

Defend Iraq Against U.S. Attack!

Imperialists Step Up Terror Bombing of Iraq

DECEMBER 10—While United Nations inspectors go through the charade of looking for “weapons of mass destruction,” U.S. and British war planes rain death and destruction on the Iraqi people on a near-daily basis. As the *New York Times* (24 November) stated with unusual honesty, “America already is at war with Iraq.”

In the last decade, the U.S. and Britain have flown a *quarter million sorties* over Iraq. On top of the tens of thousands slaughtered in 1991, hundreds upon hundreds of lives have been wiped out amid the rubble of bombed-out buildings, including four civilians killed in a strike on the southern city of Basra last week. A million and a half more have died as a result of the UN starvation blockade. The industry and vital infrastructure—water supplies, sewage systems, hospitals—of what was once one of the most modern countries in the Arab world has been devastated. Now Washington is planning an invasion and occupation that may make the 1991 Desert Slaughter and the subsequent eleven years of imperialist privation and mass murder pale by comparison.

Baghdad’s acquiescence to the arrogant UN “inspection” farce and its submission of a mandated report a day ahead of deadline will do nothing to alter U.S. war plans, as White House press spokesman Ari Fleischer made perfectly clear last week when he declaimed that Iraq would be deemed guilty as charged whether or not it admitted to having “illicit” weapons. The deployment of troops, tanks, fighter jets and

aircraft carriers to bases and waters near Iraq continues apace. Through bullying, blackmail and bribery, the American imperialist goliath secured unanimous support for a war resolution in the UN

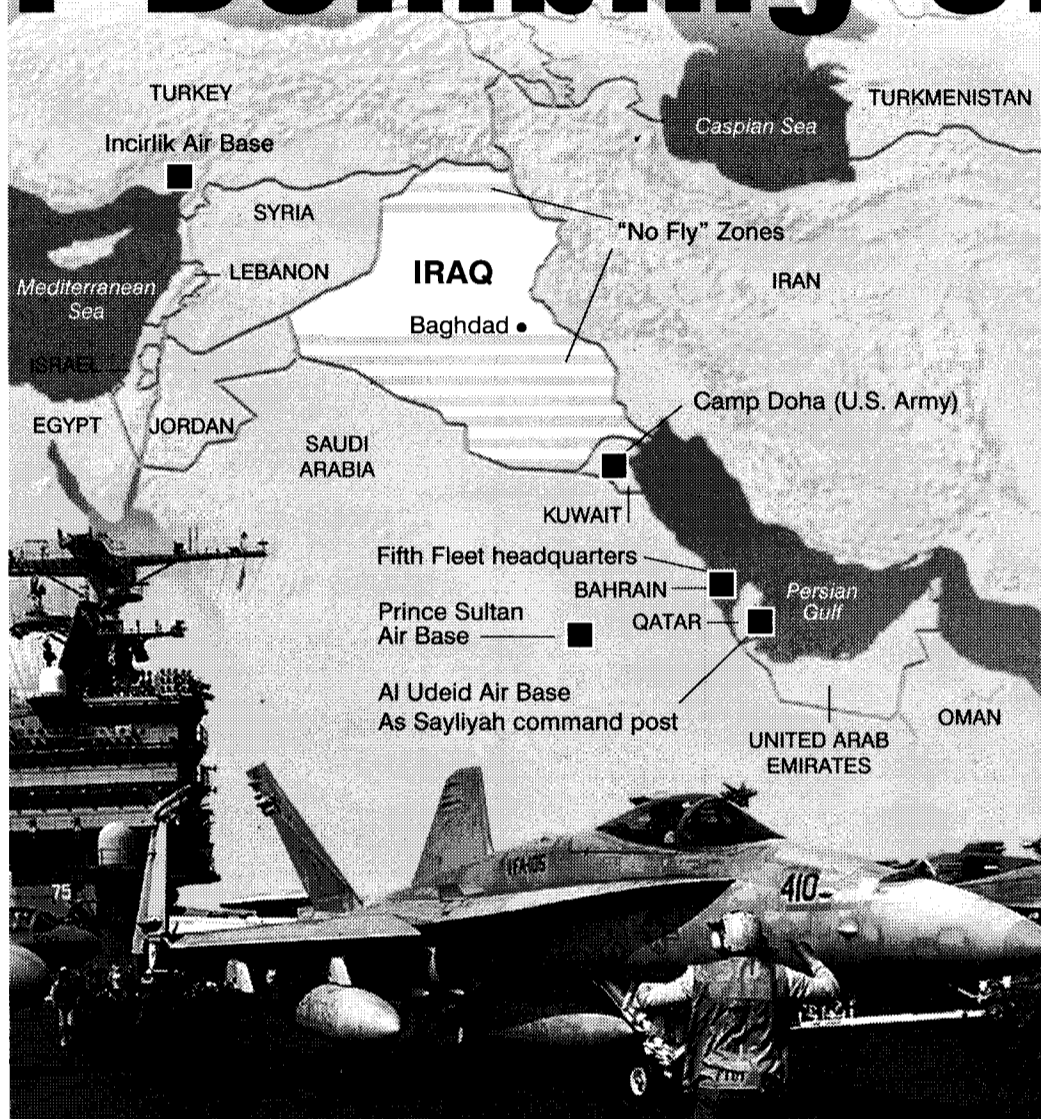
Security Council, with the Arab regimes grotesquely selling it as a measure to prevent war. German Social Democratic chancellor Gerhard Schröder, having won re-election on the basis of popular oppo-

sition to a U.S. war, assures Washington that it will be able to use its strategic military bases in Germany. Turkey’s new Islamist government, promised some \$7 billion in debt relief, has likewise made it clear that U.S. bases at Incirlik and elsewhere will be available.

With the biggest, deadliest military arsenal the world has ever seen, the U.S. rulers act as though they are invincible, riding roughshod over small countries and issuing dictates to their imperialist rivals. But there is one force that can throw a monkey wrench into their war-crazed schemes for unending global domination, and that is the working class here and internationally. As illustrated by the enormous effect that the ten-day West Coast ports lockout had on the American economy, it is the working class that makes the wheels of the capitalist profit system turn. And it is the working class that can bring them grinding to a halt.

Workers and minorities in the U.S. have plenty of reason to see in the imperialist enemy of the semicolonial masses of Iraq their own class enemy. To wage imperialist war abroad, the bourgeoisie demands “class peace” at home. The “war on terror” has meant a racist witch-hunt against Arabs and Muslims and a wholesale assault on immigrant rights and the civil liberties of the population as a whole. Tens of thousands of workers at United and other airlines face wage cuts or mass layoffs. So do city and state workers from Connecticut to California, as local governments

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Current U.S. military deployments in the Near East. U.S., British imperialists have escalated terror bombings in U.S.-imposed “No Fly” zones in Iraq.

Labor: Defend the TWU! Defeat the Taylor Law!

For a Solid NYC Transit Strike!

NEW YORK CITY, December 10—Amid repeated chants of “Strike! Strike!” some 10,000 transit workers at two mass meetings three days ago voted to authorize strike action when their contract expires on December 15. Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 100 is the power-

house of NYC labor. If the subways and buses stop running, it will bring the financial center of American capitalism to a screeching halt. **Transit workers: Strike to win!**

With NYC mayor Michael Bloomberg vowing to impose the strikebreaking Taylor Law and Governor George Pataki threatening to call out the National Guard and state police, a showdown is looming between the capitalist rulers and the most powerful union in the city. The bosses and bankers of Wall Street want to humiliate and break this union in order to set a pre-

cedent for the entire city labor movement. If the transit union is defeated, then it will be open season on the city workers organized in AFSCME District Council 37, other public employee unions, black and Hispanic people, the poor, the unemployed and immigrants.

With the economy slumping and with an aggressively hostile government in Washington, transit workers are in a tough position. But behind the hysterical threats being directed at the TWU is the recognition that the union has the power to shut NYC down cold. The city manifestly can-

not arrest 34,000 strikers or otherwise run the buses and subways in the face of a solid strike. You can’t run the subways with bayonets! Should the government invoke the Taylor Law, this should be met by strike actions mobilizing the power of the entire NYC labor movement. If the transit union proceeds with militancy and determination, in conjunction with other city unions, the labor movement could win a much needed victory that could put into motion a counteroffensive against the bosses. Today the Taxi Workers Alliance,

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NYC Transit Deathtrap

7 December 2002

Dear WV Editor,

As a train operator for New York City Transit, I was moved to write this letter after reading your article "New York Transit Workers vs. Union-Busting Austerity" (WV No. 792, 29 November), which reports on the deaths of two transit workers hit by trains in the space of just two days. The safety of our fellow workers is of paramount concern for train operators, and we are deeply saddened by the horrific deaths of Joy Antony and Kurien Baby. Moreover, we are enraged because their deaths can best be understood as a terrible consequence of NYCT's relentless drive to cut costs and raise productivity.

Transit workers regularly confront difficult and dangerous conditions. Track crews work in the dark, dirty depths of tunnels and on elevated structures outdoors, in the sweltering heat and bitter cold—all the while ducking and dodging high-speed trains and skirting the "third rail" with 600 volts of live electricity. At times, track gangs are pressured to continue working even as trains approach the area.

A train operator's greatest fear is to suddenly encounter workers on the tracks without enough warning to stop the train

safely, but supervisors often don't want to spend the time it takes to set up complete "flagging" protection to properly warn oncoming trains. This means yellow warning lights placed a minimum of 500'-700' ahead of track workers and a flagman with a red light and a "trip" that activates the emergency brakes to stop the train if it passes the warning signals. Additionally, flagmen need radios to be informed of train movement in their area.

In the case of train operators, a critical and urgent change to make the job safer on the tracks is to alleviate our oppressive schedules. With NYCT's productivity drive, our "cab time" has steadily increased over the years and rest breaks have dwindled. This is a recipe for disaster—accidents are almost inevitable when increasingly exhausted workers perform a job that requires such intense concentration. We must put an end to insufficient rest breaks, forced overtime and involuntary shift changes!

After these tragic deaths threw a spotlight on the appallingly unsafe conditions, NYCT was forced to revise its safety guidelines, but they continue to fall short of federal standards and still don't mandate complete flagging protection for all crews. Even worse, manage-

ment tries to blame the workers and pit us against each other, typically accusing track workers of improper flagging procedures and train operators of inattentiveness and unsafe operations. Using "track safety" as a pretext for increased discipline under the guise of training, transit bosses have decreed that all train crews be "critiqued" daily by our supervisors. This is a pure farce! The very same supervisor that "critiqued" me one night told me to *speed up* as I operated slowly past track workers the next day.

Workers' safety cannot be left in the hands of the bosses or state agencies—profits and productivity will always be their first concern. Last week, our union, TWU Local 100, called a "safety stand-down," directing workers to be extra cautious. However, to be effective, workers must be able to refuse unsafe work without the fear of retaliation and the union must establish elected safety committees with the power to shut down unsafe working conditions on the spot!

Such tragedies must never happen again! Joy Antony and Kurien Baby, we will not forget you.

T.O.

Housekeeping

Oakland
26 June 2002

Editor, *Workers Vanguard*
Dear Comrade:

I was fascinated to learn, from your article on the West Coast Waterfront situation, that some waterfront workers are "working around the clock for up to six months at a time."

That sounds like cruel and unusual punishment to me.

Marion Syrek

WV replies:

Either Marion Syrek can't read very well, or he is simply blinded by hostility. The full passage in question from the article, "Showdown on West Coast Waterfront," in *Workers Vanguard* No. 783 (14 June) reads: "Transportation costs have already been cut by the use of giant container ships with non-union, low-wage skeleton crews of seamen working around the clock for up to six months at a time." The sentence obviously refers to *crews* (of seamen), not individual waterfront workers.

For a Class-Struggle Leadership in the Unions!

The struggles of working people in defense of their jobs, working conditions and unions are hampered by a union bureaucracy that looks to the agencies of the capitalist state, its courts and politicians, rather than the independent social power of the proletariat. In a 1942 lecture, Trotskyist leader James P. Cannon set forth the principles of proletarian class struggle that imbued the 1934 Minneapolis Teamsters strikes, a



TROTSKY



LENIN

key victory in the mass struggles that forged mass industrial unions in the 1930s.

A strike leader without some conception of a political line was very much out of date already by 1934. The old-fashioned trade union movement, which used to deal with the bosses without governmental interference, belongs in the museum. The modern labor movement must be politically directed because it is confronted by the government at every turn. Our people were prepared for that since they were political people, inspired by political conceptions. The policy of the class struggle guided our comrades; they couldn't be deceived and outmaneuvered, as so many strike leaders of that period were, by this mechanism of sabotage and destruction known as the National Labor Board and all its auxiliary setups. They put no reliance whatever in Roosevelt's Labor Board; they weren't fooled by any idea that Roosevelt, the liberal "friend of labor" president, was going to help the truck drivers in Minneapolis win a few cents more an hour. They weren't deluded even by the fact that there was at that time in Minnesota a Farmer-Labor Governor, presumed to be on the side of the workers.

Our people didn't believe in anybody or anything but the policy of the class struggle and the ability of the workers to prevail by their mass strength and solidarity. Consequently, they expected from the start that the union would have to fight for its right to exist; that the bosses would not yield any recognition to the union, would not yield any increase of wages or reduction of the scandalous hours without some pressure being brought to bear. Therefore they prepared everything from the point of view of class war. They knew that power, not diplomacy, would decide the issue. Bluffs don't work in fundamental things, only in incidental ones. In such things as the conflict of class interests one must be prepared to fight.

—James P. Cannon, *The History of American Trotskyism* (1944)



Women and Revolution

Phyllis Anwar (1919-2002)

Phyllis Anwar, longtime friend and, between 1979 and 1982, member of the Spartacist League, died on November 7 from complications arising from Alzheimer's disease. We extend our heartfelt condolences to her family, including her sons, comrade Bruce, and his brother, Keith.

When Phyllis joined the Spartacist League she was already in her 60s. She had been in the Young Communist League as a youth and had accompanied her husband to his native Afghanistan from 1941 to 1944. In 1980, in commemoration of International Women's Day, Phyllis made a speaking tour with Dale Reissner of the editorial board of *Women and Revolution*. The talk was titled "Women of the East—Proletarian Revolution or Slavery. Down With Islamic Reaction! Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" At the time, our international tendency stood alone against the rise of the Islamic fundamentalist regime in Iran, raising the call: "Down With the Shah! No Support to the Mullahs! For Workers Revolution in Iran!" At the end of 1979, we hailed the Soviet troops that had entered Afghanistan to back the left-nationalist regime that was fighting the CIA-backed *mujahedin*.

Phyllis vividly retold her experiences as the first foreign woman to walk the streets of Kabul without a *chador*, the tent-like veil women are forced to wear. She put her life in danger, secretly teaching girls at a school which was disguised as a hospital to fool the mullahs. Her firsthand accounts of the oppressive conditions of women made concrete our revolutionary program.

While working in the *Workers Vanguard* composition department, Phyllis hammered out our first editorial style book. She imparted to all with whom she collaborated that language was always in flux and that our editorial guidelines were only worthwhile if they made our revolutionary program precise and accessible to our readers. Phyllis also spent time in Berlin working with our German section, and comrades recalled how she learned enough German to be able to sell our newspaper.

For the several years she was a member, Phyllis contributed the experience and insight of her extraordinary life to the collective body of knowledge and literature of our tendency. She left a lasting impression of bravery and compassion with everyone who met her.

A memorial for Phyllis will take place at 1 p.m. on Saturday, December 14 at the Turning Point, 468 Piermont Ave., Piermont, New York.

WORKERS VANGUARD

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No. 793

13 December 2002

"Employee Ownership" Fraud Means Layoffs, Wage Cuts

"Employee-owned" United Airlines, the second-largest carrier in the world, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection on December 9 after the Air Transportation Stabilization Board (ATSB) ruled out a \$1.8 billion federal loan package last week. Unless fought by the unions, this will mean thousands of layoffs and massive wage concessions, and the other airlines are now using United's fate to bludgeon their workers into submission. Since the September 11 attacks, airline companies have furloughed more than 100,000 workers and implemented cost-cutting measures that have made travel onerous for passengers. But the economic crisis gripping the airlines predates 9/11. U.S. carriers lost \$7.7 billion in 2001 alone, even after receiving some \$5 billion in cash handouts from the federal government following 9/11, and it is estimated that they will lose an additional \$9 billion this year.

United has slashed its workforce from over 100,000 to 83,000 and cut the number of flights by 20 percent. Management has used the threat of bankruptcy for more than a year to try to cow its unions. At the same time that recently hired CEO Glenn Tilton was awarded millions in a signing bonus and pension trust, the company was demanding \$9 billion in givebacks from the workforce. The Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA) bureaucracy agreed to an 18 percent wage cut (amounting to a whopping \$2.2 billion). The Association of Flight Attendants also gave up \$412 million. Now, United will move to gouge even more concessions from its workforce. As the president of Northwest Airlines put it, with Chapter 11 protection companies "can avoid paying debt, reject leases on airplanes and get collective bargaining agreements restructured" (*New York Times*, 8 December). In plain English, this means ripping up labor contracts and carrying out other union-busting attacks.

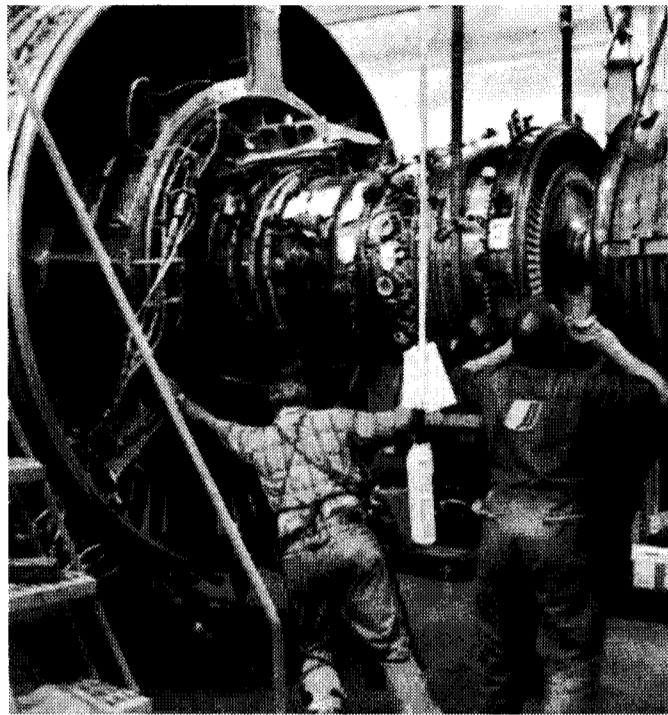
The other major airlines are now taking their cue from United. American and Continental are currently in contract talks with their pilots and Northwest is soon to be. According to the *Wall Street Journal* (6 December): "If United is able to make substantial reductions in labor costs by cutting wages and benefits and changing work rules, the impact could spill through the industry." The day after the ATSB decision against United, management at American announced plans to try to wrench \$2 billion in additional concessions from its unions.

The goal of the airline companies is to roll back the gains won through decades of union struggle by driving down wages and working conditions at the major carriers to those at low-wage, often non-union, outfits like JetBlue. Most of the major carriers have already shifted some of their routes to their regional subsidiaries, which pay far lower B-scale wages. Gloating about the ATSB decision, the *Wall Street Journal* (6 December) editorialized: "Bankruptcy would allow United to break out of its high-cost, unionized structure into a leaner, more competitive airline."

Significantly, on November 28 United's 13,000 mechanics voted to reject a concessions package totaling \$700 million, representing a 7 percent pay reduction. The vote by the mechanics reflects

longstanding animosity toward management, which at every turn has sought to further exploit the workforce. In 1994, United mechanics took a severe wage cut (nearly 20 percent) that made their pay the lowest in the industry in exchange for participation in an employee stock ownership plan (ESOP). Though the

Wolf used the bogeyman of bankruptcy (Continental, TWA and America West were operating under Chapter 11) and competition from the low-cost carrier Southwest to scare the workforce into accepting the ESOP scam. For their part, the union tops sold this scheme by promising a big future payoff in return for



Peter Dasilva

United Airlines mechanics at San Francisco International Airport. United is attempting to impose massive layoffs and wage cuts to restore airline's profit margins.

cost of living increased throughout the decade, mechanics received only two paltry raises of about 5 percent each at a time when United was making record profits. When the contract with the ESOP provisions expired in 2000, negotiations were dragged out for two years.

Meanwhile, management disciplined and even fired mechanics following safety guidelines by working to rule. After a contract was ratified earlier this year, the mechanics agreed to defer almost a half billion dollars in retroactive pay increases to help the company. Today, the mechanics are forced to work on skeleton crews six days in a row without overtime pay and to do the work of a full crew.

A "No Concessions" campaign has taken hold among United mechanics. The campaign has become a focal point of protest against the craven misleaders of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM), which also represents ramp and fleet service workers at United. The IAM labor bureaucrats have supported the company's bid for government loans all along, knowing full well that United would receive a loan only if it first gouged its workforce. Caught off-guard by the results of the November 28 vote, the IAM Local 141-M officialdom quickly returned to the bargaining table to hammer out a new concessions deal that was virtually identical to the original. Over the next week, leaders of Local 141-M made it their sworn duty to rally support for concessions in the lead-up to a new vote, which was scheduled for December 5 but canceled when the ATSB decision was announced.

The ESOP Scam

The IAM tops are probably most reviled for their role alongside the leaders of ALPA in arranging the 1994 ESOP agreement. Under the ESOP, workers traded \$5 billion in wage cuts and other givebacks, including a six-year wage freeze and a no-strike pledge, for nearly half the shares of company stock and three seats on the 12-member board of directors. Then-CEO of United Stephen

mittee of the capitalist class as a whole.

ESOPs epitomize the fraud of the partnership of labor and capital preached by the trade-union bureaucracy, which means subordinating workers' interests to the company's bottom line. As we wrote in "Phony 'Worker Ownership' at United Airlines" (WV No. 593, 4 February 1994):

"Even if the workers had 100 percent, it wouldn't make a fundamental difference. Workers have no control whatsoever over the capitalist market, which is inherently anarchic. At the first financial difficulty they would be at the mercy of the banks.... To 'save jobs' by making one airline 'more competitive' is to drive down the living standards of all."

Whether or not a company is "owned" by its employees, it must exploit their labor to make profits and survive in the face of competition.

For a Class-Struggle Leadership!

The prostration of the IAM and other industry union tops before the airline bosses points to the urgency of the fight to oust these class-collaborationist bureaucrats, who are bound hand and foot to the capitalist Democratic Party. It was under Democratic president Jimmy Carter that deregulation of the airline industry took place in 1978, paving the way for more than two decades of union-busting attacks by the airline bosses.

Air transport is a vital industry that underpins a quarter of the world's economy and is part of the lifeblood of any modern society. Airline workers have the power to shut the industry down. But the pro-capitalist labor tops hide behind anti-labor laws like the Railway Labor Act as an excuse to head off class struggle. The key lies in forging a class-struggle leadership that understands that neither the capitalist politicians nor the companies can ever represent the interests of workers—a union leadership that understands that the power of workers lies in their ability to bring production to a halt.

The treachery of the IAM tops has driven many United mechanics into the arms of the Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association (AMFA), a craft union which has already unseated the IAM at Northwest and Alaska Airlines by appealing to the most crass craft prejudice among the highly skilled mechanics while denouncing the IAM leaders as the "paid-off lapdogs" of management. Craft divisions feed into the unceasing attempts by the bosses to set one work group against another. What airline workers need is a single industrial union of all workers—from baggage handlers to pilots—at all companies, which would facilitate united, industry-wide strike action to defend jobs and extend hard-fought gains.

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Chicago Sun-Times

United flight attendants join American Airlines picket line last year.

NOTICE

Workers Vanguard skips a week in December.

Our next issue will be dated January 3.

British Firefighters vs. "New Labour" Union Busters

The British Fire Brigades Union (FBU) went out on strike twice last month, first for two days and then for eight days. With Tony Blair's New Labour government deploying thousands of troops using antiquated firefighting equipment, the London *Financial Times* (25 November) insisted: "There must be proper preparations for a long fire strike.... If that means limits on Britain's deployment of troops in a new Gulf War, so be it. The UK will not make the decisive difference between victory and defeat in Iraq, and this domestic battle is too important to be fought with one hand tied."

FBU leader Andy Gilchrist called off a second eight-day strike that was to begin on December 4, announcing that the union would submit to arbitration while leaving open the possibility of another eight-day strike scheduled for December 16. On December 7, some 20,000 members and supporters of the FBU rallied in London in the largest labor demonstration there in a decade. A common theme among many of the workers our comrades of the Spartacist League/Britain spoke to was their hatred of the strikebreaking Labour government.

Playing to such sentiment, Gilchrist declared at a November 30 meeting of Labour Party leftists that he was "prepared to work to replace New Labour with what I'm prepared to call Real Labour." But when this was denounced in the press as a call to "topple New Labour," Gilchrist responded with a December 4 commentary in the London *Guardian*, stating:

"The task of those, like myself, who passionately believe in strengthening the link between the party and unions, is being made increasingly difficult. In almost every Labour-affiliated union the call is becoming louder to weaken the links and reduce financial support to the Labour establishment. This demand will become impossible to counter if the government continues with New Labour's project of appeasing big business while distancing itself from the unions."

It is the role of left-talking union leaders like Gilchrist to sell their membership the lie that Labour represents the interests of the working class. Lately this is becoming harder as Blair drives to break the party's reliance on the unions and turn it into an outright capitalist party, like the Democratic Party in the U.S. Denouncing Gilchrist's initial remarks, one government spokesman fumed: "He said that this was an industrial dispute. Now we see it for what it really is—a political bat-

tle about the future direction of this country." The government would like the unions to be politically and otherwise utterly subordinate to the will of the capitalists. To wage effective struggle in defense of the workers' interests, the unions must have a political leadership, one which understands that the interests of labor and capital are counterposed.

Outrageously, the FBU leadership has suspended Bob Pounder from his post as union secretary for the Greater Manchester County because he opposed the union leadership's decision to suspend the second eight-day strike and go to arbitration.



November 14: Picketing firefighters in Berkshire during two-day FBU strike. Firefighters' struggle has galvanized opposition to union-busting Labour government.

Pounder, a supporter of the Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP), has been baited by the bourgeois press, which went into a chauvinist frenzy over the fact that he visited Iraq. Notwithstanding our political differences with the WRP, a group which politically supports the anti-worker regime of Saddam Hussein, and which supported Labour in the last elections, the SL/B demands: Reinstate Bob Pounder!

The need for a revolutionary workers party was a central question addressed by comrade Eibhlin McDonald at a Spartacist League/Britain forum in London on November 25. The meeting was also addressed by two FBU members, Billy Carruthers and Garrett Brooks, a member of the FBU's black caucus, and featured

a real exchange of views on working-class strategy. Referring to the government's demand for cutbacks and speedup, Carruthers told the audience, "We're talking about pay, they're talking about cuts. They call it modernization. Their modernization agenda takes us back 50 years." Voicing a view now common among trade unionists, he added: "We put a resolution through our branch to remove our political fund from the Labour Party.... What we said is not only did we want to remove it, but we want the whole trade-union movement to pull the political fund and use it somewhere else."

In his remarks, Brooks said: "We all remember the pictures that we saw of September 11 last year, when New York firefighters were running into a building to save lives. That's what we do; we don't run away, we go in to try to save lives. Last year we were heroes; this year we are called criminals." Brooks also took up our criticism of Gilchrist's acquiescence to a threatened attack on the picket lines raised in a 19 November SL/B leaflet distributed to striking firefighters and others (see *WV* No. 792, 29 November). Brooks said: "I had a different viewpoint to some of your members and that's about whether the army should cross the picket lines and take our fire engines.... Now, my view and the view of many firefighters is simple. We agree with Andy Gilchrist.... The army can't hope to compete in using our equipment and doing the same job we do."

In her presentation, which we publish below in edited and abridged form, comrade McDonald responded to Brooks' argument and also addressed the question of the trade-union political fund.

* * *

We in the Spartacist League and the International Communist League are emphatically for a victory to the FBU in this struggle. We think a lot depends on it. We think it is a battle not simply for pay for the FBU. It is a battle for the entire trade-union movement in Britain. And it's not only the working class that has a stake in it, but—as you can see on the picket lines—so do all the oppressed layers of this society.

Immigrants, minorities, women—that's where the support is coming from and that's something that's very similar to the 1984-85 miners strike. And the tremendous support the FBU is getting from the public is a measure of the depth of hatred for the Labour government. It is an outpouring of hatred by everybody

that's been taking it in the neck from this government for so long. This strike has major international significance as well, precisely because it has the capability to hamper the war preparations against Iraq. The government must not be allowed to break the back of the FBU.

One of the things we want to talk about is how to prevent that from happening and how to get the victory that the FBU needs. We think the government's threat to break the FBU picket lines must be met by mass picket lines. This is one of the lessons of the 1977 FBU strike. The Labour government of the day, of Jim Callaghan, had their strikebreakers repulsed by mass picket lines and they pulled back.

Our second point is that the Fire Brigades Union must not be left to go it alone against the full might of the capitalist state. The public sector unions—the council workers union, the teachers, etc.—are longing to give this government a kick up the backside. They work for incredibly low wages. Part of the impact of the defeat of the miners strike is that the trade-union movement in this country was weakened; wages and living standards have been really driven down. So all these workers should be mobilised on the FBU picket lines, and in particular, we think, the Tube [subway] workers ought to be out on strike.

Calling off the planned strike ballot by those workers was really a betrayal by the Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) union leadership. The drivers' solidarity with the firefighters during the first 48-hour strike had a tremendous impact. The situation in London Underground today is that drivers are being forced against their will to drive trains into the tunnels knowing that it's not safe and knowing that their class duty is standing with the firefighters on strike. Especially here in the City of London, to shut down the transport system means that the financial centre of British imperialism cannot function.

There's another point I want to make about council workers before I move on. A lot of union jobs have been contracted out to private firms. Those workers then work for even less wages and in even worse conditions than council workers whose jobs have not been privatised, and those jobs are often done by immigrants. This proves that it is in the interest of the entire trade-union movement to take up the fight for equal pay for equal work, including for immigrants, and for full citizenship rights for all immigrants.

Union "Lefts" Prop Up New Labour

These are tactics to win the FBU strike: mass picket lines and strikes in other unions. The tactics of a strike are not very difficult to work out. It's not rocket science, as any firefighter can tell you. But the real question is, why isn't it happening, and that is a political question. And that is one of the central things that we want to address, because the chief obstacle to winning this strike is illusions and ties to Labour. In this instance, that means ties to "Old Labour." Left-wing union leaders, such as RMT head Bob Crow and Andy Gilchrist and the others who have been dubbed the "awkward squad," are simply another expression of the left wing of Labour. They are always being vilified by Tony Blair and the capitalist press simply because they sometimes lead their unions out on strike. That's where the Blairites are coming from: pure class hatred of the trade unions. But our political criticisms of these leaders are based on their ties to Labour.

SPARTACIST LEAGUE/U.S. Local Directory and Public Offices

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Box 3381, Church St. Sta.
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The question of our attitude to Labour is where we fundamentally disagree. It is where you can see most clearly the distinction between us and the other groups on the left which you might be familiar with—the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), Workers Power, Socialist Alliance, Socialist Party, etc. In the 2001 elections, even when they stood their own candidates, the Socialist Alliance (supported by the SWP and Workers Power) still called to “vote Labour where you must.” We said “No vote for Labour!” and you can bet your life that we won’t be voting for them next time around either.

Another point that distinguishes the Spartacist League is that we don’t think the economic demands of this strike can be abstracted from the broader social questions of the programme that we fight for, the communist programme. We’re not like these fake-left groups who will hold a meeting about the Fire Brigades Union at which the war against Iraq is not mentioned. Or if you go to one of their meetings about the war, the Fire Brigades Union is not mentioned. You go to a meeting about the unions, and racism is not mentioned. You go to a meeting about racism, and the trade unions are not mentioned. We think that those issues have to be linked up as part of a single struggle led by a revolutionary party against the capitalist system which divides workers.

At a Workers Power meeting the other night on the FBU strike, two strikers from London’s Euston Station were present, one of whom spoke out at the end of the meeting to say that he personally pays his political funds to a charity and will never in the rest of his life vote Labour again. But when we asked the Workers Power speaker, “What about you?” he said, oh no, he couldn’t say that because that might bring the Tories back in again. So this is the connection between groups like Workers Power’s support to Labour in elections and their perspective on the strike.

Now, on Labour’s threat to send the army across the picket lines, the question that we disagree on. We understand that it is the position of at least the national executive of the FBU that they should not try to stop the army from going across picket lines to seize firefighting equipment and vehicles. We said openly in our leaflet that we disagree with Andy Gilchrist on this. First of all, that’s not about saving lives. Everybody knows that. I think even Garrett would agree with that. Picket lines are the crucial weapon of the trade-union movement in class struggle. That is how the trade-union movement was built. If you concede on the picket line question, you may as well concede to Tony Blair—it opens the door to crushing the FBU.

The capitalist state consists at its core of the army, the police, the prison service, the courts, etc. We do not accept that the police are part of the workers movement and just wage earners like anybody else. That’s absolutely not true. The actual role of the police in society was seen most clearly during the miners strike, when they bloodied not only the miners but their families and their villages daily for an entire year. They were known at the time as Margaret Thatcher’s boot boys.



French public employees at Paris demonstration against government austerity measures, November 26.

That’s what the state is; it is an instrument of class oppression.

The military top brass have been reluctant to use the army to break picket lines in the FBU strike. That has not been done in Britain since the General Strike in 1926. We think that if the army is asked to cross picket lines, the FBU should appeal to the soldiers not to do that, because there are contradictions within the army, including even the professional army, that do not exist within the police. There’s a class contradiction within the army. The soldiers are drawn from the working class. They absolutely hate the public school [as elite private schools are known in Britain], Sandhurst-educated officer corps, and it’s possible to use that. The soldiers also do not expect that breaking strikes is part of their job.

But there’s another point that can be made about this. It is not normally state repression that is used to break strikes in Britain. Trotsky said that in Britain you have an outer policeman and an inner policeman, and the inner policeman is Labour and social democracy, and they have succeeded in most cases in selling out workers struggles. So it’s not always necessary for them to use naked state repression.

Defence of Iraq Against Imperialist Attack

On the question of how to stop the war against Iraq, our position is for defence of Iraq against imperialist attack without giving an iota of political support to Saddam Hussein. The best mechanism for fighting for defence of Iraq is through class struggle at home. The connections we make between class struggle at home and opposition to war are much easier to make in the case of the Fire Brigades strike. You have the defence chief complaining that a demoralized army cannot fight on two fronts. If they keep 19,000 soldiers for breaking the FBU strike, then this hinders their attempts to wage war against Iraq. We think that is a good thing. The semicolonial masses of Iraq

and the working people and oppressed of this country have a common enemy in the Labour government and the capitalist class in this country and also, of course, in the United States.

It’s worth noting that when over 400,000 people demonstrated against the war here in London on September 28, nobody in the military establishment or the government batted an eyelid, because while it’s very good to show the level of opposition against the war, demonstrations by themselves don’t wield any social power. Trade unions such as the FBU have social power, and that really does cause major concern about the war preparations.

I just want to make a point about the SWP-led Stop the War Coalition. The purpose, the perspective and programme of the groups that built the Stop the War Coalition is for unity not only with bishops and the mosques and the liberals, but above all with the left-wing Labour MPs [Members of Parliament] Jeremy Corbyn and Tony Benn, etc. It ought to be not too difficult to work out that unity with these Labour MPs will not and cannot stop war. The Labour lefts as much as the right wing of the Labour Party are tied to the system of capitalism, and imperialist war is intrinsic to capitalism.

It’s important to understand politically that national chauvinism, pro-war sentiment, and what was called the “Falklands factor” in the 1982 war with Argentina are used as a club to beat the trade unions with now, as it was used back then. Returning soldiers from the Falklands hung a sign over the side of a ship directed against striking rail workers, saying call off the rail strike or we’ll call an air strike. We call for British troops out of Northern Ireland, out of the Near East and out of Afghanistan.

The domestic side of the “war on terror” is pretty clear to most people by now. It’s a racist witchhunt against immigrants and against British minorities, targeting blacks and particularly Asians. The ultimate target of the “war on terror” is the trade-union movement. That is

ultimately what’s considered to be the “enemy within.”

Under Tony Blair, the Labour Party is being converted into something like the Democratic Party in the United States, which is an outright capitalist party. Lenin described the Labour Party as a bourgeois workers party, with an enormous working-class base but a pro-capitalist leadership and programme. To what extent Blair has succeeded in that process of conversion is being tested right now.

Another area where we vehemently disagree with Andy Gilchrist and Bob Crow and with the rest of the left is that the trade unions should continue to fund New Labour. That’s like asking workers to fight with one hand tied behind their back, and it’s fairly obscene. To continue funding the organisation that’s threatening to crush you is not very appealing. It’s noticeable that on the picket lines—and apparently in union branch meetings from what I’m told—there are passionate discussions over this question. The Fire Brigades Union was one of the unions that began the process of cutting off funds to New Labour. They were in the vanguard of it, as was the RMT.

And once again, the so-called socialists have come out to the right of the gut feeling of most of the workers within the unions. Through the Socialist Alliance, the SWP and Workers Power have echoed and supported the position of Andy Gilchrist and Bob Crow—that it’s okay to open up the political fund to give a little bit of support here and there but that they fundamentally must not break the ties with New Labour.

There’s another group which does say that you should break the ties with New Labour, which is the Socialist Party of Peter Taaffe. They are also a Labourite group; they simply play their hand a little bit differently. They say the unions should stop funding New Labour and build another mass workers party. It would be based on the trade unions, but it should be led by the existing left-wing trade-union leaders. They have even called for such a party to be led by Ken Livingstone, of all people.

We’re no fans of Ken Livingstone. When he got the job as mayor of London he appointed a man called Bob Kiley, a former CIA officer and a notorious union-buster from the New York subway, as his man in charge of the Underground. Livingstone supported the war against Serbia. Yesterday, he called for women who are begging in the Tubes to be arrested and their children to be put into government care. And in case you didn’t get the picture of what Ken Livingstone is like, he also called yesterday for the Fire Brigades to accept the “modernisation” agenda. So that will give you an idea of what kind of mass workers party the Socialist Party would like to create.

We make the point that Old Labour has always loyally served Queen and Country. Labour supported British imperialism through two world wars. They supported the United States in the 1950-53 war against the North Korean deformed workers state, a war whose ultimate targets were China and the Soviet Union. They

continued on page 9

Sturrock/Network



Left: Striking Leeds miners battle scabs, cops in August 1984. Spartacist League/Britain fought for class-struggle solidarity with heroic 1984-85 miners strike against union-busting Thatcher government.

Japan: Abolish the Monarchy —For a Workers Republic!

We print below a translation of an article from *Spartacist* No. 26 (September 2002), publication of the *Spartacist Group Japan*, section of the *International Communist League*.

スパルタシスト

The debate over whether or not a female heir can ascend to the imperial throne, intensified after the birth of the “royal baby” last December, has brought together supposedly diverse elements, ranging from the anti-woman, ultranationalist [Prime Minister] Koizumi to bourgeois feminists to Doi Takako, leader of the Social Democratic Party [SDP]. This thoroughly reactionary debate has nothing to do with “gender equality,” as anyone who lives in this deeply entrenched and revoltingly male chauvinist society should know. Rather it is about how best to salvage the “imperial household” and recast the blood-stained emperor system as a “monarchy for the masses.” If word of this debate were to reach Kanno Suga, executed by the government in 1911 [for plotting to assassinate the emperor], she would be writhing in her grave.

It was under the name of the emperor that Japanese imperialism and its military committed monstrous crimes during the Pacific War [World War II]—the Nanjing Massacre, the Nazi-like biological military Unit 731, the brutal colonization and subjugation of half the Asian continent, the enslavement of the *ianfu* [comfort women] and forced laborers, and the massive roundups and imprisonment of burakumin [descendants of feudal-era outcasts] and the heroic men and women of this country who fought against social injustice. We call for the abolition of this reactionary institution and the establishment of a workers republic.

It doesn't matter if the monarch's chromosomes are XY or XX—the emperor system is a feudal anachronism that should have been swept away a long time ago. Its ideological purpose is as a popular focus for national chauvinism and reaction. Only in a country where women are so oppressed would any woman find the prospect of an empress appealing. One need only look at Britain which has a

queen to see that gender is no impediment to the ruthless pursuit of the imperialist, anti-working-class goals of the British capitalist class. In this country, women's oppression is deeply intertwined with the perpetuation of the emperor system, whose purpose is to sanctify social and sexual hierarchy, the family, private property and the “glory” of the Japanese state.

If the emperor system were abolished, women would still not be liberated. We would still have a capitalist system in which women are oppressed. The ever-present degradation, inequalities and superstitions that target women can only be rooted out by a workers revolution that dislodges the capitalists and their kings (or queens) and places the proletariat in power. That's why we fight for socialist revolution. The fight for women's rights goes hand in hand with the struggles of the organized working class as a whole against an exploiting class that considers its rule an “immutable right.” The tremendous wealth in this country is produced by the sweat and toil of its working people—both female and male. Those who labor must rule!

Rallying Symbol for Reaction

The overriding concern of the ruling class is that in the last few decades only daughters have been born to the imperial family. Journalist Keiko Tatsuta bluntly summed up the anxiety: “If no boys are born in the future, the Imperial Household itself would theoretically no longer exist” (*Japan Times*, 24 November 2001). It is not just for ideological purposes that the emperor system is important for Japanese capitalism. The monarchy has always been the bourgeoisie's favored institution in periods of social turmoil. The leaders of the Meiji Restoration used the emperor as a “divine umbrella” to legitimize their rule. After Japan's defeat in the Pacific War, the emperor system was preserved through a bargain between the Japanese ruling class and the U.S. occupation forces for the single purpose of clamping down on working-class struggle at a time when social revolution was a real possibility. Today, in the midst of mass unemployment, welfare cuts and homelessness, privatizations and an increasingly strong state mounting an offensive to remilitarize the country, the continued, orches-

trated “royal baby watch” is intended to unite the nation around a common cause.

The emperor system is not merely an affront to the proletariat of this country and Asia. According to the constitution, the emperor's role is supposedly limited to such things as acting as adviser and spokesman for the ruling class, performing

ponent in suppressing working-class anger and opposition to this feudal remnant. Since its inception as the Japan Socialist Party, the SDP has embraced this reactionary institution, ending its founding conference in 1945 with the three banzai shouts [“Long live the emperor!”]. In April 2001 in the shadow



Ethan Hoffman

Women employees bow to businessman at typical Tokyo reception, symbolizing intense male chauvinism in Japan.

certain functions of state like putting his “divine” seal of approval on a new prime minister. The existence of these limits obscures the real danger to the proletariat the monarchy could once again become. In recent years, the emperor has been acting more and more like the head of state, and several attempts have been made to bring back laws against *lèse majesté*. The emperor system is the rallying cry of the fascist and militaristic right wing, who have become more emboldened since official recognition of the *hinomaru* and *kimigayo* [flag and anthem], both symbols of the emperor and imperial Japan. In any deep future crisis of the bourgeois order, the emperor would be wielded as a buttress to reactionary mobilizations and a sign of “legitimacy” for a government of extreme reaction.

The Left and the Emperor System

The politics of the reformist left consists of oppositional activity within the framework of bourgeois society, characterized by Trotsky as “the training of the masses to become imbued with the inviolability of the bourgeois state.” The emperor system continues unimpeded by the fake left in this country. The primary responsibility for this lies with the SDP and Communist Party (JCP), both mass bourgeois-workers parties with a pro-capitalist leadership and program, and a predominantly working-class membership. As part of their general commitment to capitalism, they help prop up this symbol of privilege. When Hirohito [emperor during World War II] died in 1989, Doi Takako signed the condolence book and attended the funeral. In the summer of 2000, JCP leader Fuwa sent condolences on the death of the Empress Dowager because they grew up during the same years! Loyal opposition parties indeed.

The SDP and JCP's shameless acceptance of the emperor system is a key com-

ponent in suppressing working-class anger and opposition to this feudal remnant. Since its inception as the Japan Socialist Party, the SDP has embraced this reactionary institution, ending its founding conference in 1945 with the three banzai shouts [“Long live the emperor!”]. In April 2001 in the shadow

of the crown princess's pregnancy, the SDP leadership met, whereby “Doi Takako took a positive posture toward a female emperor on the basis of gender equality. However, within the party, this question is not completely resolved” (*Women's Information*, January 2002). What was resolved eight months later was “to send congratulations on the birth of a child who has been anticipated. We hope for her healthy growth.”

When the Communist Party thought they had an opportunity to administer a capitalist Japan in 1998, they revised their long-held position of opposition to the emperor system. As reported in the *Japan Press Weekly* (8 December 2001), “JCP Secretariat Head Ichida Tadayoshi said, ‘Parliament can give a congratulatory



AFF

April 2002: Prime Minister Koizumi, led by Shinto priest, visits chauvinist memorial to Japanese imperialist soldiers.



Toshiki Sawaguchi

February 1994: Japanese nurses protest overtime, staff shortages and subsidy cuts, demand better health care for all.

For Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

message as a form of courtesy on a festive event of the family which is referred to as the symbol of the state by the Constitution.... The JCP envisages a future in which the *Tenno* [emperor] system will end based on the people's consensus. At the present, the JCP is committed to defending every clause of the Constitution!" This was echoed by party head Shii a few days later when he said, "The birth of any new life is equally delightful" (*Women's Information*, January 2002). Sharing in the so-called democratic happiness over a new life is quite a bitter pill to swallow for its membership, which understands well that all life is hardly equal in a capitalist society.

Bourgeois Panic over Falling Marriage, Birth Rates

Hirohito's death was like a gift for the imperial family, lifting it from its "tainted" history. Today, it is presented as the "nation's first family, united with the people in warmth and affection." No longer surrounded by the aura of divinity, the imperial family is supposed to mirror a "modern, democratic, middle-class Japan." Now we are being saturated with news stories about the royal family as if they lived in the neighboring apartment complex, or the three-generation house next door.

The Empress Michiko is portrayed as a "commoner" who raised her own children and "assumed some of the typical duties of a housewife." Princess Masako, a "Harvard educated woman who gave up her career to settle down and have a family," is held up as a role model for women who are increasingly postponing both marriage and having children. This is the borrowed womb [women whose "function" is to produce an heir] and good wife/wise mother recast for the 21st century.

The police crackdown on high school girls hanging out in Shibuya and Ikebukuro [districts of Tokyo], the media smear campaign against young women, labeling them as selfish "parasite singles," the stigma and laws against illegitimate children, the one surname per family rule, the refusal to give pensions to divorced women, the cutting of subsidies for single mothers are all frontal assaults against women in an attempt to bolster the sanctity of the nuclear family for the "good of the nation."

With the lowest birthrate of almost any nation, the population agency in the Health, Labor and Welfare Ministry has been working overtime, churning out scare stories that within 100 years the population of Japan would not even fill the Tokyo Dome [baseball park]. A recent survey found that more than half the women in their 20s are not married, and have no plans to do so, prompting Cabinet Secretary "Japan must go nuclear" Fukuda to promote the recent marriage of teenage pop diva Utada Hikaru by saying, "We want lots of people to get married and have many children" (BBC, 6 September).

Responding to the government's hysteria, the local government of Aji, a small town in Kagawa Prefecture, has started organizing *omiai* [marriage introductions] to deal with its dwindling population. Chibu in Shimane Prefecture was the first village to begin a "cash for babies" program. In the early 1990s they began offering ten calves to every farming family that had a child. Around the same time, Kawano in Fukui Prefecture instituted its "give birth and nurture incentive program," which offers 100,000 yen [about \$800] for the first and second children, ¥1 million for the third and a whopping ¥1.5 million for each subsequent child. The program notes that if a couple "produces" 15 children, they would be entitled to more than ¥19 million. We note, that is if the couple can find the energy to do so after being almost *karoshi*-ed [overworked] to death, and if they can find the privacy for those few moments of intimacy that are so sorely lacking for most families in this country. Not surprisingly, the instigator of this program, which is reminiscent of World War II campaign slogans to procreate, was formerly in the *kempeitai* [pre-war military thought-police].

The JCP jumped on this reactionary baby bandwagon in 1999 when they announced that a high birthrate is an index of social equality for women. The next year they noted that their "proposal for economic reforms to correct 'capitalism without rules' is closely connected with the task of overcoming the 'low birthrates'" ("Draft Resolution of the 22nd Congress of the Japanese Communist Party," 2000). We wonder whether their next step will be to hand out "medals for motherhood," just like Joseph Stalin did.

Decisions concerning whether to marry or not, to have children or not, the sex of one's companion or who one sleeps with are individual and consensual matters, and none of the government's nor the JCP's business. What is needed is the teaching of reproductive biology in the schools; education on AIDS; free, safe birth control for all who want it; free, 24-hour day-care centers and nursing care for the elderly; free education and a living stipend for all students; and affordable housing. These are transitional demands, most of which will not be met under capitalism, but are a bridge between today's conditions and the consciousness of wide layers of the working class which lead to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat.

Women's Oppression and Class Society

Women's oppression is rooted in the institution of the family and has been a feature of all class societies. The family is a key social unit for the maintenance of capitalism. For the capitalists, the family provides the basis for passing on accumulated wealth. And where there is no property to pass on, the institutionalized family serves to raise the next generation of workers, care for the sick and aged, and instill conservative social values and obedience to authority. It is the family—and the necessity to control sexual access to the woman to ensure that the man knows who his real heir is—which generates the morality codified in and reinforced by religion. It is the family that throughout a woman's life gives definition to her oppressed state: as daughter, as wife, as mother. As 19th century revolutionary Friedrich Engels wrote in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884): "The overthrow of mother right was the world historical defeat of the female sex. The man took command in the home also; the woman was degraded and became a mere instrument for the production of children."

Engels went on to explain that "the first premise for the emancipation of women is the reintroduction of the entire female sex into public industry." For genuine communists, the rate of women's participation in the labor force is a real index of their social status, and the higher the better. We understand and appreciate that the social conditions under which working people live are determined in struggle against the capitalist class. The fight for the full integration of women into the workforce is literally a life and death question for the Japanese working class, which is either unemployed, literally working itself to death, or committing *karojisatsu* [suicide brought on by too much overtime]. Women and minority and immigrant laborers are a key ally in the fight for a shorter work week.

Among the results of a union misleadership that won't fight for women's rights are weak unions that don't defend any of their members and an uncontested misogynist climate in society as a whole. The leadership of all three union federations has refused to fight against the exclusion of women and minorities from full-time employment in major industries. They also refuse to organize part-time, non-lifetime and so-called contingent workers, all of whom are predominantly female. Women comprise less than 20 percent of the union membership in this country, and less than 5 percent of the executive union posts. In desperation, several separate women's unions have been formed, only further dividing and weakening the working class.

The only effective response to the cap-



U.S. imperialist butcher General Douglas MacArthur with Emperor Hirohito during post-World War II American occupation of Japan.

italists' offensive is united class struggle, mobilizing the broadest ranks of labor in the interest of all workers. We fight to organize the unorganized, unionize all "non-regular," minority and immigrant workers into common industrial unions that would fight for the full integration of women into the workforce; for equal pay for equal work; and for equal access to free technical training and job upgrading.

The 1917 Russian Revolution: Committed to Full Social Equality for Women

The 1917 October Revolution was the first—and to date the only—successful socialist revolution in history. After the working class seized power in its own name led by the Bolshevik Party, the new Soviet government under Lenin and Trotsky took immediate steps to alleviate the oppression of women. The aim of the Soviet legislation was the replacement of the nuclear family as a social and economic unit through the socialization of household labor and the equalization of educational and vocational opportunities. These two goals were key to the undermining of the capitalist social order and to the construction of a new society. The government took steps toward replacing women's household drudgery by setting up cafeterias, laundries, and childcare centers to allow women to enter productive employment.

Illegitimacy was abolished in law, eliminating discrimination against children born outside of marriage and freeing mothers from the burden of a double standard which had punished them for the consequences of having had the child. Subsequent legislation declared marriage to be a contract between free and equal individuals that could be dissolved at the request of either partner, eliminated all discrimination against homosexuals, established hundreds of institutions devoted to the care of mothers and children (at no cost), made abortion legal, free and available on demand, assured equal pay for equal work, and opened up unheard of opportunities for women in

industry, the professions, the party and government. Thousands of schools were opened to women for the first time on the basis of preferential admissions. These sweeping gains were possible because the working class expropriated the property of the capitalists and established a planned, collectivized economy.

The Bolsheviks were limited in what they could actually implement in the way of replacing the functions of the family by collective social institutions in a relatively backward country, mainly peasant in its composition, which had been materially devastated by World War I and the ensuing civil war. Still, their example points the way to what could be accomplished under the rule of the proletariat in a far more economically and technologically advanced country like Japan.

The October Russian Revolution has been undone and its gains destroyed. Surrounded and pounded by the imperialists for seven decades, the Soviet Union was destroyed by capitalist counterrevolution in 1991-92. We fought for unconditional military defense of the USSR against imperialist attack and internal counterrevolution up until the very last barricade. The responsibility for the Soviet counterrevolution lies primarily with the Stalinist bureaucracy which usurped political power from the working class in 1923-24 and betrayed the revolutionary purpose of Lenin and Trotsky's Bolshevik Party and the revolutionary Communist International that they founded. Not the least of the Stalinists' crimes were the glorification of the family and the reversal of many gains for women. We called for a proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy and return to the road of Lenin and Trotsky.

The Struggle for an Egalitarian Socialist World

The woman question is a lever for revolution. The liberation of women is central to our program and we consider the question of women's participation in the revolutionary struggle as a strategic question. In short, this means that without the participation of women, without women leading and organizing the work and the struggles, the working class and its revolutionary party would fail in its historic tasks.

Liberating women from family servitude and the myriad of feudally derived traditions tied to the continued existence of the emperor system is a central task of a Japanese workers republic. The emancipation of women requires a socialist revolution and the creation of a planned economy in which women will have full access to participation in the productive forces of society, and the institution of the family will be replaced with collective childcare and housework. Marxists fight to rip the means of production out of the hands of the capitalists in order to put them at the service of the needs of the working people who create the wealth. The program of communism is for a classless society in which the family is transcended by superior sexual and social relations which will be free of moral or economic coercion. Our slogan is: "For women's liberation through socialist revolution!"

For new October Revolutions to free the working class from the tyranny of capital—and the monarchy!■

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女性と革命

女性天皇をめぐる議論は改良主義左翼が資本主義秩序の忠実なしもべであることを暴露する

The following is an edited version of a report by a comrade from the Lega Trotskista d'Italia, section of the International Communist League, on a November 28 strike and rally by Fiat workers near Milano, part of an ongoing struggle against layoffs and plant closures. Since the report was written, tens of thousands of Fiat workers across Italy engaged in further protest on December 6, blocking roads and picketing factories.

Last Thursday, workers at the Alfa Romeo auto plant in Arese organized a one-day strike. Alfa is part of Fiat and the plant is threatened to be closed down in December, with all workers laid off. On October 10, Fiat, which directly and through related industries employs some 7 percent of Italy's working population, announced layoffs of thousands of workers, affecting almost all its plants in Italy as well as plants in Argentina, Brazil and Poland. Particularly in southern Italy, the economic impact of closing down the only jobs in some areas will be catastrophic. As one worker at the Termini Imerese plant in Sicily put it: "We can't even become robbers; there is nothing left to steal here."

While Fiat is now talking about not completely closing the Termini Imerese plant, there is no such perspective for the Alfa plant in Arese. Fiat's proposal for Termini Imerese is that a few jobs will be maintained through the introduction of "flexible" work conditions. The workers reject these conditions and hope the unions will not accept the deal. But they are also very worried about whether they'll be able to save their jobs. Employment at the Alfa plant has dwindled from 30,000 workers to less than 3,000 in the last 15 years. Some workers are also conscious of the fact that the Alfa workforce may be particularly targeted by the bosses because it is historically very militant—many unionists have been fired there and the militant, independent SLAI-COBAS union was and is very strong.

The trade-union leaders at the Alfa plant called for a protest at the house of



La Repubblica

Right-wing Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi (left) with Gianni Agnelli, scion of Fiat dynasty.

right-wing Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi near Milan to urge him to do something to save the Alfa plant! Some union bureaucrats also appealed to the regional authorities for solutions. In general, their policy is to pressure the local institutions. They took as an example the fact that the mayor of Termini Imerese—a member of Berlusconi's party, Forza Italia—started a hunger strike against the plant closing there. While Termini Imerese has been gripped by strikes, demonstrations and highway and train station blockages mobilizing most of the town's residents, the trade-union tops are frustrated that there is not the same level of mobilization in Arese. The workers may well occupy the plant in the near future. At least, this is the will of Fiat workers who demonstrated in Rome last Tuesday—20,000 strong!



Report from Italy

December 6: Fiat auto workers block train station in Torino, part of nationwide demonstrations and strikes against announced mass layoffs.

Fiat Workers Fight to Save Their Jobs

At the Alfa plant, the workers manned a picket line from 4 a.m. to 4 p.m. at all three entrances and stopped everybody from going to work. They called for solidarity with their action, asking people to join them on the picket lines. They organized a rally in the afternoon with famous leftist singers and actors. In the morning, a contingent of high school students from the area joined the protest, followed later by a contingent of students from the University of Milan organized by the reformist Rifondazione Comunista (RC) and other groups. The workers welcomed them with lengthy applause.

We intervened into the strike, covering two picket entrances and distributing our literature, including the ICL declaration on Iraq titled: "Down With the UN Starvation Blockade! Defend Iraq Against U.S. and Allied Imperialist Attack!" There were a hundred workers at the smaller picketed plant gate entrance and some 300 people at the main one, including about a hundred students. We had discussions all morning long with workers and youth, and talked to a couple of union leaders, soliciting solidarity statements for the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) in Britain, which at the time was on strike.

The level of consciousness was contradictory, but it was possible to have very interesting discussions with many workers. In the discussions, many workers complained about the fact that the factory is organized by different unions, which divides the workers and weakens their power. This sentiment came from workers in the CGIL (Italian General Confederation of Labor, Italy's largest union federation) and COBAS (a syndicalist-influenced union confederation) and ex-CGIL and ex-COBAS workers. Many of these workers strongly agreed with our program of fighting for industrial unions.

The reactions were different, though, when we talked about building a revolutionary workers party. Many reacted with comments like: "The question here is that we will lose our jobs tomorrow," or "I vote RC." But some COBAS workers were very receptive to criticisms of RC and class collaboration as they remember quite well what RC did when

it supported the anti-worker and anti-immigrant popular-front government led by Democratici di Sinistra (DS—Democratic Left) that preceded Berlusconi. COBAS workers received RC leader Fausto Bertinotti this July with insults. Many workers saw an old issue of our journal *Spartaco* from the 1980s about struggles at Fiat and agreed with its title: "PCI Stabs the Fiat Strike in the Back." Both RC and DS came out of the PCI (Communist Party of Italy), which disintegrated following the destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991-92. In 1997, RC voted for an agreement in the plant to lay off 1,000 workers.

In discussing the FBU strike with the workers, we learned that only a few of them knew about the FBU's struggle. But more advanced workers appreciated the importance of that strike, and were very surprised that in Britain the firemen are fighting for a 40 percent increase in salary. Some workers remarked that "New Labour" prime minister Tony Blair wants to play at being Thatcher (the Conservative prime minister who waged a campaign to smash the militant miners union in Britain in the 1980s).

We tried to make the link between the Fiat struggle and the U.S.'s impending war with Iraq, which the Berlusconi regime supports. We pointed to how the FBU strike is an obstacle to Blair's war efforts. But some workers saw no link between the war and their strike. They may understand that the war would be an attack on the working people of Iraq, but they don't understand how class struggle hinders the imperialists' war efforts. On the question of immigrants, there were different reactions. One young female student said she defends workers but not immigrants who, she claimed, take away jobs. The factory is totally white.

The trade-union bureaucrats address the struggle for jobs at Fiat in terms of fighting a threatened foreign takeover by GM and insisting that Fiat equals Italy, and that the government must save this giant symbol of Italian capitalism. The common approach of the left is that the auto industry is too important for the Italian economy to let it go down the

tubes, so they are all demanding a state bailout of Fiat. RC calls for nationalization of Fiat. They complain that "Fiat becoming a branch of GM is bad not only for Fiat and Italy but also for Europe" (*Liberazione*, 12 October). Many left groups are calling for Berlusconi and the barons of Italian industry—who have swindled millions of workers out of their pensions, lined their own pockets through grandiose and useless "public works," looted the country and run the Mafia—to "bail out" Fiat by nationalizing it. This is a call to make the Agnelli family, who have owned Fiat for more than a century, richer.

When Leon Trotsky in the 1938 Transitional Program addressed the question of "expropriation of separate groups of capitalists," this was not a call for absorbing the ruling class' losing industries, but for expropriating the wealth of the ruling families. And Fiat is a losing industry; its share of the Italian car market is less than 30 percent, a huge drop from the 90 percent share that it had from the post-World War II boom until roughly 1990.

Trotsky further explained in the Transitional Program that the program of socialist revolution does not hinder Marxists "from advancing, when the occasion warrants, the demand for the expropriation of several key branches of industry vital for national existence, or of the most parasitic group of the bourgeoisie." Writing shortly after the Stalinists proclaimed the "People's Front," which sought to chain the workers movement to a mythical "progressive" wing of the bourgeoisie, Trotsky went on to explain:

"The difference between these demands and the middleheaded reformist slogan of 'nationalization' lies in the following: (1) we reject indemnification; (2) we warn the masses against demagogues of the People's Front who, giving lip service to nationalization, remain in reality agents of capital; (3) we call on the masses to rely only upon their revolutionary strength; (4) we link up the question of expropriation with that of seizure of power by the workers and farmers."

It is not an accident that none of the Italian "left" calls for expropriating the Agnelli family—only the auto company that Agnelli doesn't even want anymore! As revolutionaries, we say that the workers have no interest in saving Fiat, but they need to fight to defend jobs and living conditions.

Most workers do not think about nationalization but about saving their jobs. It was mainly youth, clearly under the influence of RC and FalceMartello (followers of Ted Grant's *Socialist Appeal* group in Britain), who raised the call for "nationalization." FalceMartello had a table with over a dozen people in front of the entrance at one of the picket lines. "Nationalization" is their big campaign.

At the strike support rally, several

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COBAS leaders gave speeches. One of them made some remarks about how Umberto Bossi—leader of the fascistic Lega Nord, which is in the government—had “betrayed” the workers because he said he would only “defend” the workers in Lombardy, a northern district where the Lega Nord is influential. Several COBAS leaders remarked that “our local politicians, mayors, etc. don’t rally to our side, unlike the mayor of Termini Imerese and the regional deputies of Sicily, who side with Fiat workers.” The politicians the COBAS leaders referred to are all rightists or members of Gianfranco Fini’s Alleanza Nazionale, another government party which is currently primarily an electoral vehicle but also heir of the historic party of Mussolini’s fascism. A member of FalceMartello intervened and made a very economist speech about how the bosses are trying to dismantle Fiat and called to nationalize Fiat. A young RC woman cadre said that workers should join their fight for immigrant rights and called for dismantling the detention centers where refugees are housed. She also briefly mentioned the impending war on Iraq. Our comrade was the last to speak. He was applauded and cheered during his speech and at the end. Here’s what he said.

* * *

I’m a supporter of *Spartaco*. We are here in complete solidarity with the struggle of the Alfa and Fiat workers. The scope and stakes of this fight are larger than Arese, larger than defense of workers at Fiat, and even larger than this country itself. What is at stake is also rights



February 1999: Immigrants protest racism at Milano rally organized by trade unions.

for immigrants. Thousands of them risk not only being fired when the factories that are contracted to work for Fiat shut down, but also being deported under the Bossi/Fini law. We fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants and for the unionization of all immigrant workers. What is at stake is women’s rights, as they are the first fired and last hired. The reason why women workers at Termini Imerese are so prominent in this fight is because they fear being forced back into the oppression of the family, like they were in the 1950s and before. And this is an international fight, too. Fiat workers are being fired not only in

Italy but in Argentina, Brazil and Poland. And there are massive workers struggles in France, where truckers shut down the country yesterday, and in Britain, where the 50,000 FBU firemen are out to fight against the Blair government which threatens to send the army to break up their picket lines.

Workers at Fiat need to show their internationalist support to their class brothers abroad. And the government that today is attacking Fiat workers is the same government that is preparing to attack Iraq. We fight for the defense of Iraq against imperialist attack and for class struggle against the capitalist rulers at

home. Every blow against the capitalists here through workers strikes and actions is a blow against their military massacres against colonial peoples. Every military blow they suffer in their imperialist campaigns is a blow against our own exploiters, which helps and eases our struggles here.

We have to fight any illusions in the capitalist state and politicians. Putting this struggle in their hands means putting oneself in his enemy’s hands. What is needed to win this fight is a massive mobilization of the social power of the working class, a confrontation of class against class, through mass pickets, plant occupations and solidarity strikes. We also have to fight any illusion in reformist parties like the DS and RC, which find themselves in opposition today but for a decade were instrumental in slashing jobs and social benefits and devastating working-class livelihoods.

This crisis at Fiat is itself a product of a worldwide capitalist crisis and recession. The capitalist rulers have devastated the manufacturing base of this country, throwing millions into unemployment. What is needed to overcome this is not the RC’s program of piecemeal nationalizations, which have been clearly shown in this country’s history to enrich bankers and bosses. We need to expropriate all of the bourgeois class through a socialist revolution. The key is the ability of the working class in struggle to forge a revolutionary leadership. What we need is a revolutionary workers party that fights to lead the working class to power, to a workers government based on organs of workers power, like workers councils. ■

Firefighters...

(continued from page 5)

presided over the bloody partition of India, which was an untold horror in terms of the numbers of people killed. They suppressed the working masses in the Greek civil war in the 1940s. They introduced some of the most racist measures against immigrants in history; such as virginity tests for Asian women in the 1970s. They sent the British Army to Northern Ireland in 1969. And when it comes to the trade unions, as a firefighter pointed out to us on the picket line, this is the second strike the FBU has ever had and both have been against a Labour government.

The Trade-Union Political Fund

This question that is being debated within the trade-union movement about what to do with the political fund is really about what kind of party the working class needs to actually represent its

interests independent of the capitalist class. We fight to build a multiethnic revolutionary workers party to fight for socialist revolution, a Leninist vanguard party modelled on the party that led the Russian Revolution.

It’s a fundamentally different animal than any type of Labourite party. For example, on political funds, we think it’s fine for a trade union to have a political fund; we don’t think that they should pretend to be apolitical organisations. And they should spend them on campaigns on a case by case basis. People could go to the trade union and ask for support for a particular case. For instance, we went to the Fire Brigades Union in Glasgow some years ago and got a huge donation for Mumia Abu-Jamal, a black political prisoner on death row in America.

But there’s a fundamental difference between a trade union and a political party. Trade unions are defensive economic organisations of the working class;

therefore you want to include as broad a swath of the working population as possible. You want industrial unions to be as big as possible. That means they will incorporate people with all levels of consciousness.

The Leninist vanguard party, on the other hand, is based on the most advanced layers of the working class. While the trade-union movement is built on the broadest possible basis, the Leninist vanguard party is built by splitting other organisations and winning people away from social-democratic, Labour-type organisations and from organisations that pretend to be socialist. That’s not something the Spartacist League invented. It came from Lenin, who definitively broke with the parties purporting to be socialist when they supported their own ruling classes in war in 1914.

A Leninist vanguard party fights against all forms of chauvinism, champions all of the oppressed. What you actually see in the support from the population for the FBU on the picket lines, which you also saw in the miners strike, is that there’s a very high degree of support from ethnic minorities—Kurds, Turks and other immigrants, as well as blacks and Asians. What you see there is the potential core of a Leninist vanguard party in this country. That is what it would look like.

In this country, immediately after the greatest success of the working class in history, the Russian October Revolution of 1917, which had huge support among the working class here, the Labour Party Fabians drafted something called Clause IV, which called for common ownership of the means of production. The idea was to fool the working class that socialism here would come through Parliament nationalising industry. It’s a con, and that’s what it was intended as.

We believe that it really is possible to regenerate and reindustrialise this country and to provide work for people. We believe it’s possible to provide decent health care, decent education and decent services including housing, but not within the framework of capitalism. That does require a socialist revolution and establishing a planned economy where you decide to manufacture and produce things based on need, and it has to work within an international socialist system.

It is exactly in the crucible of very important struggles such as this one and such as the miners strike that a revolutionary party will be built. This is a really crucial battle. We want to do everything that we can to fight for the Fire Brigades Union to win against this government and in the course of such battles we seek to build a revolutionary party to fight for a socialist revolution. ■

United...

(continued from page 3)

Airline workers must fight for the unions to organize the unorganized and demand equal pay for equal work! A key question for airline unions is defending the largely immigrant airport workers who have been targeted by the government’s “war on terror”—in reality, a war on immigrants, black people and workers. Already, more than 900 airport workers have been rounded up for supposedly falsifying their job applications, and many face deportation. The airline companies have also used information from the accompanying government background checks to discipline and fire union workers. But defending all these workers is antithetical to the national-chauvinist outlook of the labor tops. Both the AMFA and IAM misleaders decry the loss of “American jobs” as the airline companies attempt to outsource more maintenance work than ever to non-union facilities in the U.S., Canada and overseas. In casting labor struggle in terms of parochial, national-centered unionism, the bureaucrats are necessarily chaining labor to the class enemy in

the name of American competitiveness against the U.S. rulers’ imperialist rivals.

Union-busting goes hand in hand with imperialist war abroad. It is widely understood that in the event of a U.S. war with Iraq, thousands of airline workers will be laid off as a result of rising fuel costs alone. U.S. Airways, for example, issued an ultimatum last week that unless its workforce agreed to another round of concessions, including an 18-month 5 percent “wage deferral” in the event of war, they would all lose their jobs. One of the reasons that United mechanics voted down their concessions package in November was that it included a similar provision.

Layoffs, union-busting, racist oppression and recurring economic crises are endemic to the capitalism system. The only solution is for the working class to take power in its own name, ripping the wealth of society from the small band of greedy capitalists. To this end, the way forward is to forge a revolutionary workers party embodying in its program and its actions the highest interests of the international working class. The only “controlling interest” worth fighting for is the social ownership of machinery, aircraft, factories and mines in the planned economy of a socialist society. ■

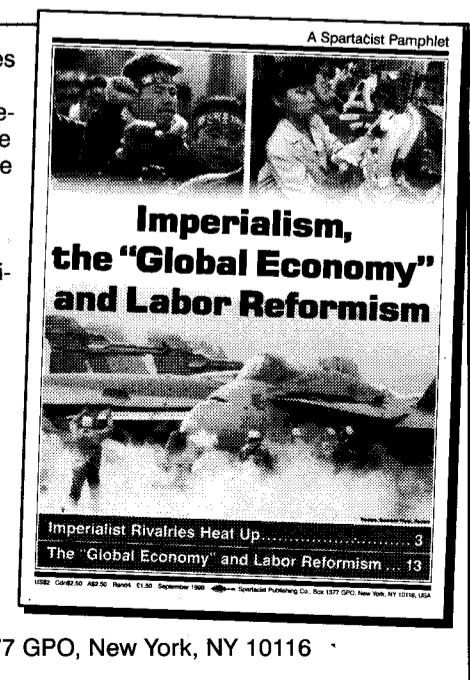
This pamphlet assesses recent changes in the world economy in a historical perspective, from the origins of modern imperialism in the late 19th century through the capitalist counterrevolution in East Europe and the former USSR and its aftermath. Reformist ideologues of “globalization” seek to obscure the role of the capitalist nation-state and the danger of inter-imperialist war which is inherent in capitalism, while amnestying the refusal of the labor bureaucracies to wage class struggle against their respective bourgeoisies.

Exploitation, poverty and social degradation can be eliminated only through proletarian revolutions in the imperialist centers as well as the neocolonial countries, laying the basis for an international planned socialist economy.

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NYC Transit...

(continued from page 1)

representing a tenth of the city's cab drivers, announced it would stop work in solidarity with a transit strike. *It's about time labor fought back!*

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) has contemptuously offered a giveback deal that would freeze wages this year while increasing health care copayments and reducing pay to finance pension benefits. Raises in the following two years of the contract would be allowed only in exchange for increased "productivity," i.e., increased work by fewer employees. Transit workers are all too aware that such "productivity money" literally comes out of the flesh and blood of the workforce. In the last month alone two maintenance workers, Joy Antony and Kurien Baby, were killed in separate incidents as a result of management's blatant disregard for safety. Local 100 president Roger Toussaint accurately called the MTA proposal an "insult, an outrage and a provocation."

To wage the solid strike needed to win—shutting down MTA subways and buses as well as the private lines buses—transit workers must look to their allies in the city's labor movement and the ghetto and barrio poor, not to the Democratic and Republican politicians who represent the class enemy. Yet Toussaint declared on WINS radio the night of the vote, "The Governor should step in." The governor has already stepped in—with threats to smash the union with National Guard troops.

And one had better believe that the White House is paying close attention to the transit negotiations. During the recent longshore dispute on the West Coast, "Homeland Security" czar Thomas Ridge warned the International Longshore and Warehouse Union that a strike would threaten "national security," and some weeks later, after an employers' lockout, the Bush administration invoked the slave-labor Taft-Hartley Act. If a transit strike shuts down the financial capital of U.S. imperialism, you can bet that Ridge and others in the Bush administration will train their eyes on the TWU. To pursue its wars abroad, U.S. imperialism demands class peace at home. By the same token, working-class struggle would deal a blow against U.S. imperialism's predatory wars abroad as well as union-busting austerity and brutal repression at home.

The city bosses have launched an anti-union propaganda barrage, with Bloomberg foaming that a transit strike would "endanger human life." But it is the multi-billionaire mayor who is demanding massive cuts in social services, including a 30 percent cut in the education budget, as well as a big jump in property taxes which will inevitably be followed by rent increases. Already rubber-stamped by the Democratic-run City Council, Bloomberg's austerity schemes are designed to force the working class and poor to bear the brunt of the economic crisis manufactured by capitalism itself. As a union call for a December 16 NYC labor rally put it, "We Did Not Share in the Wealth! We Will Not 'Share The Pain!'" An average transit worker would take over 100,000 years to earn what Bloomberg is worth. In fact, Bloomberg could just about wipe out the city's budget deficit by writing a personal check!

When Bloomberg and other government officials claim that a transit strike would jeopardize the health and safety of New Yorkers, this is sheer hypocrisy. The MTA not only constantly disregards its own safety measures but is exempt from federally mandated safety regulations. City officials are already slating firehouses to be shut down and are talking about privatizing ambulance services. Officially the city bosses pay homage to firemen as heroes because they died in the attack on the World Trade Center. But in reality the politicians believe what Deputy Mayor Marc Shaw recently said: "Since we can't get these guys to be any more productive in fighting fires, since

they only fight fires 5 percent of the time—they're hanging around doing nothing the other 95 percent of the time—let's find other things for them to do" (*New York Times*, 8 December).

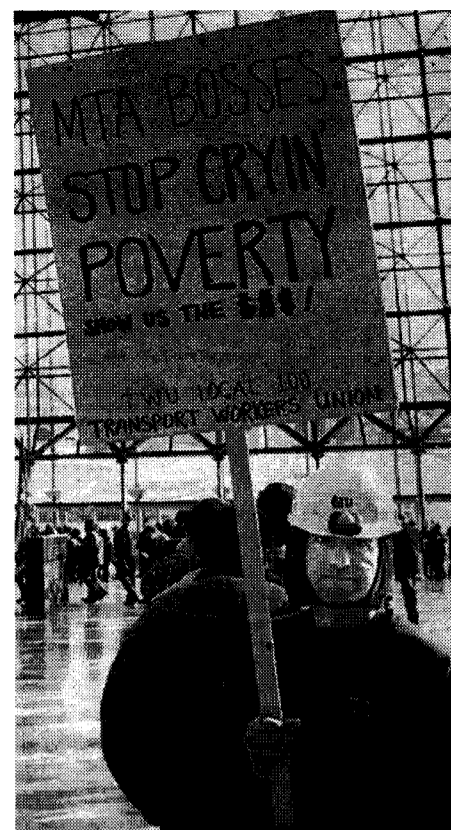
Local 100 members are rightly furious at a 6 December editorial in the vile, labor-hating *New York Post* which advised the Bloomberg administration to "prepare the arrest warrant" for Toussaint and the entire membership if the TWU strikes. Outrageously, the editorial denounced the union's stated intention to defend itself as "Toussaint's jihad." This is very much along the lines of a smear campaign directed at Toussaint's Local 100 "New Directions" leadership at the time of the TWU national convention in October 2001, when an anonymous pamphlet was circulated with a section titled: "New Directions and Sept. 11: Bin Laden's Friends?" According to New Directions supporters, the force behind this smear campaign was the TWU "old guard" headed by International-president Sonny Hall.

Anyone in the labor movement who buys into this dirty game is playing into the hands of the bosses, their kept media and their political agents—Republicans and Democrats alike. While at home the "war on terror" has been used in the first instance to witchhunt and persecute South Asian, Arab and Muslim immigrants, its targets also include the unions. The bourgeoisie is well aware that the organized labor movement potentially represents the most socially cohesive obstacle to its class rule. A year ago the leader of striking teachers in Middletown, New Jersey was labeled a "representative of the Taliban," while the strikers themselves were clapped into jail. This highlighted the fact that the "war on terror," which the government uses to drum up support for its military adventures

the Homeland Security Act, have been passed with the support of Democratic Party legislators. Another graphic example was the 1999 TWU contract negotiations. Both Republican mayor Rudolph Giuliani and Democratic state attorney general Eliot Spitzer intervened to get injunctions criminalizing not only strike action but even advocacy of strike action. They threatened to destroy the union and bankrupt union members with fines of \$1 million against the union and \$25,000 against individuals the first day of a strike, with fines doubling every day thereafter. For her part, Hillary Clinton intoned that the Taylor Law was a "wise law" because "public employees should not legally be allowed to strike."

At bottom, the pro-Democratic Party labor leaders accept the framework of capitalism and the laws designed to protect capitalist property. The bureaucrats claim that if the right people are appointed to such institutions as the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), then they will function in the interest of the unions. In fact, the labor laws provide a whole panoply of strikebreaking weapons. The Wagner Act of 1935, signed by the aristocratic liberal Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt, gave the NLRB wide powers to determine which unions would be recognized as bargaining agents by the employers, and the period immediately following saw a far more rapid expansion of company unions than real unions. Since then, new anti-strike legislation has been codified in Taft-Hartley and other laws.

Had the militants in the 1930s adhered to the law, then the CIO mass industrial unions, including the TWU, would never have been organized. The entire history of the American labor movement is one of laws broken and court injunctions defied. No decisive gain of labor was



Matthew Roberts

December 7: TWU member outside union mass meeting that voted for strike authorization.

the issue. Bluffs don't work in fundamental things, only in incidental ones. In such things as the conflict of class interests one must be prepared to fight."

—*History of American Trotskyism* (1944)

To defeat the government's array of strikebreaking laws requires both the industrial and political mobilization of the working class.

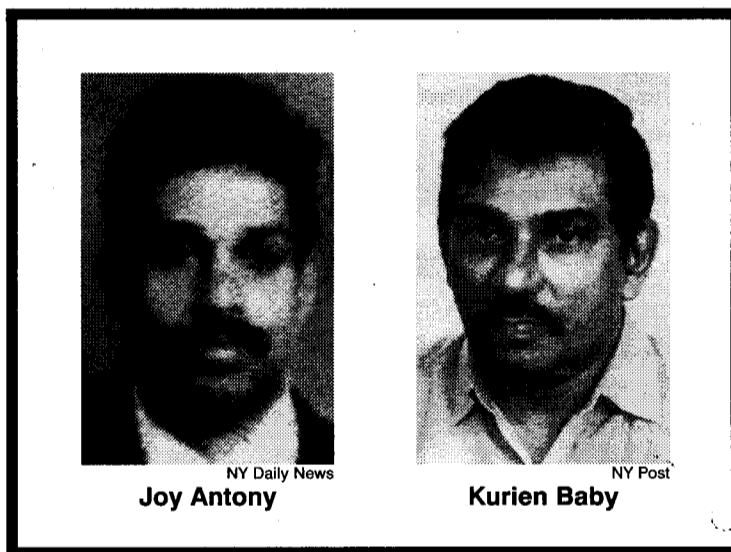
Cops, Courts Out of the Unions!

The pioneers of the labor movement would have choked over the thought that the police are anything other than the hired thugs of the bosses. Yet Toussaint invited Patrick Lynch, head of the Policemen's Benevolent Association, to speak at a September TWU rally and then hailed him at the December 7 mass meeting. The cops' job is to protect the property and power of the capitalists. Should there be a transit strike, the same police who routinely brutalize black and Latino youth will be mobilized to smash picket lines. They will be assisted in this by the TA's security guards, who outrageously are organized by the TWU. *Cops and security guards out of the unions!*

For years, New Directions has brought court suits against their opponents in the union. These unprincipled actions open up the TWU to meddling and intervention by the class enemy and further subordinate the TWU to the bosses' state. These same courts will be used to invoke the Taylor Law. Differences within the union should be debated in the union, not brought to the bosses' courts!

Without the right to strike, unions are gutted of their very reason for existence. The AFL-CIO officialdom prates that "you can't strike against the government." But who wins in any battle between capital and labor depends on the relationship of forces as measured in struggle. In the middle of World War II, against the howls of the whole capitalist order denouncing them as traitors and agents of Hitler, coal miners defied the wartime no-strike pledge. In response to FDR's threats of military strikebreaking, the miners pointed out that you can't mine coal with bayonets. When the NYC bosses tried to break the 1966 transit strike using the Condon-Wadlin Act (the predecessor of the Taylor Law), the union defied a court injunction. Thrown behind bars, Local 100 president Mike Quill declared: "It is about time that someone, somewhere along the road, ceases to be respectable. Many generations of great Americans before us have taken this road, and if they didn't take this road, half of you would be on home relief.... The judge can drop dead in his black robes, and we would not call off the strike." The strike won, and the Condon-Wadlin Act became a dead letter.

A recent handout from Local 100



Joy Antony

Kurien Baby

abroad, as in Afghanistan and now Iraq, is simultaneously directed at those who resist capitalist exploitation at home.

The Democrats—A Bosses' Party

Contrary to the ravings of the *New York Post* and other right-wing media, the Local 100 president is not a Marxist nor even particularly radical. Toussaint is a strong supporter of the Democratic Party; indeed, every TWU rally has had a large number of Democratic Party politicians on the speaker's rostrum. Other NYC labor leaders, like 1199 hospital union chief Dennis Rivera, a former co-chairman of the state Democratic Party, switched to Pataki in the last elections.

The Democrats, no less than the Republicans, are a party of big business. The Democrats appeal to a different constituency, using a different rhetoric. The particular role of the Democratic Party in American bourgeois politics is to convince the working class and the oppressed black and Latino minorities that they, too, can benefit from the capitalist system with the right kind of government policies and regulations.

Despite occasional differences on secondary issues, the two parties of capital are united when it comes to protecting the fundamental class interests of the bourgeoisie. The new pieces of legislation beefing up the forces of state repression, such as the USA-Patriot Act and

ever won in a courtroom or by an act of Congress. Everything the workers movement has won of value has been achieved by mobilizing the ranks of labor in hard-fought struggle on the picket lines. This was demonstrated by the struggles that preceded the organizing of the TWU in the 1930s. These struggles, as in 1895, were marked by pitched street battles with thousands of cops, company agents and National Guardsmen. They often involved mass arrests and firings as well as scabherding. During a 1918 strike, a scab motorman crashed his train into a tunnel wall, killing 92 people, the worst accident in New York transit history. That is what strikebreaking means.

The first great organizing victories of the 1930s were led by communists and socialists. The key to success in such battles as the Minneapolis Teamsters strikes of 1934, led by the American Trotskyists, was a clear understanding that the capitalist state is the executive committee of the ruling class and hence an enemy of the workers. As noted by James P. Cannon, a founder and leader of American Trotskyism:

"The modern labor movement must be politically directed because it is confronted by the government at every turn. Our people were prepared for that since they were political people, inspired by political conceptions....

"They prepared everything from the point of view of class war. They knew that power, not diplomacy, would decide

Iraq...

(continued from page 1)

try to cover burgeoning budget deficits by slashing such meager, underfunded social services as still exist. In New York City, the 34,000-strong Transport Workers Union Local 100 is threatened with a union-busting onslaught by multibillionaire mayor Michael Bloomberg. And the 250,000 reservists and National Guardsmen who will soon be called up for active duty, overwhelmingly black, Latino and working-class, know that they may not have a job to come back to—if they now have a job at all.

Some 250,000 people in the U.S. marched in opposition to the war on October 26. But the Workers World Party's ANSWER coalition, which organized the protests, used them to provide a platform for Democrats like Jesse Jackson to intone, "Come alive on November 5!" The politicians for whom Jackson was corraling votes include the likes of presidential hopeful John Kerry, who not only voted for Bush's war resolution in the Senate but argued that Iraq should have been attacked immediately after 9/11. Another is Delaware Senator Joseph Biden, now touring the Kurdish region of northern Iraq to line up support for Bush's war.

The Spartacist League and Spartacus Youth Clubs built revolutionary internationalist contingents to intervene into the October 26 protests, declaring in the mobilizing call for the contingents (WV No. 789, 18 October):

"We stand for the military defense of neocolonial Iraq against U.S. imperialist attack, while giving no political support whatsoever to the bloody Saddam Hussein regime. Every unchallenged act of aggrandizement by the U.S., every new easy win further emboldens America's capitalist rulers to lash out against their perceived enemies at home and abroad; any defeat of the imperialist ambitions of the U.S. would be in the interest of workers and the oppressed throughout the world....

"We fight to build a revolutionary party that can infuse the working class with an

understanding of its historic task to sweep away the capitalist order and reorganize society on an egalitarian socialist basis."

Class Struggle vs. Liberal Pacifism

The colossal military advantage of the United States against neocolonial Iraq underscores the importance of *class struggle* in the imperialist centers. Our class-struggle perspective may seem remote to many young antiwar protesters who have not seen much social struggle. But the class struggle does exist, as demonstrated by the battles of the West Coast longshoremen and the threatened strike by New York City transit workers. And labor struggle is erupting throughout much of West Europe—from Fiat workers in Italy fighting layoffs to strikes by air traffic controllers and other public sector workers in France to the British firefighters pitted against the union-busting Labour government of Tony Blair. British military chiefs have expressed alarm that Blair's use of the army for strikebreaking could undermine war preparations against Iraq.

In Turkey, a key staging ground for U.S. war plans, there were mass protests led by the trade unions both at the time of the attack on Afghanistan last year and during the 1990-91 Gulf War. Moreover, Turkish workers at the strategic Incirlik air base have staged repeated strikes over the years. Their union opposes war against Iraq, as does 83 percent of the population according to polls, and has been threatening another strike. A strike there now would not only be widely popular but could well hobble the U.S. war effort.

The obstacle to successful working-class struggle lies in the labor misleaders who seek to chain the proletariat to the class enemy, whether through the agency of bourgeois nationalism as in Turkey or through the Labour Party as in Britain and the social democrats and ex-Stalinists elsewhere in West Europe. In the U.S., the AFL-CIO tops chain the unions to the Democratic Party, which is a party of capitalism, racism and imperialist war no



AP
December 1: Protesters in Istanbul, Turkey carry banner reading "No to War."

less than the Republicans.

In their own way, the various reformist organizations prominent in the antiwar protests act to maintain and reinforce illusions in the Democrats as a "lesser evil." The International Socialist Organization (ISO) warns in the current issue of *International Socialist Review* (November-December 2002) against antiwar protesters appealing to the Democratic Party. But such left verbiage does not prevent the ISO from promoting the same class-collaborationist coalition politics pushed by ANSWER. The ISO argues for "building a broad antiwar movement, united around a simple set of demands—no war, no sanctions," which "should be able to embrace anyone who supports these demands, whether they are socialists who oppose U.S. imperialism in principle or Democratic Party sympathizers who believe that the UN can be a force for peace."

What this means in practice is reject-

ing any demand that liberal Democrats like Jackson could not embrace—like the necessary call for military defense of Iraq against U.S. imperialism—just as opposition to the UN sanctions was deep-sixed by much of the left in 1990-91. As the ISO notes in speaking of a January 1991 demonstration organized by the Campaign for Peace in the Middle East, "In the name of building the 'broadest' movement, the Campaign insisted on demanding an Iraqi pullout from Kuwait, and pandered to organizations such as Sane-Freeze (the predecessor of today's Peace Action) that supported UN sanctions against Iraq as an 'alternative' to war." Yet the ISO endorsed the Campaign demo call, joining those who pandered to the call for imperialist sanctions!

At bottom, reformists like the ISO reduce the struggle against imperialist war to a lobbying effort for the capitalist rulers to adopt a more peaceful and humane foreign policy and to shift their priorities, i.e., "Money for jobs, not for war!" But imperialist war is inherent to the capitalist profit system, the result of the drive by competing imperialist states to seize and control markets, natural resources (like oil) and areas for investment and exploitation. Only the revolutionary movement of the proletariat, shattering the bourgeois state and replacing it with a workers state in which those who labor rule, can put the imperialist war criminals out of business for good.

Weapons Inspectors: Spies for Imperialism

Weapons inspection is a pretext for and a prelude to imperialist attack. The last inspection team was not kicked out by Saddam Hussein but was rather *pulled out* by the Clinton administration in 1998—one day before the U.S. launched a concerted bombing campaign that the inspectors prepared by spying on and spotting potential Iraqi targets. Having agreed to their return only in order to indulge its allies, the Bush administration has subjected the UN team to a string of

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reproduces a *New York Times* article from 1968 and praises then-mayor Lindsay for negotiating a good settlement. It is captioned: "Where are our political leaders? Mayor Bloomberg, Governor Pataki—Where are you?" The implication is that with "good faith" bargaining on both sides, labor and management can arrive at a common interest that benefits both parties. This is fundamentally false: the interests of capital and labor are diametrically counterposed. What the Local 100 leaflet doesn't say is that the 1968 settlement, which gave union members a pension after 20 years' service with no employee contributions, came about because Lindsay had been solidly walloped by the union two years earlier and couldn't stomach another strike.

When the TWU walked out again in 1980, we wrote in a special *Workers Vanguard* supplement (11 April 1980) headlined "Smash the Taylor Law! Bust the Union-Busters!":

"The TWU membership on the lines in this strike needs a leadership with the guts and *program* to stand up to the bosses' courts and politicians, and to wage a militant class struggle against the capitalist austerity offensive.... A class-struggle leadership with a program for victory would seek to mobilize all New York labor to defend the TWU against the Taylor Law. It would shut down *all* the commuter busing and put the screws on PATH and LIRR unions to bring out their ranks as well in a powerful joint transportation strike."

But after eleven days, despite the ranks remaining solid and the city beginning to feel the pinch, the Local 100 leaders caved in and New York transit workers were sold down the river.

The 1966 strike victory led to many gains for TWU members, and for many years transit was the best union job in the city. The erosion of the traditions of militancy, including the union tops' panicky collapse during the 1980 strike, has enabled management to become much

more aggressive. The transit bosses were further emboldened by the union leadership's acquiescence to Giuliani and Spitzer's strikebreaking in 1999. In the past three years, TWU members have been subjected to 48,000 disciplinary actions and 45,000 "home investigations." Today transit workers are dogged by a small army of "beakies," company snoops, drug testing centers, security guards, etc. For every five transit workers there is one supervisor! Firing the whole lot of these parasites would realize genuine efficiencies, and would probably provide the money for a hefty wage hike for the real workforce.

For a Workers Party to Fight for a Workers Government!

It is crucial that the heavily integrated TWU take up the defense of "workfare" recipients forced into doing the jobs of transit workers just to get their welfare payments, on the basis of a deal cooked up with the city by the previous Local 100 leadership under Willie James. The point is not to deny these hard-pressed people their jobs but to demand that they be organized by the TWU and receive union wages! It is also crucial for transit workers to defeat attempts to divide this industrial union. Earlier this month, private lines bus workers resoundingly voted to reject a despicable move by Toussaint's "old guard" opponents led by Hall to split the workers away from Local 100 even as the contract battle loomed.

The TWU should respond to the bosses' campaign for a big fare hike by demanding the abolition of fares, a demand that would win enthusiastic support from the mass of the population. Public transit is a necessary social service. You don't pay firemen when they come to put out a fire, so why should working people have to pay for transit just to get to and from work? The capitalists had the subways built to haul workers into Man-

hattan from the boroughs—so make the capitalists pay! It is the Marxists who fight to mobilize the labor movement for such demands, as part of the struggle to forge a revolutionary workers party that takes up the cause of all the oppressed and poor.

The last time there was a huge financial crisis in the city it was the working people who were made to pay, as union leaders caved in to the Wall Street banks and Democratic Party machine. In the mid 1970s, the TWU and other unions had their contracts voided, thousands of jobs were slashed, the bus and subway fare was raised 50 percent and free tuition was abolished at CUNY after 129 years. The unions pledged billions from pension funds to guarantee the bankers' loans to the city. The banks have received many times the value of these loans in the form of interest. In fact, a good part of the deficit cited by the MTA amounts to these loans and the interest due on them.

The unions should demand that the

city and MTA open their books for public inspection. The bloodsucking banks and utilities must be expropriated! Billions should be made available by the federal government for rebuilding and restoring an efficient and safe urban transit system as well as decent housing, schools and hospitals.

To achieve such ends necessarily runs up hard against the realities of decaying American imperialism. The reformist view that one can smoothly make the transformation to "more butter, less guns" is a myth. American capitalism demands the maintenance of its "top dog" position as a military power, necessarily at the expense of intensified exploitation of working people at home and abroad. Only the revolutionary struggle for a workers government, which once and for all expropriates the bourgeoisie, can point the way forward for the labor movement. To lead such a struggle, what is indispensable is a class-struggle workers party that intransigently opposes the bourgeois order. ■

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Iraq...

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condemnations and ultimatums for not being provocative enough, including the demand that Iraqi scientists be forced to "defect"—i.e., kidnapped.

The purpose such defectors serve is illustrated by the case of one Khidhir Hamza, whose tailor-made "revelations" are the basis for Washington's outlandish accounts of Iraq's supposed nuclear capability. In late July, Hamza claimed that Iraq might be able to produce three bombs by 2005; seven weeks later he said three bombs could be built within a few months. What changed? "Hamza's new masters in the United States," explained an article in the *London Review of Books* (17 October), wanted him "to add some urgency to the debate."

Playing his appointed role as Bush's mouthpiece, British Labour prime minister Tony Blair took time out last week from his campaign to crush the Fire Brigades Union to offer up another of his "dossiers" justifying a war, as he did before last year's attack on Afghanistan. Prominent among Blair's examples of Saddam Hussein's crimes against the Iraqi people is the case of Dr. Hussain al-Shahristani, a scientist who was imprisoned for 12 years, 11 of them in solitary confinement, for refusing to work on Iraq's nuclear weapons program. But in *Israel*, heroic nuclear technician Mordechai Vanunu has been behind bars for 16 years, 12 of them in solitary confinement, simply for revealing to the world the scale of the Zionists' nuclear weapons program.

Unlike Iraq, Israel does have nukes,

Gaza residents depend on for survival. But these Zionist atrocities are buried in the American press and elicit barely a peep of protest on the streets.

In recent weeks, barely a day has gone by without a massacre of Palestinians somewhere in the West Bank or Gaza, the most recent victims including a mother of seven, a mentally ill man and a 95-year-old woman sitting in a taxi. In Hebron, where some 450 Zionist settlers already controlled 20 percent of the city, the 120,000 Palestinian residents have been driven into an even more confined ghetto following the killing of a number of Israeli soldiers and security guards last month. Three days ago, an Israeli attack killed ten people in Gaza, including a teacher and another worker at a UN school. Two weeks earlier, Israeli soldiers shot dead another UN official and wounded one of the West European volunteers who have courageously come to the Occupied Territories as observers in the hope of deterring Zionist terror. **Defend the Palestinians! Israel out of the Occupied Territories!**

The Zionist rulers are emboldened in their onslaught by the total support of the Bush administration. And the most anti-Palestinian elements in the White House are also the most rabid anti-Iraq warmongers, including former Reaganites like Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle and, now, Elliot Abrams, a Zionist neoconservative and convicted felon for his role in the Iran-contra gun-running scam during the Reagan administration. Speaking of such types, Israeli leader Ariel Sharon said that "next to our American friends" even one of the most rabidly anti-Palestinian members of his cabinet is a "total dove." A fanatical anti-



Revolutionary Internationalist Contingent organized by Spartacist League/Spartacus Youth Club at October 26 San Francisco antiwar rally offered alternative to liberal-pacifist politics of protest organizers.

ening the screws of repression at home. Last month, Jordan's King Abdullah ordered troops to occupy the town of Maan to quell ongoing protests there, leaving five dead and dozens injured.

Saddam Hussein is himself a prime example of how the Arab bourgeois regimes have crushed the working masses in the service of the imperialists. He is every inch the ghoulish torturer that the American press today portrays him to be. But the U.S. was happy to assist this torturer as long as it suited American interests, particularly in countering Soviet influence in the region (though Baghdad got plenty of Soviet aid as well). During the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-88, the U.S. gave Iraq economic and military aid and intelligence, while treacherously shipping weapons to Iran at times as well. In 1983, Rumsfeld visited Baghdad as Reagan's envoy and met with Saddam Hussein. U.S., German and French firms provided Baghdad with technology for the development of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons. Among these was the Bechtel Corporation in 1988, whose top executives at the time included Reagan's secretary of state, George Schultz. It was only in 1990, as the Soviet Union was collapsing, that Washington turned on the Iraqi strongman, denouncing him as "another Hitler" when he seized Kuwait from its billionaire oil sheiks.

In fact, it was the U.S. and Britain, now proclaiming their noble goal of restoring democracy in Iraq, which helped put Saddam Hussein and his Ba'ath Party in power in the first place. Iraq is an artificial entity created by the British colonialists after World War I, with borders drawn through the living body of the Kurdish and other peoples in order to safeguard British oil interests. When the British-installed monarchy was overthrown by left-nationalist military officers under Abd al-Karim Qassim in 1958, this opened up a revolutionary situation in which real power was increasingly in the hands of the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP). American troops were deployed to nearby Lebanon, and the Pentagon and CIA drew up contingency plans to foment counterrevolution in Iraq, including through a full-scale invasion ("A Desert Squall: Anglo-American Planning for Military Intervention in Iraq, July 1958-August 1959," *Middle Eastern Studies*, July 1999).

In the event, the revolutionary upheaval in Iraq was soon beheaded from within. Instead of leading the workers in a struggle for power, the Stalinist ICP leadership tied them to Qassim's bourgeois nationalists. On orders from the Soviet Stalinists, who were pursuing the chimera of "peaceful coexistence" with U.S. imperialism, the ICP moved to rein in its working-class base, and the revolutionary wave began to recede. This prepared the way for a counterrevolutionary bloodbath in 1963, when the Ba'athists came to power and rounded up and murdered some 5,000 leftists and trade unionists on the basis of lists supplied by the CIA. Thrown out by their military allies later that year, the Ba'athists returned to power in 1968—with Saddam Hussein

coming to the fore a year later—and again proceeded to terrorize Jews, Communists and sundry oppositionists while laying waste to the Kurdish regions.

A workers revolution in Iraq in 1958-59, carried out under the banner of proletarian internationalism and defense of the national rights of all the peoples of the region, would have had a profound impact throughout the Near East, not least in helping to shatter the chauvinist consensus binding the Hebrew-speaking proletariat to the Israeli capitalist rulers. By contrast, the criminal and indiscriminate terror attacks carried out by Palestinian nationalists and Islamists against Israeli civilians, and the anti-Semitism which is today endemic in the Arab countries, serve only to strengthen the Zionist stranglehold on the Hebrew workers.

The growing strength of Islamic fundamentalism underlines the stark choice confronting workers and the oppressed in the Arab world: either vile anti-woman, anti-Semitic reaction or international socialist revolution. And there can be no revolutionary perspective in the Near East which rejects the fight to win over the proletariat of the most technologically advanced and militarily powerful capitalist state in the region. The Zionist garrison-state, inherently oppressive to the Palestinian people, must be shattered from within through workers revolution. It will likely take events on the order of the Iraqi Revolution to break the Hebrew workers from Zionist reaction, but it will not happen at all without recognizing their right to a national existence.

The lesson of the betrayal of the Iraqi proletariat in 1958-59—and the subsequent decades of imperialist aggrandizement, nationalist butchery and Islamic reaction—is the need to forge revolutionary parties committed to the political independence of the proletariat. Only through proletarian revolutions against all the bonapartist dictators, sheiks and Zionist butchers can the workers and oppressed throw off the imperialist yoke and lay the basis for a socialist federation of the Near East. **Defend Iraq against imperialist attack! All U.S./UN troops out of the Near East!** ■



1983: Current Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, then an emissary of Reagan administration, greets Saddam Hussein in Baghdad. While U.S. today demonizes Hussein, in 1980s U.S. imperialism armed his regime as a key ally in the region.

300 or more, and is prepared to use them. Under cover of war, the Zionist rulers may well be planning to forcibly expel many if not all of the more than four million Palestinians living in Israel and the Occupied Territories (see "Israeli Terror Machine Strangles Palestinians," *WV* No. 789, 18 October). With half of all Palestinians already living on less than two dollars a day, many confined to their homes for days or weeks at a time only to be bombed or shot dead in their beds, the army's destruction of wide areas of the West Bank earlier this year was designed to make life even more unlivable for the Palestinian population. As though such deliberate starvation policies were not sufficient, on November 30 Israeli troops destroyed a UN depot containing 550 tons of food, which many

Communist, Abrams is also a fervent advocate of the Zionist alliance with Christian fundamentalists like Pat Robertson, whose 1991 tract *The New World Order* was an unadulterated rehash of the notoriously anti-Semitic *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

For a Socialist Federation of the Near East!

The Arab bourgeois regimes hide behind the mantle of "anti-Zionism" to deflect the anger of the impoverished and oppressed Arab masses. But their venality and craven subordination to the imperialists is illustrated not least by how rapidly they fell in line behind the U.S. war drive. Fearing the eruption of social turmoil following a U.S. invasion of Iraq, the Arab rulers have responded by tight-

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CORRECTIONS

In our article "U.S. Hands Off Iraq!" (*WV* No. 786, 6 September), we wrote: "The decade following the Gulf War was marked by one American military adventure after another, from Panama, Somalia and Haiti to the Balkans and Afghanistan." In fact, the U.S. intervention in Panama occurred in 1989, more than a year before the start of the Gulf War.

In "Defend North Korea!" (*WV* No. 790, 1 November), we stated that in the 1950-53 Korean War, U.S. imperialism only achieved "a stalemate at the 48th parallel." This should have read "the 38th parallel," which roughly divides North and South Korea.