary proletarian leadership. Therefore it is the task of the most politically advanced workers to organize themselves and to fashion a strategy and a program to accomplish this goal.

It is most likely that the inspiration for class consciousness will come from struggles outside the Middle East itself, very likely from Latin America. It is significant that Nasrallah, at Hezbollah's immense "victory rally" in Beirut September 23, saluted the anti-U.S. declarations of Hugo Chávez of Venezuela, "a man about whom I can say that he is a great Arab indeed." Chávez's populism and his attacks on Bush have been fueled by the rising class struggle in his own country and in other countries of Latin America. Nasrallah recognized that Chávez has inspired masses in the Middle East as well. Even though the Venezuelan president's program does not go beyond capitalism, his reception indicates the immense effect that genuine working-class internationalism would have in the region.

### WORKING-CLASS STRATEGY

The struggle against imperialism in the Middle East is fierce, but independent working-class struggle and consciousness is relatively limited – as compared, say, to Latin America. Moreover, the further development of class consciousness is being pre-emptively diverted by the counterrevolutionary populists. It is therefore necessary for working-class revolutionaries to promote a revolutionary working-class strategy, so that the working class can win the leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle.

An important step toward that goal would be to raise the demand on the bourgeois comprador states that they cut off oil supplies going to the imperialists because of the continuing occupation of Iraq and the expanding oppression of the Palestinians. Nasrallah in his victory speech challenged the Arab rulers to use the "oil weapon." The level of atrocities in both countries is so immense that everyone can understand that any means necessary is justified. In addition to this agitation, revolutionaries would at the same time issue exposure propaganda warning workers of the improbability of bourgeois regimes actually carrying out the necessary break with the imperialists. Exposing the rulers in living practice and not just words would help show our fellow workers that they need to act *en masse* to pressure their governments.

Working-class action best takes the form of strikes, especially political strikes. And such strikes are not unprecedented in the region. Strikes by workers in the oil and oil-related industries would reverberate throughout the whole Middle Eastern workforce. The oil workers in Iran, for example, played a central role in the revolution of 1979 before it was hijacked by the Islamists. (See our analysis in *Socialist Voice* No. 11.) Today, despite the steadfastness displayed by Iranians in the face of the imperialist threats, economic as well as political discontent is running high and strikes in several industries have already broken out.

In Iraq, the oil workers have issued statements against the imperialists and have also strongly protested the privatization of the oil industry – that is, the looting of it by imperialist corporations. Reports on the website of the British socialist magazine *Workers' Liberty* say that their most recent and victorious strike took place in late August in Basra and Nassiriyah in southern Iraq. Subsequently, "According to the Federation of Workers' Councils and Unions, several groups of workers have taken action in a wave of successful strikes over wages and conditions



*Iranian oil workers on strike in fall of 1978.*

by southern oil workers ...." The strikes have been largely driven by economic conditions, but since they were directed against the U.S.'s Iraqi facade government, their political import is obvious.

Revolutionary workers would work to make the implicit political aims of the strikes explicit. The goal over time is political strikes by Iraqi oil workers that would ignite the struggles of oil and other workers in nearby Iran and Saudi Arabia, who also hate both the imperialists and their own rulers. A strike against the oil industry aimed at blocking fuel supplies going directly to the West and indirectly to Israel would electrify the masses throughout the region. An anti-imperialist strike would be a major step toward the revolutionary goal of the working class winning the leadership of the burgeoning mass movements against imperialism away from the reactionary populist clerics.

### TACTICAL PROPOSALS

Revolutionary tactics, especially aimed at aiding the struggles of the oil workers, workers in petroleum-related industries and the rest of the regional working class, are key to the development of a conscious proletarian leadership for the anti-imperialist movement. We put forward several proposals for discussion in the spirit of communist internationalism, while recognizing that our distance from the events means that they are hardly complete. Nevertheless, since these tactics are grounded in the past experience of the class struggle, involve a certain knowledge of the general situation in the Middle East and are firmly based upon principle, we can put them forward with confidence.

#### 1. Military Defense Against Imperialism

Revolutionaries everywhere must declare their strong solidarity with the anti-imperialist struggles of the masses to drive the U.S. out of Iraq and end the occupation of Palestine. Above all, we stand for the arming of the working class itself. Further, it is necessary that politically advanced workers there be prepared to fight side-by-side with all forces, *whenever practical*. This even includes those forces now led by the reactionary populist-nationalist clerics, where and when the latter actually do fight the imperialists, their junior partners or their lackeys. From what we see, this is for the most part impossible in the anti-occupation but anti-working class battles conducted by various sectarian forces in Iraq. It would often be necessary to organize working-class self-defense against insurgent attacks. But a joint military effort may well have been possible during the recent war in Lebanon, given the nature of Hezbollah's struggle. When so engaged, revolutionaries must openly declare their political opposition to the misleaderships and warn their fellow workers that these bourgeois commanders will inevitably betray the

struggle. Revolutionaries must be willing to take up arms in defense of their fellow workers whenever the religious sectarians attack them.

This military-technical defense tactic was elaborated by Lenin in 1917. Then the Bolsheviks were the best fighters as they stood together with the reactionary Kerensky bourgeois Provisional government, against the counterrevolutionary putsch attempt launched by Kornilov. Lenin put forward the tactic only because Kornilov was the more acute danger and because the masses still had illusions in the government led by Kerensky. The Bolsheviks made no political concessions to Kerensky: military-technical defense was put forward as a weapon *against* him. It proved to be a key step leading to his overthrow by the working class in the days ahead. The tactic was further developed by Trotsky in the same spirit over the years.

The military defense tactic has two openly stated aims: to solidarize with all struggles against the imperialists, and to aid in winning away the mass following still wedded to so-called anti-imperialist leaders who are enemies of the working class.

Military-technical defense is vital in the Middle East today in order to win the battle for leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle. To not make use of the tactic whenever possible means standing outside living struggles supported by the masses. It reflects petty-bourgeois pseudo-radicalism and ultimatism – not a revolutionary strategy. It will never win the working class to communism.

## 2. No Political Support to Bourgeois Forces

Military defense should not be confused with *political* support of bourgeois leaders. Communist revolutionaries oppose political class collaboration as a matter of principle. We always fight for the political and organizational independence of the working class. This is particularly crucial since what has passed for Marxism in the Middle East (and almost everywhere else) in the past half-century has deliberately attempted to bury this principle in order to tail dead-end populist nationalism.

For decades, the masses were misled by the Stalinist Communist parties and the phony socialist parties into believing that an initial populist-nationalist stage would then lead to socialist revolution. First, they claimed, it was necessary to fight for a “progressive” and populist bourgeois regime, which would after time usher in a new socialist order. Instead, as history proved many times, from Spain in the 1930’s and China in the 1940’s and Iran in the 1970’s, this scheme led to capitulation to imperialism and to the disillusionment of the masses. It encouraged the turn toward the sectarian clerical misleadership that we see today.

Working-class revolutionaries wish to ally with the petty-bourgeois and peasant masses in the immediate struggles against imperialism and to provide them with dedicated and honest lead-

ership as a replacement for their present bourgeois and petty-bourgeois misleaders.

## 3. Democratic Struggles

Socialist revolution is the only way to achieve and secure democratic gains, including political democracy, self-determination, land to the peasants, trade union rights, religious and ethnic freedom, etc. As the situation in the Middle East has become more and more chaotic and murderous, several issues stand out at the moment as particularly thorny democratic problems.

### a. Religious Sectarianism.

The expanding civil war in Iraq between Shi’ite and Sunni forces is undermining the struggle against the occupation. Revolutionaries fight for working-class and mass unity against the real enemies, both the capitalist imperialists and the bourgeois nationalist and sectoralist leaders who betray the masses’ struggle against imperialism.

Communists stand for religious freedom. This means not only freedom of religious observance but also freedom from strictures by religious authorities. The Iraqi constitution adopted under the U.S. occupation guarantees the right to veto legislation to Islamic religious authorities, thereby rendering void all promises of democratic rights to women and genuine religious freedom. Indeed, under the occupation, various militias, including the Mahdi Army and the Badr Corps of SCIRI, a major Shi’ite party, have already imposed Islamic sharia law in the areas they control. Imperialism inevitably nourishes the most reactionary forces; united working-class struggle against it is the only way to overcome them.

While revolutionary Marxists are openly and uncompromisingly atheist, we believe that the masses will come to such an understanding only through revolutionary class struggle and the changed post-revolutionary material circumstances. Superstition can only be combated through changes in mass consciousness, not by compulsion.

### b. Israeli Oppression of the Palestinians.

Israel is a colonial-settler state, an outpost of the imperialist powers which is itself imperialist. By its very existence it stands as a barrier against the rights of the Palestinians. For example, granting the right of return of the dispossessed Palestinians to their homeland would establish an Arab majority in Palestine as a whole (including both what is now Israel and the territories it occupies), and would therefore undermine the very existence of the apartheid state of Israel. Proposals for a binational state or a two-state solution would also deprive the Palestinians of their rights and would never satisfy the Zionists in any case. All the bourgeois “road to peace” solutions are doomed to fail. The only just solution is a united Palestinian state, which would of necessity have an Arab majority. The democratic right to self-determination of the Palestinian people can only be achieved by overthrowing the state of Israel. (For further analysis, see our article “All Israel Is ‘Occupied Territory’: For Arab Workers’ Revolution to Smash Israeli/U.S. Terror,” *PR* 64.)

An important tactic would be to challenge the various Arab governments and Iran to send modern arms to the Palestinian fighters – in order to expose the widespread illusion that these regimes are really committed to the eradication of Israel and imperialist domination.

All the bourgeois forces – PLO, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, et al – ultimately stand for compromise with the U.S. and Israel. Thus the Palestinian working class must fight to overcome the present leaders of the Palestinian Authority and must do so under the ban-

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ner of a Palestinian workers' state. The Palestinian workers cannot accomplish this task alone. A Palestinian workers' state will come into existence only as part of a unified Middle Eastern working-class struggle. A federation of Middle Eastern workers' states must be the revolutionary goal.

Palestinian revolutionaries must also carry out tactics that avoid unnecessarily driving Israeli Jewish workers into relying on their discredited government. They should oppose, for example, suicide bombing and targeting missiles at Israeli civilians. They should defend Israeli workers facing economic attacks from the capitalists; their enemy is the Zionist ruling class, not the Palestinians. And to make clear that a Palestinian workers' state will not mean oppression of Jews, they should offer them cultural autonomy and guarantees of all democratic rights. In the long run that is the only hope for the Israeli Jews; capitalism can promise only the deepening of anti-Semitism and another holocaust.

### *c. Kurdish Self-determination.*

Kurdish national self-determination, the right to an independent Kurdistan, is both a basic democratic right and an issue that could be the spark that brings the entire region to the point of explosion. In present-day Iraq the Kurdish bourgeois leadership is firmly lodged within the camp of U.S. imperialism and its occupation government. This unfortunate circumstance is the result of decades of repression of the Kurds by Iraqi rulers as well as imperialism and the desire of the Kurdish masses themselves for self-determination and independence. As a consequence, the misleaders were able to manipulate the anger of the Kurdish masses and line up behind the American invaders. By virtue of this alliance, the Iraqi Kurds were able to win their endangered autonomy.

The imperialists can not permit full Kurdish independence in northern Iraq because it would lead to similar Kurdish revolts in the bourgeois states of Turkey, Iran and Syria. The armed attacks already launched by Turkey on Iraqi Kurdistan are warnings. The yearning of the Kurdish masses for a united Kurdistan is impossible as long as imperialism exists. No matter America's frayed relations with Iran and Syria, it would oppose their dismemberment by Kurds, which would raise the level of revolutionary instability throughout the already chaotic region.

Self-determination for Kurdish people under capitalism is impossible. No populist-nationalist leadership, old or new, can

successfully lead the liberation struggle. The rest of the Middle Eastern working class must defend Kurdish rights to the fullest in order to break down the barriers of suspicion built up by oppression over the years. An independent workers' Kurdistan can only occur as a result of proletarian socialist revolution. It can only survive as part of the Middle Eastern federation of workers' states which would guarantee the right to self-determination for all oppressed nationalities.

### **WORKING-CLASS INTERNATIONALISM**

Populism, including that put forward by clerical leaderships like Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Palestine and Muqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army in Iraq – claims to speak for "the people." It is inherently divisive and is nationalist at its core. Only the working class is fundamentally directed toward internationalism and inter-racialism by virtue of its role in capitalist production. Even now, we see small but significant signs emerging which point to the future of a far more conscious working-class solidarity than exists at present.

As we have shown above, the failure of the bourgeois Arab regimes in Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan to use the Lebanon war to turn their Sunni masses against the Shi'ites was one such sign. Another important, if less conscious, internationalist factor has played an important role in the Iraq struggle and has aided the growth of the insurgency there. After the Vietnam war, the American bourgeoisie became aware of the dangers of having a mass conscripted army; they witnessed both rebellion in the army and unrest at home. (See the article on page 17.) Consequently they avoided a drafted army even amid the patriotic hype after September 11, 2001. As a consequence, the U.S. invasion force sent to Iraq has been too small to do the bloody job of occupation that Washington finds necessary. Thus even the unconscious acts of the American working class have benefitted the struggle in the Middle East.

The limited but genuinely conscious revolutionary working-class forces around the world must unite through discussion and joint practical action in order to re-create the authentic Fourth International. They must solidify themselves at home and abroad through the struggle against the social-chauvinist reformists and populists everywhere, in order to win leadership of the masses over time. This is as necessary in the Middle East as it is in this, the heartland of world imperialism. ●

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# Defeat Israeli and U.S. Imperialism!

*In July and August there were several demonstrations in U.S. cities against the Israeli invasions, culminating in a rally in Washington on August 12. The League for the Revolutionary Party distributed several leaflets at these events. Here are excerpts.*

The workers and oppressed of the world have a common interest with the Lebanese and Palestinian people, as well as the Arab and Muslim masses worldwide, in seeing imperialism defeated. To forge a united struggle of the international working class against capitalism, workers in the imperialist countries must take the side of oppressed peoples in every clash with imperialism. Indeed, every blow against the imperialists abroad benefits workers in the imperialist countries too, weakening their ruling classes and making them more vulnerable to mass struggles at home. So from the outset of the Israeli invasion, we working-class communists of the League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP) stated clearly that in spite of our political opposition to Hezbollah, we stood on their side against the invasion and wished to see it defeated.

## BEHIND ISRAEL'S INVASION

Israel's excuse for its offensive was the capture of an Israeli soldier by Hamas guerrillas in Gaza and two soldiers by Hezbollah in July. This was a ridiculous lie. As U.N. observers have witnessed, Israel has launched attacks into Lebanon on an almost daily basis since they withdrew their occupying forces in May 2000. (No wonder the Israelis blew up a U.N. observation post during their invasion, killing four international observers!) And Israel's jails imprison thousands of Palestinians and Lebanese. Hezbollah was expecting another exchange of prisoners, which had become routine on the border.

This summer's wars are only the latest crimes by Israel and its fellow imperialists. Israel has repressed the Palestinian population, imprisoning and killing those who resist, since its foundation in 1948. This has been the consequence of the establishment of an exclusively Jewish state in the heart of the Arab world. Today Israeli historians admit to the huge ethnic cleansing required by the formation of their state. The colonial-settler state founded on the blatant theft of territory could only survive as a heavily subsidized outpost of imperialism. For the over 1 million Palestinian Arabs living within Israel's 1948 borders, and for the 5 million refugees descended from those expelled, there can be no justice as long as Israel exists as a racially based state. As the Lebanon war proves once again, Israel's oppression cannot stop at the borders of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. And neither can the struggle against it. "Peace" is absolutely impossible as long as the Zionist state exists.

## HEZBOLLAH'S STRATEGY

Hezbollah, despite its success, cannot lead the masses to a decisive end to imperialist rule. For all its populist declarations and anti-imperialist actions, Hezbollah is a capitalist party, and like all such parties it inevitably seeks to make its peace with imperialism while enlarging its own slice of power. It unambiguously opposes a strategy that could overthrow imperialism: the arming of the working-class masses themselves under the leadership of their class-conscious vanguard.

Hezbollah participates in the cabinet of an explicitly pro-American government established after last year's U.S.-backed "Cedar Revolution." It combines elements of reactionary Islamist ideology with social-democratic-style public services for its impoverished supporters. Like the Iranian regime that helps to

fund and arm it, it plays a dual game with imperialism of resistance and accommodation. Thus Hezbollah did not call on the angry Iraqi masses, or those in the other Arab countries, to rise up and oust their pro-imperialist rulers. This fits in with its continuing policy: like the Iranian Islamist regime, it has not challenged the U.S. occupation of Iraq and the coming to power of the Shi'ite parties under the occupiers' rule (although it opposed the invasion). It will never be a consistent opponent of imperialism.

In the war, Hezbollah's barrage of rockets against Israel inspired millions who had witnessed Israel's past bloodletting go unanswered. But by victimizing civilians (including Israeli Arabs) it helped Israel justify its far deadlier slaughter of Lebanese civilians. We do not equate the violence of the oppressed with that of their oppressors – Hezbollah's rocket attacks were a defensive effort to force Israel to halt its blitzkrieg. Nevertheless, like the suicide bombings of Israeli civilians supported by Hamas and other Palestinian resistance groups, they play into the imperialists' hands. At the end, Hezbollah accepted not just a welcome cease-fire but also the one-sided U.N. peace deal.

## FOR INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY AGAINST IMPERIALISM!

It is in the material interests of increasingly beleaguered American workers to rally to the side of their brothers and sisters in Palestine, Lebanon and Iraq. Every blow against imperialism is a victory for the oppressed and exploited everywhere. The Iraqi resistance, for example, despite the reactionary and oppressive character of most of its religious and secular leadership, is tying down over a hundred thousand imperialist troops and thereby preventing them being used against targets of imperialist anger elsewhere, such as Cuba or Venezuela. In the U.S., the defeats imperialism has suffered abroad have helped erode the wave of patriotic jingoism that swept the country after September 11. A rising level of working-class struggle, from the New York City transit strike to the massive marches for immigrant rights, has begun to erupt.

***Defeat Israeli & U.S. Imperialism!  
Defend the Palestinian and Lebanese Resistance!  
No U.N. Imperialist "Peacekeepers"!  
End the Occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan!  
All Israel Is "Occupied Territory"!  
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# ***In Defense of Bolshevik Military Policy:*** **Once Again on Conscription**

by Joseph Andrews and Arthur Rymer

The occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq are a nightmare for the peoples of those countries. They are proving to be a disaster for the U.S. ruling class as well. Thousands of American soldiers have been killed and tens of thousands wounded, while the anti-U.S. insurgencies continue to grow. With its armies slipping deeper into the quagmire, the imperialist U.S. ruling class is unable to credibly threaten military action elsewhere. Iran has so far been spared an attack that the White House had been planning. In the face of North Korea's testing of nuclear weapons, Washington is reduced to making threats of economic sanctions, not military reprisals. The threat of military intervention that has historically been used to intimidate the masses of Latin America has retreated. This may change as the U.S. ruling class becomes more desperate to re-establish its superpower authority, but the weakness of its military forces has been exposed.

Capitalist politicians of all stripes complain that the White House has failed to send sufficient numbers of troops to subdue the resistance in Iraq and Afghanistan. At the same time, they recognize that the U.S. essentially has no more troops to send. Re-enlistment rates are falling and recruitment efforts are failing. As a result, the Pentagon has been forced to rely on the "backdoor draft" – compelling Army, Reserve and National Guard troops to serve repeated and extended tours of duty. They are also using, at great expense, huge numbers of mercenaries from guns-for-hire companies like Blackwater USA.

In this context, a few capitalist politicians, both Democratic and Republican, have proposed re-instituting conscription. But in spite of the military's desperate need for more troops, the overwhelming majority of ruling-class politicians oppose the idea – at least for now. While defeat in Iraq is a major problem for America's rulers, they actually fear a draft could lead to worse. An Op-Ed commentary in the *New York Post* hinted at the reasons:

**It's not just the civilian leaders [who oppose conscription]. Much of the military doesn't want the burdens of training draftees, arguing that volunteers are more motivated and professional. (They also aren't troublesome in unpopular wars, such as the current one.) The brass see a signature on the dotted line as a necessary safeguard against sagging morale. (Aug. 25.)**

Allow us to explain what this bourgeois columnist lightly refers to as "troublesome." The ruling class knows that conscription, by forcing the youth of the nation to go to war, would encourage popular demands for the government to account for the aims and conduct of its wars. It would spark the further growth of anti-war sentiment and threaten to bring that struggle into the ranks of the military.

The capitalists' political and military leaders remember the last time the U.S. had a draft during the Vietnam war. Then, when mostly working-class youth were driven into the military, many brought with them their experience of the anti-war and Black liberation movements. Individual acts of insubordination soon grew into mutinous refusals by whole units to fight. Rank-and-file soldiers' use of fragmentary grenades and other means to kill their superiors became so common (killing from 600 to 2,000 officers, according to Pentagon records) that the term "fragging" found a permanent place in the national vocabulary. Left-wing and anti-imperialist literature circulated among the troops, and growing

numbers became politically radicalized and organized. "Troublesome" indeed! No wonder the ruling class did not even try to reinstitute the draft immediately after the September 11 terrorist attacks, when patriotic pro-war fervor was running high. Such historical experience is central to how Marxists approach the question of conscription.

## **WAR AND REVOLUTION**

The League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP) has taken every opportunity to join and build actions against the U.S.'s wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, from mass protests in the streets to demonstrations that have driven army recruiters from college campuses. These protests are crucial in spreading the anti-imperialist message, showing solidarity with the wars' victims and giving protesters a taste of the power that comes from mass action. They have the potential to grow to hamper the ruling class's war effort – although for now the anti-war movement has been run

## ***Further Reading...***

### **On conscription**

- "No Draft' Is No Answer: The Communist Position on Stopping Imperialist War," LRP pamphlet, 1980
- "Marxism and the Draft: A Reply to the Social-Pacifist SWP," *Socialist Voice* No. 9, 1980
- "Vietnam: the 'Working-Class War'," *Proletarian Revolution* No. 45, 1993 (<http://www.lrp-cofi.org/PR/VietnamPR45.html>)
- "No Draft' Is No Answer!," *Proletarian Revolution* No. 66, 2003 (<http://www.lrp-cofi.org/PR/draftPR66.html>)
- "The Leninist Position on Conscription," *Proletarian Revolution* No. 69, 2004 (<http://www.lrp-cofi.org/PR/conscriptionPR69.html>)
- "Why 'No Draft' Is No Answer," *Proletarian Revolution* No. 73, 2005 (<http://www.lrp-cofi.org//PR/draftPR73.html>)

### **Background articles**

- "The Marxism of the Petty Bourgeoisie; the Spartacist League and the USSR," *Socialist Voice* No. 4, 1977
- "Myth and Reality of the Transitional Program," *Socialist Voice* No. 8, 1979 (<http://www.lrp-cofi.org//PR/TPSV8.html>)
- "What Has Been Done to 'What Is to Be Done?'," *Proletarian Revolution* No. 29, 1987
- "Propaganda and Agitation in Building the Revolutionary Party," *Proletarian Revolution* No. 56, 1998 (<http://www.lrp-cofi.org//PR/propagitPR56.html>)

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into the ground by its pro-Democratic Party leaders.

We have also brought to these actions a very clear message: while protests are crucial, the horror of imperialist wars will not end until the capitalist system that breeds them is overthrown. *Socialist revolution is the only solution!*

Indeed, as the world economy deteriorates and rivalries between the major powers intensify, capitalism promises humanity only bigger and bloodier conflicts, leading toward a Third World War. The further and dramatic militarization of society, including moves to reintroduce conscription, is inevitable.

Marxists understand that the battles waged by workers against their exploiters at the point of production in industry and other centers of the economy are the key to the class struggle. But in this epoch of imperialism in which war and revolution are inextricably linked, a “Marxism” that can only guide the working class through its peacetime struggles and not through the horrors of militarism is no real Marxism and no use to the working class. It is crucial that revolutionaries prepare now with a theoretical understanding of imperialist militarism and a program of struggle that can put an end to it.

### REVOLUTIONARY MILITARY POLICY

Since the overthrow of capitalism by working-class revolution is our fundamental aim, revolutionaries of course oppose the existence of the capitalists’ armed forces and the rest of their repressive state apparatus. We maintain that the need to defend the working class against inevitable attack from the capitalists’ state means that the workers’ seizure of power will be anything but peaceful. Therefore, in the course of its revolutionary struggles, the working class will have to use force of arms to defend itself and smash the capitalist state in an armed revolution.

Marxists understand that the capitalist state’s armed forces are not all the same. Capitalist ruling classes generally prefer to separate the two, reserving the police for domestic repression and maintaining their military for prosecuting their interests abroad. We know that whenever the ruling class’s fundamental interests are threatened, it will not hesitate to try to deploy its armed forces

for domestic policing. But we also recognize that the typical division between the police and military necessitates different approaches. The job of police recruits will be to enforce domestic law and order, but most military recruits would never imagine being asked to turn their guns on their brothers and sisters at home.

While we expect that a victorious revolution will have to destroy the police force from top to bottom without distinction between ranks and commanders, the army is a different story. Appeals to rank-and-file soldiers to not attack the working class, and even to rebel against their officers and political leaders and side with the workers, can succeed. Indeed, history has taught that no victorious working-class revolution is possible without a split in the military.

As the great Bolshevik leader Lenin summed up:

**Militarism can never and under no circumstances be defeated and destroyed, except by a victorious struggle of one section of the national army against the other section. It is not sufficient simply to denounce, revile and “repudiate” militarism, to criticize and prove that it is harmful; it is foolish peacefully to refuse to perform military service. The task is to keep the revolutionary consciousness of the proletariat tense and train its best elements, not only in a general way, but concretely, so that when popular ferment reaches the highest pitch, they will put themselves at the head of the revolutionary army.** (“Lecture on the 1905 Revolution,” January 1917.)

Given this perspective, it is important to recognize that there are two basic types of capitalist armies: mercenary and conscripted. Mercenary armies are constituted of professional soldiers separated from the rest of the population. Conscripted armies, on the other hand, draw more broadly from the working class. Their ranks are much more intimately connected with, and influenced by, the daily lives and struggles of their civilian brothers and sisters. As a result, conscripted soldiers are far more likely to rebel against their leaders than those of mercenary armies, as the *New York Post* columnist we quoted earlier alluded to.

The U.S. army today can be characterized as a hybrid force, that is, a mercenary army with elements of a conscripted one. It includes many enthusiastic volunteers. It also recruits many poor, working class, and particularly Black and Latino youth who, in the face of poverty and discrimination, are subject to an “economic draft.” They are lured into the military by promises of a steady income, the potential for upward social mobility through college tuition payments and the illusion of a color-blind military. While such recruits are potentially rebellious, this potential is undercut by the volunteer character of the army and its isolation as a “profession” from the rest of the working class.

Therefore, for as long as we face a capitalist army which we are unable to overthrow, revolutionaries prefer one that is a less reliable tool in the hands of the ruling class, one that is more prone to rebellion. For this reason, we prefer a conscripted rather than a mercenary army.

Conscription also has the advantage of giving broader numbers of young workers access to weapons and military training, material and skills that will be vitally needed in the coming revolution. Thus, not



LRP contingent at November 2005 anti-war march in Washington, DC. Our banner and placards focused on the revolutionary solution.

only do revolutionaries prefer to face a conscripted rather than mercenary army, but we look to take advantage of moves toward conscription to demand the arming and military training of the entire working class – a demand that can become popular, and threatening to the ruling class, at times of war when the working class of a given nation fears invasion.

## THE MARXIST TRADITION AND ITS OPPONENTS

Preference for a conscripted rather than mercenary bourgeois army has been the position of revolutionary Marxists for well over a century. But that tradition has been buried by many who regard themselves as anti-imperialists and even communists. To better prepare current and future generations of revolutionaries for the challenges of wartime, we have made an effort to resurrect and critically examine this tradition. Our pamphlet *“No Draft” Is No Answer!* and our article “Marxism and the Draft” (see the box on page 17), both written when draft registration was introduced under President Carter, reproduced and re-argued the views of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky. And we returned to this issue during the most recent wars following September 11.

This approach to conscription sets us apart from the entire left in this country which, multiply divided on so many other questions, is remarkably united on this one. We have already had two rounds of debate with the Communist Voice Organization (CVO) and its support for anti-draft campaigns (see *PR* 69 and 73). Since then the CVO has continued to argue with us in Nos. 36 and 37 of their magazine (<http://home.flash.net/~comvoice/>). With their blend of selective quotation, illogic, repetition and pedantry, these articles add nothing new.

Our position has more recently come under fire from the Internationalist Group (IG) in their article “Which Side Are They On?”, published in the Summer 2005 issue of their magazine, *The Internationalist*. As would-be Trotskyists, the IG feels more pressure to attempt to reconcile their opposition to conscription with the authentic revolutionary tradition than does the “post-Stalinist” CVO. In particular, they are forced to directly confront their opposition to Trotsky’s approach to conscription, the Proletarian Military Policy (PMP). Defending the PMP will help us clarify how revolutionaries approach the capitalist military in the course of our struggle to overthrow it.

Unfortunately, the IG’s style of polemic, true to the Spartacist heritage the group derives from, relies heavily on putting down its opponents by means of innuendo and outright lies while blurring its own position under the barrage. The method of not “saying what is” reeks of contempt for working-class consciousness. We will return to the underlying cause, middle-class intellectual elitism, below. We begin, however, by taking out some of the trash that the IG has carted in.

## WHAT IT MEANS TO PREFER A DRAFT

To start, not once does the IG refer to our preference for a conscripted over a mercenary army without placing ironic quotation marks around the word “prefer.” In fact, they directly say that we are “for a draft imperialist army” and even claim that “the LRP yearns for a draft to send young workers into the army.” Elsewhere they say that the LRP “favors a military draft,” taking advantage of the fact that the word “favor” has a range of meanings from “prefer” to “desire” and “support.” We have already thoroughly refuted the charge that we call for or support a draft by the bourgeois state in our responses to the CVO – which the IG significantly avoids citing. Our position is also perfectly clear in the articles that the IG does cite, those in *SV* 9 and *PR* 66. The IG dismisses our point-blank statements as a “fig-leaf” and “empty rhetoric.”

The fact that revolutionaries, confronted with life under capitalism, prefer certain forms of capitalist rule to others because they are more favorable to working-class struggle flows from how we understand society. Utopian socialists had pipe dreams of constructing perfect societies outside of capitalism. Sectarian socialists lecture workers from outside of the class struggle. But the working class has to live and struggle under capitalism as it exists. Thus genuine Marxism looks inside the system itself for the means to overthrow it, and therefore prefers some circumstances to others.

For example, we base our entire strategy for social change on the consciousness the working class develops through collective struggle. While we hate all forms of exploitation and wish to see them all end at the first opportunity, we prefer to see capitalists running big industrial enterprises rather than small businesses: the former bring together larger numbers of workers with greater potential power to fight back. For example, we do not join in the small-business-is-beautiful campaigns against Wal-Mart that are currently in vogue. Instead we look forward to seeing Wal-Mart workers organize themselves in mass struggles against their multinational exploiter, struggles that lone workers in mom-and-pop stores could never imagine.

For any ostensible Marxist, such a preference should be obvious. Our preference for large-scale industry rather than small business is essentially the same as our preference for a conscripted versus mercenary army, as it is essentially a preference for the best situation for working-class struggle. Because we want to destroy the capitalist military, we prefer they have one that is more conducive to its own destruction.

We will show later in this article that Lenin made exactly this comparison, in particularly blunt terms.

The IG takes their first swing at “proving” that the LRP supports a draft by quoting us (from *PR* 66) – and missing the obvious point:

**When black Democrats Charles Rangel and John Conyers came out for a draft on the eve of the invasion of Iraq, the LRP wrote:**

**“Since our ruling class must have an army, we prefer that it be drafted – not, like Rangel, because an all-out mobilization is necessary to fulfill imperialist goals, but because a ‘professional’ army is more easily disciplined and more loyal to its bourgeois paymasters.” ...**

**What grotesque concern for the needs of the ruling class!**

The IG’s logic here is bizarre. Having quoted us saying that we prefer a conscripted army because a mercenary army is more disciplined and loyal to the ruling class, the IG declares that this shows “grotesque concern for the needs of the ruling class!” Of course we are concerned about the needs of the ruling class: our concern is that their needs *not* be met! They need a loyal professional army; we prefer an army that is more likely to become disloyal. The IG is so contemptuous of its readers that they are prepared to write any nonsense in the hope of getting away with it.

## WHAT IS THE IG’S POSITION?

The IG’s own position on conscription is never stated explicitly but has to be deduced from their arguments against ours.

### 1. Preference for a Mercenary Army

To begin, the IG cannot claim that we support imperialist wars, but it still tries to make a case that our position is pro-imperialist:

**The LRP can claim to be for the defeat of U.S. imperialism in Iraq, but by opposing struggle against the introduction of military conscription in wartime, the LRP is adding its grain of sand to pro-**

moting imperialist militarism. All the more so when it repeats its pseudo-Marxist arguments today as mounting U.S. casualties in Iraq have put the Pentagon in a bind. The Joint Chiefs of Staff need more troops to kill and die in enforcing their murderous occupation of Iraq? The LRP declares its “preference” on how to supply the “cannon fodder.” Trotskyists say instead that since the ruling class must have an army, *in fighting for socialist revolution we fight against every means by which the imperialist war machine gets its manpower*, whether by recruiters trying to hoodwink poor and minority students, or by a draft.

Of course, revolutionaries oppose the ruling class’s military, whatever form it takes. But the IG evades our central point that a conscripted army is more dangerous for the bourgeoisie. Nor do they address the fact that the ruling class obviously recognizes this. The imperialists have a better understanding of what a drafted army represents than do the supposed Marxists of the IG.

The IG asserts that it fights all imperialist armies and implies that it has no preference. But this is a dodge to not take responsibility for their own position. The IG’s argument that “since the ruling class must have an army ... *we fight against every means by which the imperialist war machine gets its manpower*,” means that they prefer a smaller army until the revolution overthrows the bourgeoisie. That means a mercenary army, not a mass army of conscripts.

Let us be clear: we do not mirror the IG’s approach and falsely say they are “for” or “support” a mercenary army. We only point out their unstated *preference* for it over a drafted army.

Moreover, right now there is no draft, and the issue between

the LRP and the IG, as the IG itself puts it above, is whether to support “struggle against the *introduction* of military conscription in wartime.” (Emphasis ours.) We say openly that we will not campaign against the introduction of a draft. But if the LRP is promoting imperialism by opposing struggle against the introduction of a draft when the Pentagon needs it, as the IG charges, then the IG clearly must support such a struggle. Like it or not, that means they prefer not having a draft – that is, in reality they prefer to maintain the existing mercenary army.

There is a clear historical test to prove our point. In 1973, when the Pentagon abolished the draft because of the eruptions in the U.S. army over Vietnam, the Spartacist League (from which the IG descends and whose history it embraces) could have opposed the introduction of a purely volunteer army in order to stand against what the Pentagon needed at that time. They did not. For Marxists, practice is proof. Then as now, without acknowledging it, they preferred the ruling class having a mercenary army.

## 2. Pseudo-Militant Pacifism

The IG article continues:

**Pacifists may push the illusion of “disarming” the bourgeoisie, but revolutionaries seek through protest and working-class action to hinder the bourgeoisie’s ability to raise an army for imperialist invasion and colonial occupation.**

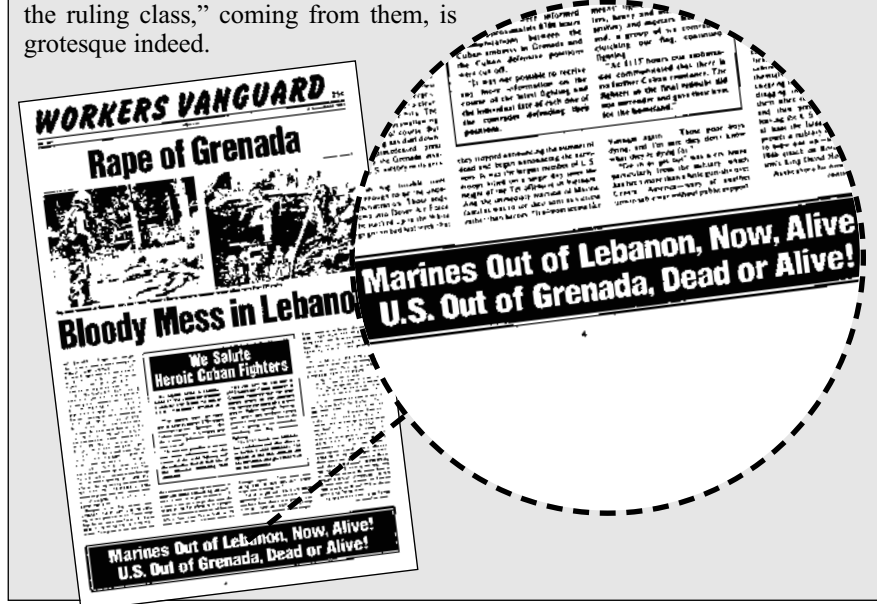
They go on to condemn the LRP for not “fighting for concrete proletarian action in the imperialist countries, such as workers strikes against the war, ‘hot cargoing’ military goods, etc.” In contrast, they boast “We call for workers strikes against the war, and for workers to refuse to handle military cargo.”

The LRP is, of course, also for mass protests and working-class action that hinders imperialist militarism. But the IG is wrong to argue that this is the alternative to pacifist illusions of disarming the bourgeoisie. Such actions can hamper the capitalists’ war efforts, but only temporarily. For as long as the military stands strong, it will find a way to arm itself. Any lasting success in mass action preventing the bourgeoisie from raising its army can only come when such action reaches into the military, splitting its ranks. To suggest otherwise is to raise pacifist illusions about disarming the bourgeoisie, and this is the essence of the IG’s position. The question of splitting the army is key to a really revolutionary strategy against imperialist war. It raises the central question of what form of bourgeois army is more vulnerable to be split in such a way – the very question the IG never addresses.

The IG hides their avoidance of this question with bluster about the many forms of anti-militarist working-class action it advocates. The LRP is also in favor of strikes against the war, hot cargoing and other working-class actions. But we recognize that at a time when the trade union bureaucracy hamstring workers from striking even for basic economic demands, calling *agitationally* for political strikes is just hot air intended to sound super-radical rather than lead to any concrete action. It is, however, vital to *propagandize* for such strikes, to explain to the most politically advanced workers that the working class has the power and obligation to take action against the capitalists’ wars. But to agitate for political strikes as if they have a real possibility of being carried out by the mass of workers today is precisely

## Real/Grotesque Concern for the Ruling Class

In Lebanon in 1983, when insurgents blew up a U.S. Marine barracks and hundreds of elite imperialist troops were killed, the Spartacists’ *Workers Vanguard* ran the headline “Marines Out of Lebanon, Now, Alive!” This expressed the fact that their chief concern was for the lives of imperialism’s professional volunteers than for the Lebanese whom the U.S. was bombarding (in support of Israel’s first war in Lebanon). The common anti-war slogan today, “Bring the Troops Home,” has the same flavor. The genuine Leninist position, then as now, was for the defeat of U.S. and Israeli imperialist forces, not their personal survival. The editor-in-chief of *Workers Vanguard* at the time was Jan Norden, founder and leader of the Internationalist Group. The IG’s charge that we “show a grotesque concern for the needs of the ruling class,” coming from them, is grotesque indeed.



“empty rhetoric” and a “fig-leaf.”

Genuine Marxists do not tail backward political consciousness among workers. But we must take into account current states of consciousness in formulating our calls for immediate action to actually take workers’ struggles forward and help raise their political consciousness. Thus while we are for socialist revolution, only crackpots would agitate for revolution as if it could actually happen now.

Similarly, and in contrast to the IG, both in our publications and in our work within the unions, we have been fighting for working-class strikes over issues which militant workers can accept as possible, even when they don’t agree with our specific demands. That is genuine agitation. We not only bring up the war; we stress that only working-class struggle can end imperialist wars. Since at the present time the mass of workers do not see mass action to stop the U.S.’s wars abroad as possible, our arguments are limited to *propaganda*: that is, ideas for struggle addressed to the more politically advanced workers to help prepare them to lead broad numbers of workers when such struggles are possible and when we can then agitate for them.

For over a century, revolutionaries have recognized that at the outset of most imperialist wars, the mass of the working class is almost always caught up in the bourgeoisie’s patriotic fervor, so that successful anti-war strikes are impossible. The IG’s bombast evades the real question. There will be a bourgeois army taking the field: which kind do revolutionaries prefer, so that when jingoism inevitably ebbs the struggle can best be advanced? Any working-class revolution will require a revolt in the bourgeois army, to undermine the state power of the ruling class. Revolutionaries openly proclaim their goal and work propagandistically towards this end even in conservative times. That preparatory work will be immeasurably more effective when young workers are being conscripted, trained and armed for imperialist wars and will rise up against their masters. The IG’s empty calls, when there is no workers’ movement even approaching our class’s political potential, and not connected to a revolutionary strategy aimed at splitting the army in the course of revolution, amount to abstract agitation and can only mislead.

### 3. Against a Draft – Until There Is One

The IG says that while they will fight the introduction of conscription, they oppose draft dodging. Complaining that “the LRP cynically equates all opposition to introduction of military conscription with calls for draft evasion,” they insist that they oppose avoiding the draft. After quoting Lenin’s statement that it is “foolish peacefully to refuse to perform military service,” they say:

**Where there is an existing military draft, Trotskyists explain that individual ‘resistance’ is not only powerless but means radically separating themselves from the mass of working-class youth. If drafted, rather than proclaim “we won’t go,” class-conscious workers encourage struggle against the war from within the ranks of the military, while gaining military training. ... using the opening to raise the revolutionary consciousness of workers in uniform and train the best elements is quite different from favoring the introduction of a draft in an imperialist war.**

What a mess of contradictions and flip-flopping the IG position is! As we have seen, the IG says that while they will “struggle against the introduction of military conscription in wartime,” once it is introduced they will oppose draft dodging and instruct revolutionaries to comply with being drafted. They make no mention of continuing their fight for the repeal of conscription, and one can only assume this means that they are for dropping their opposition to conscription once it is in effect. This is outrageous

## “Empty Rhetoric”

The IG opens its article with a jibe about the LRP’s work at City College in New York. It seems we are guilty of only “calling vaguely” for “the broadest possible campaign for the dropping of all charges” against the CCNY Four, protesters against military recruitment who were assaulted and arrested by the police. (See *PR 75*.) Our alleged vagueness is contrasted to the IG’s bold call for “shutting down CCNY over this outrageous campus repression.”

Well, the IG did indeed make such a call in a leaflet, but only in its headline. Anyone looking to these hard class warriors for guidance on how the campus could actually be shut down would have found precisely nothing: the body of their long leaflet did not even repeat the call, let alone provide a clue on how to carry out the task. Rhetoric cannot get any emptier than this.

opportunism. What sort of revolutionary says something is horrible for the working class only to go along with it when it becomes a fact? The IG seems to have been forced into this ridiculous position by the fact that Lenin and Trotsky not only strongly argued against the “foolish” refusal to perform military service, but never once fought for the repeal of conscription.

Further, in an incredible admission, the IG describes the opportunity afforded by conscription to conduct revolutionary work inside the army as an “opening to raise revolutionary consciousness” – an opening they say they will do everything to prevent! The more the IG explains their position, the more embarrassing it becomes.

### ENGELS ON CONSCRIPTION

We have documented so thoroughly the preference for a conscripted army in the writings of Engels, Lenin and Trotsky that the IG had to take a break from chest-thumping and retire to the library to come up with more scholastic forms of posturing. However, an examination of their historical claims actually provides additional evidence for the Marxist analysis.

For example, the IG discounts the preference for conscription expressed by Engels in an article we quoted in *SV 9*:

**The more workers who are trained in the use of weapons, the better. Universal conscription is the necessary and natural extension of universal suffrage [i.e. the universal right to vote]; it enables the electorate to carry out its resolutions arms in hand against any coup that might be attempted.**

**The ever more complete introduction of military service is the only aspect of the Prussian army reorganization which interests the German working class.** (“The Prussian Military Question and the German Workers’ Party,” 1865.)

Engels’ article, the IG complains, “was written *in 1865*, that is, in the pre-imperialist epoch when Germany was still divided into a plethora of semi-feudal principalities, and when the Marxists *supported a war for German unification*.” This is nothing but a pseudo-scholarly effort at kicking dust into the face of revolutionaries trying to study the question of conscription. Engels recognized that arming the working class and teaching it military skills through conscription would backfire on the bourgeoisie and be of great benefit to the coming revolutionary struggles of workers. This was not based on the fight for German unification but on general considerations of the class struggle. Thus Engels repeated his preference in the book *Anti-Dühring*, his classic defense of materialist dialectics and scientific social-

ism, written in collaboration with Marx and published 1877, six years *after* the unification of Germany. As it happens, we cited this passage as well in our *SV 9* article, so the IG's scholarly complaint is both deceptive and deliberately fraudulent. (In passing, the IG also accuses us of leaving out the words about an attempted coup from the 1865 quotation in *SV 9*, which we did not. These addicts lie in matters small as well as large.)

The passage from *Anti-Dühring* is all the more significant because here Engels states his preference in terms applicable not solely to Germany but to all the great powers of capitalist Europe, while foreshadowing the tremendous upheavals of war and revolution that would characterize the coming imperialist epoch. We quote this second passage at length, since it clearly distinguishes the Marxist method of opposing capitalist militarism from every attempt to evade it.

**Militarism dominates and is swallowing Europe. But this militarism also bears within itself the seed of its own destruction. Competition among the individual states forces them, on the one hand, to spend more money each year on the army and navy, artillery, etc., thus more and more hastening their financial collapse; and on the other hand, to resort to universal compulsory military service more and more extensively, thus in the long run making the whole people familiar with the use of arms, and therefore enabling them at a given moment to make their will prevail against the warlords in command. And this moment will arrive as soon as the mass of the people – town and country workers and peasants – will have a will. At this point the armies of the princes become transformed into armies of the people; the machine refuses to work and militarism collapses by the dialectics of its own evolution. ...**

What the bourgeois democracy of 1848 could not accomplish, just because it was *bourgeois* and not proletarian, namely, to give the laboring masses a will whose content would be in accord with their class position – socialism will infallibly secure. And this will

**mean the bursting asunder from within of militarism and with it of all standing armies.** (*Anti-Dühring*, Part II: Political Economy, Chapter III.)

Engels recognized that militarism was becoming a defining characteristic of capitalist society, not only in Germany but throughout Europe. The socialist proletariat could not stand aloof from it, any more than it could from the factories, schools, parliaments or other oppressive institutions of bourgeois rule. It would have to prepare to seize the opportunity to make sure bourgeois militarism is “burst asunder *from within*.” And universal military service is what makes this possible.

## LENIN ON CONSCRIPTION

The shift of capitalism from being an ascendant, progressive force, into its epoch of imperialist decay, and the accompanying transformation of imperialism from a mere policy of capitalist governments to the essence of capitalism in our age, does not change this strategic method but brings it forward to the order of the day. As Lenin summed up, this is “the epoch of war and revolution.”

In our pamphlet “*No Draft*” *Is No Answer* and our article in *PR 69*, we quoted from Lenin’s 1916 essay, “The Military Program of the Proletarian Revolution,” which provides his most extensive discussion of the question. Given its importance, we requote some central paragraphs here. The passage contains the comparison between industrialization and conscription, and Lenin’s blunt preference for both, that we mentioned above:

**The bourgeoisie makes it its business to promote trusts, drive women and children into the factories, subject them to corruption and suffering, condemn them to extreme poverty. We do not “demand” such development, we do not “support” it. We fight it. But how do we fight? We explain that trusts and the employment**

## The Second International and War

Having dealt so carefully with Engels and Lenin, the IG turns to what it labels the LRP’s true political heritage. “In fact,” they write, “the LRP’s line goes back not to Trotsky, Lenin and Engels but to the pre-World War I social democrats.” They specify Jean Jaurès, August Bebel and Gustav Noske, and they provide quotations from the years 1907 and 1910 showing that all three called for conscription with appeals to French and German nationalism.

Their names are well known to revolutionaries. Jaurès and Noske, in France and Germany respectively, became symbols of class treason: they endorsed the “defense” of their capitalist fatherlands in the First World War, voting to fund the war credits and repressive war powers for their governments. Thus, in contrast to Engels, Lenin, Trotsky and us, they *endorsed* bourgeois conscription. Their support for conscription was meant to *strengthen*, not weaken, their national armies.

History dealt cruel blows to their pro-imperialist illusions. Yes, the bourgeoisies needed mass armies that only conscription

could provide. But these armies eventually proved to be two-edged swords. The conscripted army of the Russian empire split along class lines, the worker and peasant soldiers rebelling against their bourgeois officers, bringing the war there to a standstill in 1917 as part of the greatest revolution in history. (We examine just how the Bolsheviks did this elsewhere in this article.) And rebellion was not confined to Russia. The French “new army” that Jaurès had hailed nearly disintegrated as a result of massive mutinies – inspired by the example of the Russian soldiers’ revolt and by the French draftees’ own rising anger at the war. In Germany in 1918, naval mutinies combined with massive strike action to bring down the Kaiser, to whom Noske & Co. had pledged support.

As defenders of their respective imperialist fatherlands, Jaurès and Noske were not only lackeys of the bourgeoisie but also blind to the coming revolutionary upheavals. The IG, in claiming that the reintroduction of conscription would be an unmitigated boon to our imperialist rulers, is similarly blind.

The events of World War I prove the Leninist case about the draft, not theirs.

So why does the IG bring up this history? First, in asserting that Jaurès and Noske’s pro-imperialist *call* for a drafted bourgeois army is the predecessor of the LRP’s communist *preference* combined with our opposition to all bourgeois armies, the IG engages in another deceitful amalgamation. But there is more. Bebel died in 1913, well before the world war broke out, and Jaurès was assassinated on the eve of the war. Noske, however, went on to infamy as a leader of the post-war Social-Democratic government that squelched the workers’ uprising and murdered the revolutionaries Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht.

The IG says, “This is the heritage the LRP embraces, these are the true progenitors of its social-democratic ‘preference’ for a conscript army.” By linking the LRP falsely to the traitors Jaurès and Noske, the IG suggests that we are the political heirs of supporters of imperialist war and murderers of revolutionaries. This despicable innuendo is an effort worthy of Stalin.



of women in industry are progressive. We do not want a return to the handicraft system, pre-monopoly capitalism, domestic drudgery for women. Forward through the trusts, etc., and beyond them to socialism!

With the necessary changes that argument is applicable also to the present militarization of the population. Today the imperialist bourgeoisie militarizes the youth as well as the adults; tomorrow, it may begin militarizing the women. Our attitude should be: All the better! Full speed ahead! For the faster we move, the nearer shall we be to the armed uprising against capitalism. ... The whole of social life is now being militarized. Imperialism is ... bound to lead to further militarization in all countries, even in neutral and small ones. How will proletarian women oppose this? Only by cursing all war and everything military, only by demanding disarmament? The women of an oppressed and really revolutionary class will never accept that shameful role. They will say to their sons: "You will soon be grown up. You will be given a gun. Take it and learn the military art properly. The proletarians need this knowledge not to shoot your brothers, the workers of other countries, as is being done in the present war, and as the traitors to socialism are telling you to do. They need it to fight the bourgeoisie of their own country, to put an end to exploitation, poverty and war, and not by pious wishes, but by defeating and disarming the bourgeoisie.

In their polemic against us the IG picks out different sentences from the latter half of this quote but omits its point-blank statement – "Full speed ahead!" – regarding conscription. Instead, they quote another passage from Lenin's article (which we also reproduced in our pamphlet):

**We are not in favor of a bourgeois militia; we are in favor only of a proletarian militia. Therefore, 'not a penny, not a man' not only for a standing army, but even for a bourgeois militia, even in countries like the United States or Switzerland, Norway, etc.**

The IG then rhetorically asks, "Was Lenin supporting conscription by the capitalist state to an imperialist standing army? Obviously not."

This is a deliberate confusion of two different questions. In the latter quote Lenin is stating his opposition to all forms of the capitalist military, just like he opposes all forms of capitalist exploitation. Therefore, he repeats the traditional Marxist position, summed up in the slogan "not a penny, not a man," to always vote in parliament against funding the capitalists' military and therefore its ability to enroll soldiers. This does not address Lenin's earlier very clear statement of what form of capitalist army he would prefer to see. Later we will cite other occasions where both Lenin and Trotsky raise demands for arms and military training from the capitalist state while at the same time opposing any vote for a capitalist military budget.

So we call the IG out: reproduce the above "Full steam ahead!" quote from Lenin in its entirety and then explain how it doesn't clearly express a preference for conscription. (We're not going to hold our breath for the IG to respond.)

And while we're at it, we note that Tsarist Russia introduced conscription during Lenin's time. Following the February 1917 revolution, the popular front governments that defended bourgeois power continued conscription, since they maintained Russia's participation in the First World War. So if the IG is right that Lenin opposed the introduction of conscription, it should be easy for them to find at least one time when Lenin called for a struggle against it. We challenge the IG, put up or shut up: show us one time when Lenin called for a struggle against conscription or its introduction.

## THE PROLETARIAN MILITARY POLICY AND LENIN'S DEMANDS ON THE STATE

The IG's opposition to the Leninist approach to conscription is not their own innovation. Their article refers approvingly to the pamphlet *Documents on the "Proletarian Military Policy"* published by the Spartacist League (SL) in 1989, when the IG's leaders were still prominent in its ranks. The title refers to Trotsky's work toward the end of his life to codify the lessons of the Russian revolution on military questions. He put forward a set of slogans and arguments with respect to the coming Second World War which became known as the Proletarian Military Policy (PMP).

The first appearance of the PMP was in the *Manifesto of the Fourth International on the Imperialist War and the Proletarian World Revolution*, drafted by Trotsky in 1940. Here is the section titled "Workers Must Learn Military Arts":

**The militarization of the masses is further intensified every day. We reject the grotesque pretension of doing away with this militarization through empty pacifist protests. All the great questions will be decided in the next epoch arms in hand. The workers should not fear arms; on the contrary they should learn to use them. Revolutionists no more separate themselves from the people during war than in peace. A Bolshevik strives to become not only the best trade unionist but also the best soldier.**

**We do not wish to permit the bourgeoisie to drive untrained or half-trained soldiers at the last hour onto the battlefield. We demand that the state immediately provide the workers and the unemployed with the possibility of learning how to handle the rifle, the hand grenade, the machine gun, the cannon, the airplane, the submarine, and the other tools of war. Special military schools are necessary in close connection with the trade unions so that the workers can become skilled specialists of the military art, able to hold posts as commanders.**

This and most of Trotsky's other writings on the PMP were reprinted in our pamphlet, "*No Draft*" *Is No Answer*.

The SL's pamphlet, which rejects the PMP as "shamelessly utopian," is illuminating. We start with one of its footnotes, where the SL concedes that Lenin's 1916 article on "The 'Disarmament' Slogan" "raises the demand for 'voluntary military-training associations, with free election of instructors paid by the state.'" But, the SL continues, "whatever one thinks of this demand, it is hardly relevant to the 'Proletarian Military Policy' since the workers militia envisioned by Lenin was clearly not auxiliary to the bourgeois army, but *counterposed* to it." (*Documents on the "Proletarian Military Policy,"* p. 31.)

No, this is not clear at all. Since Lenin was demanding that the Tsarist state fund the instructors of the "voluntary military-training associations," he clearly did not presume that the latter was counterposed to the bourgeois army. The fact that such schools are not necessarily counterposed to the bourgeois state is key to the potential effectiveness of the demand. Both working-class soldiers and workers outside the army who were not yet won to the idea of overthrowing their rulers could join with revolutionaries in raising these demands. To the extent that the demands were won, the working class would be better armed and organized to defend its class interests. And to the extent that the ruling class opposed them, the more readily would working-class soldiers and workers be convinced of the revolutionary cause: getting rid of the ruling class.

Not only is Lenin's demand relevant to Trotsky's PMP, it is essentially the same as Trotsky's demand that the state fund "special military schools" for the working class. Indeed as we will see, Trotsky's PMP is little more than the statement of the traditional



Leon Trotsky in Red Army uniform.

Marxist approach to militarism, enriched by the experience of the Bolshevik military policies that succeeded in splitting the Tsar's army and securing the victory of the October revolution.

That this was Lenin's approach becomes clear when we look at what he said in context:

**We can demand popular election of officers, abolition of all military law, equal rights for foreign and native-born workers ... . Further, we can demand the right of every hundred, say, inhabitants of a given country to form voluntary military-training associations, with free election of instructors paid by the state, etc. Only under these conditions could the proletariat acquire military training for itself and not for its slave-owners; and the need for such training is imperatively dictated by the interests of the proletariat. The Russian revolution [of 1905] showed that every success of the revolutionary movement, even a partial success like the seizure of a certain city, a certain factory town, or winning over a certain section of the army, inevitably compels the victorious proletariat to carry out just such a program. ("The 'Disarmament' Slogan," 1916.)**

Several of these slogans – election of officers, abolition of military law, and military training under workers' control paid by the state – form the core of the Proletarian Military Policy. The SL/IG argument rises and falls on the use being made of those slogans. Lenin is demanding freely elected instructors paid by the Tsarist state in order to expose the state in the eyes of masses who wanted to be armed and trained properly and yet hadn't been won to the idea of overthrowing the state. That method was put by Trotsky into the elaborated plan of the PMP – and so, contrary to the SL, it is very relevant. The SL recognizes its problem, because it introduces Lenin's call for state funding with "whatever one thinks of this demand ...". Lenin and Trotsky understood the possibility of turning the militia demands on the state into demands

which could be raised *within* the existing army. And the Russians in 1917 proved that the workers' militia could grow out of the Tsarist army itself to the extent that the working-class soldiers could be mobilized to overthrow the army's commanders.

## THE PMP AND THE TRANSITIONAL PROGRAM

Where the SL and IG try to fashion a phony Lenin in their own image, with Trotsky they take a different tack. In an authoritative tone, the SL informs us that Trotsky was wrong:

**Trotsky erred in attempting to raise a positive set of demands for the war in the absence of a revolutionary situation. As a general rule revolutionaries prefer to raise negative demands on the bourgeois state – these are the most powerful vehicles for mobilizing the masses against the bourgeoisie. Positive demands on the core institutions of the capitalist state – the army, police and courts – are easily bent in the reformist direction of portraying the bourgeois repressive apparatus as somehow class neutral. (*Documents on the "Proletarian Military Policy,"* p. 15.)**

This "general rule" is a pompous fiction. If Trotsky erred in raising positive demands, then so did Lenin with his military program just cited. Likewise did the entire Fourth International at its foundation, with the adoption of its Transitional Program. As we wrote in *PR 67*, in response to the SL on this question:

**The Transitional Program is chock full of demands made upon the bourgeois state: public works, expropriation of key branches of industry and the banks, the statification of the credit system, full employment, etc. The point of such demands raised by vanguard workers is to show the mass of politically less advanced workers, with whom we fight side by side against the bosses, to see that: "every serious demand of the proletariat and even every serious demand of the petty bourgeoisie inevitably reaches beyond the limits of capitalist property relations and of the bourgeois state."**

Trotsky pointed out that the essence of the communist program is socialist revolution; this always has to be stressed as our foremost message to fellow workers. The Transitional Program and its demands were the way to openly expose in struggle all illusions in the bourgeois state and thereby win our class to the necessity of socialist revolution. Transitional demands were not a substitute for the revolutionary strategy itself.

The IG attempts to dissociate the PMP from the Transitional Program, calling the PMP "a misdirected attempt to apply the methodology of the Transitional Program to an issue affecting the backbone of the capitalist state, the armed forces." In truth, every demand of the Transitional Program trespasses flagrantly on capitalist property relations, the defense of which is the purpose of the capitalist state. The whole point of the Transitional Program is that its demands can be raised by millions of workers on the capitalist state so that workers may learn through their own experience that their needs cannot be won without the overthrow of the capitalists and the building of a workers' state.

One could not tell this from the SL and IG's summary of the PMP as "trade-union control of military recruitment and training." This was a particular form that the demands took at the beginning of World War II, when Trotsky set himself the task of explaining the policy to the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), the U.S. section of the Fourth International. The emphasis on the trade unions reflected the political situation in the U.S. at the time: the very militant U.S. working class had just experienced its own power by building the massive industrial unions of the CIO but had yet to turn that power to the political realm. At the beginning of conscription, far-reaching proposals were still possible, although the worker-soldiers were still patriotic and non-

revolutionary. Propaganda for the PMP had to be addressed to the advanced socialist-minded workers at the outset, so that the basis would be laid for agitatingly reaching the far larger number of worker-soldiers who would be radicalized in the course of the war.

The PMP was a further concretization of the teachings of Engels and Lenin on military questions. If the capitalists were going to “militarize the population,” then revolutionary workers needed to raise tactics to organize working-class soldiers to fight for their rights and interests, independently of the bourgeois commanders – the better to prove to them that they need to split the bourgeois army and support the cause of proletarian revolution.

### REALITY OF THE PMP

The Proletarian Military Policy’s central demand toward undermining bourgeois control of the army is for the election of officers. The capitalist state trains a special, separate caste of military officers, tied to the ruling class and distinct from the ranks of the army, to whom the ranks are expected to show unconditional obedience. This caste uses the soldiers it commands as cannon fodder. Even when resentment and hatred of elitist officers is not as violent as it became in the Vietnam war, soldiers will seek ways to exert some power over the command, which can lead ultimately to their trying to put in officers they trust and control. The fullest application of this elective principle is possible only when training in the highest levels of military science is removed from the private control of an exclusive caste and is made accessible to the troops in general.

Hence the demand for universal military training under workers’ supervision. Just as capitalist industry shows a tendential drive toward de-skilling the individual worker, capitalist militarism wants to keep as much military know-how away from the working-class “grunts.” In the U.S.’s present-day army, there have been some countertendencies to this, efforts to cross-train troops for different elements of combat and support, but this is conditioned precisely by the desire to keep the armed forces “lean and mean” – that is, to recruit “volunteers” from a limited circle of the population, so that soldiers are less prone to rebellious acts. The capitalists also want military training to remain at all times in the iron grip of drill sergeants, linked to attempts at patriotic brainwashing. Only in exceptional cases, as in the colonial-settler state of Israel where patriotic war hype has broad appeal, is widespread military training compatible with the stability that capitalists crave.

In U.S. history, workers with military experience have repeatedly played a significant role in the class struggle. For example, World War I veterans played a key role in the West Virginia “coal wars,” mass strikes for union recognition that were only crushed by the combined power of the National Guard and hired thugs; and in the defense of the Black community of Tulsa, Oklahoma, against a white racist pogrom in 1921. Black veterans of World War II, Korea and Vietnam had similarly heroic roles in the Civil Rights movement and later struggles. At the end of World War II, GI demonstrations showing the mass unwillingness of troops in the South Pacific to remain abroad policing the world forced the bourgeoisie to bring them home far more rapidly than Washington wanted. This struggle was led by radicals, notably Emil Mazey, a militant CIO trade unionist.

In Vietnam, after the U.S. military was besieged by widespread dissidence and mutiny, reflecting the social ferment at home and the grievances of the ranks, bourgeois experts came to the consensus that a drafted military is not reliable. Their preference for a mercenary army reflects not only the internal problems

created by conscripts (and by “volunteers” faced with conscription) but also the impact in the army of discontent at home on the troops abroad: the Vietnam years were an era of Black ghetto rebellions and waves of wildcat industrial strikes, as well as anti-war protests. The bourgeoisie also saw the accelerating effect that military training of young workers has on the class struggle at home. (See “Vietnam: the ‘Working-Class War,’” *PR* 45.)

When the bourgeoisie is compelled to override this preference and institute a draft, the task of revolutionaries is not to submit meekly to military discipline but to seek at all times to promote the independent organization and demands of the working-class soldiers inside the military. In imperialist states, revolutionary workers, from beginning to end must take a defeatist stance with regard to “their own” nation in any war. Of course, when to use agitation and when to use propaganda are conditioned by the mood of the ranks. The soldiers’ revolt in Vietnam, even though it did not lead to revolution at home, certainly aided the Vietnamese struggle against U.S. imperialism.

### LESSONS OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

The fight for control of military recruitment, training and ultimately command by working-class organizations, while it can never be fully successful short of the smashing of the capitalist state, can win temporary gains that point out to workers and soldiers the necessity of revolution. Such working-class organizations may be unions, in situations like in the U.S. after the CIO upsurge. Or they can be other, new, broader mass organizations such as committees or workers’, peasants’ and soldiers’ councils (i.e. “soviets”), as in the Russian revolution. The Bolsheviks pursued this strategy to destroy the imperial Russian army and with it, the Tsarist state. Trotsky, a leader in that revolution and the head of the Red Army itself, developed the PMP as a generalization of Bolshevik tactics in the First World War. It is impossible to understand the PMP otherwise.

When fundamentalists are forced to openly disagree with their prophet, they do so gingerly indeed. Thus the SL and IG implicitly concede the PMP’s revolutionary origins, even as they dismiss it as “shamelessly utopian”: “The working class cannot ‘control’ any aspect of the bourgeois army, except in a transitory revolutionary situation (e.g. one presenting certain elements of dual power).” (*Documents on the “Proletarian Military Policy,”* p.15.) No kidding! The question is how to achieve dual power. A close examination of precisely such a situation in the Russian revolution proves our point, not theirs.

Dual power means the contradictory situation in a revolution in which working-class organizations have begun to exercise powers normally monopolized by the capitalist state but have not yet taken the decisive steps to smash the bourgeois state. It does not simply appear spontaneously: a revolutionary situation has to be prepared for. One crucial way is through propaganda directed at arming the most conscious vanguard workers, those who will be inside and outside the army, with the tactical approach necessary. For example, look at Lenin’s popularly written article, explicitly directed to all European revolutionaries: “Anti-Militarist Propaganda and Young Socialist Workers’ Leagues,” (*Collected Works*, Vol. 41; reprinted in *PR* 69). It was originally published on October 8, 1907, seven years prior to World War I and ten years before dual power in 1917.

**Everywhere anti-militarist propaganda among young workers has yielded excellent results. That is of tremendous importance. The worker who goes into the army as a class-conscious Social-Democrat [communist] is a poor support for the powers that be. ... As time goes by and there are more and more Social-Democrats**

**in the army and the troops become increasingly less reliable. When the bourgeoisie has to confront the organized working class, whom will the army back? The young socialist workers are working with all enthusiasm and energy of the young to have the army side with the people.**

Once the advanced workers are prepared, they engage in an agitational dialogue with their less advanced working-class counterparts, demonstrating through shared experience (like the developing fight for the PMP) the impossibility of continuing to live under the old rule. The victorious resolution of a revolutionary situation hinges on two factors: whether the advanced workers have been adequately prepared through propaganda beforehand; and whether they have been organized into a compact, trained organization capable of winning leadership and preparing an uprising – the revolutionary party. The most conclusive example occurred in the months following the February Revolution of 1917, which had overthrown Tsarist rule and inaugurated an unstable period of dual power. That culminated in the October Revolution led by the Bolshevik Party.

The chief mass organization arising from the February uprising, the Soviet of Workers' Deputies, could not become a genuine dual power organization until it had bodies of armed men under its own command. In practice, this came about not through a simple counterposition of a separate workers' militia to the bourgeois army, but by undermining the command of the old officer corps and independently organizing the working-class soldiers *within* the Tsarist army. Dual power was fought for by the now revolutionary-minded soldiers and the trained cadres of the revolutionary organizations.

Learning the lessons from these past creative efforts of the insurgent masses can better prepare us for the revolutionary situations of the future. For this reason, we will examine the fateful days that paved the way for the first successful workers' revolution. (For the following account, we are indebted not only to Trotsky's classic *History of the Russian Revolution*, but also to

Allan K. Wildman's careful scholarly research in his two-volume study, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army*.)

### ORDER NO. 1

A decisive point in the development of dual power came with the publication on March 1 of "Order No.1" by the Soviet. This order gave the basis for relations between soldiers, officers and the working class for the following period: the formation of soldiers' committees; the election of soldier representatives to the Soviet; the subordination of the military "in all its political actions" to the Soviet; the invalidation of any orders given by the bourgeois Provisional Government that might conflict with those of the Soviet; the disarming of the officers and the control of arms by the committees; political and civil rights for all soldiers. As we have indicated, Order No.1 did not arise out of nowhere and suddenly appear in the dual power situation.

The revolution began on International Women's Day, February 23 by the calendar in use at the time, with protests for bread and against rising prices, initiated by women workers over the heads of the various party representatives. The government, anticipating trouble, had stationed troops it believed to be reliable throughout the city. Yet by the third day of the protests, all workers in the city had come out in a general strike, and the conscripted soldiers refused to fire on demonstrators or aid the police in arresting them. Trotsky cites examples of workers effectively persuading soldiers to bring their comrades over to the uprising, with their weapons. The building of the workers' militia was thus tactically connected to, and developed by, the encouragement of a split in the army.

The Bolshevik strategy of fraternization between the revolutionary workers and soldiers, having been elaborated over the years, now met with remarkable success. By the morning of February 28, the Tsarist government could not count on any substantial forces in the capital. As the Tsarist order fell apart, the bourgeois liberals in the State Duma (parliament), who with the support of the Mensheviks and other pro-war "socialists" had

begun to constitute the Provisional Government, worked overtime to patch it back together. Rodzianko, president of the Duma, issued an order on the 27th for the ranks to return to their barracks, the officers to restore "order" and the commanders to report to the Duma for "instructions" the next morning. This posed a danger for the rebellious soldiers, which required a prompt response. The election of officers first arose as a defensive measure initiated by the most militant soldiers, to secure themselves against any reprisals for their participation in the uprising. It was documented as a printed demand in a leaflet distributed the night of February 28 and the morning of March 1, after many units had already held elections, with others still to come. (The leaflet was produced by the Mezhrayontsy, the group Trotsky led after he returned from exile and which subse-



*Russia 1917: workers and soldiers demonstrating against Kerensky.*

quently joined the Bolsheviks.)

On the morning of March 1, the militant soldiers, demanding “the election of officers and ... the establishing of new relations between officers and the lower ranks,” did not go first to the Soviet, but to the Military Commission of the Duma. Only when rebuffed did they turn to the Soviet, where the exact formulation of Order No. 1 was hammered out in hours of passionate debate. Distributed throughout the Petrograd barracks the next day and sent to the front by telegraph, radio and mail, its impact on the soldier masses was electric. Dual power became a reality. Sokolov, one of the Menshevik leaders of the Soviet, said at the time, “With the publication of Order No. 1 ... the Soviet suddenly perceived it was of a genuine magnitude, supported by a genuinely existing force – the Petrograd garrison. Also recognizing us as a force were the ‘friends’ of the Revolution from the Right, the Kadets and allied elements, who until then had only ‘tolerated’ the Soviet in the Tauride Palace.”

Having won “recognition” from the bourgeoisie, the reformist leaders of the Soviet were already preparing to sell out the soldiers’ hopes, to which they had been compelled to give voice. Frantically, the Executive Committee of the Soviet ordered the confiscation of the Mezhrayontsy leaflet and worked overnight to negotiate a deal with the Duma. The next day they attempted to publish a further statement penned by Miliukov, one of the leading bourgeois liberals, calling for “the harmonious, coordinated work of soldiers and officers,” as an antidote to Order No. 1. Though issued by the Soviet, the realization of Order No. 1 now required a struggle against the Soviet’s reformist leadership. This was a necessary prelude to the October Revolution. In the span of a week, rebellious soldiers, with the aid of revolutionaries and in the teeth of their official leaders’ resistance, achieved remarkable gains – the election of officers, the self-organization of the ranks and control by a workers’ organization over the army of what was still a bourgeois state.

This lesson from history is critical today. The PMP codifies gains won during the Russian revolution, which revolutionary workers can popularize and use to initiate the necessary dialogue with the ranks of the armed forces in the future, under conditions of heightened class struggle. By speaking to the democratic and class outlook (and the simple human desire to avoid being needlessly slaughtered) of the soldiers in the ranks, we can demonstrate to them that these gains can only be won through revolutionary methods – and finally made secure only through the smashing of the bourgeois state and the creation of a workers’ state. Though their realization is only possible in a revolutionary situation, convincing the more class-conscious workers and further popularizing them in advance are indispensable tactical weapons for achieving the onset of revolution. Only through the ongoing struggle for such demands, a struggle led by vanguard workers, can our class learn that its needs can only be fulfilled through socialist revolution.

Thus, the SL and IG’s objection to the PMP, that its demands require a revolutionary situation for their realization, is absolutely correct – and absolutely irrelevant. Revolutionary consciousness doesn’t descend from heaven or the pen of rationalists. It has to be prepared in advance by the most advanced layer of workers and then fought for in struggle after struggle.

### **FROM THE THIRD TO THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL**

The world-wide assimilation of the lessons of the Russian revolution by the proletarian vanguard was one of the key tasks of the Communist Third International. A lasting testament to these efforts can be found in the proceedings of the first four congresses of the International, but these could not cover all con-

ceivable questions of strategy and tactics. In particular, the question of how to respond to preparations for a second imperialist world war was not high on the agenda; at the time, Communists expected that the international spread of the revolution would prevent that war. The increasing bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet Union, and the accompanying rightward shift of the International’s Russian section, tragically cut this political education short.

As the International transformed into an instrument of Stalin’s nationalist foreign policy, each newly betrayed revolution – China in 1925-27, Germany by 1933, Spain in 1936-39 – increased the likelihood of a new world war, compounding the disorientation of the Communist parties. A key task for the International Left Opposition and the Fourth International was preparation for the likely imperialist war, and the re-education of the vanguard in the spirit of revolutionary defeatism. Even in those sections of the Fourth International which had some continuity of personnel stretching back to the early years of the Communist International, like the U.S. SWP, Lenin’s methods had never been fully assimilated. Often they were confused with homegrown forms of petty-bourgeois radicalism.

In the United States, for example, the heritage of individualist protest was intense. During the First World War, the majority of the Socialist Party had refused to support the war and promoted draft resistance. Not only because of government suppression, but also because pacifism held little appeal to workers familiar with the unavoidable violence of life under capitalism, the pacifistic Socialists had little impact on the U.S.’s ability to carry out its imperialist war aims. To the left of the SP, many radicals were in the orbit of the IWW or anarchist groups. Recognizing conscription as a form of capitalist slavery, but having no perspective of splitting the army or preparing for the seizure of power, many took the route of self-preservation. After that war, “going to Mexico” had the same aura that “going to Canada” had among radical-liberals during the Vietnam War years. Radical theories that espouse serving as “moral witness to immoral deeds” and not risking one’s neck do not promote revolution. Their advocates stand outside and above the actual struggles of classes.

By 1940, with the imperialist democracies of Europe falling like dominoes to imperialist Nazi Germany, it was clear that leadership of the Fourth International (FI) would increasingly rest on the U.S. section. As the imperialist ruling classes prepared themselves for war, the FI’s sections were divided and confused on how to respond. In the U.S. the SWP had actually opposed the introduction of conscription. While Trotsky had been consumed in the preceding years by the need to address other more urgent issues of revolutionary strategy, he now turned to patiently changing the SWP’s views on military questions. These discussions with SWP leaders led to the formulation of the PMP.

Delineation of its fundamental guidelines, however, preceded the formal opening of the discussion in the SWP, with the publication in May 1940 of the Fourth International’s *Manifesto*, which we have already quoted. As a statement of the International, it was clearly meant to apply to other sections as well as the SWP – whether in belligerent or “neutral” countries, whether under Stalinist, fascist or “democratic” rule. The IG asserts that the PMP was narrowly focused, that Trotsky “was in fact appealing, albeit in a mistaken manner, to the workers’ desire to fight fascism” – but this is belied by the broad applicability of the *Manifesto*.

The IG mocks this broadness – “workers’ control of training for Hitler’s army?!” This is a pathetic argument: the idea of trying to rally troops of Hitler’s army against its leaders is no more unreal than Lenin’s attitude toward the reactionary Tsar’s army.

Like all broadly outlined tactics, the PMP was to be adapted to specific conditions of time and place. In the case of the German military, obviously fascism had destroyed the workers' movement and its organizations. Fascist domination of the military was more far-reaching than imperialist domination of the U.S. military, where the workers' movement at home remained undefeated. There could thus be no immediate perspective of fighting for the working class to exert control over any significant aspect of the military.

But Germany's armed forces were not fundamentally different from those of the Allied Powers: they featured a hard-core of committed killers like the SS, as well as masses of poor working-class draftees, including veterans of the Social Democratic, Communist and union movements. There was therefore potential to encourage rebellion over time even among the ranks of German soldiers. Indeed, with the publication of the German-language paper *Arbeiter und Soldat (Worker and Soldier)*, Trotskyists in Nazi-occupied France heroically reached out to German soldiers during World War II, encouraging opposition to Hitler's imperialist policies and opposition to their officers' dictates. As Germany's military faced reversals on the battlefield and the Nazis increasingly turned to desperate measures using their ranks as cannon fodder, opportunities to encourage rebellion would no doubt have multiplied. Similarly, at the end of the war with the fascist forces defeated, the Allied armies continued to keep their troops abroad to occupy lands for their own imperialist interests, triggering mutinous uprising by British, American and other forces from the Middle East to Asia.

### TROTSKY PROPOSES ...

In the three months between the publication of the *Manifesto* and Trotsky's assassination, there were a handful of more detailed expositions of the PMP as Trotsky envisioned it, contained in his discussions with leaders of the SWP published after his death. In discussing the PMP, we have to carefully distinguish among three things: its essential characteristics that are applicable everywhere; specific proposals Trotsky made in order to adapt to political reality in the U.S. on the eve of its entry into the Second World War; and pedagogical formulations made to convince the SWP leadership of its necessity.

Examples of all these types of formulations can be found in the discussion held on June 12, 1940. (*Writings, 1939-40*, pp. 251-259). For instance, after a lengthy description of the development of the war to date, Trotsky introduces his arguments in favor of the PMP with a statement that applies as a global description of imperialist capitalism, particularly when it reaches the pitch of world war: "Militarization now goes on on a tremendous scale. We cannot oppose it with pacifist phrases." Yet from there he proceeds to speak in terms that are clearly tailored to the political situation in the U.S., though by no means solely applicable here: "This militarization has wide support among the workers. They bear a sentimental hatred against Hitler mixed with confused class sentiments. They have a hatred against the victorious brigands. The bureaucracy uses this to say help the defeated gangster [the imperialist countries conquered by Hitler]. Our conclusions are completely different. But this sentiment is the inevitable base for the last period of preparation." (p. 253.)

The fact that militarization cannot be opposed with pacifist phrases is not contingent on whether it is popular or not among the workers. It is an essential characteristic of capitalism's imperialist epoch, and imposes a particular program of military demands upon those who would fight for proletarian revolution. In contrast, the particular agitational approach to take in popularizing the need to undermine the bourgeois army is impacted by

the popularity (or its absence) of the war.

An example of Trotsky's pedagogical formulations can be found in his response in June 1940 to a query about the usefulness of the slogan "not a cent for war":

**Suppose we had a senator. He would introduce a bill in favor of training camps for workers. He might ask 500 millions for it. At the same time he would vote against the military budget because it is controlled by class enemies. ... We are enemies of the bourgeoisie and its institutions, but we utilize them. War is a bourgeois institution a thousand times more powerful than all the other bourgeois institutions.** (pp. 255-256.)

Later, he continues this explanation, comparing the army to the factory to demonstrate why one must be "the best soldier" no less than "the best worker" (pp. 257-258), in order to secure the trust of one's fellows.

The same point had come up more sharply earlier in 1940, during a major faction fight inside the SWP. Trotsky reprinted a letter he had written to Max Shachtman in 1937, attacking him for advocating a "yes" vote in favor of the Loyalist military budget in the Spanish parliament during the civil war: "To vote the military budget of the Negrin government signifies to vote him *political* confidence. ... To do it would be a crime." ("From a Scratch – to the Danger of Gangrene," *In Defense of Marxism*, p.128.) That is, Trotsky applied "Not a penny, not a man" not just to an army fighting an imperialist war but to the army of a government at war with Generalissimo Franco's fascist forces.

Thus Trotsky follows Lenin's policy cited earlier of demanding of the capitalist state that it provide arms and military training to the working class, while remaining true to the slogan "not a penny, not a man" by opposing voting for a capitalist military budget. The point is to expose the ruling-class government for not arming and training the workers while giving no support to that government. It is further proof that the IG twists the truth by citing Lenin's opposition to voting for war credits as evidence of his supposed opposition to conscription.

### ... THE SWP DISPOSES ...

Even before Trotsky's death, there were signs that, as in their trade union work, the SWP adapted excessively to pro-Roosevelt "progressives." Poorly assimilated tactical suggestions and tendencies to adapt to imperialist patriotism all flourished in the SWP. This cannot be attributed simply to bad ideas. Various class pressures act upon the revolutionary party at all times, above all during a patriotic war. One, particularly in imperialist countries, is the influence of a strong labor aristocracy. Thus the PMP was put forward in the SWP's paper *Socialist Appeal* not as a way to more effectively combat patriotism but as an implicit accommodation with it. A typical formulation:

**Therefore we demand federal funds for the military training of workers and worker-officers under the control of the trade unions. Does that mean we want military appropriations? Yes – but only for the establishment and equipment of worker training camps! Does this mean compulsory military training of workers? Yes – but only under the control of the trade unions!** (August 17, 1940.)

In this passage the spirit and content of "Not a penny, not a man" for the capitalist army is completely absent. "Yes" for military appropriations is a shocking deviation. It calls into question whether an SWP senator would have voted against bourgeois military appropriations.

An earlier misformulation was answered by Trotsky in a letter he wrote in July 1940 to Albert Goldman, who was writing on conscription for the SWP. Here Trotsky attempts in a comradely

fashion to correct Goldman's understanding:

**We are absolutely in favor of compulsory military training and in the same way for conscription. Conscription? Yes. By the bourgeois state? No. We cannot entrust this work, as any other, to the state of the exploiters. In our propaganda and agitation we must very strongly differentiate these two questions. That is, not to fight against the necessity of the workers being good soldiers and of building up an army based on discipline, science, strong bodies and so on, including conscription, but against the capitalist state which abuses the army for the advantage of the exploiting class. In your paragraph four you say: "Once conscription is made into law, we cease to struggle against it but continue our struggle for military training under workers' control, etc." I would prefer to say: "Once conscription is made into law we, without ceasing to struggle against the capitalist state, concentrate our struggle for military training and so on." (Writings, 1939-40, pp. 321-322.)**

Goldman's wording combines a whiff of pacifism with a hint of accommodation to the bourgeois state, first by fighting against conscription and then dropping the issue once it is made law. In effect, it is a precedent for the same opportunist flip-flopping on the question of conscription as the IG.

Trotsky's reply emphasizes the distinction between conscription in general and under the bourgeois state in particular: We will not fight for conscription until we have a workers' state. But short of that we do not campaign against conscription; it is the bourgeois state that we fight under all circumstances. We underline that Trotsky *removed* the words "we cease to struggle against it" (conscription) from Goldman's formulation, because for him the struggle was not against conscription, and he was not for campaigning against its introduction.

Trotsky goes on to explain, "The very simple and very powerful idea of our fight against the war is: we are against the war, but we will have the war if we are incapable of overthrowing the capitalists." In this and every other formulation on the subject, he combined immediate agitation over the U.S.'s upcoming entry into the war with propaganda about the need for the workers to overthrow the capitalists and create their own workers' state.

### ... AND CANNON EXPOSES

After Trotsky's murder by a Stalinist assassin and under wartime conditions, the SWP was largely isolated from the rest of the Fourth International. Over time, in the absence of extensive controls by an authoritative International, the narrow national and trade-unionist interests of the labor aristocracy can corrode the integrity of even the most revolutionary of parties, especially during a popular war. Moreover, the SWP also wrongly isolated itself from the mounting class struggle during the war in an effort to "preserve the cadres."



James P. Cannon

The initial effects can be seen in the writings and speeches of the SWP's major leader, James P. Cannon, collected in the book, *The Socialist Workers Party in World War II*. At several crucial points Cannon and the SWP conceded ground to the myth that the war was between democracy and fascism instead of between imperialist rivals. For example, in his introductory speech at the September 1940 conference where the SWP

adopted the PMP, Cannon provided this totally one-sided and thus wrong formulation:

**We are willing to fight Hitler. No worker wants to see that gang of fascist barbarians overrun this country or any country. But we want to fight fascism under a leadership that we can trust. We want our own officers – those who have shown themselves most devoted to their class, who have shown themselves to be the bravest and most loyal men on the picket line, those who are interested in the welfare of their fellow workers. ...The workers themselves must take charge of this fight against Hitler and anybody else who tries to invade their rights. (p.73.)**

Of course every revolutionary socialist would fight Hitler. But the main enemy of the American working class was its own capitalist class, something that Cannon doesn't mention. For the working class to "take charge of this fight against Hitler" requires not just working-class officers but workers' state power, and that propaganda point was not made centrally. Cannon's agitational approach, addressed to workers whose fear and hatred of fascism was being abused by the imperialists to fan the flames of patriotism, could all too easily be understood in the spirit of a better way to support the U.S. war against Germany. What was needed was propaganda to lay the base for a struggle for workers' control when the pressure for patriotic class peace wore off.

Trotsky had already explained the importance of opposing the capitalists' use of patriotic talk about "defense of the fatherland" to rally support for the imperialist aims. The Fourth International's *Manifesto on Imperialist War and World Revolution* explained:

**Official patriotism is a mask for the exploiting interests. Class conscious workers throw this mask contemptuously aside. They do not defend the bourgeois fatherland, but the interests of the toilers and the oppressed of their own country and of the entire world. The Theses of the Fourth International state: "Against the reactionary slogan of 'national defense' it is necessary to advance the slogan of the revolutionary destruction of the national state."**

In this context, Trotsky outlined how to pursue the PMP by explaining to workers who mistakenly wanted to "defend the [capitalist] homeland" from invasion that they should only be prepared to defend a land ruled by the working class:

**That is why we must try to separate the workers from the others by a program of education, of workers' schools, of workers' officers, devoted to the welfare of the worker army, etc. We cannot escape from the militarization but inside the machine we can observe the class line. The American workers do not want to be conquered by Hitler, and to those who say "Let us have a peace program", the worker will reply, "But Hitler does not want a peace program." Therefore we say: We will defend the United States with a workers' army, with workers' officers, with a workers' government, etc. (Writings, 1939-40, p. 333.)**

The SWP never manages to hear about the "workers' government," since that was incompatible with their agitational approach. Nor do the SL/IG. In condemning the PMP, they assume that Cannon was merely carrying out Trotsky's prescriptions, for which they partially excuse Trotsky on the grounds that his writings were only fragmentary. They do not see that Cannon and the SWP, despite Trotsky's efforts, were missing the revolutionary essence of the Transitional Program method.

### THE TRUE HEIRS OF MAX SHACHTMAN

Each blunder by the SWP in the direction of patriotism made things that much easier for Marxism's betrayers in the radical





Max Shachtman

movement. Not the least of these, in 1940, was Max Shachtman.

The IG's article is, of course, full of ritual denunciations of the LRP as "Shachtmanite." The flimsy basis for this is that we share neither Trotsky's belief that the USSR remained a workers' state after the culmination of the Stalinist counterrevolution, nor the IG's (and others') anti-Marxist view that "deformed workers' states" were created without workers' revolutions after World War II. (See our

book, *The Life and Death of Stalinism*, Chapter 7.) As well, some of our founding members were adherents of Shachtmanism, from which they broke over thirty years ago. In contrast, the IG overlooks that *their own position toward conscription is modeled on the Shachtmanite original.*

According to the SL and IG, the sole reason the Shachtmanites split from the SWP was that they rejected the defense of the Soviet Union. In fact, on that question as on others, the Shachtman-led minority was an unprincipled bloc. Some held to one or another hodgepodge theory of "bureaucratic collectivism" in the Soviet Union, arguing that it represented a new kind of class society neither proletarian nor bourgeois. Others, including Shachtman himself, held at the time that the Soviet Union remained a degenerated workers' state, but they refused nonetheless to defend it in the war. Yet others in the faction were for the defense of the Soviet Union but regarded the question of the SWP's internal "regime" – i.e., their own rejection of democratic centralism – as superseding issues of theory and program. As Trotsky diagnosed, the common bond of the faction was acute sensitivity to petty-bourgeois radical public opinion. By splitting on the eve of war and thereby showing that they valued their standing in those circles higher than party discipline, the Shachtmanites demonstrated their own class nature.

One of the many issues on which the Shachtmanites, after the split, displayed their greater susceptibility to radical middle-class opinion was conscription. Eager to claim "Leninist" credentials for these politics, they published a number of polemics from Shachtman's pen, which consisted mainly in going on at length about every blunder by Cannon, from the significant to the trivial. Yet the SL, in its pamphlet, shamelessly calls Shachtman's lawyerly arguments a "devastating polemic." (p. 54.) Closer examination reveals Shachtman's desperate efforts to muddy the waters and cover his tracks.

Just two weeks before his assassination, in a letter responding to questions from the SWP leadership, Trotsky pointed out the direction Shachtman was heading in. He quoted Shachtman: "Let us have a program for peace, not war; for the masses, not for murder," and interjected: "What does this mean? If we have war, we must have a program for war ... ." (*Writings, 1939-1940*, pp. 331-332.) For comparison, during World War I the overarching demand raised by Bolsheviks was "Turn the Imperialist War into a Civil War," not the pacifistic cry for "peace."

In the following weeks, *Labor Action*, the Shachtmanites' newspaper, beat its drum against the introduction of conscription – and in the process, heaped praise on John L. Lewis, the reformist pro-war leader of the United Mine Workers and the CIO, who believed that no draft was necessary: greater inducements for enlistment would provide the ruling class with the mass army it needed. Thus they showed how far they had already drifted from

the Bolshevik method of exposing and replacing reformist leaders, in favor of trying to goose them on through mixed flattery and gentle criticism. In the August 12, 1940, issue, while chiding Lewis for speaking in favor of "real, voluntary recruitment," they pile on the glory: "John L. Lewis has given organized labor a lead." "When John L. Lewis forthrightly blasts military conscription, we applaud his doing so." And finally, "In his fight against conscription we are with Lewis one hundred percent."

Trotsky demolished this argument:

***We are not with Lewis for even a single percent, because Lewis tries to defend the capitalist fatherland with completely outdated means. The great majority of the workers understand or feel that these means (professional voluntary armament) are outdated from a military point of view and extremely dangerous from a class point of view. That is why the workers are for conscription. It is a very confused and contradictory form of adhering to the "arming of the proletariat."*** (*Writings, 1939-40*, p. 392.)

Could Trotsky's position be any clearer? A prominent union leader opposes conscription and Trotsky declares that revolutionaries do not share even "a single percent" of agreement with him. Revolutionaries are not for the defense of the capitalist fatherland, but we are for the arming of the proletariat, even in its most confused and contradictory forms.

Shachtman's later "devastating polemic" against the SWP policy was a radical cover for social-pacifism and adaptation to labor reformists. His first salvo, a *Labor Action* article of November 4, 1940, reads as if the SL and IG had plagiarized it. Like the SL and the IG, he baldly counterposes the formation of proletarian armed forces to the attempt to undermine the bourgeois army, blithely ignoring the actual course of events in Russia in 1917:

**"Trade-union control" of the conscript army ... is a slogan of class collaboration ... . That is why revolutionary Marxists have never put it forward and do not put it forward today. The bourgeois army cannot be "reformed," transformed into an institution or instrument of the working class. The proletarian analysis of it, and attitude towards it, is the same as it is towards the bourgeois state, of which the armed forces are the principal physical constituent and characteristic.**

The claim that the bourgeois army can never be transformed, which the SL and the IG repeat in various permutations throughout their literature, is deliberately confusing. The point, as Engels, Lenin and Trotsky all pointed out, is that the capitalist military can be transformed – but not peacefully. Masses of the rank-and-file can be mobilized in rebellion against the officers and government. Whole sections of the armed forces can be won to the side of the revolution. But a violent reckoning with the remains of the capitalist state is inevitable.

Even the gripes are the same. Shachtman denied Cannon's suggestion that his opposition to conscription led to draft dodging, indignantly rejecting the idea that some of his young supporters were planning on "going to Tahiti." Likewise the IG complains that "the LRP cynically equates all opposition to introduction of military conscription with calls for draft evasion." The fact remains that the overwhelming majority of anti-draft radicals in this country do celebrate draft evasion. The IG argues, as we saw, that the expansion of the military via conscription is a bloody service to imperialism. Moreover, they use the traditional Marxist formula "not a penny, not a man for the bourgeois army" not as the parliamentary policy it was meant for but as an all-purpose moral slogan, as if every soldier kept out of the army is a gain for the working class. Even though that

is not the IG's intention, such opposition to conscription encourages draft dodging.

The IG, like Shachtman, insists that they are exceptions to this rule. Their alibis on this point have much in common. "If the imperialist government, because of our weakness, compels us to enter the army, we enter. If it compels us to participate in its war we participate." Thus Shachtman. "If drafted, rather than proclaiming 'we won't go,' class-conscious workers encourage struggle against the war from within the ranks of the military, while gaining military training." Thus the IG. That is, where Lenin said "All the better" and "Full speed ahead," Shachtman and the SL/IG say, in effect, "No, stop ... but if we have to... ."

What is striking is the focus on personal conduct rather than broad class perspectives. It is as if to say: If we must, then we will take the occasion "to raise the revolutionary consciousness of workers in uniform" (IG), but until then, we will kick and scream and raise our voices in a chorus of "No to the draft!" Mr. Capitalist, don't draft us, or we might be forced to do something that would really hurt you! This is no way to train the proletarian vanguard to recognize that in the imperialist epoch, "all great questions will be decided by military means."

### CLASS-FREE MARXISM

There is a logic to the SL/IG position on the draft. The Spartacist heritage, as we showed in "The Marxism of the Petty Bourgeoisie" in *Socialist Voice* No. 4, includes the self-conception that its adherents are intellectuals who do not engage in the class struggle as part of the working class. Instead they lecture it from outside to guide the masses to socialism. In their own words:

**Socialist consciousness is based on knowledge of the history of the class struggle and, therefore, requires the infusion into the class-struggle process of socialist conceptions carried by declassed intellectuals organized as part of the vanguard party. Socialist revolution does not occur through the intensification of traditional class struggle, but requires a leap from a vantage point outside bourgeois society altogether.** (The SL's *Marxist Bulletin* No. 9, Part III.)

That is, the job of the revolutionary intellectuals is to stand outside the working-class movement while the workers struggle through their own experiences with objective reality. The workers' revolutionary consciousness, they believe, will arise not from having to discover through struggle what they face and what choices, power and mission they have – with the guidance of fellow workers who have already arrived at revolutionary conclusions. No, for them consciousness comes through revelation from outside by the "declassed intellectuals," the workers' condescending saviors. Trotsky correctly dismissed such professorial elitism.

Of course, "outside" does not really mean "outside bourgeois society altogether," because not even Spartacists or IGers really come from another planet. It simply means outside the central struggle in bourgeois society between capitalists and proletarians. Middle-class intellectuals often see themselves as objective, rational and altruistic people not caught up in the greed (in Spartacist/IG lingo, "appetites") and shortsightedness of the two powerful classes, the capitalists and the workers. Their self-image of being outside the society comes from a middle-class intellectual social position that sees itself independent of the means of production and the relation of exploitation at its heart. Leftists among them often relate to the working class as the source of the social power they lack; for them the proletariat is controllable by superior intellects. It is a battering ram to be wielded, rather than

a class that gains consciousness and creates its own vanguard leadership in the course of struggle.

The IG leadership's empty agitational calls which we cited at the beginning of this article stem from this conception. Since they are abstract propagandists, the positions they take are not meant to have consequences in the actual struggle today. Abstract calls for strikes against the war or for shutting down a college are not concrete calls for action but simply markers that distinguish the declassed and unsullied from the benighted activists who raise partial or transitional demands in the effort to advance consciousness through struggle. Likewise, arguing *against* the draft is an abstraction, free in their minds from consequences like being *for* keeping the mercenary army. It is enough to denounce all bourgeois armies from on high without worrying about how to defeat them – until the day of dual power and revolution magically arrives.

The outside-the-working-class perspective is often claimed to be the essence of Leninism, because of what Lenin wrote in his pamphlet "What Is to Be Done?" before he experienced the Russian revolution of 1905. But even so, the Spartacist version is a grotesque distortion of the outlook that Lenin later corrected. Lenin's real views were explained by Trotsky and further developed in our article "What Has Been Done to 'What Is to Be Done?'" in *PR* 29.

### THE PMP TODAY AND TOMORROW

It is obviously not possible to apply the PMP today. As a small interventionary propaganda group, the LRP has the task of cohering and training the vanguard of the working class, not to try and leap over it to directly access the masses. Even the SWP in 1940 was a propaganda group, but it was significantly larger and had important implantations in key industries. This gave it much greater opportunities to test the validity of its propaganda through agitation and action. While putting ourselves to the test of agitation whenever possible, we recognize that our primary task is to politically prepare the vanguard for its coming duties through propaganda.

Thus the immediate tasks of revolutionaries today are to instill in those workers and youth who are coming to class-consciousness the indispensable lessons for a class fighter in this epoch. Among these are: to understand that there can be no peaceful resolution to the barbarities of capitalist rule; and to stand firmly against alien class pressures to say and act otherwise. Our position on the draft is in this spirit. Though agitation for the PMP is not on the near-term agenda, propaganda for its use in the future is an important part of Marxist education.

Reinstatement of the draft is highly unlikely now. But if it came about, despite the opportunity for revolutionary work it would portend, it would not be a victory for the working class. It would mean that U.S. imperialism is overextended in Iraq and elsewhere. But it would also mean that capitalism is preparing an even greater slaughter of working-class youth – for which the ruling classes have no choice but to overcome their fears of conscription.

We openly oppose the imperialism of our own ruling class. But we do not greet conscription with wails and lamentations. A revolutionary party trained in principled Marxist methods for winning over the masses, including the PMP tactic, would present another possibility for our class: turning the instruments of capitalist slaughter into tools for the socialist overthrow by bursting their hateful war machine "asunder *from within*."

The stakes are high. But authentic communists dedicated to fighting for an end to imperialist war must meet the real world challenges, not with bombast but with a clear eye and a firm will. ●

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## COFI-LRP

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*continued from page 2*

ident” – referring to the Black U.S. senator from Illinois who had supported the racist wall to be erected on the Mexican border.

The Minuteman Project is the enemy of all working people. All workers’ organizations, the trade unions and immigrant defense groups above all, should come out in force to squelch their pickets and rallies wherever they appear.

### COLLEGE CAMPUSES

The Chicago LRP is continuing sales and distributions at Truman College and Northeastern Illinois University. In New York we have regular sales at both City College (CCNY) and Borough of Manhattan Community College. We launched our semester’s work in September with a forum at CCNY on the continuing struggle of the survivors of Hurricane Katrina.

New York LRPers attended the ISO’s national conference at Columbia University in June, labeled “Socialism 2006: Build the Left, Fight the Right.” There were over 1000 people present, mostly students; the middle-class nature of the event and organization was palpable both in politics and in the perpetual lateness of events with no announcements or apologies. An LRP leaflet, “Capitalism is the Problem: Right, Left and Green” attacked the ISO’s anti-socialist support for and growing participation in the capitalist Green Party.

One indicative session featured a speaker from the Party of Revolution and Socialism (PRS) of Venezuela. He talked incessantly about Hugo Chávez’s “revolutionary process,” citing mostly small democratic gains but never once pointing out the need for workers to overthrow the capitalist state to achieve socialism. (Chávez is the populist president who ties the working-class and oppressed population to Venezuelan capitalism. See *PR* 70 for our analysis.) He also handed out a trade union bulletin

calling for the re-election of Chávez. An LRP speaker from the floor criticized him and the ISO for not standing for working-class independence from all capitalist politicians.

### NEW YORK TRANSIT UNION

In December 2005, New York City’s Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 100 leader Roger Toussaint sent transit workers back to work after less than three days on strike. Almost a year later, the Local’s election campaign is heating up – and the members still have no contract. An arbitrator says he will announce his decision on the contract around December 15, the same day votes are counted.

The LRP continues to be active in transit workers’ struggles through supporters of its newsletter *Revolutionary Transit Worker* (available on the web at [www.lrp-cofi.org/TWU100/](http://www.lrp-cofi.org/TWU100/)). We have demanded that the union’s leadership, as well as their electoral challengers, organize mass protests to stop arbitration and reignite the contract struggle, but to no avail. As we have explained to our fellow workers, the various slates running in the Local elections offer no alternative to the betrayals of the Toussaint leadership. We have also campaigned to expose the Local’s endorsement of Democratic gubernatorial candidate Eliot Spitzer – the “friend of labor” who as Attorney General fined the Local and its members millions of dollars for going on strike and sent Toussaint to jail.

Building a new leadership for the union based on a revolutionary socialist program is the urgent task of the most politically advanced workers. To that end, LRP and *RTW* supporter Eric Josephson is contesting the election for the positions of Executive Board Member and Division Chair in the Local’s Track Division. Josephson’s campaign promotes our revolutionary socialist and anti-imperialist perspective and also features a program of militant struggle for transit workers’ immediate demands. We hope that through his campaign, more transit workers will take interest in our socialist ideas and join with us in working to build a revolutionary leadership for the Local and beyond. ●

## Carol Lang Loses Arbitration

The arbitrator in the disciplinary hearing of CCNY campus worker Carol Lang ruled against Lang in August after months of hearings. But on one point where the arbitrator decided in her favor, the College administration has refused to accept the decision.

Lang, who has a long history of activism in the class struggle, was arrested two days after a demonstration against military recruitment for the war in Iraq in March 2005. CCNY is heavily engaged in military research, and its administrators showed their loyalty to the Pentagon and the criminal war in Iraq by cracking down on the protesters.

The non-violent demonstration was attacked by campus cops, and Lang and three students who were arrested at the event (collectively, the “CCNY Four”) were charged with assaulting a police officer – standard procedure for the NYPD. The students were suspended from classes, and Lang was suspended from work without pay, for four weeks. Eventually the criminal charges were dropped against all four and they were allowed back on campus. (For

more on this case, see our website.)

In ruling against Lang, arbitrator Herbert L. Haber cited discrepancies in the testimonies of witnesses appearing on Lang’s behalf but discounted the far larger number of discrepancies in the testimony of the cops. For example, the cops’ stories differed on which of them had arrested one of the students; the complaining cop, Sergeant Tukpui, testified that the woman who assaulted him had “fled the scene,” whereas Lang had remained after the event discussing it with an administrator; and the head cop at the event, Lieutenant White, ordered Tukpui to not hand in his original report because it was full of errors.

Haber’s decision added two days to Lang’s suspension, but the administration was denied the additional five-week suspension it was demanding. Further, because Lang had been temporarily off the payroll, the administration maintained that she was ineligible for an \$800 payment included in the District Council 37 contract that was ratified during her suspension. Haber denied

that claim and granted Lang the \$800. But management refuses to pay, claiming that the lump sum payment issue was not part of the arbitrator’s purview, even though it is clearly a matter of interpreting the union contract.

The arbitration decision is a defeat for workers’ rights and for the anti-recruitment struggle. The arbitrator essentially “split the difference,” accepting the original suspension but denying the College’s additional demands, thus giving the appearance of fairness. But since Lang and the rest of the CCNY Four were not guilty of assault or any violation, the decision was a severe injustice.

The College’s refusal to pay Lang the \$800 it owes her is a slap in the face to all workers, and a dangerous precedent. That an employer can opt to reject the part of a ruling that went against it underscores that the process is stacked. The failure of the leadership of DC 37 to carry out any union mobilization on Lang’s behalf (see *PR* 75) was no doubt a strong factor in encouraging management’s stance.

# Mumia Abu-Jamal: The Fight for Freedom

In December 2005, the courts made a ruling that provides the legal possibility of a new trial for Mumia Abu-Jamal. The stakes are no less than a matter of life and death. If a new trial does not lead to his freedom, it could mean his re-conviction and execution.

Mumia is the well-known victim of a racist frame-up who has been imprisoned since 1981, falsely charged and convicted for shooting a cop. However, he is far more than just a victim; he is an internationally recognized political prisoner. Mumia is respected for his outspoken and tenacious opposition to racism, imperialist war and a range of other injustices over the years. (See PR 50 and 59 for background discussion.)

Mumia was a radical journalist in his home town of Philadelphia, where he had a history with the Black Panther Party as a youth. The Panthers were a chief target of the FBI's murderous "counter-intelligence" program. Hundreds of pages of FBI files dating from 1973 show attempts to frame Mumia for a political assassination. One file stated that he had "not shown a propensity for violence," but because of racial and political profiling he was nevertheless on the "armed and dangerous" list. That meant cops should shoot first and ask questions later.

Mumia was lucky enough to survive that scene. Later he was involved with MOVE, a Black "back to nature" group which was brutally repressed. Abu-Jamal became especially known for his articulate exposés of local police brutality. It was not by coincidence that he ended up framed by the police and courts for the murder of a Philadelphia cop in 1981.

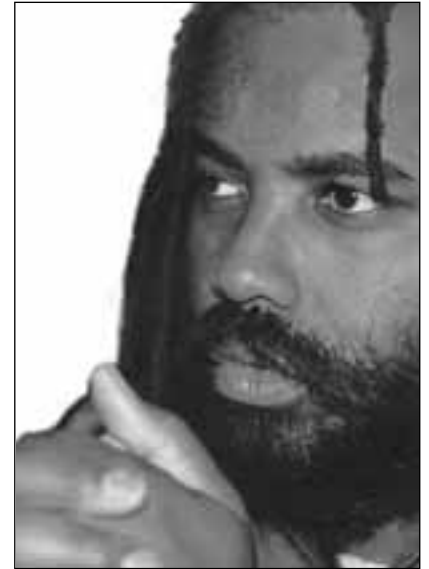
## THE FRAME-UP

On December 9, 1981, Billy Cook, Mumia's brother, was pulled over by Officer Daniel Faulkner. Mumia, who was sitting in his taxi filling out trip sheets, crossed the street to assist his brother. Both Mumia and Faulkner were shot; Faulkner died.

Mumia was given a rigged, racist trial. The investigation was led by cops of the Center City district, known as "Rizzo's boys" after Philadelphia Mayor Frank Rizzo, the organizer of the notorious Civil Defense Squad that targeted Blacks and gays in particular. A third of the 35 cops who played a role Mumia's arrest and conviction were later nailed and punished by prosecutors for other illegal acts that preceded this event. Three months after the

arrest, one cop testified that Mumia had confessed when he was in the hospital (where police beat him as he waited to be operated on.) However, the official police report from the night in question had stated, "The negro male made no comment."

The prosecution's principle witness was Cynthia White, a prostitute with a long record of prior arrests and several arrests pending at the time of the trial. Later Pamela Jenkins, another prostitute and a friend of White, stated that White had lied



Mumia Abu-Jamal

under pressure. Jenkins came forward after White died under suspicious circumstances. Another prosecution witness, Robert Chobert (like Mumia, a cab driver), was on probation for arson and on the night of the shooting was driving his cab with a suspended chauffeur's license. He also later came forward to say he had been pressured to testify against Mumia.

Other facts that prove Mumia's innocence "beyond a reasonable doubt" are widely available. (Besides our previous articles, readers can refer to the websites [www.mumia.org](http://www.mumia.org) and [www.freemumia.org](http://www.freemumia.org).)

According to a legal update from Mumia's lead counsel, Robert Bryan, the issues that the court is willing to hear in consideration of a new trial include the following:

- The prosecution used peremptory challenges to exclude Black people from the jury.
- There were extreme irregularities in the verdict form and in the jury instructions, resulting in the death penalty. These included the prosecutor's encouraging the jury to disregard the presumption of innocence and reasonable doubt by claiming that Mumia would have endless opportunities for appeal later on.
- The blatant bias and racism of Judge Albert Sabo, who had helped engineer the initial conviction, was evident during the post-conviction hearing. At this hearing he was overhead to have said that he was "going to help 'em fry the nigger."

Until December 2005, higher courts had rejected all appeals for a new trial. During the 1990's there was a growing movement in the U.S. which, along with international support, played a role in staving off execution. While the active U.S. movement has ebbed in terms of numbers on the streets, Mumia has retained a large potential resource of sympathy and support at home and abroad. For workers and youth fighting against the racist death penalty, police brutality and capitalist injustice in general, defending Mumia Abu-Jamal is an integral part of our struggle.

**Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!**

**Free All Political Prisoners!**

**Down with Capitalism's Racist Death Penalty!  
Socialist Revolution is the Only Solution!**

We urge all readers of *Proletarian Revolution* magazine, and all workers and youth, to join the fight to defend this political prisoner. A key action will take place in Philadelphia at noon on December 9th, the 25th anniversary of Mumia's imprisonment. You can also contribute to his defense by sending a donation to the National Lawyers Guild at 132 Nassau Street, Room 922, New York, NY 10038, earmarked for Mumia.

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# Immigration

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*continued from page 36*

“path to citizenship” it dangled as the promised carrot was attached to a big stick. It was heavily punitive, and it made citizenship open only to those immigrants who could jump through a bunch of hoops.

Thus S 2611 represented a divide-and-conquer policy toward the undocumented. It called for the deportation of all undocumented immigrants who were in the U.S. for less than two years, while requiring undocumented immigrants in the U.S. for two to five years to leave the country before they could apply for citizenship or a visa. For those lucky enough to have been slaving away in the U.S. for more than five years, they were to pay thousands of dollars in penalty fees and back taxes in order to apply for citizenship.

Furthermore, S 2611 provided for increased militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border – including the “fence” – among the enforcement proposals in this “comprehensive” bill. It also advocated a guest worker program that would require immigrant workers to return to their home countries for a year after working in the U.S. for up to six years. This echoes the notoriously abusive “bracero” program of the 1940’s, ’50’s and ’60’s, which was called “legalized slavery” by the Labor Department official in charge of it when it ended.

The reason for all these proposals is that most big capitalists want to see immigrants with second-class status in the country, because they form a layer of the working class that is most easily exploited – they have a much harder time fighting back against rotten conditions and sub-minimal wages. Having such a layer of workers bound to miserable conditions weakens the whole working class, since other workers face the threat of replacement by this underpaid sector of the workforce.

## MAINSTREAM MISLEADERS

Any serious reading of the contending bills shows that the “fight” in Congress over immigration reform was never a debate about pro-immigrant vs. anti-immigrant laws. It was really a debate over what form of anti-immigrant, anti-worker law to enact. When leaders of “pro-immigrant” organizations pushed bipartisan “comprehensive” bills like S 2611 and the earlier McCain-Kennedy bill that it grew out of (see *PR 77*), they were lending political cover to anti-immigrant policies.

Some mainstream leaders of the immigrant rights movement were a bit more critical. The National Council of La Raza (NCLR) ran a big headline commending the Senate’s bill, “For Historic Immigration Vote” – with a small disclaimer indicating that their organization “has significant reservations as the bill moves forward.” NCLR President Janet Murguía stated, “We have deep concerns about some of the provisions in this bill, but in the end the Senate has voted today to put millions of immi-

grants on a path to U.S. citizenship. ... This is a major step forward in a debate that is vital to our community and to the nation.”

None of the mainstream immigrant organizations wanted to directly oppose bills associated with the Democratic Party. The unions that claim to be championing immigrant workers acted similarly. They have their criticisms of the Democrats, to be sure, but the last thing they want is to expose the anti-worker character of the Democratic Party and its immigration proposals.

Since the community leaders and union bureaucrats support the capitalist system, they inevitably push support for the “lesser evil,” and that is always the Democrats. A common slogan in the mass marches in the spring was “Hoy marchamos, mañana votamos” (“Today we march, tomorrow we vote.”) But a layer of immigrant workers already realize that there are big problems with both parties in Congress – and this will become evident to larger numbers in the near future. It is up to revolutionary-minded workers to take the lead in exposing the truth about the current misleaders and their strategy and to put forward an alternative that makes political sense for the working class. It is necessary to build a mass fight against any bills that contain attacks on immigrant workers, whether they are sponsored by Democrats or Republicans or both.

## CAPITALISM’S DIVIDE-AND-CONQUER STRATEGY

One very basic idea, unity of the working class and oppressed people, is critical. In all capitalist societies, a tiny class of people owns the means of production and profits by exploiting the workers’ labor. United, the overwhelming tendency of the working class would be to fight for a decent life for all, which is incompatible with capitalism. Powerful united struggles of the working class would inevitably demonstrate the need to overthrow capitalism altogether. Since the working class is the only class with the power to overturn capitalism, the capitalists use every possible divide-and-conquer tactic to prevent this development.

Racism has been the major tool of the ruling class in this country. The notion that Black people are inherently inferior is used to divide the working class between generally better-off white workers and Black workers. Historically, American capitalism was built on the superexploitation of Black people, during and after slavery. (See our booklet *Marxism, Interracialism, and the Black Struggle*.) In the twentieth century, the U.S. became the strongest imperialist power in the world. Its divide-and-conquer methods now also included the brutal superexploitation of oppressed nations abroad. Moreover, imperialism’s plundering of the resources of so much of the world forced the migration of masses of immigrant workers to U.S. shores. So imperialism extended its racism to apply also against other people of color within the U.S. The ideologies of racism and national chauvinism became intertwined, both overtly and subtly.

There is another side of this picture, however. Imperialism not only compels resistance among the masses of the oppressed nations; it also strengthens the proletariat in the U.S., since immigrant workers can play a leading role in the class struggle of *all* workers, who will be driven by the capitalist attacks to fight back. As Karl Marx noted about capitalism in general, imperialism creates its own gravedigger.

But unity is not an automatic process. It depends in large part on the creation of a revolutionary workers’ vanguard party that can convince fellow workers over time that imperialism is the enemy and that workers must unite to defeat racism and national chauvinism. Such a vanguard must fight alongside its fellow workers in all struggles, always championing the greatest class unity and a revolutionary strategy. Convincing our fellow workers means exposing the current misleaderships and capitulatory

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strategies which hold back the potential for an all out fight against the racism and chauvinism that the system breeds.

### RESERVE ARMY OF UNEMPLOYED

Among the key material factors that capitalism needs for its very existence is structural unemployment, creating what Marx called the reserve army of labor, including a vast pool of low-wage labor. (See “Joblessness: Capitalist Crime,” in *PR* 47.) The masses of low-wage immigrant workers in the U.S., from Latin America, Africa, the Caribbean and Asia, largely come from the international reserve army. Native-born workers, too, often have to accept low-wage jobs because the immediate alternative is being unemployed altogether.

The ideology that white Americans are more deserving than others is used to justify the workings of the system. Racism and chauvinism are used to attack the whole working class, even though a layer of workers, especially better-off white workers, now buy into it. In the U.S. and other imperialist powers this better off section, the labor aristocracy, materially benefits by the fact that the U.S. is the central imperialist power in the world. Thus it can provide middle-class people and aristocratic workers with a better life than elsewhere – based in good part on the profits it extracts from the oppressed nations of the rest of the world.

Now that a militant fightback by Mexican and other immigrant workers has come to the fore, the campaign to inculcate the ideology of white and American superiority over immigrants from oppressed nations is being ramped up. Right-wing paramilitary operations like the Minutemen have been railing openly against the mass “invasion.” They need to be countered by mass militant defense actions wherever possible. But a whole range of politicians and pundits, not just paramilitaries like the Minutemen, have been railing openly against the mass “invasion” of immigrants. Open or veiled, the right means to stoke reaction against the “browning of America.”

### ALL WORKERS NEED INTERRACIAL UNITY

The ruling class can’t depend just on the division between white workers and workers of color. The bosses hope to keep the worst-off sections of workers – Blacks, Latinos and other immigrants – fighting with each other over shrinking pieces of a small pie instead of uniting to fight for a decent life for all. In the recent period, the media has particularly hit on the contention between Black American workers and immigrants over low-wage jobs. Much has been done to stoke apprehensions and hostilities against immigrant workers, including in the Black community – with some success. But Black workers in particular have nothing to gain by falling prey to any type of anti-immigrant scapegoating.

In fact, because Black, Latino and immigrant workers have been the most oppressed in this system, and because of the particular histories of struggle in these communities, their unity is the key to turning the whole situation around. Confronted with racism, workers of color in general are quicker to see the way forward and to see through imperialist hypocrisy. The road to a united fightback will surely be based on Black, Latino and immigrant workers playing a weighty role in the vanguard. In short, we need a united interracial struggle of all workers against the capitalist attacks, based on an uncompromising stance against any racist or anti-immigrant hype. We have to reject all laws that divide the working class into legals and illegals by fighting instead for an immediate blanket amnesty with no strings attached, for equal citizenship rights for all immigrant workers, and for an end to all anti-immigrant restrictions.

The struggle for these policies has to be taken up by workers involved with the various immigrant rights organizations as well



*In Houston, janitors, mostly Latina, organized by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), prepare for strike.*

as in the unions, the strongest working-class institutions in this country. Populist leaders are always looking to limit the workers’ struggle, and they are inherently capitulatory. Such leaders can be pushed by the ranks to act in our favor in specific circumstances, and it is necessary to place demands on them. But the real need is to use the fight ahead to build a working-class revolutionary party opposition which can eventually replace the current leaderships.

The illusion that the upcoming elections will reap positive results will be dashed soon enough. Mass action of the working class will be on the agenda again soon. Revolutionary-minded workers will not only support the new round of protests ahead but need to band together to raise demands that meet the needs of all workers, above all “Jobs For All!” and “A Massive Program of Industrialization and Public Works” to provide the good jobs and needed services for all our communities.

The need for such genuinely comprehensive demands and a mass struggle for them also means that we must fight to make the unions and other pro-immigrant organizations rally around each and every strike and workers’ struggle today. We call for relaunching the long-delayed fightback by the working class. Within that struggle revolutionaries will campaign for a general strike of all workers against the capitalist attacks. Given how militant the movement already has been, there will be opportunities for revolutionaries to intervene in the next upsurge in favor of strike actions in specific unions, and arguments for a general strike of immigrant workers can be made concrete.

The League for the Revolutionary Party maintains that the demands to benefit the entire working class which we propose cannot be fully or permanently achieved under capitalism. The crucial task of the most politically advanced workers is to build a revolutionary socialist vanguard party to lead our class from its current struggles to the overthrow of the entire system. We will take part in every effort of the working class to defend its interests, regardless of whether our fellow workers agree with our views about capitalism or not. The road ahead will convince more workers and youth of the revolutionary perspective.

***Workers and Oppressed Peoples of the World, Unite!  
Equal Rights for Immigrant Workers! End All Restrictions  
on Immigrants!***

***Down With Racism and National Chauvinism!  
Jobs for All! For a Massive Public Works Program!  
International Socialist Revolution is the Only Solution!  
Build the Revolutionary Party of the Working Class!  
Re-Create the Fourth International!***

## Democrats and Republicans, Enemies of Immigrant Workers

Millions of immigrants marching in Los Angeles, Chicago and other major U.S. cities this spring grabbed the attention of the country and the world. The mass mobilizations included partial strikes and stayaways as well as student walkouts. Undocumented workers from Mexico, as well as other countries of South and Central America, had finally “come out from the shadows.” Long overdue, a courageous movement championing the rights of all immigrant workers and inspiring a strong feeling of pride was in the making.

The million-strong “Gran Marcha” in Los Angeles on March 25 and the huge outpourings across the country on May 1 were unlike anything seen before in the U.S. As a result, Congress backed away from the blatantly racist and anti-worker Sensenbrenner bill, HR 4437, which the House of Representatives had passed last December. This measure, backed by the Republican House leadership, would have branded every undocumented immigrant and all those who help them as felons. In response, the Senate adopted the “Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act,” S 2611, which offered some sops to immigrants and whose basic features were supported by George W. Bush.

Once Sensenbrenner was off the table, however, the main-

stream leadership of the immigrant rights movement in effect told people to stay off the streets. Despite the gains of the momentous upheaval, the leaders turned from mass action to voter registration efforts, the oldest idea in the populist book, with the aim of electing supposedly friendly Democratic Party politicians. The plan was to lobby for a House-Senate compromise that would look like the Senate bill.

### WHAT THE DEMOCRATS WROUGHT

But what happened? In the absence of mass protests, all that Congress faced were a number of “enforcement only” bills, including one that authorized state and local cops to enforce immigration laws. As Miguel Perez wrote in the Chicago *Sun-Times* (Sept. 26), the proposals “were part of the House’s extremist legislation that sparked immigrant rights demonstrations all over the country last spring. In other words, it is all repackaged repression.”

The bill that passed Congress in September was a total setback. Supported by almost all Republicans and a majority of Senate Democrats, it called for walling off parts of the Mexican border. According to the Associated Press (Sept. 29), “The House and Senate are trying to speed construction of 700 miles of fencing

along the nation’s southern border aimed at keeping Latin Americans and criminals from entering the country illegally.” Demonizing immigrants as criminals and terrorists is the bipartisan racist method. Such a wall would force even more migrant workers away from populous areas and into remote desert and mountain regions, increasing the already horrendous number of deaths.

Even the Bush-friendly Mexican government denounced the border wall as a hostile gesture. Voting for the bill were hypocritical liberals like Hillary Clinton of New York and Barack Obama of Illinois, who had appeared at the mass immigrant rights rallies last spring. Once again relying on the Democratic Party has proved to be a dead end for a mass struggle.

To nail the point, the “comprehensive” S 2611 pushed by the Democrats was in fact nothing that any fighter for immigrant rights had any business supporting. It did not offer a blanket amnesty for all undocumented immigrants, clearly the minimum immediate demand the mass of marchers wanted. The supposed

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LRP supporters marching in the mass demonstration in support of immigrants in New York City on May 1, 2006.