

The

September-October 2005

No. 22

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Internationalist



**Katrina Aftermath: Capitalist Land Grab,
Black People Flooded Out, Now Kept Out**

New Orleans

Police State



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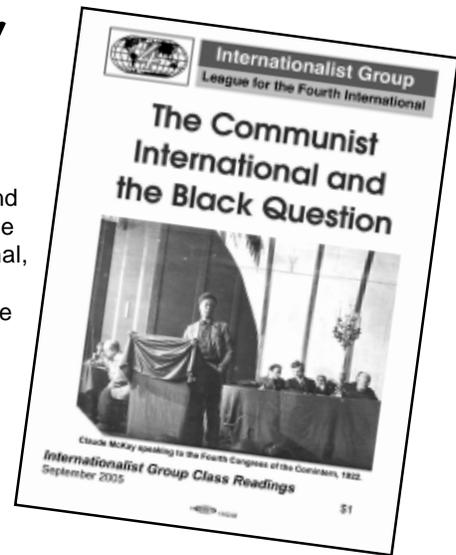
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New Orleans Police State

Willie J. Allen/AP



National Guard troops at the Superdome refuse to let flood survivors leave. For the U.S. government, the black poor and working people of New Orleans were the enemy.

“Ethnic Cleansing” American-Style

The devastation of New Orleans has highlighted as no other event in the last several years the depth of racist oppression in the United States. Many minority and working people suddenly saw “their own” bourgeois government as the enemy. Reflecting the burning anger over the government’s abandonment of the overwhelmingly black poor population to its fate, almost 350 copies of our first article, “New Orleans Death Trap” (see page 26 of this issue) were sold at Caribbean Day, September 5, in Brooklyn, NY. Subsequently, on September 24, more than 1,000 copies of a special 12-page tabloid issue of The Internationalist on New Orleans and Iraq were sold at an antiwar march in Washington, D.C.

SEPTEMBER 20—The ravaging of New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina has deeply shocked the country and the world. What horrified people was not the raw force of nature but the proof of a man-made disaster. What they saw through the television lens was a monstrous crime, racist mass murder carried out by the rulers of capitalist America against the downtrodden that they exploit and oppress. By now everyone knows that 100,000 people, overwhelmingly black and poor, were left to die in the “New Orleans Death Trap”: the levees that authorities knew couldn’t handle a big storm but weren’t repaired because the

money went to the war on Iraq; the patients trapped in public hospitals without supplies while those in private hospitals were taken out by helicopter; the “evacuation” that provided no transportation for those without cars and money. The evidence is irrefutable that race and class determined who escaped and who didn’t, who lived and who perished there from drowning, starvation and unbearable heat. The images of bodies floating in the flood waters for two weeks with no one picking them up are now seared into the collective memory. Together with the harrowing photos of the torture and sexual degradation of prisoners by their American jailers at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, these are an unforgettable visual indictment of the *criminal* nature of U.S. imperialism. And the conclusion is just as inescapable: ***We need a revolution!***

Today the Big Easy is a police-state encampment, occupied by an estimated 14,000 heavily armed government men and their machine guns, patrolled by military trucks, “up-armed” Humvees, Black Hawks and Chinooks. The poor and working people of New Orleans, black and white, but mainly black, have been dispersed across a half-dozen states. In their shelters they are wondering whether the government means this diaspora to be temporary, or will it attempt to bar them from

Marko Georgiev for The New York Times



New Orleans cops patrol the city in pick-up trucks and plainclothes, September 4. U.S. officials declared they were engaged in “combat” against “insurgents,” in order to justify plans for internal war.

ever returning to New Orleans. Some may be starting to feel like the Palestinians displaced by the Israeli Zionists in 1948 who are still sitting in their “temporary” refugee camps today. When the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) tried to stuff them onto cruise ships in the New Orleans harbor, flood survivors refused to go aboard. After being locked down in the New Orleans Superdome and then the Houston Astrodome, their experience told them these would quickly become prison ships. So instead FEMA is building huge trailer parks where tens of thousands are to be housed, “temporarily” of course. ***We demand the right to return of every person and family driven from New Orleans!***

Since the hurricane, every day has brought new revelations about how the government systematically *prevented* doctors, nurses, firefighters and anyone else from reaching those marooned in the flooded city, how it *blocked* ambulances, helicopters, buses and boats from evacuating the exhausted and dying from hospitals and the hellhole collection centers, how “first responders” were ordered not to respond and Air Force pilots who heroically rescued survivors were reprimanded. Now the bourgeois media are beginning to admit that the stories they broadcast and printed about thugs raping and murdering people, about rampaging “anarchy” in New Orleans, were wildly exaggerated. At most there were a handful of cases. A racist frenzy was whipped up, pure scare propaganda. But why? Because the principal objective of the government at all levels – local, state but especially federal – was not to rescue the victims but to *militarily occupy the devastated city and put the population under martial law.*

The head of the Pentagon’s National Guard Bureau, Lt.-Gen. Steven Blum, frankly stated in a September 3 Defense Depart-

ment briefing that “we waited until we had enough force in place to do an overwhelming force” and that they “stormed the convention center” (although he admitted that “there was absolutely no opposition”). The general called the whole operation “a great success story – a terrific success story.” These were not the demented ravings of a General Jack D. Ripper out of the movie *Dr. Strangelove* but the official spokesman for the U.S. military. The units sent into New Orleans were not search-and-rescue units but National Guard Military Police, the Army’s 82nd Airborne and 1st Cavalry divisions and the 1st and 2nd Marine Expeditionary Forces, back from Iraq where they “stormed” Baghdad in the 2003 U.S. invasion. Many of

their tactics were the same in both cities, only here they were engaging in “combat operations” (against mythical “insurgents” who put up no resistance) as part of a program for *internal war.*

This is no exaggeration but a precise description of the plans drawn up by the Defense (War) Department long before 11 September 2001, which led to the establishment of the U.S. Northern Command. Once fatuously described as an “office in search of a mission” (*Christian Science Monitor*, 25 February 2002), NORTHCOM is now larger than the command center for all U.S. operations in Latin America (SOUTHCOM). Its mission is to set the stage for junking the legal prohibition against using the military to police the domestic population, the proscriptions of the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878 which have been increasingly skirted by Republican and Democratic administrations alike (as in the Clinton administration’s murderous 1993 attack on the Branch Davidian religious sect in Waco, Texas). The Pentagon used the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center as the pretext for putting Lower Manhattan under martial law for weeks. Now in New Orleans the generals have seized the opportunity to lock down an entire city indefinitely.

In his September 15 speech pledging unlimited federal aid to rebuilding New Orleans, Bush declared that such a “challenge” “requires greater federal authority and a broader role for the armed forces.” As of September 14, the U.S. had more than 68,000 troops on the ground or on ships in the New Orleans area, a city whose police force totaled a little over 1,500 cops (two-thirds of whom have since quit or left town). NBC-TV Nightly News anchor Brian Williams reports in his Internet “web log,” or blog:

“It is impossible to over-emphasize the extent to which this area is under government occupation, and portions



Iraq to New Orleans: Sign at Sept. 24 D.C. antiwar protest recalls Muhammad Ali's statement, "No Viet Cong ever called me n----r."

of it under government-enforced lockdown. Police cars rule the streets. They (along with Humvees, ambulances, fire apparatus, FEMA trucks and all official-looking SUVs) are generally not stopped at checkpoints and roadblocks. All other vehicles are subject to long lines and snap judgments and must PROVE they have vital business inside the vast roped-off regions here."

In addition, mercenary outfits like Blackwater USA (the "contractors" whose professional killers in Iraq were strung up in Falluja in April 2004, leading to Washington's decision to destroy the city), the Steele Foundation (which helped facilitate the kidnapping of Haitian president Jean-Bertrand Aristide last year while ostensibly protecting him) and Wackenhut Security (specialists in scab-herding) are protecting the properties of their various capitalist clients.

In 2001, the Bush administration used the 9/11 attack to implement its war plans for an invasion of Iraq, preceded by the occupation of Afghanistan, as well to implement a battery of police-state repressive laws, all dutifully voted for by the Democrats. Now it is using the Katrina hurricane and ensuing flood of New Orleans to implement its domestic agenda. No-bid contracts worth billions have been handed out to Bush/Cheney cronies such as the Halliburton Corporation, notorious for its Iraq war profiteering; the "prevailing wage" requirements of the Davis-Bacon Act have been suspended, facilitating the use of low-wage non-union companies; requirements for affirmative action plans facilitating employment of minorities have been dropped. Mayor Ray Nagin has invited Wal-Mart to build a superstore. But while big corporations will get whopping tax breaks in "opportunity zones," the impoverished population of the 98 percent black Lower Ninth Ward will not be allowed back into their houses, which will probably be bulldozed. As David Banner rapped at an Atlanta "Heal the Hood" fundraising benefit, "Bush is giving his homeboys Halliburton the rebuilding contracts to our cities.... They been waiting to tear our ghettos down and separate us from our land."

As usual, this operation is carried out under the pretense of "aiding" the victims, building better homes than the "shotgun houses" with no hallways that were common in poor black neighborhoods of New Orleans. Of course, they leave out the little fact that the former residents of Bywater and the Ninth Ward won't be able to afford the new housing. Barbara Bush, matriarch of the Bush dynasty, sounded like Marie Antoinette ("Let them eat cake") when she visited hurricane relief centers in Houston. With bourgeois condescension toward the newly "homeless" of New Orleans, she remarked: "What I'm hearing which is sort of scary is they all want to stay in Texas.... And so many of the people in the arena here, you know, were underprivileged anyway, so this – this (she chuckles slightly) is working very well for them."

—Editor and Publisher, 5 September

In the 1950s and '60s, as real estate interests, city hall pols and Washington bureaucrats got together to tear down inner-city ghettos to re-

place them with middle-class housing, business districts and Interstate highways, protesters chanted that "*urban renewal is Negro removal*." Today, as U.S. wages its terrorist "war on terror," what we are seeing in New Orleans is "*ethnic cleansing*" American-style.

The not-so-liberal bourgeois media and the Democratic Party, long intimidated by the hard-ball conservative politics of the Bush gang, have shown unaccustomed gumption over the New Orleans disaster, complaining of the "slow pace" and "incompetence" of the Bush response. This is an echo of John Kerry's 2004 "we can do better" Democratic presidential campaign. The White House tried to dismiss this as a "blame game," while Bush repeatedly scurried back to the Gulf Coast to rescue his presidency. Appealing to common ruling-class interests, the *New York Times* (2 September) editorialized: "America clearly needs a larger active-duty Army. It just as clearly needs a homeland-based National Guard that's fully prepared and ready for any domestic emergency." Yet for the dispossessed, it's not that the Bush regime was too slow in sending in the 82nd Airborne, but that the imperialist military – under both of the twin parties of U.S. capitalism – exists to serve the rich and powerful, the ruling class. For them, the two-thirds black population and working people of New Orleans are the enemy.

FEMA: "First Responders Urged Not to Respond"

As the first televised news reports of the flooding following Hurricane Katrina came out, viewers could not believe what they were seeing. One hundred thousand exhausted people were left stranded in New Orleans without sufficient food and fresh water to survive. Many were the sick and elderly from nursing homes and hospitals; most were the city's poor and mainly black residents, who did not have their own means of leaving town nor a place to go when the mayor issued the evacuation order a day and a half before the hurricane hit. As

heart-wrenching scenes were shown day after day and conditions deteriorated in the Superdome, called the “shelter of last resort” by Mayor Nagin, people asked: Where is the government? Where are the rescuers? Critics are now accusing the Bush regime of “incompetence” over the “botched rescue operation.” The head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Michael Brown, has been dumped as a sacrificial lamb. But the feds weren’t slow to respond, *they immediately organized a gigantic military operation to keep out all those who were attempting to help.*

As a division of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the post-9/11 federal police superagency, FEMA was intent on locking down New Orleans from the moment Katrina hit the Gulf Coast. That very day, August 29, FEMA issued an ominous bulletin titled “First Responders Urged Not to Respond to Hurricane Impact Areas Unless Dispatched by State, Local Authorities” (available on the FEMA Internet site). On September 2, the Red Cross told astonished reporters that the “Homeland Security Department has requested and continues to request that the American Red Cross not come back into New Orleans.... Right now access is controlled by the National Guard and local authorities. We have been at the table every single day [asking for access]. We cannot get into New Orleans against their orders” (Pittsburgh *Post-Gazette*, 3 September). That didn’t stop the Red Cross from cashing in on the disaster, however. The “humanitarian” agency raised almost three-quarters of a billion dollars in relief aid although it had no shelter in New Orleans and refused to build shelters in the coastal flood plains.

The FEMA bulletin and DHS directives discouraged many would-be aid workers like those who rushed to the rubble of the World Trade Center on September 11 trying to pull out survivors. But the Bush regime did far more to keep rescuers out. They established a military cordon around New Orleans to make sure no help could get through. Take the following incidents, only a few among many reported in the bourgeois media:

- On August 31, a caravan of 1,000 volunteers towing 500 private boats assembled in Lafayette at the appeal of a Louisiana state senator and headed toward New Orleans with a police escort from the Jefferson Parish sheriff’s department. This would have been a formidable flotilla of navigators with years of experience on Louisiana waterways. However, according to a participant, when they got off the Interstate, they found their way blockaded by FEMA. Agents said no boat over 16 feet would be allowed. They also refused to let the boatmen go to hospitals to ferry out patients who were dying there. All 500 were turned back. A couple who got through to the launch site of the state Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (under FEMA command) reported “there were over 200 DWF agents just standing around and doing nothing.... FEMA would not let them help” (reported on the Securing America web log, 3 September; WNYC radio, 5 September; and the Lafayette *Daily Advertiser*, 12 September).
- The Navy amphibious assault ship *USS Bataan*, with 1,200 sailors, a fully equipped and staffed 600-bed hospital, and capacity to generate plenty of electricity and 100,000 gallons of

fresh water a day, rode out the storm in the Gulf of Mexico and attempted to aid New Orleans as soon as it passed. FEMA turned the *Bataan* away (*Chicago Tribune*, 4 September).

- Some 1,400 firefighters from all over the country headed to the Gulf Coast to help. But they were corralled by FEMA and sent to Atlanta . . . for public relations training. Told that their job would be to shuffle around the region passing out fliers telling people to call 1-800-621-FEMA, some peeled off their FEMA-issued shirts in disgust. “They’ve got people here who are search-and-rescue certified, paramedics, haz-mat [hazardous materials] certified,” complained a Texas firefighter. One team of 50 firemen did make it to New Orleans, though. Their assignment: to stand by President Bush for photo ops as he toured devastated areas (*Salt Lake City Tribune*, 12 September).
- A highly trained Houston-area oil-fire-fighting unit tried to deploy to New Orleans anyway, but was prevented at gunpoint by FEMA-controlled agents (participant report on the liberal Daily Kos weblog, September 5).
- The American Ambulance Association offered to provide 300 emergency vehicles but the General Services Administration and FEMA turned them down (*Washington Post*, 4 September).
- The city of Chicago offered to send “hundreds of personnel . . . and dozens of vehicles” to New Orleans’ aid, but FEMA declined, saying all that was needed from Chicago was a single tank truck (*Chicago Tribune*, 2 September).

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Soldiers examine dead body still lying on New Orleans street September 7, nine days after hurricane hit city. FEMA privatized collection of corpses, giving contract to company that was big Bush campaign contributor.

- Hundreds of doctors and nurses from far and wide have attempted to aid stricken New Orleans residents, only to be turned away by the U.S. government. Among those stopped from carrying out their life-saving missions by FEMA gun thugs: a 113-bed state-of-the-art mobile hospital with 100 surgeons and paramedics (which drove in a convoy for 30 hours from North Carolina), and a large medical team from Georgia with 31 doctors, nurses and paramedics (*Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, 5 September).

- Even U.S. military personnel who sought to help people were blocked and punished. When two Navy helicopter pilots ferried a hundred or so exhausted and stranded people to local hospitals, they were formally reprimanded for these acts of compassion and human decency, and reassigned to take care of officers' pets (*New York Times*, 7 September).

- Aaron Broussard, president of Jefferson Parish in New Orleans, catalogued the following incidents of FEMA's assault on the rescuers on NBC's *Meet the Press* on September 4: "We had Wal-Mart deliver three trucks of water, trailer trucks of water. FEMA turned them back. They said we didn't need them. This was a week ago . . . we had 1,000 gallons of diesel fuel on a Coast Guard vessel docked in my parish. The Coast Guard said, 'Come get the fuel right away.' When we got there with our trucks, they got a word. 'FEMA says don't give you the fuel.' Yesterday FEMA comes in and cuts all of our emergency communication lines. They cut them without notice." Broussard wept as he told of the death of his friend's mother, left stranded in a nursing home for four days as he desperately pleaded for rescuers.

International offers of aid have been routinely ignored or rebuffed by the U.S. government. Cuba, the world's most advanced country when it comes to hurricane response, has offered to send over a thousand of its highly trained and re-

spected doctors, each equipped with a specially developed 50-pound hurricane relief pack. The State Department refused the offer, and then lied that it was never made. The U.S. also refused Venezuela's offer of gasoline, heating oil, and doctors, and Sweden's offer of thousands of working cell phones so refugees in shelters could contact relatives and friends (Democracy Now! WBAI radio, September 7).

As the toll of confirmed dead climbs over 1,000, the fact that at least 154 of the bodies were recovered in New Orleans hospitals and nursing homes has caused an uproar. There may be cases of negligence by individual operators, but many doctors, nurses and hospital workers acted heroically to save the patients. A *New York Times* (19 September) investigation showed that in facility after facility, the feds turned around or commandeered trucks, buses, boats and helicopters that had been sent to aid the patients. Memorial Medical Center (35

dead): on Day 3, hospital officials were told by Office of Emergency Preparedness that they were "on their own"; at that point they could not get buses or drivers. Methodist Hospital (16 dead): the company which runs the hospital contracted two trucks with food, water and fuel – "confiscated by federal authorities" – and hired two helicopters – "officials refused to let them fly." Maison Hospitalière (4 dead): "FEMA officials had told drivers it was too dangerous to enter."

Many of those who died were drowned in the rising waters, after days of waiting for promised rescue boats that were never permitted to get near them. Flood survivors with nowhere else to go were directed by local authorities to the Louisiana Superdome and the New Orleans Convention Center. The thousands who streamed in from the flooded city slums, through chest-deep oily and sewage-filled water, were abandoned to their fate. When National Guard soldiers arrived they treated the survivors like prisoners and trained their guns on them.

After officials locked down the filled Superdome and Convention Center, straggling refugees tried to get out on foot. Many were told to walk to the Pontchartrain Expressway and cross the Mississippi River to the West Bank, where they would be met by buses. Thousands tried to make this trip, but there were no buses at the other side, only a cordon of Gretna sheriffs, who fired volleys over their heads. Some set up a camp on the expressway, in the hopes that they would be noticed and rescued. At dusk, however, a police chopper used its backdraft to blow away the flimsy shelters the refugees had built against the pouring rain, while a Gretna sheriff aimed his gun and screamed "Get off the fucking freeway." As the frightened flood victims retreated, the sheriff loaded his truck with their meager supplies (Larry Bradshaw and Lorrie Beth Slonsky, New Orleans Indymedia report, September 7).

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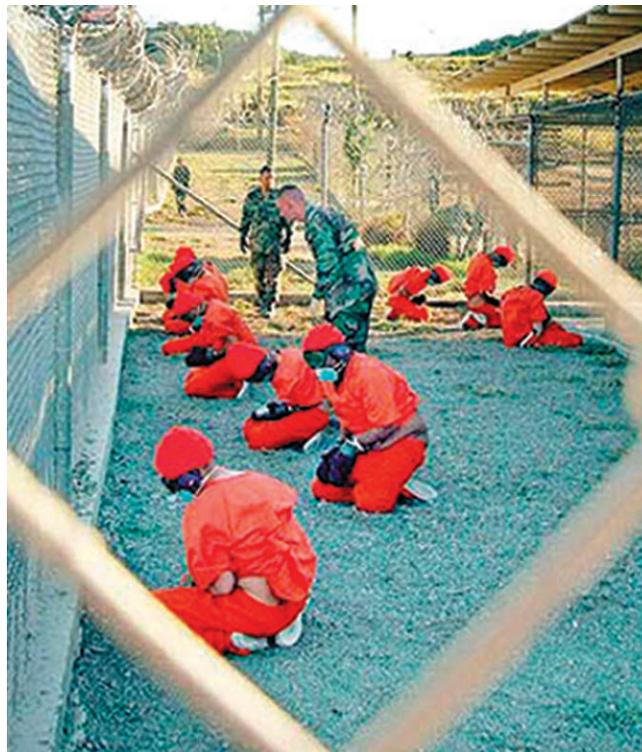
Guantánamo Hunger Strike Exposes U.S. Imperialism's Torture Camp Horrors

- No Justice in the Capitalist Courts!
- Shut Down U.S. Torture Chambers – Free All the Prisoners! Return Guantánamo to Cuba!
- Drive Colonial Occupiers Out of Iraq/Afghanistan! Defeat U.S. Imperialist War Through Mass Working-Class Action!

On Wednesday, October 5, the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) sponsored a forum at New York University Law School to publicize the United States' depraved policy of torturing and murdering prisoners in dozens of secret, remote military installations across the globe as part of its self-styled "war on terror." The featured speaker was James Yee, the former U.S. Army captain and Muslim chaplain at the American torture camp in Guantánamo, Cuba, whom the government tried to frame as a traitor after he passed on complaints from the prisoners to his superior officers. Gita Gutierrez of the CCR reported on the spreading resistance at the Guantánamo prison camp, where prisoners are waging a hunger strike protesting their imprisonment without charges or trial. The U.S. has tried to keep news of this from getting out by preventing lawyers from communicating with inmates. While the Bush administration now admits that a dozen or so prisoners are refusing to eat, and that there were previous hunger strikes in 2002 and 2003, Gutierrez reported that *hundreds* of prisoners are risking their lives to participate in the protest.

Speaking before a packed hall, Gutierrez delivered an electrifying report of current conditions at Guantánamo, while stressing that this U.S. torture camp is but one of many. The prisoners have been held incommunicado, unprotected before their tormentors, many of them for years, although they have not been charged with any crimes. They are kept in tiny cages, whether in Camp X-Ray at "Gitmo," as the military refers to the base the U.S. stole from Cuba, or in camps in Iraq, Afghanistan, Tadjikistan, or . . . who knows where. Gutierrez told how some are kept in specially constructed dungeons on aircraft carriers at sea. Still others are "rendered" – turned over by the U.S. to other governments notorious for torturing prisoners, especially Mubarak's Egypt (see Janet Mayer, "Outsourcing Torture: The Secret History of America's 'Extraordinary Rendition' Program," *The New Yorker*, 14 February 2005). Bush and his Dr. Strangelove war secretary Rumsfeld grotesquely call their prisoners "detainees," as if they are travelers unavoidably but temporarily detained, rather than victims of a seemingly permanent imperialist nightmare.

The prisoners are subject to a catalog of abuses worthy of Hitler's Nazis. But the U.S. imperialists don't need Nazi inspiration. There was worldwide outrage in 2004 when some of the



Inmates being processed at Camp X-Ray, U.S. torture prison at Guantánamo, Cuba, January 2002.

hidden truth came out about the Abu Ghraib and Bucca torture camps in Iraq. What took place there was part of a consistent policy. The U.S. used similar tactics in its brutal war against the Vietnamese a generation ago (recall the infamous "tiger cages" at Poulo Condor, a prison island inherited from the French colonial rulers). Moreover, many of these abuses have been practiced for decades against the mounting, heavily black prison population within the U.S. of over 2 million behind bars. Now thousands of Near Easterners – men, women, even children – are being subjected to a series of horrific practices which, to paraphrase 1960s black radical H. Rap Brown, are "as American as cherry pie." These include beatings with fists, batons, rifle butts, metal bars, often to the point of permanent maiming, and sometimes death.

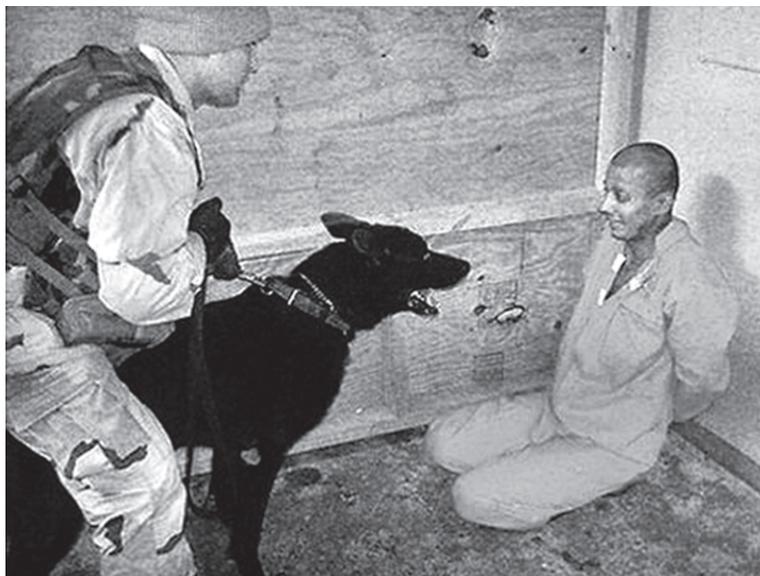
If the Nazis with Prussian bureaucratic thoroughness left a detailed log of their slaughter of millions of European Jews (and others including Communists, Slavs, Roma, homosexuals) in the Holocaust, the practices of the U.S. torture archipelago are documented in legalese in a string of White House and Department of Justice memos. Approved torture techniques included: mock executions, being kicked while manacled, dog attacks, total isolation, sensory deprivation, sleep deprivation, forced nudity, cultural and sexual humiliation, being forced to stand or sit in positions causing excruciating pain, being beaten for moving, electric shock, filthy food, dirty water, extremes of

heat and cold, dehydration, being screamed at and cursed, forced to imitate animals, being anally penetrated with batons, and more. A favorite of the torturers at the Pentagon and CIA is the technique of simulated and sometimes actual drowning (cynically called “waterboarding” as if it is some kind of sport).

The abuses are seemingly endless, and have been investigated by a number of groups. Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) has placed a great deal of documentation on the Internet (at www.phrusa.org), including a comprehensive document, *Break Them Down: Systematic Use Of Psychological Torture by US Forces* (May 2005). A particular focus of the PHR is the deadly practices of U.S. imperialism’s Dr. Mengeles, sadistic doctors who participate in the torture, providing medical data to interrogators, force-feeding prisoners, injecting them with psychosis-inducing drugs, tormenting them in psychotherapy sessions. Doctors who do not cooperate are reprimanded or reassigned. PHR wants to bar the torture docs from practicing medicine, which is the least of what should happen to them. The Center for Constitutional Rights has published a hair-raising account of U.S. barbarism, *Detention in Afghanistan and Guantánamo Bay*, by three young torture camp survivors, Shafiq Rasul, Asif Iqbal, and Ruhel Ahmed, who managed to get out due to their British citizenship (available on the CCR Web site, www.ccr-ny.org).

The CCR has led the effort to gain access to the Guantánamo prisoners and challenge the government’s claim it can with total impunity indefinitely imprison anyone anywhere in the world it calls an “enemy combatant.” The U.S. says there are about 500 prisoners left at “Gitmo,” mainly Muslim citizens of so-called Third World countries, many of whom have been living in that nightmare for four years. Tormented beyond endurance, with no hope of getting out, they have found the strength to resist, resorting to an act of desperation out of necessity. Gutierrez reported that in the hunger strike against the abominable conditions at Guantánamo, an estimated 200 prisoners may be near death. The present strike is a direct continuation of the preceding one, earlier this summer, which was called off after the jailers ostensibly granted some concessions. However, no concessions were ever made. Instead, once the strikers were eating again, they were subjected to even worse treatment than before. Many current hunger strikers have been force-fed through tubes forced down their noses.

James Yee also recounted his story to the New York audience. While at Guantánamo and in his role as Muslim chaplain, Yee was told by prisoners that they lived in constant fear, under a regime of psychological and physical torture, preyed upon by sadistic guards, interrogators, and doctors. Yee, pretty much a straitlaced military man, passed on prisoners’ complaints to his superior officer. The Army retaliated against him, attempting to frame him up as an “Al Qaeda” operative. In September 2003 he was given “leave” and then seized; taken to Jacksonville Naval Air Station, he was subjected to the same kind of sensory deprivation the government practices on Guantánamo prisoners. He was eventually dumped in a maximum security military prison in



Washington Post

Guards terrify prisoner at Abu Ghraib with dog.

South Carolina, where he was kept in solitary confinement for 76 days. At first, Yee’s Syrian wife and his children were told nothing and were frantic about his whereabouts. When U.S. agents finally told Mrs. Yee that her husband was in prison, they treated her like a criminal too, and tried to turn her against him by lying about her husband having sex with coworkers.

Court papers were filed indicating that Yee would face charges of “espionage, spying, aiding the enemy, mutiny or sedition, and disobeying an order. His attorneys were told that he could face execution” (*USA Today*, 16 May 2004). Pro-war mass media then went into action, with the fanatical right-wing *Washington Times* leading the way, accusing Yee of treason. The case against him, however, was a pack of lies, so the government quickly moved to Plan B, charging Yee with an absurd grab-bag of minor infractions – from mishandling a classified document to more far-fetched fabrications involving “adultery” and “possession of pornography.” (This obsession with inflicting sexual humiliation on its victims runs through the entire repressive apparatus of the U.S. government to an extent suggesting that its bureaucracies are led by some serious psychos.) Once the paltry charges were made public, it was clear that the government had nothing – they were eventually dropped for lack of evidence. Yee still had to fight a long battle to expunge Army lies from his record and secure an honorable discharge – which he did.

The Center for Constitutional Rights has won a number of small victories recently, including getting the Pentagon to release hundreds more photos of the atrocities at Abu Ghraib, and challenging the Homeland Security prison in Brooklyn, where hundreds of Arabs were thrown in an outrageous racist roundup in the aftermath of 9/11. It has also secured lawyers for many Guantánamo prisoners and has filed habeas corpus petitions for 230 of them. The government has fought them every step of the way. The habeas corpus petitions, for example, may have to go to the Supreme Court, which could take years and would be unbear-

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U.S. Divide-and-Rule Politics Provoke Sectarian Conflict

Colonial “Constitution” Farce in Iraq

On October 15, Iraqis are being called to vote in a referendum on a “constitution” intended to serve as a pseudo-democratic façade for U.S. colonial rule. Although the document was issued by the puppet regime in Baghdad, the whole exercise in sham “democracy” has been organized by the imperialist occupiers. The United States has feigned disagreement with some provisions of the charter, yet the United Nations is distributing it and U.S. troops are organizing the security for this propaganda exercise. The Western media will do their part by broadcasting images of voters “courageously” flocking to the polls “defying terrorist threats.”

Following the colonial elections at gunpoint last January, the “celebration of democracy” was short-lived. The vast majority of Sunni Arabs boycotted the charade, knowing that it was designed to marginalize them in a regime dominated by clerical politicians of the Shiite branch of Islam. Soon the Shiite bourgeois politicians and their temporary allies among the Kurdish parties fell into squabbling over posts and control of oil revenues, barely managing to appoint a “cabinet” and “prime minister” who lack any credibility. The real power in Baghdad is the U.S. military and American consul Zalmay Khalilzad.

This time around, a number of Sunni bourgeois parties and religious figures are calling to vote “no” in the referendum. They evidently want to show the numerical strength of the Sunni population, which the Western press generally puts at 20 percent of Iraqis but is considerably larger, since their chances of actually defeating the constitution in the rigged voting are slim. Under the complicated rules, two-thirds of voters in three provinces have to vote against the charter to block it.

Clearly, these Sunni sheiks, clerics and bourgeois nationalist supporters of the former Baath regime of Saddam Hussein do not rule out participating in the political circuses set up by the imperialists. Various resistance groups that have bedeviled the occupation army with a tenacious insurgency in the Sunni regions have said they will call a truce to enable participation. These bourgeois forces only seek a better deal with the imperialist occupiers. Even the most reactionary *jihadis* (holy warriors) recall how in the 1980s the U.S. bankrolled and armed *mujahedin* cutthroats fighting Soviet forces and a secular-nationalist petty-bourgeois government in Afghanistan that taught young girls to read and write.

Revolutionary Marxists, defenders of Leon Trotsky’s program of *permanent revolution*, oppose imperialism down the line and *hailed* the Soviet Red Army in Afghanistan. In Iraq today, the Trotskyists greet every blow struck against the colonial occupiers who are laying waste to the country and sadistically subjecting the Iraqi population to a hell of torture and poverty. The League for the Fourth International is for



Adam Nadel/Polaris

Women’s groups protested in Baghdad July 19 against draft constitution imposing *sharia* (Islamic law) on Iraqi women.

active *boycott of the colonial referendum*, which no matter what the provisions of the phony constitution are, will only serve as a “democratic” mask for the bloody rule of U.S. guns, and for *driving the U.S. imperialists out of Iraq*.

Spokesmen for the Bush regime tried to distance themselves from the constitution when Iraqi women protested last July that it was imposing *sharia* (Islamic law) to cover matters of family and personal status. This would deprive women of rights won in the 1958 aborted revolution that overthrew the British-backed monarchy. Although it was later half-disguised by saying that laws will accord “personal status according to their own religion,” this means that Islamic law will apply to Muslim women (the vast majority). While Bush & Co. cynically claimed that freeing women from oppression by the Taliban Islamic fundamentalists (whom Washington had earlier aided) was a goal of the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, women there are still imprisoned in the head-to-toe shroud of the *burka*, making them faceless beings. And in Iraq the Bush regime is imposing a constitution formalizing the subjugation of women.

The Iraqi constitution also prepares the way for the breakup of the country, including provisions for autonomous regions with their own armed forces. This will mean that as the U.S. reduces the numbers of its occupation troops, as the Pentagon plans to do in a few months, the Kurdish *pesh merga* militias and Shiite armed groups such as the Iranian-supported Badr Brigade will locally control the oil-rich northern and southern regions, while Sunnis in the resource-poor central region will remain under the boot of the imperialist occupiers. This prospect has enraged Iraqi Sunnis, and has unnerved Sunni regimes in neighboring countries, notably Saudi Arabia.

As proletarian internationalists, Trotskyists fight

against all forms of national and ethnic oppression, and we have no commitment to maintaining the borders of neo-colonial regimes which were arbitrarily determined by the colonial rulers. These regimes typically repress a multitude of ethnic and national minorities (or even majorities). We have long called for a united socialist Kurdish republic, to bring together that people carved up among various capitalist countries in the Treaty of Sèvres following World War I. We have noted that Iraqi Shiites were among the most determined fighters against British colonial rule.

But when the various Kurdish and Shiite leaders become puppets of Washington in its war on and colonial occupation of Iraq, their talk of national and democratic rights becomes a screen to hide imperialist rule. While defending the rights of all national/ethnic communities (including Turkomans, Assyrian Christians and others), communists fight for the defeat of the real power in Iraq, the U.S. occupiers. At the same time, we defend the Kurds in Turkey, Iran and Syria against their bourgeois nationalist oppressors, as well as the Shiite majorities in eastern Saudi Arabia and Gulf oil sheikdoms, where they form a large part of the strategic oil workforce.

Some defenders of continued occupation of Iraq argue that, whether or not the 2003 invasion was justified, for the U.S. to pull out now would guarantee a sectarian civil war due to age-old animosities between Sunnis and Shiites. In fact, the U.S. has greatly exaggerated traditional hostility between the various ethnic/religious communities in Iraq, and has consciously sought to exacerbate such divisions following the precept of *divide et impera* (divide and rule), the traditional formula for imperial rule from the Roman Empire to the British *raj* in India.

In fact, Iraqi Shiites made up a large portion of the soldiers who fought under Saddam Hussein against the Iranian Shiite armies of Ayatollah Khomeini during the decade-long Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s (in which Washington played both sides off against each other, supplying chemical weapons to both). Particularly before the Shiite uprising of 1991 (which George Bush I encouraged in the wake of the Gulf War, only to then abandon the hapless insurgents), there were significant numbers of secular Shiites in Hussein's Baath party, including many middle-class professionals. They are now being hunted down and murdered by the Shiite clericalists.

U.S. imperialism has consciously sought to establish a Shiite ascendancy in Iraq from the outset, beginning with its alliance with the CIA/Mossad-linked swindler Ahmed Chalabi, a favorite of the "neo-conservative" warmongers in Washington. Now the Bush II government is reaping the fruits of its strategic policy. It organized bogus elections designed to minimize Sunni Arab representation; now it is ramming through a fake constitution to lock in Sunni subordination. As Kurdish and Shiite mini-states emerge, even Iraq war "hawks" have a sense of "foreboding" and "alarm" over the outcome, the *Financial Times* (12 October) reports.

At a conference on Iraq at the conservative American Enterprise Institute, Iraqi intellectual Kanan Makiya, one of the biggest propagandists for U.S. intervention to overthrow

Hussein, called the constitution a "profoundly destabilizing document" that could "deal a death blow to Iraq." At the same conference, Phebe Marr, formerly of the Institute of Strategic Studies of the National Defense University, said that with an Iraqi Kurdistan in the north and a de facto "Shiastan" in the south, the result would be an "arc of instability in the Sunni center" leading to the eventual dissolution of Iraq. If it happens, it will be a direct result of U.S. policy.

At a parallel conference on Iraq by the right-wing Heritage Foundation, Michael Eisenstadt of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, a Zionist pro-war think tank, worried that the constitution would lead more Sunnis to support the insurgency as they saw that the system was stacked against them. "I don't know if it is winnable, but we haven't lost it yet," was the most optimistic statement he could make. On the TV program "Talk of the *Times*," liberal investigative reporter Seymour Hersh was categorical, saying the U.S. was going to lose the Iraq war. The well-connected Hersh added that in their private comments, two-star generals spoke very differently than in public, because "they know how bad it is."

In a televised address aimed at boosting sagging morale on the "home front" and his own plummeting ratings in the polls, George Bush II appealed for support to "stay the course" in Iraq. Despite his ranting about "Islamofascism" and attempts to paint the secular Baathist regime in Syria, which slaughtered 10,000 Muslim fundamentalists, and the Shiite theocracy in Iran as allies of the Wahabi and Safiyist Sunnis of "Al Qaeda" (who consider Shiites to be apostates), Bush's appeal for a crusade against Islamic fundamentalism fell flat. Support for the Iraq war is down to 32 percent in the latest CBS opinion survey, with 59 percent favoring withdrawal ASAP, whatever the consequences.

We have noted before the growing defeatist sentiment among large sections of the imperialist bourgeoisie (see "Drive U.S. Imperialists Out of Iraq!" *The Internationalist* No. 21, Summer 2005). It is to this sentiment that various reformists and centrists appeal when they call on the government to "bring the troops home" or for "U.S. troops out of Iraq" (so they can be sent to New Orleans and impose martial law on the black poor who survived the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina?). Orienting to the liberal imperialists, the pseudo-socialists are in effect trying to save the U.S. from a humiliating defeat.

In contrast, the League for the Fourth International calls to **defend Iraq and the Iraqi peoples** and to **defeat the imperialist war/occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan**. We fight to carry out this program through mass proletarian action, including **workers strikes against the war** and **"hot corgoing"** (refusing to transport) **military goods**. We seek to win the working class, minorities and opponents of imperialist war to break from the Democrats, Republicans and all capitalist politicians, in order to build a **revolutionary workers party**. As Iraq spirals downward, we warn that to put an end to the imperialist system, which produces endless wars and condemns the vast majority of humanity to a "life" of poverty and oppression, it will take no less than **international socialist revolution**. ■

Torture Camp...

continued from page 10

able for the prisoners. The military have gone to great lengths to deprive their prisoners of any legal protection. Interrogators imitate lawyers, sometimes for weeks, speaking abusively to prisoners, then show up in military dress, to sow confusion and mistrust of lawyers. Prisoners who have legitimate lawyers are told, "Your lawyer is a Jew. He doesn't care about you!" Prisoners report that after the lawyer leaves, they are beaten. And, as Gutierrez pointed out, Guantánamo is the easiest site to visit. Thousands are being held in total isolation in even more remote or completely secret locations.

As Marxists we support efforts to gain legal protection for the victims of U.S. imperialism. But we warn that there is no justice for the oppressed in the capitalist *injustice* system. When the CCR sued for the right of Guantánamo prisoners to have U.S. court hearings, and received a favorable (but vague) ruling from the Supreme Court under right-wing chief justice Rehnquist, (*Rasul v. Bush*, June 2004), the government simply ignored it. Even if the "detainees" had their "day in court," this is no guarantee that they would get fair treatment. On the contrary, the courts have upheld the president's right to arbitrarily declare individuals "enemy combatants" without any proof at all. Last week, the U.S. Senate attached a rider to a military appropriations bill supposedly banning inhumane and degrading treatment of prisoners. Not only will this be knocked out in conference with the House of Representatives, or vetoed by the White House, even if passed and signed into law it would not stop this regime whose whole purpose is to terrorize the world into submission.

Even where "human rights" groups are not simply stalking horses for a wing of the imperialists (such as the Zionist Human Rights Watch and the British Amnesty International who beat the drums for war on Yugoslavia), they at most seek to clean up imperialism's act and give it a more humane face. The CCR calls to pressure Democrats like New York senators Charles Schumer and Hillary Clinton. Yet these capitalist politicians wholeheartedly support the U.S.' "war on terror," of which the torture prisons are an integral part, accusing Bush & Co. of waging this imperialist war incompetently. From Afghanistan and Iraq today back to the U.S. and French in Vietnam and Algeria, and further back to the bloody U.S. takeover of the Philippines and the genocidal conquest of the Congo by Belgium (which has the gall to arrest African tyrants for crimes against humanity) at the turn of the last century, colonial wars are *always* accompanied hideous torture and wanton slaughter. The source of these horrors is the capitalist system itself, which generates endless war, poverty and racist oppression, and must be overthrown.

In calling to "drive out the Bush regime," as various pseudo-socialist reformists (such as the Maoist RCP and the Stalinoid WWP) do, they are giving back-handed support to the Democrats, who launched the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba and the war on Vietnam. The Internationalist Group fights instead to drive out all the racist capitalist politicians (Democrats and Republicans alike, as well as minor league bourgeois pols like immigrant basher Ralph Nader) and build a revolutionary workers party. As



AP

Abu Ghraib or Auschwitz? U.S. soldier marks number on Iraqi prisoner, May 2005.

they were going to the gallows in 1927, the Italian anarchist workers Sacco and Vanzetti, who were murdered by the capitalist state, said to their hundreds of thousands of supporters around the world, *La salute è in voi* (Redemption is up to you). Only through international socialist revolution will the heinous war criminals from Bush and Rumsfeld on down meet the fate the fate they deserve and rid this world of oppression once and for all. ■

Correction

In a box titled "How Imperialism 'Liberated' Afghan Women" on page 29 of *The Internationalist* No. 21 (Summer 2005), we referred to the bands of CIA-backed Islamic fundamentalists in the 1980s waging war against Soviet forces in Afghanistan, which were defending "a bourgeois government that implemented some timid reforms, among them educating women." The box rightly emphasized that while most of the Western left opposed Soviet intervention, "Genuine Trotskyists, in contrast, called for 'Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!'" However, the reference to the government of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan as "bourgeois" is incorrect.

The Afghan government that took power in April 1978 following a coup d'état led by pro-Soviet elements in the Afghan army was characterized in *Spartacist* (No. 29, Summer 1980), which then stood on the program of revolutionary Trotskyism, as a "left-nationalist bourgeois government." However, there followed a bloody reckoning among the various military factions, and as the same article noted, "with its massive intervention in late December [1979], the Soviet armed forces became the dominant power in Afghanistan." Thereafter it is more accurate to characterize the Kabul government as a petty-bourgeois nationalist regime.

Following the withdrawal of Soviet forces in early 1989, the PDPA government in Kabul sought to hold on to power by forming coalitions with "moderate" Islamic parties. However, the regime lacked the cohesion and social base to resist the imperialist-backed onslaught, and fell in 1992. There ensued a bloodbath of the secular nationalists by the Islamic fundamentalists. Soviet withdrawal presaged the collapse of the USSR and destruction of the Soviet degenerated workers state in 1991-92.

The Sellout Hug: Why Are They Smiling?



Richard Drew/AP

“Win-win” contract for Bloomberg, Klein and Weingarten is “lose-lose” contract for teachers and students. Oust the labor fakers – For a class-struggle leadership!

Vote Down the Giveback Contract and Prepare to Walk Out!

What It Will Take to Win: An All-Out NYC Education Strike

**Jail 110,000 Strikers? Hell No! –
Defeat the Taylor Law with Mass Action!
No to Democrats and Republicans –
For a Revolutionary Workers Party!**

The following leaflet was issued by the Internationalist Group on October 11.

It’s high noon for teachers, professors, students and staff in New York City’s public schools and colleges. The racist labor haters who run this city and this country are out to gut public education and enslave those who provide it. Bush’s former education secretary, Rod Paige, who got his job by fudging test scores and dropout figures, called the National Education Association a “terrorist organization.” They’re looking for a showdown in NYC, figuring if they can bust teachers unions here, they can do it anywhere. *But we have the power to bust the union-busters.*

Billionaire mayor Michael Bloomberg and his schools chancellor flunkey Joel Klein have been holding teachers hostage

in order to ram through a raft of “reforms” that would introduce salary differentials and “merit pay,” abolish seniority rights, sharply increase working time – in short, gut union gains won over decades of hard struggle. Bloomberg is running for reelection taking credit for (dubious) improved test scores while sticking it to the teachers and students whose hard work were responsible for any improvements. The “management experts” they have installed at the DOE know zip about education, and have zero respect for teachers.

Now the leadership of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) under Randi Weingarten has accepted a contract that lengthens the work day, lengthens the work year, eliminates seniority transfers, eliminates the right to grieve principals’ evaluations, lets principals assign teachers to hall and lunchroom monitoring and a series of other givebacks. All this in exchange for a 14 percent pay “raise” over four-plus years, which works out to a *pay cut* when inflation and the increased hours are included.

The UFT Delegates Assembly, dominated by Weingarten’s Unity Caucus, is set to approve this giveback contract at the October 11 DA. But there is massive opposition to the giveback deal in the ranks, particularly in high schools. Extra security is

reportedly being hired to police the members who show up at the meeting to voice their opposition. ***This sellout by the union bureaucracy should be ripped up by the UFT membership. Chapter meetings should be called to vote it down. There should be mass pickets by teachers and students in front of the schools.***

The timid house opposition to the Weingarten regime is doing everything to avoid the “s-word.” “If I vote no, will I have to go on strike?” asks the blog of Independent Community of Educators. ICE answers: “Absolutely not! If the proposed contract does not win approval from the members, both sides will go back to the bargaining table.” Dead wrong! This buys into the fear of striking spread by the UFT tops, who talk of strikes in order to scare the membership. Thousands of “no” votes on mail ballots (which won’t be counted until after the mayoral election) will only set the stage for the inevitable test of strength.

The union must be geared up to ***wage an all-out strike*** against the would-be union-busters in the Department of Education, backed up by their bosses in the city, state and federal governments. Defeatists always argue that “you can’t fight City Hall,” much less the State House and the White House. They’re wrong, we can. Certainly it would be a bitter battle. They will use the strikebreaking Taylor Law, which calls for heavy fines and jailing of strikers and union leaders. Yet the UFT is the largest union in the city. They don’t have enough jail space to hold tens of thousands of strikers.

And teachers are not alone. The 74,000 primary and secondary school teachers and 34,000 paraprofessionals, secretaries, maintenance personnel represented by the UFT have been working without a contract for more than two years, since June 2003. Meanwhile, 20,000 faculty and staff of the City University of New York (CUNY) have been without a contract since 2002 and haven’t had a raise since 2001. The PSC should strike simultaneously with the UFT to produce a full-scale strike shutting down all New York City public education. And if the Taylor Law is used to jail and fine striking teachers, the subway and bus union, ***Transport Workers Union Local 100, should shut down mass transit.*** Even a one-day walkout would throw the city into chaos.

A real strike that deals a defeat to the capitalist rulers cannot be a narrow “labor” fight simply about wages and hours. It must centrally involve the 1.1 million students of the New York City schools, and their parents. The students are overwhelmingly black, Latino and Asian, with a majority from immigrant families. The union must make a special effort to involve them in strike preparations and on picket lines, fighting against anti-immigrant repression (such as the arrest of two Muslim young women students by the feds last spring). The union must demand an end to the vicious discrimination against schools in poor neighborhoods which have the oldest equipment, most decrepit buildings and most crowded classrooms.

The UFT should demand that small class sizes be written into the contract, emphasizing that this is a fight particularly for minority students. It should make a particular emphasis on winning higher pay for paras and staff workers. And the discrimination against new teachers, who get 6 percent smaller raises in the proposed contract, must go.

More broadly, the union must be in the forefront of the struggle against the resegregation of U.S. schools, as Jonathan

Kozol documented in his recent article (“Still Separate, Still Unequal: America’s Educational Apartheid,” *Harper’s Magazine*, September 2005). Kozol pointed out that the large high schools in the Bronx are mostly more than 95 percent black and Latino. While pushing its “small school” panacea, the Department of Education crams thousands more students into these schools, producing chaotic conditions, and then calls in police. We stand with the Dewitt Clinton students who last month protested the installation of metal detectors. And we demand: ***Cops out of the schools!***

Most of the discussion about the contract has been about specific numbers and clauses, but this battle is fundamentally political. It is no accident that the contract deal came a few weeks before the mayoral election. Weingarten effectively offered the UFT’s neutrality in the contest, which would be backhanded support to the Republican mayor against Democratic challenger Freddy Ferrer. That’s why the press called it a “win-win deal” for Weinberg and Bloomberg. But it’s a “lose-lose” deal for teachers and students.

The fight is political in a broader sense as well. The anti-labor offensive here is intimately linked to the colonial occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan. The government that is waging an imperialist war in the Near East is simultaneously waging a capitalist war on working people, minorities and immigrants here. The government wants to use the schools to produce cannon fodder for its wars. We demand ***military out of the schools, including recruiters and JROTC***, and that ***schools must refuse to turn over information on students to the military***, as stipulated in the “No Child Left Behind” law.

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Required Reading!

Includes articles on the capitalist assault on public education, bilingual education, struggles in defense of open admissions in Mexico and New York, and an essay by Anatoli Lunacharsky, the first Soviet commissar of education.

\$2

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NYC Teachers: Protest Arrest of Muslim High School Students!

The following leaflet was issued by the Internationalist Group on April 10.

Over the last several days, the *New York Times* has documented the outrageous arrests of two NYC high school girls who were dragged away from their homes and are now being held in an immigration jail. These two 16-year-olds are apparently accused of being “would-be suicide bombers,” although under the draconian U.S. anti-terrorist laws, no charges have been made and no evidence presented. Their real “crime” seems to be that they are Muslim.

One of the young women is a student at the Heritage High School in East Harlem, where she ran for student body president. The other girl attended the High School for Environmental Studies in Manhattan, and was receiving home schooling at the time of her arrest.

The students, both immigrants, from Guinea and Bangladesh, respectively, have been held for weeks now at an immigration jail in southern Pennsylvania, hundreds of miles away from their families, with whom they’ve only had the briefest of contact. They were seized by agents of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), a division of Homeland Security. School officials were not notified of this atrocity.

The girls are accused of having the “intention” to “become suicide bombers.” The FBI claims it has “evidence” of this, but no such evidence has been revealed to the girls, their families or anyone who represents them. Moreover, government officials in Washington and New York are dubious about the whole business and say that there is “no evidence” of any such plot (*New York Times*, 7 April 2005).

According to the paper, the girls are being terrorized in the jail and being told that they must “confess” to unknown charges



Adama Bah, 16, with the figures her classmates at the Heritage School made to protest her arrest.

or their little brothers and sisters will also be seized from their homes and immediately deported. It should also be noted that prisoners picked up on “terror” laws have been abused and even tortured in U.S. immigration jails, notably in Elizabeth, N.J., and York prison has been cited by Amnesty International for shackling children and other abuses.

These arrests drive home how the war on Iraq and Afghanistan is directly linked to attacks on the democratic rights of minorities and immigrants and the general population in this country. Thousands of immigrants were rounded-up and seized in waves of racial profiling over the last four years. A deliberate attempt to purge thousands of “undocumented” students at the City University (CUNY) in the wake of the imperialist war hysteria after September 11 was countered by a campaign of protest by faculty and students and workers, kicked off by a united-front rally at Hunter College initiated by the Internationalist Group.

Teachers and members of the UFT cannot stand by while our students are being victimized and traumatized, and denied their fundamental rights, both under the aegis of the Bush administration’s “USA PATRIOT Act” (voted for by both capitalist parties) and anti-immigrant laws previously passed under Democrat Clinton. We must demand that the students be immediately released and any secret charges against them be dropped, that they be immediately reunited with their families; that the UFT assign lawyers to assist our arrested students and their families; that they be allowed to return to school immediately, and given additional services to make up for time lost because of these abusive arrests. At chapter meetings, the Delegate Assembly and at UFT rallies, teachers should demand: “Stop Arresting Our Students.” ■



Adama Bah reading to children at Bellevue Hospital.

Racist New Orleans Cops Assault Black School Teacher



"New Orleans Police State" we headlined our September 20 article. Now we see it in action.

On Saturday night, October 8, Robert Davis, a 64-year-old retired teacher, wandered into the French Quarter of New Orleans looking to buy some cigarettes. When he asked a police officer when a curfew went into effect, he was grabbed and viciously beaten, initially by two local cops, later joined by two others (including a New York policeman) while FBI agents looked on. All the police were white, their hapless victim was black. Where have we seen this before?

A mounted cop used his horse to try to block a crew from AP-TV from filming the scene, to no avail. The videotape shows the police pummeling Davis, slugging him repeatedly in the face, slamming him into a wall, then throwing him on the ground where a third cop kicks him in the head. When the TV reporter shows his credentials and asks what is happening, the police push him against a car and manhandle him, telling him to mind his own business.

Drenched in blood, Davis was then charged with public drunkenness, resisting arrest, battery on a police officer and public intimidation. The charges are absurd: Davis, who lost his house in the Ninth Ward to the post-Katrina flooding, hasn't had a drink in 25 years and no blood or breath tests were administered. Two of the police involved have been charged, but national TV networks have been inventing excuses for them.

It was an eerie replay of the 1991 beating of Los Angeles black motorist Rodney King by a lynch mob of racist L.A.

police, shown in brutal detail in a video that has played over and over on national TV. In both cases, the whole world saw what goes on all the time as paramilitary police ride roughshod over largely black and Latino cities, treating them as militarily occupied areas.

The New Orleans Police Department is a notorious sewer of graft and murderous racist brutality. In the 1990s, some 30 N.O. cops were fired for corruption charges. One was sentenced to death for ordering a mob hitman to murder a woman who had charged him in a police brutality suit. This pattern continued in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, when up to a third of the police force simply fled and others were photographed looting CDs from Wal-Mart stores.

They also engaged in wanton murder of flood survivors. It was reported on September 4 that New Orleans police had shot and killed five "looters" who had supposedly attacked Army Corps of Engineers personnel. However, the Corps said that those killed were contractors on their way to repair a breached canal. Now the family of a young man killed by cops outside the Convention Center are charging that he was shot down in cold blood, and then run over by a police car.

The NOPD, like the LAPD, NYPD or any other big city police department in the U.S. has plenty of pathological racist thugs and killers. This is not a case of a few "bad apples," but a reflection of cops' role as the armed fist of the capitalist ruling class. The police cannot be reformed, they must be swept away by workers revolution!

NYC Education Strike...

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The government's war on the poor and minority population was seen clearly with Hurricane Katrina. Not only were millions taken out of the budget for flood protection in order to fund the "war on terror" and the occupation of Iraq, not only were tens of thousands of black poor left to die in the flood, but now the U.S. is imposing racist police-state rule in New Orleans. Last weekend retired black teacher Robert Davis was

beaten bloody by cops in the French Quarter.

Both capitalist parties are the enemies of working people. It is necessary to break with Democrats and Republicans (and minor capitalist politicians such as immigrant-basher Ralph Nader) and **fight for a revolutionary workers party**. Only through socialist revolution will conditions be created in which education can serve the interests of the vast majority of working people who produce the wealth and make society run. Otherwise, talk of educational reform can only be a cruel hoax. ■

Photo courtesy of The New Yorker



Torture in Iraq, bodies floating in New Orleans, images of crimes of U.S. imperialism.

New Orleans Police State...

continued from page 8

“Troops Begin Combat Operations in New Orleans”

What would lead local, state and federal authorities to adopt such a murderous response toward the surviving victims of a disaster? Gut racism, certainly, from sheriffs on the bridges over the Mississippi, or the squads of heavily armed white cops and others who cruised through the streets of New Orleans in pick-up trucks hunting down black residents. “Ninth Ward n_____rs” were Texas’ problem now, remarked one caught on a reporter’s tape recorder (Democracy Now! September 6), referring to the thousands of evacuees who were eventually bused from New Orleans’ Superdome to Houston’s Astrodome. The mood was captured by one of the state’s grinning gun thugs, who jokingly told a reporter, “if you wanted to kill someone here, this was a good time” (*New York Times*, 8 September). It has been widely noted (except by Bush’s black front woman, the despicable secretary of state Condoleezza Rice) how the callous disregard for black lives shown by the government in New Orleans contrasts with their attitude toward white suburbanites hit by hurricanes in North Carolina or Florida.

But there was more to it than a bunch of racist yahoos run amok, much more. The deliberate, *racist mass murder* in New Orleans was official government policy coming straight from

Republican Bush in the White House and extending down to Democratic senator Mary Landrieu, Democratic governor Kathleen Blanco and the black Democratic mayor Nagin in New Orleans. The tragic events of the last two weeks are a brutal object lesson in the class nature of the state. As Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels wrote a century and a half ago, “The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie” (*The Communist Manifesto* [1848]). As Engels later spelled it out in his book, *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884), the state consists of a “special, public power” consisting of “armed men” as well as “prisons, and institutions of coercion of all kinds,” by means of which “the economically dominant class ... becomes also the politically dominant class, and thus acquires new means of holding down and exploiting the oppressed class....”

During times of slavery, black people by law “had no rights which the white man was bound to respect,” as Supreme Court Chief Justice Roger Taney held in the infamous 1857 Dred Scott decision which denied that people of African ancestry were or ever could be citizens. Today the United States claims to export bourgeois “democracy” at gunpoint around the globe, to make the world safe for exploitation by ExxonMobil, Halliburton and Citibank. Then and now, the capitalist state, as a special body of armed men dedicated to “holding down and exploiting the oppressed class,” is the enemy of black people and all poor and working people. The state of siege in New Orleans is no isolated episode, but is closely tied to the U.S. war and occupation in Iraq and Afghanistan. As we have repeatedly emphasized, *imperialist war abroad means racist police-state repression “at home.”* The imposition of martial law in New Orleans and the removal of its entire population is not an exercise in “emergency management.” It is a first taste of long-standing plans by the U.S. bourgeoisie to “impose order” in America’s inner cities through preventive internal war against the exploited and oppressed.

We noted in our previous article (“New Orleans Death Trap,” see page 26) that “the occupation of New Orleans resembled nothing so much as the U.S. takeover of Baghdad” – no accident since it was carried out by some of the same military units. Taking their cue from the feds, the makeshift headquarters of the notoriously racist and corrupt New Orleans Police Department was nicknamed the “Green Zone,” after the fortified HQ area of the U.S. occupiers in the Iraqi capital. Outside the Green Zone, whether in Baghdad or New Orleans, the people are in the gunsights of the government’s war machine. In Iraq, the colonial subjects have yet to be “pacified” – a determined insurgency has frustrated the U.S. expeditionary forces and the Iraqi puppet “government” and army. Fearing that the endless bloodbath in the Near East could stir unrest in the U.S., as occurred in the ghetto upheavals of the late 1960s during the Vietnam War, the imperialists have been sent stormtroopers to subdue the minority population under the iron heel of martial law. New Orleans is intended as a bloody lesson to the rest of us.

The day before President Bush entered the city, the semi-official *Army Times* (2 September) announced that “Troops Be-

gin Combat Operations in New Orleans.” This was not just a headline writer’s exaggeration. The article said a “massive citywide security mission” had been mounted to “fight the insurgency in the city.” The article quoted Brig. Gen. Gary Jones, commander of the Louisiana National Guard’s Joint Task Force Katrina, saying: “This place is going to look like Little Somalia.... We’re going to go out and take this city back. This will be a combat operation to get this city under control.” Take the city back . . . from whom, from the hapless and helpless people who were stranded there? On the face of it, this is demented. The supposed “insurgency” consists of a couple of potshots against helicopters. The reports of rampaging murder and mayhem in the darkened city have been shown to be wildly escalating rumors. Gunfights in the Superdome? Not a shred of evidence of this has been produced. In any case, it would have been pretty difficult since all those going into that giant holding pen were searched.

As for the talk of turning New Orleans into “Little Somalia,” this refers to the U.S. military’s psychosis about the fiasco of the U.S. racist invasion of the African country of Somalia in 1993 (under the Democratic Clinton administration) lyingly mythologized in *Black Hawk Down*. What that gung-ho movie did not show, of course, was the string of murderous atrocities committed against unarmed Somali civilians by the U.S. military before outraged resisters shot down two helicopters and killed 18 Army Rangers in a fierce gun battle in the capital Mogadishu. The American forces, enraged at being defeated by people they considered an inferior race, showed their cowardice and depravity by murdering hundreds of unarmed Somali men, women, and children. Now the racist military officers want to avenge themselves for that humiliation by suppressing the black population of New Orleans. And they are backed by the government officials who issued “shoot to kill” orders against “looters,” referring to the flood victims trying to get water, food and diapers from waterlogged stores.

“These troops are fresh back from Iraq, well trained, experienced, battle-tested, and under my orders to restore order in the streets,” declared Democratic governor Blanco. “They have M-16s and they are locked and loaded. These troops know how to shoot and kill and they are more than willing to do so if necessary and I expect they will” (ABC News, 2 September). While Washington expressed mild displeasure at Blanco’s refusal to hand over command of the Guard to the Pentagon, her blood lust seemed to please the feds. National Guard bureau chief Blum declared that the trapped population of New Orleans was violent and would be put down “in a quick and efficient manner.” The troops, Blum said, had just come from Iraq and Afghanistan and were “highly proficient in the use of lethal force” (*Washington Post*, 3 September). How many atrocities have been committed by U.S. forces in New Orleans? Reporting is sketchy, photographing of bodies is forbidden, and guns have been pointed at reporters who are too nosy.

But all the talk of combat, insurgency and the reference to Somalia reveals something more. In our article, “American Gestapo” (*The Internationalist* No. 19, Summer 2004), we detailed the extensive planning by the U.S. military for carrying out “Military Operations on Urban Terrain” (MOUT) *inside*

the United States. We noted:

“This has pushed aside earlier doctrines on Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW): the army isn’t just planning for ‘peacekeeping’ during ‘civil disturbances’ in places like Los Angeles, they’re planning for war.”

A book-length study of urban counterinsurgency tactics published by the Institute of Strategic Studies of the U.S. Army War College, titled *Soldiers in Cities* (2001), cited the fighting in Mogadishu as a prime example of “Recent MOUT Failures.” The authors lament: “the outcome of this battle represented a major political defeat for the United States, spelling the beginning of the end of U.S. efforts to stabilize the situation in Somalia.” The study pointedly notes that “coincident with the end of the Cold War, the likelihood of U.S. military operations in the continental United States itself has also increased,” and that “the new national strategy of Homeland Defense gives the U.S. military a number of potential missions in cities and other urban areas within the United States itself.”

The volume is a series of case studies of “urban warfare” from the standpoint of counterrevolutionary counterinsurgency: it studies problems the Israelis encountered in their 1982 occupation/destruction of Beirut, Lebanon, reviews the 1968 battles of Hue and Saigon in Vietnam, lists where the German Wehrmacht screwed up in the Battle of Stalingrad, etc. The chapter on the Los Angeles “riots” of 1992 following the acquittal of the racist cops who brutally beat black L.A. motorist Rodney King notes in particular the “significant” “limitations” on police actions by federal troops by the Posse Comitatus Act. It is doubly significant, therefore, that in requesting that Louisiana governor Blanco hand over command of the National Guard to Washington, the Bush administration asked her to federalize the Guard under the provisions of the Insurrection Act of 1807, which would remove such restrictions. That is what is behind the reference to mythical “insurgency” and “combat” in New Orleans: *the feds ominously wanted to declare that an “insurrection” was under way that had to be suppressed*.

A Permanent Black Diaspora?

The black population has been the prime target of internal repression since the republic was founded on the economic basis of chattel slavery. During the period of Radical Reconstruction following the defeat of the Southern slavocracy in the Civil War, the freed slaves attained some genuine democratic rights. But after 1876 as the Ku Klux Klan nightriders sowed terror in black communities and rigid Jim Crow segregation was instituted. Louisiana was in the vanguard of states that passed laws declaring that “one drop” of “black blood” was enough to classify a person as “colored.” Limited gains were won with the civil rights movement in the 1950s and ’60s, formally outlawing most forms of legal segregation but doing nothing about the endemic poverty which shackles the black poor. Even those gains are constantly being eroded as schools resegregate and the 1965 Voting Rights Act itself is under attack. In the “war on drugs” millions of black men have been jailed and permanently disenfranchised. Democrat Clinton abolished “welfare as we know it,” throwing millions of black women into increased poverty.

Given the racist legacy of American capitalism, past and present, in which black people have been corralled into hellish ghettos, north and south, are hounded by the cops, lack access to quality education and health care, are “last hired and first fired,” it is not surprising that blacks have been victimized in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Although New Orleans currently has a black mayor, the local rulers are infused with racism. In the home of jazz music and the Mardi Gras, the elite white “krewes” (Comus, Rex, Proteus, Momus) derived from aristocratic 19th-century secret societies, tightly controlled the parades and lorded it over the black Mardi Gras “Indians.” When ordered to desegregate in the early 1990s, most of them stopped parading but continued their exclusive, by invitation, whites-only balls. Now the business elite is moving with lightning speed to remake the city by emptying out the ghettos and expelling the black poor.

What is looming is a permanent diaspora of New Orleans blacks. A clue to the ruling class’s intentions for post-Katrina New Orleans was revealed by unofficial Bush administration mouthpiece David Brooks, in a *New York Times* (8 September) column outrageously titled, “Katrina’s Silver Lining.” The silver lining for the capitalists, it seems, is the opportunity presented by the fact that Katrina “separated tens of thousands of poor people from the run-down isolated neighborhoods in which they were trapped.” Like the Bushes, Brooks is exultant at the idea that this government-enhanced disaster is turning hundreds of thousands of black residents into homeless evacuees, to be hunted down as looters or rounded up and deported to heavily policed “shelters.” Brooks says government must prevent them from ever coming back: “If we just put up new buildings and allow the same people to move back into their old neighborhoods, then urban New Orleans will become just as run down and dysfunctional as before.”

House Speaker Dennis Hastert took some flak for saying too bluntly what large sectors of the American bourgeoisie thinks, sneering that restoring largely black New Orleans “doesn’t make sense” and that “It looks like a lot of that place could be bulldozed” (*Washington Post*, 1 September). That he isn’t alone in this was shown by the comments of James Reiss, head of the New Orleans Business Council. As head of the Regional Transportation Authority, he was responsible for seeing to it that city buses were not marshaled in an organized evacuation effort. Reiss got out safely just before the storm hit, and then choppered back a few days later – with Israeli security guards – to his mansion in the gated Uptown millionaires’ community of Audubon Place. While tens of thousands were still stranded on rooftops and in the Superdome, Reiss organized a secret conclave of business leaders in Dallas to work out the plans for a new New Orleans, “cleansed” of poor black people. Through the house organ of American capital, Reiss issued a threat on behalf of his class:

“The new city must be something very different, Mr. Reiss says, with better services and fewer poor people. ‘Those who want to see this city rebuilt want to see it done in a completely different way: demographically, geographically and politically,’ he says. ‘I’m not just speaking for myself here. The way we’ve been living is not going to happen

again, or we’re out’.”

–“Old-Line Families Plot the Future in New Orleans,” *Wall Street Journal*, 8 September

Similarly, *Washington Post* reporter and editor Joel Garreau wrote:

“The city of New Orleans is not going to be rebuilt.

“The tourist neighborhoods? The ancient parts from the French Quarter to the Garden District on that slim crescent of relatively high ground near the river? Yes, they will be restored. The airport and the convention center? Yes, those, too.

“But the far larger swath – the real New Orleans where the tourists don’t go, the part that Katrina turned into a toxic soup bowl, its population of 400,000 scattered to the waves? Not so much....

“There are a lot of black and poor people who are not going to return to New Orleans any more than Okies did to the Dust Bowl.”

–*Washington Post*, 11 September

Meanwhile, Bush cronies in companies like Halliburton, Bechtel and Fluor Corporation are cashing in, with huge no-bid contracts ranging from \$100 million to \$500 million. On FEMA’s recommendation, some of the donated aid money has been flowing into the coffers of “Operation Blessing,” run by Pat Robertson, the ultra-right-wing religious fanatic who recently called for the U.S. to assassinate Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez. Robertson, it may be remembered, together with fellow zealot Jerry Falwell hailed the 2001 attack on the World Trade Center as god’s punishment on New York gays and abortion-rights supporters. Robertson is notorious for looting his “charities,” having spent \$500,000 in donations on a jet he used to visit his African diamond mines, and channeling half of all donations to his Christian Broadcasting Company. And the rightist Heritage Foundation is helping (for a hefty fee) develop the government’s recovery plan, calling for waiving environmental rules, eliminating capital gains taxes and permitting private ownership of public school buildings.

“Crony capitalism,” it turns out, doesn’t just sprout in semi-colonial countries like Indonesia. The Bush gang are not only bloody-minded imperialist warmongers, depraved mass murderers, front men for a sinister military-industrial complex, hypocritical Christian bigots and scions of a capitalist robber baron who helped finance Hitler (Prescott Bush), they and their ilk are also deeply corrupt. The idea that conservatives are for “small government” is a myth to keep the small-town Chamber of Commerce businessmen of Main Street politically tied to the financiers of Wall Street who bleed them dry. All these corporations live off the public trough, and their political representatives loot the “public” till with abandon. Just drive around northern Virginia some time to see all the estates and McMansions built by right-wing “consultants” with the proceeds of their lucrative “cost-plus” government contracts.

The corruption, lies and cronyism are what most of the liberals and reformist left focus on in their comments on the New Orleans catastrophe. More far-out types focus on conspiracy theories (maybe Bush ordered the planes to hit the World Trade Center, was there a plane at all at the Pentagon, what about W’s bin Laden connection, etc.). What they have



New Orleans Police Department turned Greyhound bus station into a jail following post-hurricane flood.

in common is that they seek to discredit the Bush regime *within the political framework of bourgeois politics*. Most fundamental, however, is the fact that, from Iraq to Louisiana, the government acts as the “executive committee” of the entire capitalist class. Democrats and Republicans may have disputes over which one is too “soft” in going after the current nemesis (Iraq’s Saddam Hussein yesterday, North Korea’s Kim Jong Il tomorrow), over whether tax cuts are “reckless” or the Iraq invasion “ill-prepared.” But they all seek to further the interests of U.S. imperialism, which is the greatest threat to working people around the globe and the future of humanity.

While various reformist pseudo-socialists call on the government to “do more” for the hurricane victims, calling for “money for relief, not for war,” revolutionaries respond that this is not a matter of “priorities” but of class interests. Communists do not call to “bring the troops home” to send them to New Orleans, but to *drive the U.S. out of Iraq and defeat the imperialist occupation*. Indeed, the example of Hurricane Katrina, where troops were “brought home” and then used to impose martial law on black New Orleans, is a perfect example of what is wrong with reformist “troops out” slogans which appeal to imperialist liberals who want to cut their losses in Iraq in order to focus on other “priorities” such as “disaster relief.” In the 1960s, liberals and reformists called to “bring the troops home” and “send them to Selma,” supposedly to defend civil rights protesters. But in reality, U.S. troops were sent into Little Rock, Arkansas and Birmingham, Alabama not to defend blacks but to put down incipient black rebellions against racist terror!

Authentic communists seek to mobilize the mass of the exploited and oppressed against their exploiters and oppressors, fighting for a *class* opposition to the rulers who are laying waste to Iraq and are responsible for the devastation visited on New Orleans. We have called for the tens of thousands of black poor and working-class families who have been deprived of their homes and livelihood to march on Washington on a class-struggle program. There must be a fight to rebuild New Orleans in the interests of those who with their toil make the city run. The ruling class wants to line the pockets of racist Uptown magnates, the California and Texas

megacorporations who live off juicy government contracts, the Arkansas retailers who milk profits from slave labor, and the New York banks who will make billions in interests on the loans that will be floated to pay for the reconstruction bonanza. We demand a *massive program of public works, hiring the jobless at full union-scale wages and under workers control, to provide social services and decent housing, free of cost, for every single family driven from New Orleans*.

Demands must be raised as well to *cancel the debts of all flood victims*. Otherwise they will not only be left without homes and jobs but will also be thrown into permanent penury by the relentless grinding of the capitalist market. As city rulers use the absence of hospital facilities as an excuse to prevent New Orleans residents from returning, there should be a mobilization to provide *free quality medical care to all*. Accept the offers of aid from Cuba and Venezuela! Let in the hospital units that FEMA kept out! Expropriate the private hospital corporations! While Bush & Co. use the Katrina disaster to push vouchers and private schools, there must be a fight for *high quality public education* under teacher-parent-student control. The entire workers movement along with civil rights organizations and all defenders of black rights and democratic rights should mobilize for the *right of return for the entire displaced population of New Orleans*. This will be a potentially explosive confrontation that comes directly up against the U.S. imperialist drive toward a police state.

After the last hurricane thousands of Mexican and Central American workers provided the back-breaking labor to rebuild. While untold numbers of “undocumented” immigrants have had to flee from New Orleans, staying away from shelters for fear of deportation, defenders of labor, minority and immigrant rights must demand *full citizenship rights for all immigrants*. To defend the victims of the Katrina disaster from being victimized again in the reconstruction, *councils of working people and residents of poor neighborhoods* should be formed. Blacks and working people across the country have the power to repulse the onslaught against the hard-hit population of New Orleans. This racist attack, like the war on Iraq, has been unleashed by both capitalist parties. To defeat it, it is necessary to break with all the bourgeois politicians and fight to build a *revolutionary workers party*.

To avenge the deaths of the brothers and sisters, the mothers and fathers that the ruling class left to die, to achieve genuine social equality and a decent life for blacks and all working people, we will have to get rid of this whole rotten system. Capitalism is racist to its core, and the struggle against racism must therefore be a struggle against capitalism. Organizing each group of the oppressed on a narrow sectoral basis only aids the class enemy, the rulers who seek to keep us divided. Only a revolutionary, internationalist workers party can organize and lead the oppressed to victory by sweeping away the capitalists and establishing a socialist society based on the principle of production for use and not for profit. The Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International calls upon all the oppressed to join in the struggle. *Remember New Orleans! Black liberation through socialist revolution!* ■

FEMA and U.S. Plans for “War at Home”

A lot of the partisan infighting and interagency wrangling about the occupation of New Orleans was over the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Democrats charged that FEMA had become inoperable since it was absorbed into the Department of Homeland Security. It should again be a stand-alone agency reporting directly to the president, they argued, like it was under the Democratic Clinton administration. Clinton himself, who has been giving political cover for George Bush II by doing disaster relief fundraising with George Bush I, opined that he understood disaster relief better, having been a poor boy himself. The Democrats “forget” that they were the ones who pushed for a “homeland security” agency after 9/11, as well as for beefing up and centralizing U.S. intelligence agencies, removing restrictions on spying and disruption against domestic “enemies,” as well as voting for the draconian USA PATRIOT Act in 2001 and then extending this police-state repressive legislation in 2005.

But FEMA is not some do-good agency that doles out checks to homeowners who have been flooded out. Under Clinton and Bush and for decades beforehand, this seemingly innocuous outfit has been the centerpiece of plans to ensure the “continuity of government” (COG) *after the suspension of the Constitution*. During the ten-year period of 1982-92, FEMA’s budget included only \$243 million for disaster relief, but \$2.9 billion for secret operations. This includes the mammoth underground government command center at Mt. Weather in Virginia. The agency was formed in 1979 by Democratic president Jimmy Carter through Executive Order No. 12148 (issued by the White House without approval or even discussion by Congress) to consolidate under a single “emergency czar” the various functions the federal government would take over by decree after an “emergency” has been declared (not necessarily by the president). In 1983, the head of the agency’s Civil Security Division, General Frank Salzedo, declared that one of FEMA’s tasks was “prevention of dissident groups from gaining access to U.S. opinion, or a global audience in times of crisis.”

In 1984, Ronald Reagan issued a Presidential Directive authorizing FEMA to carry out a simulation of a “state of domestic national emergency.” This exercise, REX-84, was run by a group led by the infamous Lt.-Col. Oliver North and General Richard Secord, the architects of the Iran-contra scandal and the financing of Central American death squads through CIA-assisted drug-running. The game plan included preparing concentration camps for the detention of 400,000 undocumented immigrants on military bases, and plans for suspension of the Bill of Rights of the U.S. Constitution for the duration of the national emergency. The network of camps is still in existence. Among the facilities which were turned over to FEMA for its detention centers is Fort Chaffee, Arkansas. After the Houston Astrodome filled up with evacuees from New Orleans, the next destination where 9,000 flood survi-

vors were sent was Fort Chaffee. Photos showed happy children playing on the lawn. They didn’t show the barbed wire fences surrounding the camp with the top of the fence slanting inward to keep inmates in.

Meanwhile, the government has been gearing up its apparatus for military repression inside the United States. The Army Field Manual on Civil Disturbance Operations (FM3-19.15) was updated and reissued last April, full of diagrams and exercises for dispersing crowds, admonitions to gather intelligence about domestic dissident groups and the like. This past summer, reporter Bradley Graham was given a tour of the NORTHCOM headquarters in Colorado Springs where he was apparently shown a compendium document, CONPLAN 2002, of over 1,000 pages dealing with some 15 different scenarios in which federal troops are used in the United States. “When it comes to ground forces possibly taking a lead role in homeland operations, senior Northcom officers remain reluctant to discuss specifics,” Graham reports. “Military exercises code-named Vital Archer, which involve troops in lead roles, are shrouded in secrecy” (*Washington Post*, 8 August).

The American ruling class has long had domestic war plans. In every major imperialist war the authorities have targeted the “enemy within,” often jailing war opponents. The October Revolution of 1917 led by the Bolsheviks under V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky struck mortal fear into capitalists around the world, suddenly confronted with the prospect that they could lose power to an uprising of their wage slaves. U.S. capitalists felt especially vulnerable during the 1930s, when the Depression led to a radicalization in the working class and growth of left-wing parties. During World War II they locked up the Trotskyists while most pro-capitalist union tops and the Stalinized Communist Party did their part for the war effort with a “no strike” pledge. At the onset of the Cold War, camps were readied to intern tens of thousands of communists under the McCarran Internal Security Act of 1950. Since the 1980s, as the capitalists sharply intensified the rate of exploitation, driving down wages while profits soar, the growing inequality has led the American bourgeoisie to restructure its repressive apparatus, beefing up paramilitary police units as it has long done with its Latin American satraps. FEMA sits atop the pyramid.



FEMA camp at Ft. Chaffee in 1995.

Black Self-Defense Against “Ethnic Cleansing”

Racist Hell in Tulsa, 1921

National Guard troops patrolling the streets with a mounted machine gun. Thousands of black people held at a convention center. Entire black neighborhoods destroyed, families prevented from returning to their homes. Hundreds of black dead, their bodies “stacked up like cord wood.” No, we’re not describing New Orleans in September 2005. This was Tulsa, Oklahoma in June 1921. Today, the media and government call the destruction of black New Orleans a “natural disaster.” Back then, the papers described the devastation of black Tulsa as a “race riot.” In both cases these were racist assaults. But in Tulsa there was a stiff resistance by armed black war veterans, including black radicals, which sent shock waves around the country.

On 30 May 1921, a young black man named Dick Rowland stumbled as he entered an elevator – and was accused of “assaulting” the white woman operator. He was arrested the next day. But in this booming oil town dominated by the Ku Klux Klan, this kind of accusation, no matter how absurd, was tantamount to a death sentence. The year before, a prisoner held in the city jail had been taken out by a mob and hung. Nationwide, 50 black men were reportedly lynched in 1920. This time, the *Tulsa Tribune* ran an article, “To

Lynch Negro Tonight.” But that evening, the white mob was surprised when several dozen black former soldiers, dressed in their World War I uniforms, showed up to prevent the worst. When the racist vigilantes tried to disarm them, shots rang out. This led to a three-day racist pogrom which devastated the black neighborhood of Greenwood. The police said 36 died, the Red Cross reported more than 300 dead, overwhelmingly black people.

Courtesy of Oklahoma Historical Society



Fires set by white vigilantes wiped out Greenwood, racists exulted in “running the Negro out of Tulsa.”



National Guard machine gun crew patrolling black community of Tulsa, 1 June 1921.

Courtesy of the University of Tulsa

Greenwood was referred to by local whites as “Little Africa”; for blacks around the country this relatively prosperous neighborhood was known as the “black Wall Street.” The racists, drunk on oil money, were determined to get rid of it. In the early morning hours of July 1, white mobs – many deputized by the police department – poured into Greenwood to loot and burn. The massive assault suggests premeditated action. They proceeded methodically, burning every single house, store or church. The mob, however, met determined resistance from Greenwood’s black defenders, who were also well-armed. Oklahoma Governor Robertson declared martial law and sent in the Guard who rode around



Hundreds of black men were seized at gun point and marched to detention centers like prisoners.

Tulsa with machine guns mounted on trucks. The sky was filled with airplanes, which hovered over Greenwood “like great birds of prey looking for a victim,” as one survivor put it. Police used planes to report movements of blacks. A black woman saved two black boys being shot at from a two-seater plane. Incendiary bombs were also reportedly dropped from planes. Black self-defense efforts were overwhelmed by the government offensive.

It was the first time an American city was bombed from the air. (In 1985, the Philadelphia police, ordered by Democratic



Black Tulsans fought valiantly to defend their community.

mayor Wilson Goode, dropped an incendiary bomb on the MOVE commune, destroying 62 black homes.) In the end, 35 city blocks of Tulsa were gutted, including several churches, a library, a school and a hospital. Over 6,000 black people – men, women and children – were rounded up and held at the Convention Hall and fairgrounds, some for as long as eight days. Thousands fled the city, some never to return. The homeless were shunted off into a tent city where they were exposed to floods, heat and cold for more than a year. Typhoid fever, smallpox and malnutrition took their toll. Initially, blacks were only allowed out of the fairground to work bearing a green tag giving the name of their employer, a measure reminiscent of South Africa’s apartheid. Others were used as forced labor, clearing away the rubble of their homes.

Whether or not there was a previous plan by the white Tulsa bourgeoisie to take over Greenwood, the city’s Real Estate Exchange certainly acted like it afterwards. It wanted to have the district declared an industrial zone, and municipal authorities attempted to block black reconstruction. Although these attempts were not successful, Greenwood continued

to be punished. Decades later the neighborhood was still deprived of streetlights, paved streets, running water, sewers or trash collection! And the whole subject of the pogrom was taboo for several generations.

James Hirsch, author of a recent book on Tulsa, *Riot and Remembrance: The Tulsa Race War and Its Legacy* (Houghton Mifflin, 2002), dismisses reports of aerial bombing and concludes that “many whites honestly (but wrongly) believed that the blacks were trying to take over Tulsa.” So according to this star reporter for the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*, it was just a misunderstanding! The bourgeois press may expose individual racist atrocities, but cannot denounce the capitalist land-grabbing behind them. Racist hysteria about marauding blacks in Tulsa in 1921 had as little substance as the rumors of pillage and murder in today’s New Orleans.

Racist terror was closely connected to the Oklahoma oil barons’ war against the labor movement. In November 1917, after a police raid on an Industrial Workers of the World hall in Tulsa, 17 workers were arrested and convicted of “vagrancy”. A climate of patriotic war hysteria was whipped up because this leftist union was organizing local oil workers. In the night of November 9 the condemned men were taken by police from the Tulsa jail, whereupon they were promptly kidnapped and sadistically whipped and tarred by masked nightriders from the “Knights of Liberty”, a local variant of the Klan. According to the pamphlet *The “Knights of Liberty” Mob and the I.W.W. Prisoners at Tulsa, Okla.* published by the National Civil Liberties Bureau in February 1918, the Chief of Police and his detectives simply donned masks and oversaw the vigilante action. As in the case of Dick Rowland, where a lynching was announced in advance, the *Tulsa World* had editorialized “Get out the Hemp” on the very day of the kidnapping.

The Tulsa “race riot” was also the culmination of a series

THE CRUSADER

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The Tulsa Riot

Tulsa Post, A. B. B., Accused of "Fomenting and Directing" Riot, Herewith Presents Statement

By
COMMANDER, Tulsa Post,
Africa's Blood Brotherhood

Supreme Council, A. B. B., New York, N. Y.

Comrades:
I am not a literary man, and my report will be most badly written. However, you have asked it and it is my duty to give it.

Most everyone knows by this time the origin of the Tulsa trouble, that the incident of a colored man named Dick Rowland, stumbling into an elevator and taking hold of the arm of the girl operator to save himself, played up by the white press as an assault by a Negro on a white woman, had led to a mob of white men to terrorize the colored people. When these men had in their possession the city...

over rounded up by these queer despots happened to be colored!
Failing to drive the Negro fighters from their positions, the white mob and their allies, the police and the newly sworn in deputies from the ranks of the mob, resorted to underhand and backhanded warfare on women and children, attempting to force the Negro residents, churches, hospitals and day nurseries, but failing in this work airplanes came up and dropped incendiary bombs upon the Negro district, setting the flames of white death upon defenseless women and children, and helpless aged and sick, bed-

MILITARY CONTROL IS ENDED AT TULSA

Civil Law Restored, One Negro Agitator Under Arrest, Three Others Sought.

PLOT BY NEGRO SOCIETY?

Wealthy Men of Race Say Headquarters Were Busy Hours Before the First Clash.

Special to The New York Times.
TULSA, Okla., June 3.—Martial law was lifted from the city this afternoon despite the appeal of the Chamber of

Report of a "Negro Brotherhood"

An official who is in close touch with the military men here declared tonight that the "authorities" had evidence in their possession that organizers of "the African Blood Brotherhood" passed through Oklahoma about sixty days ago and organized a chapter of the secret society in Tulsa.

He stated that this evidence indicated that some leaders of the mob that first gathered before the Court House on Tuesday night had been identified as members of this society, which was "highly aggressive" in character, seeking to foment unrest among the negroes; that the society was national in scope and headed by a New York negro, and that it had carried on activities in other parts of Oklahoma and the Southwest. It was said also that there was a suspicion that a store of ammunition, which exploded with the burning of the new church in the negro district, was suspected to be the arsenal of this society.

In connection with the general assertion that the negro society linked up outside sections with Tulsa, it was stated by a high police officer that the department was notified by the telephone central about 9 o'clock Tuesday night that they had intercepted a message to Muskogee, fifty-five miles dis-

ABB's *Crusader* refuted *New York Times*' claims of "outside agitators," hailed black self-defense at Tulsa.

of murderous attacks on black neighborhoods during the war and post-war period, notably in East St. Louis (1917) and Chicago (1919). In 1921 the recently-founded Communist Party exposed the hideous racist reality behind U.S. bourgeois "democracy" and stood forthrightly on the side of black self-defense. A CP appeal, titled "The Tulsa Massacre," declared:

"No words are vivid enough to describe the actions of the well-dressed and armed mob of business men who, with automobiles and airplanes surrounded the Negro quarter of Tulsa on June 1, killed ninety persons and injured more than 200 and made more than 10,000 Negroes homeless.

"There is only one appeal to stop these fiendish and bloody outrages – the appeal to organized force. The only language that the bloodthirsty capitalists of America can understand is the language of organized power.

"Only by reprisals, by answering force with force, will business men and their white guards, the Ku Klux Klan, etc., be restrained from their assaults on the Negroes and the working people."

The leaflet criticized the "whites only" policy of the pro-capitalist labor misleaders:

"We've failed to organize the Negro and refused to treat him as our equal brother. We are to blame. Break down the barriers in the union[s]. Wipe out the color lines. There is only one line we can draw, and that is the class line."...
"Under the Russian Czar the Jews were the victims of race riots and pogroms. Workers and peasants overthrew the capitalist government and established a workers' govern-

ment – the Soviet Republic of Russia. Only by following our Russian comrades' heroic example and establishing here the Soviet Republic of America will the workers, white and black, be able to work in peace and enjoy the fruits of their labor.

"Down with the capitalist system! Long live the Workers' Republic of America!"

The African Blood Brotherhood, a pro-communist independent black grouping, printed a report from a supporter and participant in its paper *The Crusader* (July 1921) recounting how 50 black ex-soldiers repelled a mob of whites attacking a church:

"The white mob and their police allies failing to dislodge the Negro fighters, the white militia was called out. Upon their arrival on the scene, they instantly directed their attacks upon the Negroes, and acted in the capacity of a vanguard for the howling white mobs who greeted their appearance with glee, and confidently lined up behind them for the assault upon the embattled Negroes. But not even the militia reinforcements to our enemies proved able to drive out the Negro fighters until their bombing aeroplanes began circling above the Negro lines and dropping bombs upon them..."

The *New York Times* (4 June 1921) on its front page blamed the "African Blood Brotherhood, which is believed by the authorities in Tulsa, Okla., to have fomented the riot in that city." The ABB responded:

"As to the accusation that the Tulsa Post of the African Blood Brotherhood 'fomented and directed the Tulsa riot,' the first part is a lie, and whether we directed Negroes in their fight in self-defence is certainly no crime in Negro eyes, and [it] is left for the white Oklahoma authorities to prove."

It is no accident that in New Orleans today, one of the first measures under the martial law orders issued by Democratic mayor Nagin was to seize guns from the population, even those who had obtained legal permits. From Tulsa 1921 to the Monroe, North Carolina NAACP in 1961, the Louisiana Deacons for Defense in 1964 and the Black Panther Party in the mid-late '60s, black self-defense has been central to the crystallization of radical and effective resistance to racist attacks. Defense of this fundamental right remains a touchstone for all genuine communists, who fight for black liberation through socialist revolution.

The answer to the man-made "disasters" which repeatedly ravage the oppressed requires building a revolutionary workers party capable of harnessing the power of the entire working class in the struggle against racist oppression, to sweep away the capitalist system and begin the socialist reconstruction of society. ■

For further information on the Tulsa pogrom, see Scott Ellsworth, *Death in a Promised Land: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921* (Louisiana State University Press, 1992), the report of the American Red Cross, *Tulsa Race Riot Disaster* (1994), the report of the Oklahoma State Commission to Investigate the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921 (2001)*, and the web site of the Tulsa Reparations Coalition (<http://www.tulsareparations.org>).

*Available on-line at <http://www.ok-history.mus.ok.us/trrc/report.htm>

New Orleans Death Trap: Thousands of Black Poor Left to Die

SEPTEMBER 5—The New Orleans disaster was man-made. It was the product of a government that defends only the property and interests of the ruling class, and refused to make preparations for a catastrophe that everyone knew was coming. The horrendous suffering and still-unknown death toll reaching into the thousands was determined by class and race: the rich and white got out in their SUVs, while the poor and black, without cars and money and credit cards, were left to fend for themselves against the inundation.

The destruction in the wake of Hurricane Katrina is being called the worst natural disaster in U.S. history. But the devastation of New Orleans was not natural, nor just the result of callous, criminal neglect – it was mass murder by the racist rulers of capitalist America. The real response to this outrage is not to call on criminals in power to improve preparations for the next disaster, but to fight for socialist revolution to bring down the system that perpetuates war, racism and poverty.

The numbers left stranded were staggering, well over 100,000 trapped on rooftops, camped out on Interstate Highway 10, jammed into the filthy, sweltering Superdome and the chaos of the Convention Center. From Day One, television images showed the desperate black families, without food and water, the crying hungry babies, the old and infirm in wheelchairs expiring from dehydration and heatstroke. What the TV didn't show were rings of police who kept the survivors trapped in these hellholes, preventing them from leaving.

Eighty percent of this city of 500,000 has been submerged in a flood of biblical proportions. But the government's concern was not to protect the population, two-thirds of which is black. There were no plans – none – to evacuate the 35 percent of the population that was too old or too poor to be able to move. There were no plans to evacuate patients from public hospitals, where the destitute are treated, although wealthy

We Need a Revolution!



Michael Appleton/New York Daily News

Man driven from his home by Hurricane Katrina carries unconscious boy past National Guardsmen sealing off the Superdome in New Orleans, September 1.

private hospitals hired helicopters and buses. By Wednesday, police were ordered to stop searching for survivors and to focus on stopping looting.

Only on the fifth day were buses brought in to evacuate the victims. This took place just as President Bush whisked through New Orleans, avoiding any areas where he might encounter angry survivors. State Police and National Guard SWAT teams bristling with weapons rode through the city atop armored personnel carriers, acting like they were in occupied Iraq. In fact, the occupation of New Orleans resembled nothing so much as the U.S. takeover of Baghdad. While the government (including Louisiana state and New Orleans city officials) and the media kept braying about “looting,” which was mainly the desperate population scavenging for food and drink, the authorities stood by and did nothing, day after day.

The hue and cry over looting is a classic racist ploy. A set of two nearly identical wire service pictures is circulating on the Internet: the caption of one shows a white couple wading through water after “finding bread and soda from a local grocery store,” while the second shows a young black man “after

looting a grocery store.” Other photos show New Orleans police officers joining in the “free for all” and National Guard soldiers in uniform “shopping” for supplies in storm-battered Wal-Mart stores. Meanwhile, Bush’s capitalist buddies at Enron and Halliburton have been looting the entire country, siphoning off millions in fictitious billing and destroying billions of dollars of workers’ pensions!

Millions around the globe saw searing pictures of crowds of poor and black flood victims crying out “Help, help, help,” while columns of buses were parked on the highways ten miles away. The New Orleans *Times-Picayune* (4 September) reported:

“Witnesses said a small riot broke out Wednesday when refugees saw rescuers in big trucks carting off white tourists by the dozens, leaving many black people to fend for themselves. ‘You should have seen them gathering up white folks,’ said Kim Jackson, 39. ‘They had a big 18-wheeler with the National Guard walking alongside them. ... But they got us here like dogs.’”

Now a political firestorm has broken out in Washington over the “slow pace” of the government’s response. Black Democrats and even some Southern Republicans blasted the Bush White House. But at bottom, it’s not about speed, or priorities, or even money. It’s about an inhuman system of exploitation in which the owners of capital grow rich off the labor of the toilers who from the time of chattel slavery have been considered “expendable” by the arrogant boss man.

“No One Can Say They Didn’t See It Coming”

As the 145-mile-an-hour winds of Hurricane Katrina slammed into the Gulf Coast on Monday morning, August 29, it was classified as a Category 4 storm, lower than the Category 5 storm that had been predicted. The eye of the storm passed east of New Orleans instead of hitting the city directly as feared. Yet by Monday evening, the low-lying areas north and east of the high ground along the Mississippi River embankment and the tourist destination of the French Quarter were under water. Incredibly, federal engineers did not realize that there had been a major breach of the flood barriers until they read about it on Internet web logs the next morning!

Later, the head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Michael Brown, a Bush political appointee who previously ran the Interna-

New Orleans Disaster in the Racist Media

White People “FIND”



Two residents waded through chest-deep water after finding bread and soda from a local grocery store after Hurricane Katrina came through the area in New Orleans, Louisiana.

(AFP/Getty Images/Chris Graythen)

Black People “LOOT”



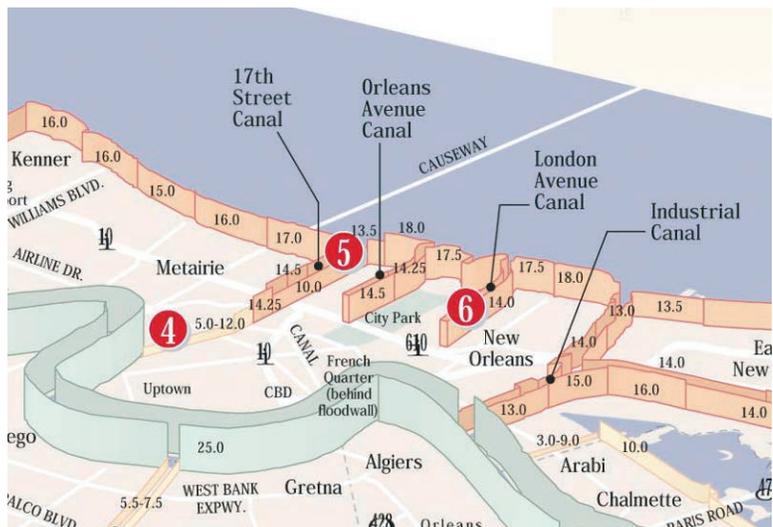
A young man walks through chest deep flood water after looting a grocery store in New Orleans on Tuesday, Aug. 30, 2005. Flood waters continue to rise in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina did extensive damage when it

AP Associated Press

These stories and pictures both appeared in **YAHOO! NEWS** August 30, 2005

<http://news.yahoo.com/photo/050830/480/1adm10208301530>

http://news.yahoo.com/photo/050830/photos_ts_afp/050830071810_shkxwoma_photo1



Partial detail from June 2002 *Times-Picayune* diagram of New Orleans levees. Note that break occurred at lowest point of floodwall on 17th Street canal.



Hurricane Katrina survivor confronts soldier demanding answers to why food has not come for him and everyone at the New Orleans Convention Center Friday, September 2.

tional Arabian Horse Association, said FEMA didn't know about more than 15,000 thirsty, starving, dying flood survivors in the New Orleans Convention Center until Thursday, after days of reporting on TV.

"No one can say they didn't see it coming," wrote the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* (30 August), in an article on how "Feds' Disaster Planning Shifts Away From Preparedness." For years, Gulf Coast officials had been warning about the dire need for hurricane protection, including building up levees and repairing barrier islands. In early 2001, FEMA issued a report listing the three most likely disasters as a massive earthquake in San Francisco, a hurricane hitting New Orleans and a terrorist attack on New York City. "The New Orleans hurricane scenario may be the deadliest of all," wrote the *Houston Chronicle* (1 December 2001) in an article titled, "Keeping Its Head Above Water: New Orleans Faces Doomsday Scenario."

The next year, National Public Radio (20 September 2002) broadcast a major piece on the danger of a hurricane hitting New Orleans. It interviewed Walter Maestri, in charge of emergency management for Jefferson Parish, who said they had held an exercise to estimate the effects of a Category 5 storm. After it was over, he wrote on the simulation map, "KYAGB: Kiss Your Ass Goodbye. It was body bag time. We think 40,000 people could lose their lives." Despite the warnings, nothing was done. Last year, Maestri told the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* (8 June 2004): "It appears that the money has been moved in the president's budget to handle homeland security and the war in Iraq, and I suppose that's the price we pay. Nobody locally is happy that the levees can't be finished, and we are doing everything we can to make the case that this is a security issue for us."

Following the 11 September 2001 attack on NYC's World Trade Center, the federal government drastically curtailed planning for natural disasters to focus on "terrorism." FEMA was absorbed into the Homeland Security Department. NBC-TV (2

September) reported that last year an exercise was held on a hypothetical "Hurricane Pam" which was almost an exact preview of what happened in Katrina: 120-mph winds, massive storm surges, 20 feet of water in New Orleans, 80 percent of the buildings damaged, hundreds of thousands stranded, people on rooftops, gunfire slowing rescue operations. A Louisiana State University hurricane expert, Ivor van Heerden, said that U.S. Army "Corps of Engineers people in the back of the room giggled" when the researchers presented the information.

Speaking with ABC-TV's Diane Sawyer, president Bush claimed that "I don't think anyone anticipated the breach of the levees." Like Condoleezza Rice's claim about 9-11 that "I don't think anybody could have predicted that these people would take an airplane and slam it into the World Trade Center," this is a bald-faced lie. Repeated studies showed that the floodwalls would

be breached by any powerful storm. Plans to raise the barriers higher were delayed as the administration slashed flood control programs for New Orleans by 60 percent last year. As a map in a five-part *Times-Picayune* (23-27 June 2002) series shows, the place on the 17th Street Canal where the floodwall was breached is precisely where it was the lowest, barely 10 feet above sea level. Katrina produced surges much higher than that in Lake Pontchartrain.

So they knew exactly what would happen in a major storm, and did nothing to prevent catastrophic damage. As far as protecting the population is concerned, the only preparation was New Orleans mayor Ray Nagin's call two days before the storm hit to evacuate the city. Yet the same *Times-Picayune* series reported that "100,000 people without transportation will be especially threatened" if New Orleans were hit by "the Big One." In spite of this, neither the city, state or federal governments did anything to dispatch the 2,000 buses that would be needed to get such a huge population out of harm's way. They consciously left the poor, overwhelmingly black population there to die. It was a classic capitalist "solution" going back to the Georgia slave-era proverb: "Every man for himself, and the devil take the hindmost."

In the aftermath, the survivors of Hurricane Katrina have been held prisoner in the flooded city. It should not be forgotten that Louisiana is Klan country. In addition to the shotgun-wielding cops ringing the sports arenas, when exhausted black New Orleans residents trudged over the Crescent City Connection, trying to get out by crossing the bridges west to Jefferson Parish, the only escape route was cut off by officials with guns and dogs. Jefferson is a white flight suburb, a hotbed of racist reaction which in 1989 elected fascist David Duke, the neo-Nazi "Klan in a suit," to the state legislature. The racist blockade preventing survivors from reaching the West Bank of the Mississippi shows again that the Louisiana disaster

New York Times



Authorities kept 20,000 flood survivors locked in the New Orleans Superdome for more than four days, blocked from leaving by police and National Guard, without adequate food and water, in stifling heat and pitch dark at night.

was *political*, not “natural.”

The horror of New Orleans has deeply shaken the country. Complacent liberals act as if they have suddenly seen the face of hell, “right here in River City.” Even some of the servile bourgeois media, who acted as shameless PR men and women for the Pentagon when they were “embedded” with the imperialist invaders in Iraq, showed apocalyptic scenes from New Orleans as Bush was proclaiming that FEMA head “Brownie” was “doing a heck of a job.” A round-up by the *New York Times* (4 September) commented:

“New Orleans, Flannery O’Connor once wrote, is a place where the devil’s existence is freely recognized.

“But not this devil. Not the devil of bloated bodies floating in muddy waters washing lazily over submerged pickups and campers, of corpses being eaten by rats as they decomposed on city streets, of people dying in wheelchairs outside the convention center as friends poured water over their heads to try to keep them alive.”

Mayor Nagin, a “maverick” bourgeois politico, warned “if I don’t get the help I need this city is going to blow up and this is going to be a national disgrace.”

Suddenly, the press is reporting that what was exposed in New Orleans was not just a broken levee, but a “cleavage of race and class, at once familiar and startlingly new, laid bare in a setting where they suddenly amounted to matters of life and death,” as *Times* reporter Jason DeParle wrote. With the images of impoverished black people staring viewers in the face, the voice of the capitalist “establishment” discovered that “28% of people in New Orleans live in poverty,” more than triple the national average, and “of those, 84% are black.” New Orleans looked like Port-au-Prince, Haiti, they said, or Somalia. Or it could become like Los Angeles in 1992, after the acquittal by a lily-white jury of the white cops who beat black motorist Rodney King. Or like Newark, Detroit or Washington, which all burned in the “race riots”

(actually, ghetto upheavals) of the 1960s. Or more recently, Cincinnati in the spring of 2001.

DeParle’s article was titled, “What Happens to a Race Deferred,” a reference to black writer Langston Hughes’ 1951 poem presaging the civil rights movement, “Lenox Avenue Mural: Harlem,” which began:

“What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore –
and then run? ...

“Maybe it just sags,
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?”

Now that the Big One has hit, the ruling class is worried that the Big Easy could blow.

Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

As has frequently happened through the ages, a natural phenomenon, Hurricane Katrina, laid bare the fault lines between the classes in a rotting, decaying society. We noted in our special issue on the Asian tsunami disaster (“Capitalist Tidal Wave of Death,” *The Internationalist* No. 20, January-February 2005) that the vast majority of the quarter million who perished in that calamity died because they were poor and vulnerable, forced to live in precarious conditions on the edge of a punishing sea. In New Orleans today, black poor and working people resided in the basin below sea level where the canals were breached. They live from paycheck to paycheck, from disability, social security and welfare checks, and couldn’t leave because the hurricane hit before the end of the month when the check comes. Even if they had a car, many did not have \$40 to buy a tank of gas, so they stayed to face the wrath of Katrina, and several thousand died.

The fury of the hurricane survivors against the government, as one TV newscaster remarked, is that of people who don’t just feel “neglected” since August 29. They toil under the burden of several hundred years of slavery, almost a century of Jim Crow segregation, and a grinding poverty that has never let up. The thousands crammed into the stinking New Orleans Superdome, who never could have afforded the \$90 a seat tickets when it was a sports arena, felt like they were in the hold of a slave ship, as Jesse Jackson remarked. Of course, black Democrat Jackson then turns around and tells the grandchildren of slaves the lie that “the hands that picked cotton will pick a president” ... by voting for Dixiecrats like Bill Clinton. Clinton is helping Bush do political damage control and touring with George Bush I calling for charity contributions, swindling working people while providing a juicy tax break for the capitalists.

Slavery was the economic foundation on which U.S. capitalism was built, and its effects still permeate American society. All the more so in New Orleans, which was annexed by the United States from France in the 1803 Louisiana Purchase, greatly extending the sway of the slavocracy. In the early 19th century, New Orleans was a center of the slave trade. Controlling it was crucial to U.S. rulers, because the products of slave labor were shipped down the Mississippi and exported through the port of New Orleans. Back then, the black population was kept in shacks in the bottom lands that lie below sea level, while the grand mansions of the white aristocracy lined St. Charles Avenue. The relatively large number of free blacks gave rise to the multicultural heritage that is to this day the trademark of New Orleans, the city that was the birthplace of jazz music and home of the Mardi Gras. But in the rich cultural mix, black people were always on the bottom economically, and geographically. The state is a paradise of plunder and corruption for oil and agribusiness companies, together with Democrat and Republican politicians who feed at the trough. Their wealth and power are based on ruthless exploitation of the black and white laboring poor.

The *St. Petersburg Times* (4 September) writes that “many black people in New Orleans, believed the city purposefully broke the levy that flooded their neighborhood so the famous French Quarter and white areas of town could be spared.” They may think that because the capitalist rulers of New Orleans did it before. During the Mississippi River flood in the spring of 1927, the business community decided to dynamite the levee at Poydras, just below the city, flooding out St. Bernard and Plaquemines parishes and ruining small farmers. For this the bankers enlisted the support of Republican president Calvin Coolidge, who named a commission headed by Herbert Hoover. Throughout the Mississippi Delta, blacks by the thousands were press-ganged to shore up the levees, forcibly held in work camps under armed guard, beset by Klan night-riders. When a black worker refused to submit to this slave labor, he was shot by a cop, triggering a strike and unrest in the camps (John Barry, *Rising Tide: The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 and How It Changed America* [Simon & Schuster, 1997]).

The victims of Hurricane Katrina are enraged because they know it doesn't have to be this way. In a society organized for human needs rather than for the profits sweated out of the misery of the masses, natural disasters can be prepared for and their effect mitigated. Just across the Caribbean in Cuba, where capitalism was abolished after the Revolution of 1959, hurricanes are an annual affair, yet few are killed by them. In 2001, when Hurricane Michelle, a Category 4 storm, lashed the island with 125-mph winds, 700,000 people were evacuated and five died. In September 2004, while Hurricane Jeanne killed up to 4,000 people in U.S.-occupied Haiti, the even stronger Category 5 Hurricane Ivan pummeled western Cuba, but nobody was killed, even though the storm destroyed up to 20,000 homes. This feat was achieved by evacuating 1.9 million people, housing three-quarters of them in other people's homes, while the remainder found refuge in 2,500 shelters; 1,725 kitchens, staffed by food workers from Havana, were set up by the government to feed the evacuees.

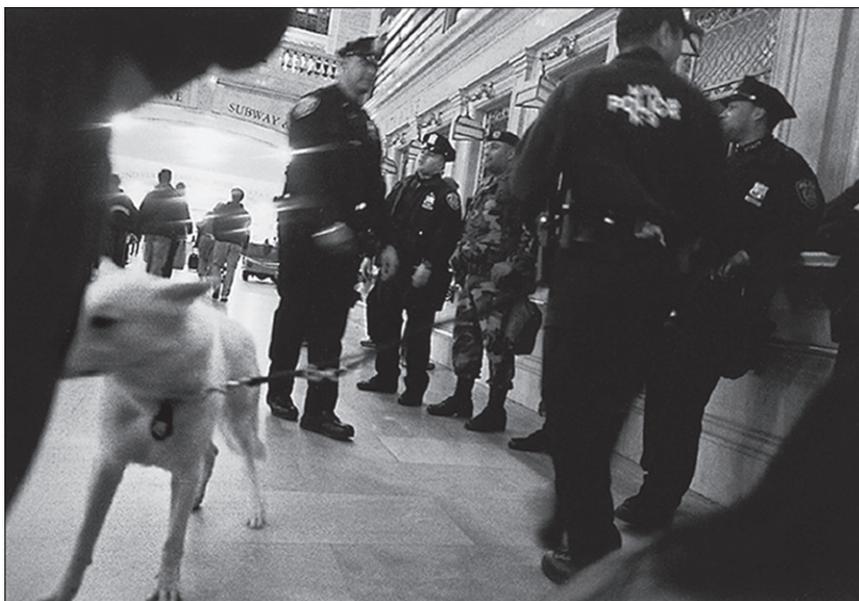
This shows what can be accomplished by a collectivized economy where such urgent tasks of meeting human needs are not blocked by capitalist private property, even though the government of Fidel Castro is a bureaucratic regime. Today, Cuba has offered to send teams of doctors, experienced in disaster relief, to New Orleans. The U.S. government, which has economically blockaded the island for 45 years in its frenzy to strangle the revolution, has refused to acknowledge the offer. Meanwhile, Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez, a bourgeois nationalist allied with Castro's Cuba who has been a thorn in the side of the Bush regime, has offered to provide \$1 million in disaster aid and cheap heating oil to poor communities in the U.S. through the Citgo chain of refineries and gas stations that it owns. Revolutionaries defend the Cuban deformed workers state and Venezuela against U.S. imperialism, and call for their offers of aid to be accepted.

The capitalist rulers' response to Hurricane Katrina is part and parcel of the racist oppression that is endemic in the United States and has been escalating in the wake of the U.S. invasion/occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan. This is part of the reason why it is vital to fight in defense of the Iraqi and Afghan peoples and for the defeat of U.S. imperialism. While dead bodies are stacked in hospital corridors and at airport counters and float through the flooded streets of New Orleans, the medical examiner in Tucson, Arizona is using a refrigerated tractor-trailer to hold the overflow of bodies of immigrant workers who died in the desert after crossing the border from Mexico in search of a better life. More than 200 “illegal immigrants” have been killed in this way in Arizona alone during the past year, while anti-immigrant fascists set up “Minuteman” vigilante patrols to hunt them down. Meanwhile, racist politicians rail that undocumented immigrants must not be given any flood relief – that is, they can work and die, but not get what they need to live. The fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants and for workers defense squads to smash the racist vigilantes is crucial for the entire working class.

Much of the left in the United States has joined with liberals in clamoring for the federal government to provide “money for relief, not for war.” They write that the government could use “eminent domain in a way that actually benefits people,” by using college dormitories, convention centers and hotels to house hurricane evacuees. “Only massive immediate Federal intervention can relieve the situation,” says the International Action Committee (linked to the Workers World Party) in a September 1 statement. Noting that thousands of Louisiana and Mississippi National Guard troops are currently in Iraq, along with their Humvees, refuelers and generators, the IAC says: “They should be at home helping their neighbors recover from this disaster, not in Iraq maintaining an illegal occupation.” Such appeals for the government's armed forces to serve the people create dangerous illusions in the forces of racist repression and the capitalist state they represent.

In fact, the National Guard troops are being brought back from Iraq, and they are now patrolling New Orleans like they did in Baghdad only a few weeks ago. “They have M-16s and they are locked and loaded. These troops know how to shoot

New York Times



Troops patrol Grand Central Station in New York, April 2004. New Orleans lockdown is dress rehearsal for police state measures in the U.S. Imperialist war abroad means racist repression “at home”!

to kill... and I expect they will,” announced Governor Kathleen Blanco. Revolutionary communists would certainly not stand in the way of troops actually providing aid or helping rescue survivors. We support demands that decent facilities be opened for the use of the survivors, which will be a major issue in months to come as the “rebuilding” of New Orleans will undoubtedly be dragged out. But we tell the truth, that the capitalists’ army and police exist to *repress* the workers, black and poor people, and to *protect* the rich and powerful. Reformists beg the government of the class enemy to “do the right thing.” Revolutionaries seek to mobilize the black, poor and working people to act independently in their own class interests against the state power of their oppressors.

The wrenching dislocation that Hurricane Katrina has set off could have profound *revolutionary* consequences, if a revolutionary leadership is forged to lead the struggles of the oppressed. The tens of thousands of suddenly homeless black poor and working people ought to march on Washington itself, on a class-struggle program counterposed to the segregationist nationalism of Farrakhan et al. The sight of thousands of unemployed homeless camped out on the ellipse and the mall in full view of Bush’s White House and the Capitol, recalling the hunger marches of the early 1930s, would send shivers down the spine of the ruling class. Demands should be raised for massive public works, at full union-scale wages and under workers control, to rebuild New Orleans in the interests of those who live and work in it, not the capitalist oil corporations, agribusinesses and tourist industry who have run Louisiana as their private fiefdom, in the process sinking its biggest city below the waters of Lake Pontchartrain and bringing doom to its inhabitants.

House speaker Republican Dennis Hastert opposed spending billions to rebuild New Orleans, a city which he said could

instead be “bulldozed” into oblivion. This expresses the racist disdain of the right-wing yahoos who, even as they use the 9-11 World Trade Center attack as a battle cry for their terrorist “war on terror,” would like to “cut off New York City and let it float out to sea.” Their visceral fear and hostility is directed against the black, Latino, Asian, immigrant poor and working people who live in the urban centers and have the economic and social power to bring the rulers of U.S. capitalism to their knees. A magnificent city can be rebuilt in New Orleans. It is not true that this is impossible because much of the city is below sea level – just look at Amsterdam. But for that to happen a revolutionary workers party must be built, one that is internationalist to its core, to lead the necessary revolution in this country and around the world. Black workers would play a vanguard role in making such a party a champion and tribune of all the oppressed.

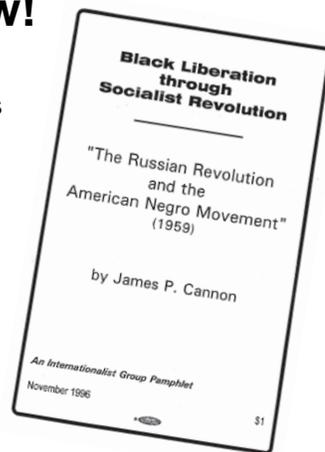
The agony of New Orleans has shown once again that black oppression is central to all politics in the United States. The civil rights movement, which stayed within the “bourgeois-democratic” framework, achieved only limited gains, and even those are constantly being undermined. It could not liberate black people from the poverty and racism inherent in the system of capitalist wage slavery. As Karl Marx wrote at the time of the Civil War, the second American Revolution, that abolished chattel slavery: “Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black skin it is branded.” Today, fighting for revolutionary integrationism against the racists who lock up minorities in segregated ghettos and barrios, the Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International call for all the oppressed to join the struggle for *black liberation through socialist revolution*. ■

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State Terrorism: Filiberto Ojeda Ríos Assassinated by FBI Death Squad

The following statement was issued by the Internationalist Group on September 26.

On Friday, September 23, an FBI hit squad brazenly murdered Puerto Rican independence leader Filiberto Ojeda Ríos in his home in the municipality of Hormigueros. Ojeda Ríos was the historical leader of the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Party/Ejército Popular Boricua – Macheteros. He has been on the feds' "most wanted" list for the last decade and a half, for having escaped from their mid-1980s judicial vendetta against 15 *independentistas*. Ojeda's killing was a cold-blooded assassination by a government death squad, and a deliberate provocation, coming on the anniversary of the 1868 Grito de Lares, when Puerto Ricans first rose up fighting for independence from Spain.

The federal agents arrived by helicopter in mid-afternoon on the 23rd, and according to Ojeda's wife, Elma Beatriz Rosado Barbosa, they immediately started firing at the house. This was confirmed by a neighbor who saw the agents arrive. Rosado Barbosa also said that the Machetero leader offered to surrender, which was confirmed by an FBI spokesman, and that her husband was still alive when they took her away blindfolded. When she was gone they killed him. The FBI official said that the agents only fired "in self-defense." This is a blatant lie, contradicted by other government officials. The FBI asked Puerto Rican officials to leave the scene, and then waited for almost 24 hours before entering the house, guaranteeing that their victim would bleed to death.

The Puerto Rican secretary of justice, Roberto Sánchez Ramos, reported that the government squad unleashed a hail of more than 100 bullets, while Ojeda fired at most 5 or 10 shots. The Puerto Rican official also said that Ojeda was killed by a single bullet fired from above, suggesting an outright execution. "Preliminary reports are that if he had been given immediate medical attention, he could have sur-

vived. There are questions about the decision of the federal authorities not to enter the house for many hours after having wounded him," Sánchez said. (*Primera Hora*, 26 September). This was the second time the government tried to murder Ojeda, having surrounded his house and smashed down his door while arresting him in 1985.

Ojeda Ríos was murdered because he fought for independence of his country from more than a century of colonial subjugation by U.S. imperialism. This government has attempted innumerable times to assassinate Cuban leader Fidel Castro, is now threatening Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez and in the past two and a half years has slaughtered tens of thousands of Iraqis. Washington has been smarting ever since the Macheteros dramatically destroyed nine planes of the Air National Guard at Muñiz Air Base in 1981. As proletarian internationalists we have considerable political differences with the Macheteros, who have sought to unite with bourgeois pro-independence parties on a nationalist basis and looked to spectacular actions rather than mobilizing the working class, but we stand on the same side of the barricades with them against the colonial regime and its murderous repressive apparatus.

The Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International denounce this act of naked state terrorism and call on the workers movement and all defenders of democratic rights to protest this crime. We warn that the federal government and the Puerto Rican police kept a blacklist of up to 135,000 names, and more murderous arrests may be in the offing. We demand the immediate release of all Puerto Rican independence fighters, including Carlos Alberto Torres, José Pérez González, José A. Vélez Acosta, Haydée Beltran Torres and Oscar López Rivera. We demand unconditional independence for Puerto Rico – *Yankee imperialists get the hell out!* – as part of a fight for socialist revolution throughout the Caribbean and in the imperialist citadel. ■



Filiberto Ojeda Ríos



Brennan Linsley/AP

Helicopter extracts U.S. hit squad after assassination of Ojeda Rios, September 24.

Labor-Immigrant Squads to Run Off Minuteman Fascists

FOR MILITANT WORKERS DEFENSE OF IMMIGRANTS!



Internationalist photo

Demonstrators picket Minuteman event in Babylon, Long Island, September 10.

Since the beginning of this year, there has been a concerted effort by fascist groups to spark a racist backlash against immigrants, particularly in the Southwest. The most prominent and media-savvy bunch is an outfit calling itself the Minuteman Project, which has been promoting vigilante patrols along the Mexican border. Their initial focal point was Arizona, where an anti-immigrant Proposition 200 passed by 56 percent in last November's elections which would require proof of status to get health care, childcare and even library cards.

The immigrant-bashers sought to capitalize on this, vowing to bring 1,500 "volunteers" to Tombstone, Arizona in April. Some 150 showed up, a mixture of Gulf War and aging Vietnam War vets and Aryan Nations fascists, far outnumbered by the press. The would-be immigrant hunters then sat around in camp chairs drinking beer, eating sausages and fingering their Glock pistols and AR-15 rifles while fantasizing about killing Mexicans. Minuteman founders and publicity hounds Chris Simcox and Jim Gilchrist then vowed to put patrols along the southern border throughout the month of October. This time, even fewer showed up.

Going back to the 1970s when Louisiana KKK wizard David Duke, the "Klan in a suit," set up a Klan Border Patrol, fascists have sought to whip up anti-immigrant hysteria. It would be easy to dismiss the motley crew that showed up in Tombstone as a bunch of beer-belly deadbeats, as most of the bourgeois press did. But the racist paramilitaries are dangerous because they are part of an across-the-board attack on immigrants, undocumented and those with legal papers alike. Their aim is to goad the federal government into launching an all-out round-up of "illegal" foreign-born workers. And the feds are already

embarked on a massive militarization of the borders.

On September 10, the Minuteman thugs came to Babylon, Long Island to hook up with anti-immigrant racists who have been trying to drive day laborers out of nearby Farmingville and Farmingdale. Outside the American Legion hall where a couple dozen were meeting, some 50 defenders of immigrant rights demonstrated, chanting: "No Minutemen, No KKK, No fascist U.S.A." The Internationalist Group participated with chants for "Fascists out of Babylon, U.S. out of Iraq!" and a banner calling for "Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants! Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!"

Various liberal, reformist left and anarchist groups have responded to the Minutemen according to their usual approaches. The American Civil Liberties Union has organized a "vigilantewatch" campaign to follow, photograph and videotape the activities of the anti-immigrant "patrols," gathering evidence for possible civil rights lawsuits. Volunteers sign a pledge of non-violence. The International Socialist Organization calls for counterdemonstrations to "stand up to the big-ots." The Progressive Labor Party, at least, tried to bust up a Minuteman event in New Jersey, resulting in several arrests but at most leading to inconclusive skirmishes.

On occasion, outrage over the fascists' anti-immigrant provocations has led to sizeable and sometimes militant protests. When Gilchrist tried to stage a Minuteman recruiting rally at Garden Grove in Orange County, California, 300 angry demonstrators showed up. As the racists tried to leave, protesters surrounded their cars, banging on them with picket signs. One of the thugs drove his van into the crowd, injuring

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Left Party in the Dead End of Bourgeois Pressure Politics - Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!

Germany: Grand Coalition Against the Workers

When German voters went to the polls on September 18 in elections for the Bundestag (lower house of parliament), the result was a near-tie between the Christian Democrats (CDU), who received 35.2 percent, and the Social Democrats (SPD), with 34.2 percent. Both major parties lost votes since the last elections in 2002, as did the Greens (with 8.1 percent), who have been ruling in coalition with the SPD since 1998. Neither the Christian nor the Social Democrats were able to get a parliamentary majority with their preferred coalition partners. The press bemoaned the “election chaos.” After three weeks of wrestling in the corridors and backrooms over who will hold the reins of power, a Grand Coalition has been cobbled together with CDU chief Angela Merkel replacing SPD leader Gerhard Schröder as chancellor. This new coalition government will proceed to carry out the program of anti-working-class economic “reforms” begun by Schröder, slashing and burning social programs and driving down wages in order to drive up profits – all in the name of making German capitalism “competitive.”

Bourgeois elections are the periodic ritual aimed at fostering the “democratic” illusion that “the people” choose “their” government when in reality it is capital that rules. Schröder called early elections last May after a series of electoral setbacks for the SPD, culminating in the loss of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, in the industrial heartland of the Ruhr, where the Social Democrats had governed for the last 39 years. His aim was to stop the spreading erosion of the social-democratic ranks over the government’s economic policies which were impoverishing the party’s base. The Christian Democrats quickly pulled ahead in opinion surveys, as voters saw little difference between SPD and CDU policies and figured any change would be better. A newly formed Left Party shot up to 10 percent in the polls tapping into the widespread working-class discontent. By the end of the campaign, the SPD managed to make it into a neck-and-neck horse race, as Schröder convinced traditional SPD voters that the Christian Democrats really were a greater evil. But for workers there was no “lesser evil” in these elections.



Demonstration against SPD/Greens Harz IV cutback program in Bochum, August 2004.

So now you have an electorate that figures it staved off the worst of the cutback programs, saving their pensions and health care from further attacks. In addition, the Left Party, with 8.7 percent of the vote, will have 54 representatives in the Bundestag compared to 2 deputies of the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) after the 2002 vote. The Left will go through the motions of pressuring the government to rein in initiatives that “go too far” in attacking the threadbare remains of the “social state.” The small left-reformist groups outside parliament, in turn, will try to pressure the Left Party a few millimeters to the left. Currently, almost everyone in the political scene is saying that the more extreme cutback plans will be shelved for now, that the Grand Coalition will be paralyzed, it will be business as usual. But the reality is that Germany now has a government that with over two-thirds of the seats doesn’t have to worry a whit about parliamentary opposition. At the first opportunity, or first signs of serious economic crisis, it will seek to use its steel-plated Bundestag majority to roll over the workers’ bodies and impose brutal “free market” capitalist measures.

In foreign affairs as on economic policy, the new regime will continue where the old one left off. Merkel and her SPD foreign minister may make a show of friendship with the Bush regime in Washington, but no German government is about to get drawn into the Iraqi quick sands. Not that the German

imperialists are any more peace-loving or less war-mongering than their allies and rivals across the Atlantic. Germany has provided the second-largest number of occupation troops in Afghanistan, whose president Hamid Karzai was installed in office in a meeting held in Bonn, and the Bundestag just voted to expand its Afghan contingent. As the executive committee of Germany, Inc., the government will cement its economic domination of East Europe, exporting capital to take advantage of low wages in the former deformed workers states. And Berlin will continue to flirt with Moscow as inter-imperialist rivalries between Europe and the U.S. intensify. Today, the barometer points to trade war (Airbus vs. Boeing, wrangling over agricultural tariffs and subsidies), ultimately leading down the road to world war.

German workers, immigrants and the unemployed are under heavy attack. But in a post-election flush, the new regime could bite off more than it can chew. Chancellor Merkel, a right-wing yuppie from former East Germany (the German Democratic Republic, or DDR), fancies herself a new Margaret Thatcher, the “Iron Lady” who broke the 1985-86 British coal miners’ strike. (*Der Spiegel* called Merkel the “iron maiden.”) With hardliner Edmund Stoiber (head of the CDU’s Bavarian ally, the Christian Social Union) as her economics minister, she could provoke a battle with the unions which are still powerful, despite years of membership losses. Siemens and Mercedes-Benz recently announced big layoffs. The government may also seek to ratchet up the repressive apparatus, already working overtime under SPD supercop Otto Schily, who recently ordered a 15-hour search and seizure operation against a journalist who published a leaked government document. In the face of these looming threats, while various reformists play the bourgeois games of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary pressure politics, it is all the more urgent to forge a revolutionary workers party that can galvanize working-class resistance to the Grand Coalition, leading toward an international fight to bring down the capitalist system itself.

End of the “Red-Green” Social-Liberal Government

For the past seven years, the coalition of the historic German social-democratic party and the bourgeois environmentalist Greens, carried out a savage offensive against the working class and oppressed. Imitating Tony Blair’s “New Labour” government in Britain, Chancellor Schröder’s “new Social Democrats” (historically known as “reds” although today they are hardly even pale parlor pinks) slashed away at social gains left over from earlier decades, when they were enacted to ward off the “Communist threat.” The “red-green” government of loyal servants of German capital allowed no concessions, granted no respite, following a blitzkrieg strategy similar to the German bourgeoisie’s drive to annex the DDR and restore capitalist rule in East Germany in 1989-90. It has championed the imperialist ambitions of the fourth German Reich (empire), from the Balkans to the Hindu Kush – participating in the onslaught against Yugoslavia and sending troops to Afghanistan – and unleashed racist persecution of immigrants in the name of a

“war on terror”. In Germany, it aided the bosses’ drive to significantly cut labor costs and extend working hours, using unemployment as a club against the industrial proletariat.

But this capitalist blitzkrieg has not gone unchallenged. Over the last two years, hundreds of thousands marched against the government’s “Agenda 2010” package of anti-labor laws. In June 2003, East German metal workers launched a strike for the 35-hour week, ultimately going down to bitter defeat. In August 2004, the introduction of the “Hartz IV” law (named after Volkswagen executive Peter Hartz), which introduced slave labor and steep benefit cuts for the unemployed, provoked spontaneous massive protests mainly by the East German population. Beginning with 20,000 on August 2, the marches quickly mushroomed to 170,000 two weeks later. They were modeled on the autumn 1989 Monday demos in Leipzig, which morphed from “Wir sind das Volk” (we are the people), a protest against Stalinist bureaucratic rule, into “Wir sind ein Volk” (we are one people), pushing for capitalist reunification of Germany. In 2004 as well there was a mixture of working-class protest and right-wing populism, as fascists sought to feed off anger over continuing 20 percent unemployment in the East.

While the trade union bureaucrats have overseen whopping give-backs to the bosses – even as they gave lip service to opposing Agenda 2010 – workers at the Opel plant in Bochum stood up, if only for a few days, against General Motor’s threats of massive lay-offs. Their six-day wildcat strike in October 2004 drew expressions of support from around the country. But the trade union bureaucrats and their helpers from the *Betriebsrat* (plant council) stabbed the Opel strike in the back. This only underlines the urgent necessity of a revolutionary working-class political leadership armed with a program capable of beating back the capitalist offensive through hard class struggle and going on the offensive towards socialist revolution. Although written in a different historical period, Leon Trotsky’s acid description of the SPD in the Weimar Republic has many parallels to the SPD today:

“The war came. The Social Democracy supported the war in the name of future prosperity. Instead of prosperity, decay set in. Now the task no longer consisted in deducing from the inadequacy of capitalism the necessity for revolution, nor in reconciling the workers to capitalism by means of reforms. The new task of the Social Democracy now consisted in making society safe for the bourgeoisie at the cost of sacrificing reforms.

“But even this was not the last stage of degeneracy. The present crisis that is convulsing capitalism obliged the Social Democracy to sacrifice the fruits achieved after protracted economic and political struggles and thus to reduce the German workers to the level of existence of their fathers, grandfathers, and great-grandfathers. There is no historical spectacle more tragic and at the same time more repulsive than the fetid disintegration of reformism amid the wreckage of all its conquests and hopes.”

– Trotsky *What Next*, 1932

The SPD and its Agenda 2010 certainly became “repulsive” to wide sections of the German working class. In one

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After Murders of Amazon Peasant Leaders, the Worst-Ever Massacre in Rio de Janeiro

Lula's Brazil

Land of Massacres



Cristiano Borges/Diário da Manhã

Military Police gun down residents of community of the homeless in Goiânia, February 16.

The following article is translated from El Internacionalista No. 5, May 2005, the Spanish-language organ of the League for the Fourth International. A shorter version was issued as a leaflet by the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil on April 15.

In the third year of the popular-front government, Brazil is drowning in a wave of murders and massacres. On February 12, an American nun who had become a Brazilian citizen, Dorothy Stang, was killed by three shots in an ambush on a dirt road in the municipality of Anapu (in the Amazonian state of Pará). Sister Stang was a delegate of the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT) in the area. A few hours after this crime, in the same locality, Adalberto Xavier Leal, a landless peasant activist, was assassinated. Three days later, the ex-president of the local chapter of the Rural Landless Workers Movement (MST) in Parauapebas (also in Pará), Daniel Soares da Costa Filho, was gunned down. Then, on February 16, during a police op-

eration evicting squatters from an occupied area in the city of Goiânia, the Military Police killed two people, wounded 20 and arrested more than 800 residents of the neighborhood, which was organized by a movement of the homeless. And on the night of March 31, a police "extermination group" launched a caravan of death in the Baixada Fluminense region of the state of Rio de Janeiro. The group assassinated more than 30 people, leaving a river of blood in their wake as they careened through the cities of Nova Iguaçu and Queimados.

Whether the perpetrators are gunmen hired by the landowners, soldiers obeying orders or police death squads, these are crimes of bourgeois terrorism. In the final analysis, the capitalist government presided over by Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and his Workers Party (PT) is responsible.

The recent *Baixada Massacre* was the worst slaughter in the history of Rio de Janeiro, worse than the massacre of Candelária, in July 1993, when eight street children were killed



“Police Violence in the Communities: You Could Be Next.” Relative of victims in protest against the massacre in the Baixada Fluminense, in front of San Antônio church, Nova Iguaçu, April 2.

by Military Police on the steps of a famous church in downtown Rio; worse than the massacre of Vigário Geral, carried out in August of the same year, when 21 workers and students were murdered by a gang of at least 40 cops, in reprisal for the death of four military policemen in an ambush by drug traffickers the day before. The recent carnage set off horror throughout the region. These are the same kind of indiscriminate murders that the military police engage in to terrorize Rio’s *favelas* (mountainside slums), in the cops’ supposed war on “criminals” and gangs of drug traffickers. In this case, the Military Police attacked poor neighborhoods of an important industrial region, firing on the residents at random. It is a return to the early years of the military dictatorship, when “death squads” appeared and the Baixada had the reputation of being the “*faroeste fluminense*” (Fluminense Far West), i.e., a lawless land. And it is an attack on workers and poor people carried out by the guard dogs of capital.

The tidal wave of terror began on the 30th when Military Police killed two people, decapitated them and tossed the head

¹ Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro, set up as a kept “opposition” party under the military dictatorship.

of one of them over the wall into the 15th Military Police Brigade in Duque de Caxias. This was an act of revenge for the jailing of some 15 cops in the region since February, as part of a campaign (Operation Knife in the Flesh) against crimes and corruption in the Military Police. When MPs were arrested for this crime, their colleagues went on a rampage. The first victims on the night of the 31st were two bicyclists on the Dutra Highway [between Rio and São Paulo]. Then they shot point-blank a cook who was walking along a street, and two transvestites near a hotel. Then, passing by a *flipperama* (an arcade for videogames, table football and other games), they killed nine people. After killing 18 in Nova Iguaçu, most of them youth and practically none with a criminal record, they went on to the neighboring city of Queimados, where they proceeded to kill people on the street, in a bar and in two carwashes.

It was a monstrous act of force and impunity. The assassins didn’t even bother to hide their identifies: they traveled with their faces uncovered. Several of them were recognized by the residents as known members of police extermination groups.

Following the collective burial ceremonies on Friday, April 1, relatives and neighbors marched on Saturday with signs bearing the names of the victims behind a banner proclaiming: “Enough Massacres! The People of Rio Demand Justice.” But justice from whom? The mayor of Nova Iguaçu, Lindberg Farias of the PT, washed his hands of the matter, complaining of “unacceptable scenes,” and demanded “an investigation which will require special forces, federal forces. A task force should be formed” (*O Dia* [Rio de Janeiro], 2 April). The governor of the state of Rio de Janeiro, Rosinha Garotinho of the PMDB¹, declared that “as a mother” she lamented the monsters who cut off the lives of innocent children, and called for a rigorous investigation. President Lula, fearing “that his government could be seen abroad as incapable of containing and punishing so-called crimes against human rights” (*Folha de S. Paulo*, 5 April), ordered his ministers to keep “permanent



A murder foretold: Sister Dorothy Stang in the Amazon jungle in 2004, alerted the government to death threats.

tabs” on the investigations. From Brasilia it was announced that 400-600 men of the National Security Force would be sent to the region.

To do what? The Rio state government already dispatched 250 additional Military Police, including members of the Shock Battalion, the Special Operations Battalion (BOPE), the Special Mobile Tactical Group (GETAM), the Air-Sea Group (GAM) and the Tactical Action Groups (GATs). As usual, the police set up checkpoints in the streets and

raided houses. A crime committed by the Military Police? Send in more MPs to further terrorize the population! The reality is that all these police groups are part of a single repressive apparatus, the iron fist of the capitalist state protecting the interests of the bourgeoisie, which lives in its walled fortresses and travels in armored vehicles. The bloodthirsty Military Police acted in the Baixada like they always do in the *favelas* of Rio: they have a license to kill and they know it. Against this state crime, it would be suicidal to call for protection by the same bourgeois state. It does not matter that for the moment it is presided over by the PT which, far from protecting the interests of the working people and residents of poor neighborhoods, is today the lapdog of the bankers and the captains of Brazilian industry and their Yankee imperialist godfathers.

On the contrary, we have to rely on the strength of the working class, mounting a powerful mobilization to demand: ***Military police out! Police of all types are the armed fist of the exploiters!*** We call on the unions of Rio de Janeiro in the first instance to initiate and ***organize workers self-defense*** of the working-class neighborhoods against the attacks of the class enemy, closely linked to the ***peasant self-defense*** of the agricultural workers and landless against the ***jagunços*** (rural paramilitaries) of the big landowners. It is necessary to unite the exploited and oppressed under proletarian leadership. This requires a tenacious struggle to ***break the stranglehold of the pro-capitalist union bureaucracy***, particularly at this moment when the screws of state control are being tightened and attempts are being made to throttle the combative unions through a “labor and trade-union reform.” Above all, it is necessary to ***forge a revolutionary workers party*** to sweep away Lula’s popular-front government and open the road to a ***workers and peasants government*** like that formed by the October Revolution of 1917 under the Bolsheviks led by Lenin and Trotsky.



“Peace to Those Who Live From the Fruits of the Land.” Relatives and comrades of MST leader Daniel Soares da Costa Filho protest in Parauapebas, Pará, February 16.

From Pará and Goiás to Rio de Janeiro: Capitalist Terrorism

In Brazil over the last two decades there have been constant massacres. The massive and all-sided repression under the dictatorship of the bonapartist generals has been followed by intimidation by terror under the “democracy” of the bourgeois politicians. Many of the massacres have already become legendary: Tocantins Bridge (1987), Acari (1990), Diadema (1990), Carandiru (1992), Candelária (1993) Vigário Geral (1993), Corumbiara (1995), Eldorado dos Carajás (1996), Francisco Morato (1998), São Vicente (1998), all as the result of attacks by the military police. In recent years, the official violence of the MPs and the extra-official violence of the landowners’ *jagunços* have focused on the MST. According to Bishop Balduino, president of the Pastoral Land Commission, from 1985 up to 2004 there were 1,379 deaths in agrarian conflicts in all of Brazil; of these, 523 were in the state of Pará, and only in ten cases were there trials. Of the 73 assassinations in the Brazilian countryside during 2003, 33 were in Pará (Raúl Zibechi, “Black February, Red April,” *La Jornada* [Mexico], 11 March).

The explosive agrarian situation has become so notorious that a Parliamentary Investigative Commission (CPI) on the Land Question has been appointed by Congress to investigate violence in the countryside. Its preliminary report, written before the murder of Sister Stang, talks of a “rural civil war” in Pará, to the point that there is a veritable “industry of hired guns” in the Amazonian state, linked to *grilagem* – the systematic fabrication of false land titles by the big landowners (*Folha de S. Paulo*, 20 February). According to Bishop Balduino of the CPT, “Dorothy’s death reveals the universe of the Pará region. The disorderly occupation of land is responsible, and it is carried out by the ranchers, the loggers and now also by soya bean growers.” The slaughter of 19 landless peasants in Eldorado dos Carajás is the most famous of the Pará massacres, but it is far from the first. Already in 1985, another nun, Adelaide Molinari, was assassi-

Claudio Pinheiro/Imapress



Lula's response to murders ordered by the landowners: send shock troops to persecute the peasants.

nated in Pará; in June of the same year 17 people were gunned down in the Surubim ranch in the municipality of Xinguará. And the massacres go on: in November 2004, five members of the MST were assassinated by gunmen in a camp in the municipality of Felisburgo (Minas Gerais).

The murder of Sister Dorothy was a death widely foretold. She had received several death threats, and informed the authorities of them. Four months before the attack, a judge asked the Pará police for protection for the nun. Instead the local police accused Stang of aiding the arming of the landless peasants. Leaders of the PT recalled the 1988 assassination of Chico Mendes – an environmentalist, PT member and leader of the rubber workers union in the state of Acre – also amply “fore-told.” They want to make it appear as the crime was an action by the ranchers against the PT. However, the ranchers have their agents inside the PT-led government, in the person of agricultural minister Roberto Rodrigues, representative of the Brazilian Association of Agribusiness and the Ceará sugar mill owners’ man. Lula also received the endorsement of the patriarch of the oligarchs of the Brazilian Northeast, Antônio Carlos Magalhães (ACM), the “coronel” (boss) of Bahia, in the sec-

ond round of the presidential elections in 2002.

This past January the state of Pará was the scene of a full-scale mutiny by the loggers, who blocked highways and rivers, burned buses, threatened to contaminate water with chemicals and declared that “blood will flow” if the government didn’t suspend the implementation of an injunction limiting logging in the region. So just ten days before the murder of the nun, the federal government gave in to the loggers and signed an agreement to approve permits for cutting down forests that had previously been blocked. Environmental groups strongly criticized the agreement, saying that it would only encourage actions by powerful economic groups against legality. The assassination occurred on the very same day that in the nearby municipality of Altamira the environmental minister, Marina Silva, spoke in a ceremony celebrating a new “extractive reserve.” It is abundantly clear that the death of Sister Dorothy was the direct result of the government’s support to the loggers and ranchers.

Human rights groups, the CPT, the National Forum for Agrarian Reform and other bodies demanded federal intervention to punish the authors of the crime and called for “federalization” of crimes against human rights. Newspapers such as *Folha de S. Paulo* refer to the Amazon region as a “lawless land,” implying that the answer is to enforce “the law.” Yet even the bishops of the CPT relate the death of sister Stang to the failure of “a government whose priority is agribusiness,” and that “People don’t want social questions to be resolved on a police or military basis. That’s how the military tried to resolve them under the dictatorship” (*Folha de S. Paulo*, 17 February). So Lula’s federal government sent 2,000 soldiers to the Anapu-Altamira area. Given the international interest in the case, the gunman was captured after only four days and masterminds of the homicide were identified shortly after: two ranchers in the region who were already being investigated for using slave labor and for expelling peasants in land-reform settlements. But this is an isolated instance: in 2003-04, some 70,000 families were thrown off their lands as a result of actions by the courts of Pará. As for the famous massacre of Eldorado dos Carajás, of the 150 people charged in the 1996 case, only two military police commanders are under arrest – comfortably ensconced in police barracks.

Thus federal intervention and the action of the judicial system do not defend the peasants, but instead harm them. In two years in office, the popular front has settled at most some 60,000 rural families, far less than the million landless families that it promised before the 2002 elections – and much less than the number of families granted land under the prior government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso. For 2005, the agrarian reform budget has been cut by more than half. The establishment of a CPI on the land question, at the PT’s initiative, is intended to control the peasants’ land occupations. In reality, the capitalist government headed by Lula shores up the large landowners in the name of promoting the agricultural export industry, a key sector for paying the debt to the imperialist banks. And the MST, as an extraparliamentary component of the popular front, has done everything to keep the peasants under control. As opposed to a

Domício Gomes/O Popular



“Operation Triumph”: Military Police arrested more than 800 residents of the barrio “Real Dream,” killing 2.

bourgeois “agrarian reform,” Trotskyists fight for *agrarian revolution* to root up large landholdings, once and for all, as part of a workers revolution overthrowing capitalism.

As for urban community land occupations, there too the popular front defends capital. When the Movement of Homeless Workers occupied an empty property belonging to Volkswagen in São Bernardo do Campo in August 2003, they were evicted by the state Military Police and by the city (under a mayor belonging to the Brazilian Socialist Party, part of the popular front). In November 2004, when the homeless occupied abandoned buildings in the city of São Paulo, under PT mayor Marta Suplicy, they were violently evicted by shock troops of the Military Police. The attack on the homeless squatters in Goiânia on February 16 was planned as an act of war. Two thousand Military Police were sent against the 4,000 residents of the tract in the Industrial Park West that they had named “Real Dream.” Following the attack, with two people dead, many wounded and hundreds arrested, the chief of security for the state declared that “Operation Triumph” had been altogether a success. Although the governor of the state of Goiás belongs to the PSDB² and the mayor of Goiânia is from the PMDB, the PT is responsible as well: the

² Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira, the “social-democratic” bourgeois party of former president Fernando Henrique Cardoso.

federal minister of human rights, Nilmário Miranda, was informed of the developing tragedy on the eve of the massacre, and even afterwards he declared that no “excesses” were committed by the police.

If Pará is experiencing a *rural civil war*, as the CPI says, in the Baixada Fluminense region of Rio de Janeiro there is an *urban civil war* going back years. Given that the murderers carried out their crimes with their faces uncovered, using their service revolvers with .40 caliber munitions (exclusively used by the police), it wasn’t possible to cook up the usual story about the authors of the massacre being “unknown.” The killers were soon recognized as some of the most notorious assassins in the area. Of the 12 police who have been arrested for these crimes, the four main accused are already being tried for the death of four youth murdered in December 2003. One of the suspects, Carlos Jorge Carvalho, was recognized by witnesses as the perpetrator of another crime, having killed six youth for smoking marijuana in a September 2001 ambush. In the present case, the newspapers at first tried to peddle the story that a handful of “bad police” were involved, but even that was unconvincing since the killers had a whole “protective network.” They were followed by uniformed police in official cars, and shortly afterward off-duty Military Police were called in by radio to clean up the crime scene by removing cartridges and other items that could incriminate their colleagues (“The Four Messengers of Terror,” *O Globo*, 10 April).

Fotos: Cristiano Borges/Diário da Manhã



Unequal “combat”: Youths with slingshots face heavily armed Military Police in Goiânia, February 16.

This massacre, like all those that preceded it, confirmed once again the undeniable fact that it is the police itself, and not some individuals, that organized the extermination groups. In the face of the wave of outrage over this new show of barbarism, the commanders of the Rio Military Police have tried to join the protests in order to cynically express their “sorrow” over the deaths. On Saturday, April 9, uniformed soldiers of the Military Police marched behind a banner proclaiming, “The 24th BPM In Solidarity with the Community of Queimados.” Relatives and friends of the victims found the participation by the police so repugnant that many left the protest marches, especially when there was a symbolic embrace in front of the Battalion HQ. One of them “stopped participating in the demonstration in Queimados because he couldn’t accept walking side by side with representatives of the Military Police” (“Relations in Crisis,” *Viva Favela*, 9 April). He’s right. For the Military Police to join the protest was an insult, but the very presence of the police is the main cause of the butchery. The first demand of those who seek to put an end to the bloodbaths must be: “Cops out!”

The reality is that the Military Police is an institution set up for civil war conditions, whether open or disguised. As such, it treats the inhabitants of the areas it patrols as the enemy. In its present form, the Military Police dates from the dictatorship that governed Brazil from 1964 to 1985. An internal study by the Military Police, “The Police Shock Brigade and Controlling Civil Disturbances,” which was leaked to the public³, complains that today the Rio Military Police have to put up with dramatic headlines like “Violent Military Police! Arbitrary Military Police! Corrupt Military Police!” and more specifically, “Authoritarian Military Police! The Arm of Repression! The Police of the System!” The study admits that “the Military Police made their weight felt markedly in the revolutionary movement of 1964” – by which they mean the military coup – and that the Rio Military Police “actively participated” in the “political repression” directed against “the enemy within and communist subversion.” Today the Military Police must adapt to democratic sensibilities, the study says, but adds, “this doesn’t mean the Military Police are prohibited from carrying out repression.” They merely want to carry it out in a more intelligent manner. It urges police to beware that “the deep-going reforms in the area of social rights” could unleash “collective opposition movements.”

The antiseptic language of bureaucratic manuals disguises the fact that the Military Police were the base for the infamous death squads, particularly

³ Available at: <http://www.midiaindependente.org/pt/blue/2003/11/267884.shtml>



Oswaldo Prado/O Dia



Ernesto Carrico/Agência Estado

Scenes of horror in the Baixada Fluminense on the night of March 31/ April 1. Above: three of the four victims in a car wash in Queimados. Middle: man shot down in the street, Nova Iguaçu. Right: some of the nine people killed by the Military Police death squad in a bar in Nova Iguaçu. Military police get out! The police are the armed fist of the bourgeoisie.



Ernesto Carrico/Agência Estado

in the area of Metropolitan Rio de Janeiro. The first “extermination groups” were formed by businessmen’s associations in 1962, following a general strike in Rio, and helped prepare the way for the 1964 coup. Soon the legendary figure of Tenório Cavalcanti appeared, a machine-gun toting gangster originally from the Northeast who in the early years of the dictatorship built an empire in the Baixada Fluminense before becoming a federal deputy. From 1967 on, the death squads were integrated as auxiliary repressive forces under the aegis of the Military Police. The sociologist Claudio Souza Alves, author of the book, *Dos Barões ao Extermínio – A História da violência na Baixada* [From the Barons to Extermination – The History of Violence in the Baixada] (2003), points out: “The new developments are the rise to power since the 1990s of members of the first generation of the *extermination groups* in local city halls, and of drug trafficking, which became a source of financing for those groups” (*Folha de S. Paulo*, 2 April).

Thus the death squads of the 1970s, begun by the Military Police and local businessmen, became institutionalized and part of the local power structure. This process has been documented by the historian Luís Mir in his 962-page *opus magnus*, *Guerra Civil – Estado e Trauma* [Civil War: The State and Trauma] (2004). In an interview with the *Jornal do Brasil* (27 November 2004), Mir stated that the 5,000 people gunned down every year in Rio de Janeiro are not just the result of shoot-outs between drug traffickers and criminal bands: “We are living through a civil war... We have Military Police that occupy *morros* [the *favelas* or slums on the mountainsides that surround Rio] or carry out military operations. This is the best proof that we are in a war.” Mir notes that the violence is the result of an “economic Hiroshima,” which took place when the capital was abruptly transferred from Rio to Brasília some 40 years ago, causing the loss of a million jobs. He considers that “we are experience a human catastrophe and we have to change that.” To be sure. But his solution is to call for a “truce” in this civil war in order to “distribute the cake.” He says that in the last half century, “the elite concentrated excessive wealth,” and “it is necessary to integrate this [marginal] population socially and economically.”

This is the social-democratic illusion of redistributing wealth within the framework of capitalist society. The current predominance of what is commonly called “neo-liberalism” or “globalization” is not a matter of choice, that can be revoked at will, but rather reflects the evolution of *capitalism* on a world scale. The policy of “import substitution” that characterized the 1950s and ’60s, to which the “anti-neo-liberals” want to return, corresponded to a phase during which the imperialists concentrated on restoring the productive apparatus in West Europe after the ravages of World War II while the United States expanded its own industry, and certain social benefits (the “welfare state” or “social state”) were enacted in order to combat the “communist threat” during the anti-Soviet Cold War. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the deformed workers states of East Europe, the imperialists



Residents of the Baixada Fluminense protest in Rio de Janeiro, April 15: “We Won’t Accept Exclusion. We Want Our Right to Housing, Education, Health Care and Peace.”

embarked on a new phase of frenetic profit maximization. At the same time, a string of financial crises and the bursting of the technology industry bubble in 2000 foreshadow an international capitalist crisis of overproduction. The enrichment of the upper bourgeoisie that Mir considers “excessive” in Brazil is a worldwide phenomenon that can only be reversed by *international socialist revolution*.

Mobilize the Working People for Worker and Peasant Self-Defense!

There has been a chorus of denunciations of the latest barbaric massacre. 100% repudiation. But none of these pious declarations are worth a cent: the same was said after each and every one of the previous bloodbaths, and they keep on occurring. So what should be the response of the workers movement, and what has been the response of the left to this horrendous fact. For Luís Mir, “What’s needed is a reform of all the police. Currently the structure is immobile and paramilitary. Look at our case. When a country like ours goes through a process of redemocratization, all the repressive bodies have to be dissolved” (*Jornal do Brasil*, 27 November 2004). The Land, Labor and Freedom Movement (MTL), part of the new Party of Socialism and Freedom (PSOL), puts forward the same reformist outlook, in even more detail. It writes:

“Even under the aegis of a capitalist society and a bourgeois-democratic regime, it is possible to fight for closing down the Military Police and forming another public security body of a purely civilian and technical kind, requiring a complete higher education, with decent wages and social control by the population, including access to investigations and the possibility of removing its leaders.” –MTL, “Massacre in the Baixada: Social Exclusion and Elite Violence” (5 April)

What dangerous democratic illusions! These people, who offer themselves as a “left” opposition to the Lula government, pro-

vide an example of vulgar opportunism that flatly contradicts the nature of the capitalist state as the mailed fist of the bourgeois class. As V.I. Lenin writes in his masterpiece, *State and Revolution* (1917):

“According to Marx, the state is an organ of class rule, an organ for the oppression of one class by another; it is the creation of ‘order,’ which legalizes and perpetuates this oppression by moderating the conflict between classes....

“Engels elucidates the concept of the ‘power’ which is called the state ... [that] consists of special bodies of armed men having prisons, etc., at their command....

“A standing army and police are the chief instruments of state power. But how can it be otherwise?”

For his part, federal deputy Babá, another spokesman of the PSOL, called in a recent declaration on “The Responsibility of the Government in the Baixada Fluminense Murders” for a “cleansing of the police, punishment for the murderers, democratization of the armed forces, investments in social areas.” But *who* is going to purge the police, punish the murderers, and democratize the armed forces – and with what special bodies of armed men are they supposed to accomplish this? Lula’s popular-front government, perhaps? Last November Lula issued Decree No. 5,261 creating *yet another* elite military force, the “11th Light Infantry Brigade – Guarantor of Law and Order,” to repress demonstrations of social unrest. Babá calls for “building another model of country, of state, of government and of politics.” But the Brazilian state is not a “model” that one can replace with another, like trading in a Mercedes-Benz for a VW, but a whole system: capitalism.

At the same time, Babá asks for *more money* for the murderous forces of repression, complaining about the “slashing of R\$242.9 million from the Public Security budget” and “explaining” the massacre: “with poorly paid police ... nothing else could be expected but spreading corruption and violence.” So according to this extortionist logic, the police should get a pay hike so they won’t kill!

A call for a purging of the armed forces was made under another popular-front regime, in Spain during the Civil War of 1936-39. Shortly after the military uprising against the Spanish Republic, Leon Trotsky, who together with Lenin at the head of the Bolshevik Party led the Russian October 1917 Revolution and was the founder and first commander of the Soviet Red Army, polemicized against popular-frontists who only wanted to purge the mutinous officials:



Relatives and friends of the victims of the Baixada massacre protest in Nova Iguaçu, April 2. The Catholic Church calls for “disarmament” while the Lula government passes gun control laws, leaving residents of poor neighborhoods defenseless in the face of violence by the police and drug trafficking gangs. The unions must organize workers self-defense.

“The officers corps represents the guard of capital. Without this guard, the bourgeoisie could not maintain itself for a single day. ... The danger lies not in the military braggarts and demagogues who openly appear as fascists; incomparably more menacing is the fact that at the approach of the proletarian revolution the officers corps becomes the executioner of the proletariat. To eliminate four or five hundred reactionary agitators from the army means to leave everything basically as it was before.... The troops in the barracks commanded by the officers’ caste must be replaced by the *people’s militia*, that is, the democratic organization of the armed workers and peasants. There is no other solution. But such an army is incompatible with the domination of exploiters big and small.” –“Lessons of Spain” (30 July 1936)

Marx as well, in his essay “The Civil War in France,” referring to the Paris Commune, the first attempt to constitute a workers state, emphasized: “The first decree of the Commune, therefore, was the suppression of the standing army, and the substitution for it of the armed people.... Instead of continuing to be the agent of the Central Government, the police was at once stripped of its political attributes, and turned into the responsible, and at all times revocable, agent of the Commune.”

Such steps were only possible, obviously, because there was a workers insurrection which installed the proletariat in power. This is a far cry from what is happening in Brazil today, although given the growing discontent among the workers with the popular-front capitalist government led by Lula, things could change quickly. What is to be done? It was precisely in order to answer this contradiction that Trotsky wrote the *Tran-*

sitional Program (1938), the founding document of the Fourth International, in order to “help the masses in the process of the daily struggle to find the bridge between present demand and the socialist program of the revolution.” In that program, Trotsky devoted an entire chapter to the subject of “The Picket Line, Defense Guards/Workers’ Militia and The Arming of the Proletariat.” He wrote:

“Only armed workers’ detachments, who feel the support of tens of millions of toilers behind them, can successfully prevail against the fascist bands. The struggle against fascism does not start in the liberal editorial office but in the factory – and ends in the street. Scabs and private gunmen in factory plants are the basic nuclei of the fascist army. Strike pickets are the basic nuclei of the proletarian army. This is our point of departure. In connection with every strike and street demonstration, it is imperative to propagate the necessity of creating workers’ groups for self-defense. It is necessary to write this slogan into the program of the revolutionary wing of the trade unions. It is imperative wherever possible, beginning with the youth groups, to organize groups for self-defense....”

In situations such as currently in Brazil, where the working people of the cities and the countryside confront private militias of the bosses and police death squads, it is necessary to call upon the mass organizations of the exploited to form *worker and peasant self-defense groups*.

This would directly clash with the campaign of Lula’s government to disarm the population. With Law 10,826 of December 2003, the popular front is attempting to restrict holding weapons to the armed forces and police (who already have 2.4 million firearms), private security companies, landowners and businessmen, and to take them out of the hands of the civilian population. Clearly, the drug-trafficking gangs and the ranchers private militias are already heavily armed. The very fact that an extermination group armed with nothing but pistols could unleash such bloody butchery, leaving a toll of 30 dead over a period of two hours, without encountering any resistance, is irrefutable evidence that the population lacks arms to defend itself. Despite the spectre whipped up in the yellow press about an insurrection of the landless peasants, the large number of peasants who have been gunned down shows that the peasant movement as well is unprepared to defend itself. ***The massacres will keep recurring on an even larger scale until the working people organize themselves to resist.***

The workers movement as a whole must ***oppose any gun control law***. Disarming the population only aids the violent criminals, the murderous police and military, and the bosses’ white guards. It will help to prepare a new 1964, i.e., a reactionary coup d’état with the aim of destroying the organizations and gains of the working people. In the face of intensifying class struggle, we can be sure that with this arms control law, the military and police will carry out searches of the offices of workers organizations, as they did in Chile in the final days of the Unidad Popular government of Salvador Allende, in order to pave the way for the bloody Pinochet coup. Worker and peasant self-defense doesn’t consist of small groups picking up the gun to play at guerrilla warfare, which in any case does

not lead to socialist revolution that is based on mass action. Revolutionaries and class-conscious workers must fight for the *organizations of the working people, first of all the unions and peasant movement, to form defense groups* for their strikes, offices and communities in the face of the onslaught by the murderous repressors.

This is not a pipe dream but a very concrete perspective. Although Nova Iguaçu, Queimados and other municipalities in the Baixada Fluminense are best by poverty, with social indicators substantially lower than the rest of the state of Rio de Janeiro, the region has important industrial sectors: the Petrobrás refinery and chemical industrial park, the electrical power plants at Paracambi (Light, El Paso), metalworking plants of the South Fluminense and other industrial parks. The several thousand oil workers in Caxias have enormous power. In their historic strike of 1995, for more than a month they resisted the assault by the army, which occupied the plant. Recently, they were on strike on March 31. If Sindipetro-Caxias were to enter the struggle, forming workers defense groups in the face of police terror, it would have a nationwide impact. Another important union which is amply present in the area is the SEPE-RJ, the union of educational workers, which is in direct contact with the residents of the neighborhoods affected by the March 31 massacre and the constant persecution of police violence.

With a class-struggle leadership, workers self-defense could be carried out in the Baixada Fluminense and Rio de Janeiro. But to organize it requires a political struggle against the pro-capitalist union bureaucracy which is under the thumb, directly or indirectly, of the popular front.

Put an End to the Infernal Cycle of Massacres – For Permanent Revolution!

It is well-known that for decades Brazil has been the country with the highest index of social inequality in the world, divided between a minuscule layer of bourgeois who enjoy fabulous wealth and a large mass of tens of millions of working people and rural and urban poor, many of whom live in subhuman conditions. The “Gini coefficient,” an index measuring inequality that is hardly known in the rest of the world, is famous in Brazil, where it is calculated at 0.6, compared to 0.22 in Cuba (0 being perfect equality and 1 being perfect inequality). It is obvious that this social chasm is derived from the large land-owning agrarian structure and the terrible heritage of slavery, which Brazil was the last country in the hemisphere to abolish (and where it is reappearing today). The extreme class polarization was enormously intensified under the military dictatorship. Historian Luís Mir and others point out that today’s Brazilian police has hardly changed since it took shape under military rule. There is a direct correlation between acute class confrontation and a system of repression based on a highly militarized police force and death squads.

The ideologues and defenders of the Military Police object, saying that the origins of their institution go back to the dawn of the Republic, to the Military Division of the Royal Guard, formed in 1809. It is true and important that the Brazilian bourgeois state has always had a military police force to repress “disturbances.”

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“Redemocratize” this! Famous photo by Sebastião Salgado of gold miners of Serra Pelada in clash with Military Police. The photo is from 1986, the year after the fall of the military dictatorship. Bourgeois “democracy” and police massacres go hand in hand.

In fact, the recent massacres have predecessors going back to the oligarchic Old Republic, which in 1889 replaced the slaveholding monarchy. The Northeastern “colonels” (local regional bosses) and the new Republican rulers feared a general peasant uprising. For that reason they were careful upon abolishing slavery with the “Golden Law” (1888) to leave landed property in the hands of the former slaveowners. Even so, the formal freedom granted to the black ex-slaves caused social agitation among the population of the Northeast, which in the space of a few years led to the Canudos War of 1896-97.

Antônio Conselheiro, the “prophet” of the messianic movement, dreamed of the reinstatement of the monarchy, as do many millenarian movements who yearn for an imaginary lost “golden age.” But Canudos was far from being a Brazilian Vendée, as Euclides da Cunha imagined in his famous chronicle of the war, *Os sertões* (The Backlands), where he compared it to the clerical-monarchist regional uprising against the French Revolution in 1789. At bottom, Conselheiro’s New Jerusalem was a movement

⁴ The *quilombos* were villages and encampments of fugitive slaves located in remote backlands, some of them covering extensive areas, that arose by the late 16th century. The largest of the quilombos, Palmares in the northeastern state of Bahia, grew out of a 1604 slave revolt and lasted almost a century. It withstood dozens of attacks by *bandeirantes* (irregular militias recruited around São Paulo) and regular Portuguese colonial forces, and also counterattacked. It was finally conquered, and its legendary warrior-leader Zumbi dos Palmares killed, in 1695.

that rejected the avid expansion of the new bourgeois latifundia and sought to create a kind of mestizo *quilombo*⁴, of “escaped” landless peasants, where collective property was the rule. The response of the authorities was blunt: they massacred the entire population of Canudos, some 15,000 inhabitants, setting the pattern for future genocidal massacres carried out by Brazilian capitalism, and for the same reasons.

If following the fall of the monarchy and the abolition of slavery state terrorism was required in Canudos in order to intimidate the recently “liberated” peasants, today, following the fall of the military dictatorship and the installation of “democracy,” the bourgeoisie seeks to continue ruthless exploitation, keeping the toilers chained by means of repeated massacres ... and now with the mask of Lula’s popular front.

Reflecting the politics of the popular front, the great majority of the Brazilian left, far from fighting for working-class action against the massacres, and despite its criticisms of “police violence” (that is, of the “bad police”), has at crucial junctures *supported* the military police. During the action by various police “unions” in July 1997, virtually all the self-proclaimed socialist parties and groups backed this supposed “strike” which in reality was a police mutiny (see box, “How the Opportunist Left Embraced the Capitalist Police,” page 47). Recently, the Nova Iguaçu local of the PCdoB⁵ managed the feat of issuing a con-

⁵ Partido Comunista do Brasil, the once Maoist party which has become an ultra-reformist, hard right wing of the Lula popular front.

demnation of the violence without once mentioning the word “police” (there was only a vague reference to the “inefficiency of the Security System”), which no doubt reflects the orientation of these ex-Stalinist social democrats to recruiting supporters among the police. Only the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil warned against dangerous illusions in the police, and has consistently fought to throw these guard dogs of capital out of the unions. In the countryside, the MST has systematically refused to form peasant self-defense groups, although hundreds of its members were massacred by the landowners’ militias and the Military Police working on their behalf.

The “solutions” to police violence put forward by the opportunist left are illusory. A “purge” or cleansing of the police and armed forces of a few well-known thugs will leave a no-less murderous repressive apparatus. Moreover, no capitalist state has had, nor can it have, the reformist utopia of a “strictly civilian and technical” security force under “social control by the population,” including “the possibility of recalling the commanders,” as the MTL calls for. What is “public security” but the dictatorship of the ruling class over the classes and layers it exploits and oppresses? They pretend that Brazil could be an idyllic canton, lost in the reaches of the Swiss Alps at the time of Wilhelm Tell in the early 14th century, with a population of landowning middle peasants whose yodelling songs reverberate off the majestic mountainsides. The reality is that Brazil is the largest country of Latin America, with a high degree of urbanization and industrialization, containing enormous capitalist agribusiness landholdings and immense slums populated by people who lack jobs and livelihoods, dominated by a capricious and powerful neo-colonial bourgeoisie, lackeys of Yankee imperialism, which defends with machine guns and tanks, with bullets and elections, the wealth it extracts from the sweat of the workers and peasants.

There has not been and cannot be a “redemocratization” of the capitalist state, because the bourgeoisie needs paramili-

tary forces to maintain its class domination over the mass of the starving and oppressed, as well as the powerful Brazilian working class. Until there is a socialist revolution that sweeps away the present ruling class and brings down its state apparatus, Brazil will necessarily be ruled by a dictatorship, whether it is openly military, bonapartist, or lightly disguised with “democratic” overtones consisting of an impotent parliament, drowning in bottomless corruption, which only serves to prettify the filth and violence that are its essence. How can one “democratize” the security forces under conditions of modern slavery (wage-earning or not), which are synthesized in the expressive photos of Sebastião Salgado of the gold miners of Serra Pelada confronting the Military Police, which took place after the fall of the military regime?

The very popular-front government headed by Lula is the best proof of the impossibility of a “democracy” in which the great exploited majority rules given the essence of the capitalist state as a machinery of bourgeois rule: fed up with a succession of “democratic” governments representing the bosses under Sarney, Collor, Franco and Cardoso, 53 million people voted for Lula, almost 40 million on the first round of the 2002 elections, winning the presidency for the candidate of the Workers Party ... and everything stays the same as always!

The question of the police sums up the class nature of the bourgeois state, of which it, together with the other “special bodies of armed men” (according to Engels’ definition), constitutes the backbone. It also synthesizes the character of the revolution that is needed to replace it. The Stalinists put forward a “theory” of “two-stage” revolution, in which the first stage is “anti-imperialist,” “anti-fascist” and above all “democratic,” while socialist revolution is postponed “to the Greek kalends” (times which never come), as Karl Marx would say. Stalin borrowed this theory from the Russian Mensheviks, presenting with pseudo-revolutionary rhetoric the social-democratic vision of propping

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How the Opportunist Left Embraced the Capitalist Police

The following article is translated from *El Internacionalista* No. 5, May 2005, the Spanish-language organ of the League for the Fourth International.

The policy of various Brazilian left groups toward the police was revealed like an x-ray at the time of the police “strike” (above all by the state Military Police) in July 1997. At that time, the LQB wrote:

“We of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil (LQB – Fourth Internationalist League of Brazil) warn the working class that opposing the army occupation and Cardoso’s hunger policies does not mean falling into the arms of the murderous police. It is a betrayal that a large part of the left supports those who carried out the massacres of Candelária, Vigário Geral, Acari, Diadema, Cerro Corá, Eldorado dos Carajás, Cidade de Deus and so many others [sites of police and army massacres of landless peasants, black street children and prisoners]. The military police’s armed action is not a workers strike but a military revolt which, if successful, will increase the power of the police. The guardians of capital demand more money from the bosses to carry out their dirty work and to carry out even bigger attacks on the workers and the poor of the countryside and *favelas* (ghettos). Today they talk deceitfully about ‘unity’ between the police and the people; tomorrow once again they will pull the trigger of capitalist repression.

“The LQB stress the fundamental Marxist lessons that ‘the police are the armed fist of the bourgeoisie.’ In the class struggle it is necessary to distinguish clearly between who are the friends and who are the enemies of the working people. Every alliance with sectors of the bourgeoisie, from the police who are their agents in the streets to their corrupt politicians in the government palaces, leads to defeat. We need a revolutionary opposition to the bourgeois state in crisis.”

–“Brazil: Crisis of the Capitalist State,” *The Internationalist* No. 3, September-October 1997

The pseudo-Trotskyist reformists and centrists, in contrast, supported the police “strike.” Today the PT (Workers Party) mayor of Nova Iguaçu, Lindberg Farias, says he has “many doubts about whether the police can investigate” the massacre of the Baixada Fluminense and calls for federal intervention to obtain “justice.” Lindberg Farias, like many Brazilian politi-



Ronaldo Bernardes/Zéiro Hora

Military Police of Rio Grande do Sul came off their “strike” in order to attack students protesting against privatization, July 1997.

cians, has switched horses more than once in the carousel of parties. During the police “strike” of 1997, he was in the process of moving from the PCdoB¹ to the PSTU².

The PCdoB fulminated: “The people and the police united will never be defeated!” This shameful slogan takes to its ultimate “logic” the watchword of Salvador Allende’s Chilean Unidad Popular, “The people united will never be defeated,” which today is repeated in just about every popular-front demonstration. The truth is that “the people united” – that is, the workers ‘allied’ to bourgeois sectors – always spells defeat for the exploited. The LQB insists: “The popular front is paid for with workers blood.” It is urgently necessary to *break* the chains that bind the working class to the class enemy and fight for the *revolutionary independence of the proletariat* at the head of all the oppressed.

Today the PSTU denounces the “barbarism” of the Baixada Fluminense massacre (in an April 3 declaration). Its leader and former presidential candidate Zé Maria (José Maria Almeida) says of the Goiânia massacre: “This is the true face of the Brazilian police; repression in the service of the bourgeoisie” (*Opinião Socialista* No. 207, 24 February). But in July 1997, the ever-op-

¹ Partido Comunista do Brasil, a social-democratic outfit of Stalinist origin.

² Partido Socialista dos Trabalhadores Unificado – United Socialist Workers Party, which follows the line of the late Argentine pseudo-Trotskyist Nahuel Moreno.

portunist PSTU bragged about giving *support* to the revolt by the Military Police of Minas Gerais. “Of all the parties and organizations of the left who are active in Minas Gerais, only the PSTU and the Liga Operária e Camponesa (a split-off from the [Maoist] MR8) gave full support to the movement of the military [police],” it said (*Opinião Socialista* No. 37, July 1997). Later the PSTU changed its support to “tactical,” to soothe the bellyaches of its own members who had problems digesting the support to the murderers of street children and striking workers.

So Lindberg Farias went from “the people and police united will never be defeated” to “full/tactical support” to the mutiny of the Military Police, and from there to his current position of asking for the assistance of a “task force” of the federal police. It’s not such a great distance after all, since all three parties he has joined on his odyssey (the PCdoB, PSTU and PT) are reformist and popular-frontist to the core.

Another group which proclaimed “All Support to the Minas Gerais Police Strike” (*Combate Socialista* No. 56, 25 June 1997) was the CST³, also Morenoite, which was then a tendency in the PT and is now part of the PSOL⁴. *O Trabalho* (3 July 1997), a reformist current inside the PT which follows the line of the French pseudo-Trotskyist Pierre Lambert, published an article under the title, “Belo Horizonte on Battle Footing.” Moreover, we have pointed out⁵ the scandalous fact that the (now former) “union” leader of the civil police of the state of Alagoas, José Carlos Fernandes Neto, belongs to *O Trabalho*, which led the bourgeois newsweekly *Veja* to wax ironic about “Trotskyist cops.” A small centrist group, the POR⁶, followers of the Bolivian pseudo-Trotskyist leader Guillermo Lora, wrote: “The police should unite with the workers, peasants and other working people in an anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist struggle” (*Massas*, June 1997). A stepson of the so-called “anti-imperialist revolutionary front” so beloved of Lora (and which led him to tail after General J.J. Torres in 1971), the idea that the police must ally with their victims is utterly anti-Marxist, and sows illusions that can have terrible consequences.

If the ex-Maoists, Morenoites, Lambertistes and Loraites were in agreement in supporting the “strike” of the Military Police, the Partido Causa Operária (PCO), a centrist pseudo-Trotskyist outfit allied with Jorge Altamira’s Partido Obrero in Argentina, published in its newspaper at that time a small box calling for the “Dissolution of the Military Police” (*Causa Operária*, 1 July 1997), which at the end added a slogan in favor of the “creation of a municipal police and army under the direct control of the population.” It is pure reformist utopianism to think that the Brazilian bourgeoisie can do without a paramilitary police and that the population can exercise “direct control” over the armed organs of repression. This fairy tale only serves to

disorient the workers, by instilling the deeply erroneous notion that it is possible to reform the central axis of the capitalist state without a socialist revolution.

The band of centrist imposters of the Liga Bolchevique Internacionalista (LBI) also came out for the “dissolution of the Military Police,” a slogan that it later dropped. But in the face of the police “strike,” the LBI declared that due to “an irony of History,” the “agents of state repression against the workers [were] acting as the vanguard of the struggle against wage cuts” (*Jornal Luta Operária* No. 21, July 1997). These farceurs later called for the “Formation of Red Unions in the Troops of the Armed Forces and Military Police.” The LBI attempts to equate a conscript army, where in times of revolutionary struggle, above all during imperialist wars, soldiers committees can arise to fight against the bourgeois officer corps, with the *professional thugs* of the Military Police who voluntarily offer their services (for which they demand high wages) to repress the workers and the rural and urban poor. As we wrote at the time:

“Red unions’ of the Military Police?! Such creatures have never been seen by man or beast, but only by pseudo-Marxist poseurs when they are in their cups. The LBI is calling here for ‘red unions’ of the Brazilian bourgeoisie’s counterrevolutionary white guards – the professional strikebreakers and racist murderers who are the guard dogs of capital.”

–“Latin America: Opportunist Left Embraces the Cops,” *The Internationalist* No. 4, January-February 1998

While the whole gamut of the opportunist left sought to sidle up to the “striking cops,” the LQB said clearly what any confusion about the role of these professional agents of repression can mean, and carried out a persistent campaign to remove the *guardas* (local police) from the Union of Municipal Workers of Volta Redonda (SFPMVR). Supporters of the LQB (then Luta Metalúrgica) had won the leadership of the SFPMVR on the basis of a program declaring that all police forces (federal, state, military and municipal) are, together with the armed forces, “armed fists of the bourgeoisie,” and that there can be no alliance with any of them. When it proceeded to carry out the separation of the *guardas* from the union, supporters of the police launched a witch hunt against the Trotskyists, using the bourgeois courts to expel the supporters of the LQB from the leadership of the union and placing the latter directly under the control of the capitalist state. In carrying out this dirty work, the bourgeois forces enjoyed the support of the fake-Trotskyists of the LBI (see “The ‘United Front’ of the LBI with the Bourgeois State,” *Vanguarda Operária* No. 1, July-September 1996).

The main pro-cop element, one Artur Fernandes, was ostentatiously supported by the LBI, which published without criticism some of his bulletins in its magazine *Luta Operária* (No. 10, July 1996), where it said “the campaign ‘Police Out of the Union of Municipal Workers of Volta Redonda’ was “idiotic,” and it repeated the slander that the “members of LM [Luta Metalúrgica] were carrying guns” in a union meeting that was attacked by armed police. The LBI acted as advisors to the pro-cop faction, reaching the point of sending a fax to Artur Fernandes in which they urged him to attack LM for “carrying out campaigns of a purely superstructural character

³ Corrente Socialista dos Trabalhadores – Socialist Workers Tendency.

⁴ Partido Socialismo e Liberdade – Socialism and Liberty Party, whose founders were expelled from the PT in December 2003.

⁵ See “Brazil: Crisis of the Capitalist State,” as well as “Brazil Betrayals Too Hot for Mandelites, Lambertistes: The Debate That Wasn’t,” in *The Internationalist* No. 18, May-June 2004.

⁶ Partido Operário Revolucionário – Revolutionary Workers Party.

(campaigns in defense of gays, lesbians, blacks)! Subsequently, the LBI presented Fernandes as a member of its union slate in the CUT⁷. In fact, the LQB is known, as was LM, for having initiated the campaign in Brazil in defense of Mumia Abu-Jamal, the ex-Black Panther and revolutionary black journalist jailed on death row in the United States for his intransigent defense of all the oppressed. It is highly significant that the partisans of “unionizing” the police also regurgitate the racist and homophobic prejudices of the bourgeoisie.

The police “strike” of 1997 was a definitive test which served to separate the genuine Marxists, Leninists and Trotskyists, defenders of the class independence of the proletariat and champions of the cause of all the oppressed, from all the opportunists, whose politics of class collaboration leads them to make common cause with the infamous agents of bourgeois repression. ■

Lula’s Brazil...

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up the capitalist state by means of reforms. In reality, the first stage regularly ends in a massacre, because in semicolonial countries where late-developing capitalism dominates there is no possibility of genuine democracy in the imperialist epoch. As Trotsky wrote, summing up the experience of three Russian Revolutions (1905, February 1917 and October 1917) as well as the failed Chinese Revolution of 1925-27:

“With regard to countries with a belated bourgeois development, especially the colonial and semi-colonial countries, the theory of the permanent revolution signifies that the complete and genuine solution of their tasks of achieving democracy and national emancipation is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat as the leader of the subjugated nation, above all of its peasant masses.”

—L.D. Trotsky, “What Is Permanent Revolution? Basic Postulates,” in *The Permanent Revolution* (1930)

In Brazil today, permanent revolution encompasses the fight, not for an agrarian reform under the law of 1988, which requires the “compensation” of the large landowners, or any other capitalist reform scheme, but rather **agrarian revolution**, in which the large estates are seized, the modern and productive agribusinesses as well as the idle lands of the speculators and ranchers, in conjunction with the seizure of power by the urban proletariat. It includes the struggle for **national liberation from the imperialist yoke**, which cannot be accomplished by any bourgeois government, the current popular front included, but only by means of international socialist revolution. And it would institute **democracy for the exploited and oppressed**, through soviet organs of workers power. So long as Brazil remains a capitalist country, the continuous massacres, poverty and myriad forms of social oppression against blacks, Indians, women, homosexuals and other sectors will go on. To break this chain of death what is required is above all building an authentically communist **revolutionary workers party** in the struggle to reforge the Fourth International. ■

⁷ Central Única dos Trabalhadores – United Workers Federation, the labor confederation linked to the ruling PT.

Defense of Immigrants...

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several and touching off an uproar. In Chicago, 10,000 came out July 1 in answer to appeals on Spanish-language radio to protest the appearance of a Minuteman speaker. On October 8, several hundred protesters from Ciudad Juárez, Mexico and El Paso, Texas met at the international bridge to denounce the immigrant-hunting vigilantes.

But the immigrant-bashing thugs must not merely be protested, they should be run out by the overwhelming power of the organized working class. Revolutionaries seek to mobilize the unions to come out in force to chase off the fascist vermin who represent a danger to the safety and well-being of the minority, immigrant and working-class population. Militant worker-immigrant defense must be organized to disperse these would-be killers while their forces are small and vulnerable.

The Minuteman Project and similar groups, such as the California Friends of the Border Patrol and Civil Homeland Defense in Arizona, are today tiny clots who vituperate against the federal government for “not doing its job.” But the fascists and paramilitary racists have support within the state apparatus. California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger praised the Minutemen for doing “a terrific job,” saying that “the private citizen has to go in there and start patrolling our borders” (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 29 April). Later, the U.S. Border Patrol announced it was investigating using the vigilantes as “something akin to a Border Patrol auxiliary” (*Sacramento Union*, 21 July).

Now Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), part of the Department of Homeland Security, has started visiting shelters for survivors of the New Orleans flood demanding documents. This abuse should be met with a resounding demand: *Migra hands off Katrina survivors – No deportations!*

Ever since the 11 September 2001 World Trade Center attack, the government has taken aim at immigrants, holding more than 2,000 incommunicado for months and deporting thousands, particularly from the Near East and South Asia. Now, in the name of fighting “terrorism,” federal and state authorities are imposing driver’s license standards such as the federal “Real ID” law which, if enforced, would make it impossible for millions of working people to provide for their families. Bourgeois immigrants’ rights groups keep trying for immigration “reform” legislation, talking wistfully of “amnesty.” This is an illusion – the only “reforms” that will be enacted by capitalist legislators in this climate are increased attacks on immigrants.

Many are pinning their hopes on the Kennedy-McCain immigration act, a bi-partisan effort that tries to reconcile employers’ needs for cheap immigrant labor with the government’s drive to tighten border controls. The result is a bill that would set up a system of indentured servitude to import “guest workers” and would provide no relief or rights to the millions of undocumented workers already in the United States. To defend immigrant workers, a vital and growing sector of the working class, the key is to build a revolutionary workers party that defends the interests of all the oppressed, fighting for equal rights for all, and for socialist revolution around the globe. ■

For a Revolutionary Workers Party!

Arroyo Impeachment Dead, “People Power” Pop Front Goes On

SEPTEMBER 6 – The Philippine bourgeoisie’s political crisis entered another phase today when the impeachment complaint against President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo (GMA) was voted down by the House of Representatives.

The ditching of the three complaints filed by the parliamentary opposition was predictable. The Arroyo ruling clique sought from the outset to use their Congressional majority to squelch efforts to oust them. With the backing of that den of iniquity, GMA will claim a “clean bill of health” as she prepares to attend the United Nations Security Council, an imperialist rubber stamp currently chaired by the Philippines.

With impeachment dead, Arroyo and her backers are proclaiming “closure” on the issue of her theft of the 2004 election. They want to sweep the trash and stench under the rug in order to “move on” and “get the job done” of “reforming” the slumping economy. That translates into more taxes on the impoverished masses (particularly a 12 percent Expanded Value Added Tax) and more increases in the cost of fuel, food and other basic necessities.

Yet all the maneuvering in the notoriously corrupt Batasan (legislature) hasn’t diminished opposition among the Filipino working masses, who are being pushed towards an abyss of suffering and pauperization. The bourgeois parliamentary opposition along with their petty-bourgeois left covers are trying to divert this *class* hostility into the dead end of another popular-front “people power” fraud.

As Congress wound up its marathon session whitewashing GMA, a protest march of some 20,000 was led off by former president Corazon Aquino, Susan Roces (widow of presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr.) and two other candidates in the ill-fated 2004 presidential campaign, evangelical pastor Eddie Villanueva and Senator Panfilo Lacson. Bringing up the rear were assorted “national democrats” and social-democrats.

They dream of a repeat of the 2001 EDSA 2 uprising, when after the failure of the attempt to impeach President Joseph Estrada, mass mobilization in the streets paved the way for his ouster. The fake left has fallen in behind the bourgeois opposition in the name of (bourgeois) democracy, but it still lacks the support of the military, which was crucial in the overthrow of Estrada and of dictator Fernando Marcos in the 1986 EDSA 1.



Bullit Marquez/AP

Workers pull jeepney in September 11 demonstration on eve of national transport strike called by KMU labor federation. Reformists link struggle to ouster of Arroyo, rather than fighting for workers revolution.

As revolutionary Trotskyists, we warned from the onset of this political crisis against giving support to the bourgeois opposition and being sucked into the treacherous popular frontism of the various left groups/parties (see article on next page). From Spain in the 1930s to Indonesia in 1965 and in the Philippines from 1986 on, the popular front has shackled the working class and oppressed to the “opposition” bourgeoisie. This invariably results in the consolidation of the bourgeois rule when the urgent task is to bring it down.

Congressmen Satur Ocampo of Bayan Muna and Renato Magtubo of the Labor Party (PM – Partido ng Manggagawa) both declared that the struggle was passing into the “parliament of the streets.” But this “parliament” is led by pro-capitalist forces (including the various party lists and nationalist pop fronts, Bayan Muna, Bayan, Sanlakas, Akbayan, etc.) no less than is the present legislature.

The League for the Fourth International insists that the task posed is not “radical reforms” carried out by a bourgeois “people’s council” or “transitional revolutionary government,” but to mobilize the working masses independently from all the bourgeois factions, fighting to do away with this grinding poverty and oppression through workers revolution. This class fight for power can only be accomplished under the leadership of an internationalist workers party based on the program of permanent revolution. ■

Not Another EDSA “People Power” Fraud, Fight for Workers Revolution!

Presidential Crisis in the Philippines Workers Should Sweep Out Arroyo and All the Bourgeois Politicians

The following is an expanded version of a leaflet by the League for the Fourth International distributed in Manila, Philippines on July 25.

JULY 31 – “Hello? Hello, Garci?” With these words that are now echoing on cellphone ring tones around the country, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo (GMA) began one of several compromising calls with Commission on Elections (Comelec) chief Virgilio Garcillano following the May 2004 elections that could be the trigger that brings down her tottering presidency. “So I will still lead by more than one million, overall?” asks the president. “More or less, it’s the advantage ma’am,” the commissioner replies reassuringly. “It cannot be less than one million?” repeats the president, to make sure he gets her point. “Garci” got the point. Adding a little padding just to make sure, in the Comelec’s final tally, Arroyo beat challenger Fernando Poe, Jr. by 1.1 million votes. Now these heavily doctored results may be her downfall.

From the moment that former National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) deputy chief Samuel Ong presented the tape of dozens of calls between officials of the GMA administration and the Comelec chief at a press conference on June 10, there have been sometimes daily anti-government demonstrations in Manila. Over 50,000 came out on July 13, and even larger numbers protested Arroyo’s State of the Nation Address (SONA), July 25. Simultaneously, opposition legislators and quite a few former Arroyo supporters are pushing for an impeachment proceeding in Congress. The left is mobilizing with talk of another “People Power” uprising, a third EDSA.¹ Yet the driving force behind this upsurge has come from elements in the armed forces (it was military intelligence that taped the calls) and among GMA’s rivals among the bourgeois politicians, who are every bit as rotten as Madame Macapagal Arroyo.



Pat Roque/AP

Protesters blocked by barricades and phalanx of police as they try to march towards parliament during Arroyo’s state of the nation address, July 25.

This corrupt and reactionary president – who dispatched Filipino troops to aid the U.S. imperialist invasion and colonial occupation of Iraq, who is waging a dirty war of oppression against the Bangsamoro population in the south and against leftist guerrillas around the Philippines, who keeps the economy afloat with the remittances of over 10 million overseas Filipino workers, has presided over the elimination of more than 125,000 public sector jobs in the last year alone and has tried to raise the Value Added Tax (VAT) that particularly hits the poor – certainly ought to be driven from office. But it is the working class that must carry out this task, not only dumping GMA into the dustbin of history but also sweeping out the den of

¹ EDSA refers to Epifania de los Santos Avenue, the ring road in Manila that has been the focal point for the “People Power” demonstrations in the revolt against dictator Ferdinand Marcos (1986) and president Joseph Estrada (2001).



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trapos (“traditional politicians,” also meaning “dirty rags” in Tagalog) in the Philippine Congress and the nests of coup plotters. Filipino workers do not need another “People Power” fraud, replacing one used-up capitalist politician with another.

This is the third time in two decades that a Philippines president may be brought down amid an upheaval of popular mobilization. Yet from one EDSA to the next, the bourgeoisie has landed on top, and it threatens to do so again. The military apparatus, the backbone of the capitalist state, remains the power behind the throne, disguising a semi-bonapartist regime with a façade of “democratic” rhetoric. To put an end to this vicious cycle requires overthrowing capitalist rule. The revolution that is posed is not “national democratic,” “popular democratic” or any other bourgeois formula. Only a *socialist revolution* can overcome the grinding poverty to which the Filipino masses are condemned, and guarantee the right to self-determination for oppressed peoples and national minorities. A workers revolution must be internationalist in character, breaking with all forms of the bourgeois ideology of nationalism. And it must extend internationally to survive, centrally to the neighboring peoples of Indonesia, to U.S. imperialism’s regional sheriff, Australia, and to the imperialist industrial powerhouse of Asia, Japan.

The Bourgeois Opposition On the Move

After three weeks of silence on the Garcillano tapes, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo broke down and admitted late last month that the woman’s voice in the wiretapped phone conversations was hers. “GMA: Hello...It’s Me,” headlined the *Philippines Daily Inquirer* (28 June). The president said she took

responsibility for the “lapse in judgment” in calling the Comelec chief during the vote counting, improbably claiming she was not trying to influence the outcome. Arroyo claimed to welcome an impeachment trial in the Philippine Congress, dominated by her supporters.

On July 25, the morning of her SONA, an amended complaint for impeaching Arroyo was handed into the House of Representatives with 48 signatures, well short of the minimum of 72 necessary to send it on to the Senate. Among the charges are electoral fraud, concealing ownership of valuable real estate, obstructing justice in the investigation of abuses, granting sweetheart contracts, using government funds to buy votes, and facilitating the killings of political dissenters. According to Karapatan (Alliance for the Advancement of Peoples’ Rights), at least 411 people have been killed in assassinations, summary executions and indiscriminate firing on protests, as well as 130 “disappeared” and 245 documented cases of torture by the police and army. Whether anything will come of this motion is another matter.

The scandal of the “Hello Garci” tapes exploded right as a Congressional investigation was under way into high corruption amid low farce over the involvement of the president’s husband, First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo, allegedly involved in influence peddling, as well as First Son, Congressman Juan Miguel (“Mikey”) Arroyo, and the president’s brother-in-law, businessman Ignacio Arroyo, accused of receiving million-dollar payoffs on the illegal “jueteng” numbers racket. (Husband and son voluntarily exiled themselves to Hong Kong, while Iggy, a/k/a “Jose Pidal,” is sticking it out, so far.) It is lost on no one that this is hardly new in Philippine politics, as Gloria herself was elevated to the presidency after a frustrated impeachment trial and subsequent “People Power” upheaval that ousted President Joseph (“Erap”) Estrada over accusations of receiving P 400 million (roughly US\$8 million) in jueteng kickbacks. Estrada has offered to serve as interim president if Arroyo resigns, is impeached or overthrown.

By now, almost all the sectors that helped Arroyo wrest power from Estrada in 2001 in what is now dubbed as “EDSA 2” have left her. The influential Makati Business Club, the Association of Major Religious Superiors, a Catholic church grouping of almost 250 religious organizations of priests and nuns, and even former president Corazon Cojuangco Aquino have already called for Arroyo’s resignation. (“Cory” Aquino was elevated to power in 1986 in the first EDSA upheaval.) The Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), which in EDSA 2 was in the forefront of Arroyo’s supporters, is officially neutral. Following the death of Jaime Cardinal Sin last month, the church leaders fancy themselves his successors as “moral guides” and political kingmakers of capitalist politics. On July 10 the CBCP declared, “we do not demand her resignation. Yet neither do we encourage her simply to dismiss such a call.” It urged Arroyo to “discern deeply to what extent she might have contributed to the erosion of effective governance and whether the erosion is so severe as to be irreversible.”

With the high clergy politely urging her to consider handing over power peacefully, even people and cliques

within her regime have been jumping ship, giving up their status and perks as part of Arroyo's regime, a clear indication that they see her ship sinking. The most significant was the resignation en masse of ten cabinet members, including the entire so-called economic team of the administration. Malakanyang [the Philippine White House] dubbed them the "Hyatt 10," after the hotel where they had met secretly. They complained about GMA's request that the Supreme Court issue a restraining order on the VAT increase which she herself pushed to be approved, in a desperate attempt to save her government. In addition, two major partners of Arroyo's Lakas slate, the Nacionalista and Liberal parties, which have been the traditional pillars of bourgeois governments in the Philippines for decades, joined the calls for the resignation of Arroyo.

The bulk of the bourgeois opposition, grouped together in the United Opposition (UNO) coalition, has presented an alternative 15-member governing council supposedly representing different sectors of society to serve as a transitional government. Their thrust is for Arroyo to resign and have Susan Roces, the widow of "defeated" presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr., who died of a heart attack last December, head the council. The mayor of Makati, Jejomar Binay, argues that Ms. Roces uniquely has the "moral ascendancy" to lead such a council. But she would be nothing but a front for the UNO, a hodgepodge of discarded bourgeois politicians, ranging from siblings of the dictator Marcos (who was toppled by EDSA 1) to the Estrada clan (ousted by EDSA 2). Arroyo's faction waves around opinion surveys showing that people are sick and tired of "People Power," reflecting the fact that nobody wants to go into the streets just to bring back groups which have already been deposed and discredited.

Congressional solons (bigwigs) of the opposition parties (and many former GMA allies) are pushing for an impeachment trial. They reportedly have the support of influential Republican senator Lugar in the U.S., who helped orchestrate the downfall of Marcos. They want a "constitutional succession," replacing Arroyo with Vice President Noli ("Kabayan") de Castro. This is like taking a dilapidated jeepney [a jitney mounted on a jeep chassis, Philippine equivalent of a minibus], repainting it and trying to sell it as new. De Castro is known as a straw man for the Lopez family, which owns Manila Electric Company (Meralco), which controls power in the capital area; BayanTel, the second largest land-line telephone company; and the ABS-CBN television network. During the 1990s, they milked the government for funds to build mini-power plants, while Meralco continued charging exorbitant rates. In the 2004 election, they made a sweetheart deal with Arroyo to develop the North Luzon Expressway, and subsequently quadrupled toll charges. Under a Kabayan government, the Cojuangco/Aquino and Arroyo haciendas as well as the Lopezes' power monopoly (and profits) will be safe.

While Arroyo and her allies search for "constitutional" means to cling to power, they are trying to consolidate their forces with daily visits by politicians to Malakanyang Palace. But a head count of the trapos will hardly be reli-

able, as bought-off politicians may not stay bought with the political establishment from the Senate to the local level split down the middle. The country has been turned topsy-turvy by this in-fighting of the bourgeoisie. In this political regime crisis, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has taken a neutral position – again, so far – in contrast to 2001, when they threw in their lot with Arroyo's faction, shifting the tide of the EDSA II uprising in her favor. Similarly, despite all the "People Power" rhetoric, the stance of the military in EDSA I was decisive, as defense minister Juan Ponce Enrile and AFP chief Fidel Ramos swung from supporting Marcos to backing challenger Aquino.

Just below the military's surface neutrality, the golf links in the AFP officers' country clubs are buzzing with plots and counterplots. The aging Young Officers Union (YOU), relics of the 1989 coup attempt in the Makati financial district, when they joined with the rightist Rebolusyonaryong Alyasang Makabansa (RAM – Revolutionary Patriotic Alliance) of then-colonel Gregorio ("Gringo") Honasan, has declared that it will bring down Arroyo "to save the country from further ruin and continue the unfinished revolution of our forefathers." The YOU communiqué confirmed that the "Hello Garci" tapes were made by military intelligence. Two days later, another group appeared calling itself the Protectors of the Filipino People, which read a pronouncement in a video aired on TV in front of its symbol, a rising sun between two mountain peaks. This shadowy outfit declared that it could not remain neutral as "the sovereign people have spoken," and called for a "genuine and radical transformation in our political system."

What kind of "radical transformation" do the various plotters have in mind? An "alternative" being pushed by retired general Fortunato Abat is setting up a civilian-military junta, to be headed by Abat himself. Abat, who heads the Christian Nationalist Union (CNU) and the right-wing "Patriots" group, has been calling for a Coalition of National Salvation (CNS) ever since the 2004 elections. While Patriots has put forward a populist "People's Agenda" commiserating with workers suffering from high taxes and low wages, talking about rolling back prices, "genuine land reform" and the like, Abat's real agenda was spelled out in an April 30 speech where he outlined plans for a revolutionary council, headed by a commander-in-chief named by the military and police, which would institute "authoritative governance," curtailing certain rights, "such as the right to strike," according to *Newsbreak* (3 July). While Abat has tried to suck in leftist groups, this is a blueprint for a "corporatist" regime with fascist overtones.

For his part, former president and AFP chief general Fidel Ramos calls for Arroyo to stay on as a "caretaker," to allow time for "charter change" (ChaCha) and a Constitutional Convention (ConCon) to introduce a "parliamentary" regime, giving the corrupt Congressmen more power. The ChaCha/ConCon agenda was taken up by House speaker Jose de Venecia and others from Arroyo's Lakas slate and endorsed by the president in her SONA speech, as desperately tries to hang on to her office. Behind Ramos' move is the calculation that in the absence of a new Marcos-like strong man, more upheavals

to bring down unpopular regimes are inevitable given the hunger and poverty policies they are called upon by the imperialists and their “national” bourgeois flunkies to enforce. Having had two and one-half EDSAs already, Ramos figures that with a prime minister to take the heat, the changing of the guard can be carried out without mass mobilizations that could get out of hand. And in the process, maybe the “kingmaker” can become king again.



Photos: Aaron Favila and Bullitt Marquez/AP

Philippine president Gloria Macapagal Arroyo delivers state of the nation address, July 25 (left). Reformist left builds “popular front” tying anti-GMA protests (facing page) to bourgeois figures such as ex-president Corazon Aquino (above, right) and Susan Roces Poe, widow of presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr.

Above all, this crisis is not only the concern of the bourgeois opposition. The Philippines has long been a strategic area for U.S. imperialist interests. As a key partner in the U.S. “global war against terrorism,” Washington requires assurances that the country won’t “go communist,” its preoccupation since the days when Philippine bases were a staging area for the Vietnam War, and before that in the Hukbalahap peasant rebellion of 1946-54. So U.S. embassy official Joseph Mossumeli arranged talks with the bourgeois opposition, former cabinet ministers and the president’s office to ask their intentions. Mossumeli said that the U.S. would “strongly oppose” a government put in office by “extra-constitutional” means, such as the revolts that installed Cory Aquino and Gloria Arroyo on the presidential throne. While feigning neutrality between the various squabbling factions, and claiming the U.S. would not intervene militarily (unlike in Afghanistan, Iraq, Haiti, Venezuela, and EDSA 1 and 2 in the Philippines), U.S. imperialism’s overriding concern is that power remain in the hands of the bourgeois class and *not* in the hands of the working class or so-called “reds.”

The imperialists’ worry is understandable, as the Filipino working masses are under constant attack by President Arroyo’s regime. The almost weekly oil price increases, escalating power rates and increasing costs for liquefied petroleum gas have led to a sharp increase in the cost of groceries, other basic commodities and transportation fares. Add to this the continued attacks on the rights of the working masses to organize, the continued killings and summary executions of leaders of workers, youth, women and other oppressed sectors – more than 50 activists of the Bayan popular front murdered in recent years, along with the November 2004 massacre of Hacienda Luisita workers and sympathizers – and you have a recipe for a social explosion. Hand-in-hand with the continued physical attacks go the suppression of the right to protests, rallies and strikes, and the “zoning” (raid-

ing) of communities of anti-Arroyo supporters, like the urban poor community in Tondo known as a pro-Estrada/Poe base, on charges of being “drug havens.”

Meanwhile, the countryside is under siege as the AFP continues its “counterinsurgency” war against peasant-based rebellions, particularly that led by the Maoist New People’s Army (NPA). The Bangsamoro people in the South (Mindanao, Sulu Islands, etc.) are under occupation by the AFP, together with U.S. Special Forces “advisors,” allegedly going after the dubious Abu Sayyaf group. Human rights workers and journalists are being killed wantonly – at last count, 69 reporters have been killed since 1986, when democracy was supposedly restored. The direct connection between repression in the Philippines and imperialist war/occupation in Iraq is shown by the case of Maj.-Gen. Jovito Palparan. When he was head of an infantry brigade in Mindoro Oriental in 2001-03, human rights worker Eden Marcellana and peasant leader Eddie Gumanoy were murdered. Palparan was then sent to Iraq to head the AFP “humanitarian” team. Now he is back, promoted by Arroyo to command the infantry division in Eastern Visayas, which “has become a virtual killing field since he assumed his post last February” (*Bulatlat*, 24 July).

With mounting discontent over Arroyo’s policies, it is understandable that a political crisis has erupted. The question is, will this confrontation among the ruling clans of the bourgeoisie simply dissipate, will it lead to a “regime change” that means more of the same – or worse – for the Filipino working masses and oppressed sectors, or can it be a spark that contributes to a proletarian counteroffensive against the imperialists and their junior partners in the “national” bourgeoisies throughout Southeast Asia? As the reformist Philippine left pushes a program of bourgeois democracy and nationalism, calling for yet another “People Power” fraud, the League for the Fourth International says it is necessary to *fight for international socialist revolution*.



Demonstrators protest GMA presidential speech, July 25.

Mainstream Left Spreads the Illusion of “People Power”

The bourgeois opposition orchestrated this crisis, with controversy after controversy undermining the Arroyo presidency. As matters stand today they are who stand to profit immediately by kicking “Madame Excelsis” (Gloria Macapagal Arroyo) out of Malakanyang palace, where she used to cavort as a teenager when her father Diosdado Macapagal was president in the early 1960s. (Like her father, GMA has always “sat at the sumptuous tables of power,” but contrary to his famous boast, her consort and offspring have indeed “run away with the silverware.”) The present bourgeois opposition were the ones kicked out of office in 2001 by the Arroyo/Ramos faction. They want to get back the power to dole out government contracts, share in kickbacks and “commissions,” and the other “perks.” But the main reason that the capitalist rulers may benefit from the turmoil, is that the opportunist left is playing by their rules and acting as pawns for their maneuvers.

The last several weeks has seen a profusion of anti-Arroyo groups with cute acronyms, including ARREST Gloria (Artists for the Removal of Gloria), ADIOS GMA (Artists for the Immediate Ouster of GMA), ENRAGED (Environmental and Natural Resource Advocates for GMA’s Expulsion) and the like. As usual, the opportunist left is operating through a series of cascading “popular fronts,” whose purpose is to tie the workers and peasants to one or another group of bourgeois politicians. At the July 13 demonstration in Makati, the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan or New Patriotic Alliance) called for a “People’s Council” (PC) composed of “patriotic and pro-people figures.” The Bayan Muna party-list called for a “transitional, civilian-dominated National Council for Reform and Unity” (NCRU) as the most “progressive post-Arroyo alternative.” These are variants of the same theme. What they seek is a coalition government with the bourgeois opposition, the class enemy of the working class. Just who might the “patriotic and pro-people figures” be that they have in

mind for their PC/NCRU? A July 13 Bayan Muna press release praised Susan Roces Poe to the skies, saying she “rocked the nation” and imparted “some important reminders about good manners, right conduct, and patriotism.”

What the “national democrats” are proposing is like a broken record that keeps repeating itself over and over again. The NDs, through the BAYAN popular front, have been calling for such a class-collaborationist coalition since EDSA I (1986), and again in EDSA II (2001). The rationale for this line is given by the Maoist Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), arguing that “the revolutionary movement must take advantage of the present political crisis by propagating the program for a people’s democratic revolution” to free the masses “from the graft-ridden and corrupt government and the semicolonial and semifeudal system” (*Ang Bayan*, 21 June). In line with the CPP’s call for “a broad mass movement and anti-

Arroyo united front,” *Ang Bayan* reports that “BAYAN, religious groups and the pro-Estrada camp formed a coalition to demand Arroyo’s ouster.” In 2001, the NDs allied with Arroyo, declaring that Estrada & Co. were the “main enemy”; today they walk hand in hand with Estrada’s siblings in the UNO!

In the name of people’s/new/national democracy, the Maoists/NDs are calling for nothing more than a change of faction of the ruling capitalists. And it is not just Roces Poe and Estrada with whom they want to ally. Jose Maria (“Joma”) Sison, “chief political consultant” of the CPP-allied National Democratic Front, argues that there are “reasonable military and police officers who can be attracted to a patriotic and democratic program of government and to the broad united front against the Arroyo regime and who can be encouraged to uphold civilian supremacy and respect the sovereign will and democratic rights of the Filipino people” (*Bulatlat*, 24 July). Who might those “reasonable,” “patriotic” and “democratic” officers be? A new Victor Corpuz, perhaps, who as a young lieutenant in 1970 carried out a raid on the military academy armory on behalf of the NPA, and after re-defecting was later elevated by Arroyo to head the AFP Intelligence Service? Another Captain Rene Jarque, former head of the Army Psychological Operations Command? Or is rightist retired general Abat the apple of the Sisonites’ eye?

The so-called “rejectionists” in *Laban ng Masa* (The Masses’ Fight) – followers of Sison’s rival Filemon (“Popoy”) Lagman, who broke from the CPP in 1994 rejecting the Sisonites’ program of peasant guerrilla warfare and was assassinated by unknown assailants in 2001 – want a “transitional revolutionary government.” “Remove Tough Dirt? Resign All!” proclaimed a sign of the Lagmanite Partido ng Manggagawa (PM – Labor Party) at its July 13 rally. But in a statement issued the same day, PM, even before the fighting starts, already surrendered the working class to the hands of the class enemy by stating that, “Workers are willing to coordinate with other classes, sectors and groups ... for the common struggle to

Aaron Favila/AP



Protesters from Courage (public sector workers) union during protest march in Manila, September 8, calling for the ouster of President Gloria Arroyo.

oust the Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo regime through a new type of people power uprising.” The PM talks about a lot about the working class, and even a “workers uprising” (in its July 13 “Manifesto of the Working Class against the GMA Regime”). But rather than fighting for workers revolution, PM declares: “The movement for the ouster of GMA should be an opportu-

nity to fight for significant reforms in society.” The “new type of people power uprising” and “transitional revolutionary government” PM is calling for is merely “a democratic government that is a true representative of the people.”

What new kind of “people power” does the PM think it will get when workers join with “other classes” (namely, the bourgeois opposition) in the fight against Arroyo? Today, it laments that “EDSA 2 was born out of the desire for genuine reforms and changes in the face of politics in our country yet ended up in a mere change in the faces in Malakanyang. The victory of the Filipino people was stolen by an economista who betrayed their hopes for change.” But PM’s present alliance with the Estradas, the Marcoses, Ping Lacson and other *trapos* will only suck the working class into a merry-go-round that will make the workers dizzy until their class enemy pounces on them. Just to make sure the workers were firmly chained to a section of the capitalist class, Susan Roces spoke at the PM-supported Sanlakas party-list rally on July 13. An uprising headed by Poe’s widow Susan would not look all that different than EDSA 1: “People Power” of the old type headed by the widow of Benigno (“Ninoy”) Aquino, this time with generals Abat and Ramos in the background instead of Ramos and Enrile.

Sonny Melencio, in an article in the PM newspaper, *Obrero* (July 2005), spells out the program. Melencio argues that a “genuine alternative is a government that is composed of representatives of the working and poor masses,” but “for now, the ouster of GMA can only happen through the coordination of different forces including the bourgeois opposition and groups within the military.” A revolutionary transitional government, he writes, would be “‘revolutionary’ in the same sense that the government of Cory at the end of Marcos’ rule was ‘revolutionary.’” That is, it would be a popular front government designed to head off revolution. This “revolutionary” government would include “bishops that are against GMA, and the FPJ [Fernando Poe] camp especially headed by Susan Roces.”

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Melencio's "minimum program" is a sellout of the workers. His talk of a government of "representatives of the working and poor masses" sometime in the future may sound radical, but by insisting that it would be a "democratic" regime the PM means that it would be bourgeois in character. At bottom, this is identical to the "ND" call. It is the hoary Stalinist/Menshevik line of two-stage revolution, in which the first "stage" is "democracy," and later for socialism. In reality, the first stage is always another defeat for the workers, and quite frequently leads to a massacre of the left, labor and peasants. Where the Bolsheviks under Lenin and Trotsky called in 1917 for a "workers and peasants government" to begin the socialist revolution, in the Philippines today both "national democrats" and "rejectionists" reflect the stagist program of Stalin. Whether it is called a PC/NCRU or a TRG, the reformist opportunists want a "*trapos and generals government*."

Finally, the social-democratic Citizen's Action Party, or AKBAYAN, is even more "moderate." While urging the public to intensify demands for Arroyo's removal from office, it mournfully observes that: "A simple change in the form of government only means that the *trapos* in the presidential form of government will be the same *trapos* under the parliamentary form of government." This sums up the politics of AKBAYAN and its allied organizations like BISIG (Bukluran para sa Ikauunlad ng Sosyalistang Isip at Gawa) and the Alliance of Progressive Labor (APL). As European social democracy has been doing since ignominiously capitulating before their respective bourgeoisies in the first imperialist world war, their Filipino counterparts fight not for socialist revolution but for the improvement and beautification of capitalist exploitation. This line spreads dangerous illusions that the bourgeois state can be reformed, thereby denying the working class its world-historic role as "the gravediggers of capitalism," as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels wrote in the *Communist Manifesto*!

With the "mainstream" left sucked into a vortex of reformism and opportunism, the Philippine bourgeoisie has assured itself and its master, U.S. imperialism, that whichever faction wins, their interests will remain intact. What the working class needs is to fight for political independence from all wings of the bourgeoisie in order to be able to fight for its own class power. And for that, what is required above all is the leadership of a revolutionary workers party fighting on the Trotskyist program of permanent revolution.

Oust Arroyo and All Bourgeois Politicians – Workers to Power!

As a University of the Philippines political analyst said on the 24 Oras news program, "ever since Marcos' Martial Law the elite have inherited a political culture of trying to get democracy [to] work for their interest. And when this doesn't work out, they instigate extra-constitutional means." This is not a peculiarly Filipino phenomenon. On the contrary, among the semi-colonies and former colonies of Asia, Africa and Latin America, even the most ostentatiously "democratic" regimes have pronounced *bonapartist* characteristics. As Leon Trotsky analyzed in his theory of permanent revolution, in the imperi-

alist epoch, the weak national bourgeoisies of economically backward capitalist countries are incapable of carrying out the fundamental tasks of the bourgeois revolution, including democracy, agrarian revolution and national liberation. In order to hold the reins of power over millions of workers, peasants and urban poor, the tiny ruling class requires a "strong state" in which the military and police keep the masses under their iron heel.

The strategy of staging coups d'état with mass support is nothing new. The innovation of the post-Marcos Philippines was to suck the "mainstream left" into the operation and give it a name, promoting the illusion of "People Power." Hundreds of thousands pour into the streets, while the military plotters in Camp Aguinaldo, Fort Magsaysay and Fort Bonifacio pull the strings. After the fireworks are over, in the end, it has resulted in the destruction of working class and leftist organizations and parties. A second significant development was the active participation of U.S. imperialism in promoting such "extra-constitutional" change of government. In the past, the U.S. routinely got rid of inconvenient governments through the simple expedient of a military coup. But in 1986 Cory Aquino's rise to power following the "snap election" (held at Washington's insistence) was prepared by the resuscitated National Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL). As recounted in Raymond Bonner's *Waltzing with a Dictator: the Marcoses and the Making of American Policy* (Times Books, 1987), NAMFREL was set up by the CIA in the early 1950s "to help [CIA officer Ed] Lansdale elect [Ramón] Magsaysay" president.

This model of U.S.-sponsored "regime change" with popular participation has since been used repeatedly, in Southeast Asia and elsewhere. The 1998 ouster of Indonesian dictator Suharto (who was installed in a U.S.-orchestrated 1965 coup) was accompanied by mass demonstrations, many led by petty-bourgeois leftists such as the Indonesian PRD (People's Democratic Party) which supported the bourgeois nationalist Megawati Sukarnoputri. But the scenario was set in motion from Washington as the World Bank began complaining of rampant corruption in the decrepit Jakarta regime. Moreover,

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Impeachment, the Popular Front and Trotskyism

How to respond to political crises initiated by sectors of the bourgeoisie anxious to head off a popular uprising is a question that has come up before. In the classic case of the ouster of a certified war criminal in recent times, that of American president Richard (“I am not a crook”) Nixon in 1973-74, the Trotskyists in the United States proclaimed, “Impeachment Is Not Enough!” calling for immediate elections, a break with the capitalist Democrats and the formation of a workers party to fight for a workers government (in *Workers Vanguard* No. 43, 26 April 1974).

In Brazil in the early 1990s, a movement developed similar to the current “oust Gloria” protests in the Philippines, calling for the ouster of President Fernando Collor de Melo, a notoriously corrupt politician responsible for privatizations and anti-labor repression. The social-democratic Workers Party (PT) eventually joined the “Fora Collor” (Collor Out) movement, while the fake-Trotskyist *Convergência Socialista* (today PSTU) became the “best builders” of the impeachment movement, calling for a “real” parliamentary inquiry. Another pseudo-Trotskyist group, the PCO (Partido Causa Operária – Workers Cause Party) called for “general elections.” But this was all posed on a (bourgeois) democratic basis. Our comrades who later formed the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil (LQB – Fourth-Internationalist League of Brazil), predominantly black workers in the largest steel plant in Latin America, fought against this line, calling for the formation of a revolutionary workers party (see “Workers Struggle vs. Popular Frontism in Brazil,” *The Internationalist* No. 14, September-October 2002).

Elsewhere, the “People Power” model has been repeated in recent upheavals in various of the ex-Soviet states, notably Ukraine. As we wrote last December:

“The model for the current operation was the ‘people power’ revolt in the Philippines that ousted strongman Ferdinand Marcos in 1986. Then, too, you had huge crowds massing in opposition to a decaying authoritarian regime that had become a liability to the U.S. ... In the end, the power ended up not with ‘the people’ but in the hands of Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile and General Fidel Ramos, with Corazon Cojuangco Aquino, scion of one of the leading landowning families installed as figurehead president. Communists and other radicals, whose popularity had been growing in opposition to Marcos’ brutal rule, were effectively sidelined by the elaborate manipulation – with their popular-front politics they were beholden to bourgeois allies, who then did them in.”

–“U.S.-Sponsored Coup d’État in Ukraine,” *The Internationalist* No. 20, January-February 2005

This dismal history is well-known to the opportunist left. “All the EDSA uprisings where majority of those who took part comes from the marginalized sectors of society brought us nothing,” declares the Partido ng Manggagawa. So why do they keep calling for yet another EDSA, which will be different this time? For the same reason they fell in line behind Aquino in the first place: the reformists program of “two-stage revolution” requires that they join with the “progressive” (or not so progressive) capitalist sectors. So when the bourgeois opposition sounds the bugle, the Stalinists and social democrats salute.

this operation was heavily influenced (at the very least) by the same man who helped grease the skids for Marcos, Paul Wolfowitz, who was Ronald Reagan’s deputy secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific Affairs in ’86, later ambassador to Indonesia and more recently a key architect of the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Thus the petty-bourgeois nationalist leftists of the Philippine CPP and the Indonesian PRD, who tailed after Cory Aquino (after initially boycotting the “snap election”) and Sukarnoputri respectively, were ultimately following the baton of U.S. imperialism.

Thousands of working people marched on July 13 and 25 and in myriad “oust Gloria” demos, but they are being used as foot soldiers by the capitalists and their labor lieutenants. The protests are dominated by middle-class, petty-bourgeois forces while the voices of the workers in the free trade zones, power plants, breweries, metal factories, mines and sugar mills are submerged in the “democratic” clamor. This is not because they lack the will to fight, but because they are kept in check by police-state repression and diverted by their own misleaders. Despite the massacre of striking workers at Hacienda Luisita in Tarlac, Luzon last November, carried out by the Arroyo government on behalf of Corazon Cojuangco Aquino’s clan, the strikers have refused to capitulate. Striking workers at the Lepanto Mining Company in Benguet have braved mass arrests defending their

picket lines against scabs being herded by Arroyo’s police. A genuinely communist vanguard would call out the whole of the working class to halt work until these strikes are won.

Refusing to be sucked into supporting Susan Roces Poe or some other bourgeois figure, a *national strike* should be organized against the VAT, fuel price rises, the government’s counterinsurgency wars and the puppet regime that implements the starvation policies ordered by the International Monetary Fund, *raising the call for workers to power*. A roiling *mass strike* could dispatch *flying pickets squads* to organize workers in industrial parks from Cavite to the former U.S. Subic Bay naval base, Clark Air Base and Camp John Hay in Baguio. *Area-wide strike committees* could be formed, overcoming union divisions and attracting non-union workers. Peasants and agricultural workers should take this opportunity to seize the estates of the large landowners, who are hardly “semi-feudal” (as the CPP claims) but entirely capitalist, as part of an *agrarian revolution* in conjunction with a struggle for power by the urban proletariat. They can start with the Cojuangco’s Hacienda Luisita, purchased in 1957 as part of the anti-communist “agrarian reform,” and go on to the Arroyos’ Hacienda Grande sugar estate in Negros Oriental, for-mally the property of 27 dummy corporations.

The League for the Fourth International says: *Not another*

United Working-Class Action Against Bourgeois Attack!

Filipino Working-Class Fighter Murdered

Two gunshots rang out on September 22, in Calamba City, about 60 kilometers south of Metro Manila, as unidentified assassins shot and killed Diosdado Fortuna, president of the Union of Filipino Employees (UFE) at Nestlé's Philippines, makers of food products such as Milo, Nescafé, and Nido. He was also a leader of labor groupings in southern Tagalog and a national council member of the KMU labor federation. "Ka Fort," as he was known among his co-workers, was coming home from a series of meetings with workers and students to attend to his sick grandson. At just past 5 p.m., he was shot in the back by two motorcycle-riding men. He was 50 years old.

Ka Fort had been leading a strike of around 600 workers at the Nestlé's Cabuyao plant since 2002. The three-year-old strike was triggered by management's refusal to grant retirement benefits of workers under their collective bargaining agreement. The struggle of the Nestlé's Philippines workers for their rights, better wages and better working conditions has met a bloody and violent response. Ka Fort's predecessor, Meliton Roxas, was shot in front of the picket line at the Cabuyao plant in 1987. Like the massacre of striking sugar cane and mill workers at Hacienda Luisita last November, the murder of Ka Fort aims to force the striking workers of Nestlé's into submission.

According to the Center for Trade Union and Human Rights, there were 27 cases of attacks on the picket lines that victimized 1,457 workers from January to September 2005 alone. Following the assassination of Fortuna, on September 30 Vicky Samonte, a regional vice chairman of the KMU in Surigao del Sur, was killed, and on October 10, Tony Cuizon, president of the Atlas Mining Corporation union, was ambushed. This wave of attacks on unionists is part of an intensification of repression by the government of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo (GMA) since September 6, when a docile Congress dismissed impeachment charges against her.

When groups pushing to oust GMA announced they would continue protests, the presidential office issued Executive Order 464, known as "Calibrated Preemptive Response" (CPR), allowing the Philippine National Police to ban all kinds of rallies, whether by leftist groups or even the bourgeois opposition. Add to this the passing of the Anti-Terrorism Bill in the House of Representatives (controlled by cheerleaders for Arroyo), that labels rallies, pickets and protests as "terror-

ism" because they disrupt the flow of services by creating traffic and noise. The Arroyo government is gearing up for a major crackdown if not outright martial law. In short order, on October 5, some 16 leaders of workers and leftist organizations were arrested as police violently dispersed a march protesting the CPR decree. And on October 15, water cannons were

used against a march led by a former vice president and three Roman Catholic bishops.

Two days before his murder, Diosdado Fortuna spoke at one of several rallies around the country commemorating the 33rd anniversary of the imposition of martial law by the dictator Ferdinand Marcos. As the Philippine bourgeoisie, through the Arroyo regime, tightens its grip on the population, it is important for the working class to face these attacks squarely with powerful united-front action. Instead, the vast majority of the left and labor organizations are building competing "popular fronts" tying the working masses to opposition sectors of the ruling class. Yet these same Makati [central Manila] businessmen and Catholic bishops support Arroyo's CPR crackdown on demonstrations. With sugary talk of "democracy," their purpose is to block any struggle for workers revolution.

On September 29, a "national day of protest and indignation" was held against the murder of Fortuna. As we fight to build the world party of socialist revolution and the nucleus of a Trotskyist party in the Philippines, the League for the Fourth International honors the example of Ka Fort and other martyred workers and champions of the oppressed. Their example will inspire new fighters and stoke the fire in our hearts to put an end to this capitalist system that breeds endless war, poverty and oppression.



EDSA, but workers revolution! Warning against giving political support to the bourgeois opposition, as the reformist Stalinist and social-democrats do, the Trotskyists call for building a **revolutionary workers party** that fights for a **workers and peasants government**. As the Makati businessmen, Catholic bishops, hardline generals and corrupt bourgeois politicians call demonstrators into the streets demanding "impeachment or resign," the

millions of workers, peasants, poor people, students, oppressed national and linguistic minorities and other victims of this semicolonial capitalist regime must begin to organize independently of and against the exploiters and oppressors. Authentic communists fight for the program of **permanent revolution: Not another "people power" popular front of class collaboration, but a revolutionary offensive of class struggle!** ■

Germany...

continued from page 35

federal state after the other, the SPD/Green coalition went down to electoral defeat at the hands of the bourgeois opposition, as a significant part of the SPD's working-class base simply stayed home. Following his loss in the May 22 vote in North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), where the coal mines and steel plants of the Ruhr region once constituted the heart of the German industrial proletariat, Schröder engineered his own loss on a vote of confidence in the Bundestag, in order to precipitate new parliamentary elections rather than wait a year for the end of his term. As the election campaign took off, the SPD tops dredged up some social demagogy they had stored in their long-term memory from back in the 1970s.

Comic relief was provided by Franz Müntefering, to whom Schröder had handed the thankless job of SPD chair. At an April conference in Berlin he thundered against "asocial" and "faceless" foreign investors (mainly hedge funds) who were descending on Germany "like swarms of locusts" stripping companies bare and then moving on. Business circles pretended to be horrified, and even complained that comparing investors to locusts was like stigmatizing the Jews in Nazi Germany! Müntefering had not, of course, rediscovered Karl Marx so late in the day, and the SPD's loyal stewardship of German capitalism is not in doubt. In the rush to privatization of government assets under the "red-green" coalition, hundreds of gas stations, motels, etc. on German highways were sold off to the firm Apax while slices of the railway went to U.S. and Japanese investors – by none other than Transport Minister Müntefering.

Tirades against "finance capital" or "monopoly capital" etc. as "irresponsible" or "parasitic" have been the stock in trade of certain currents of bourgeois politics, from early-20th century populists up to the critics of "globalization" today. "Anti-capitalism" it is not. Opinion polls did discover wide public assent to Müntefering's harsh words about certain aspects of latter-day capitalism, although far fewer thought that the SPD would do anything about it. Above all, a key element in the "locust debate" was it was directed against *foreign* "predator capitalism": discontented workers are to be manipulated into reconciliation with "their" European capitalists. But a real opposition to the social devastation being carried out both by the "red-green" and the new "black-red" (SPD/CDU) governments requires an *internationalist* perspective of proletarian struggle, not the *nationalist* illusion of returning to a social-democratic *Modell Deutschland* (German Model) that was never real and is now gone for good.

The key lesson here is the current wave of attacks on the working class across Europe – wholesale dismantling of social programs, driving down wages and creating a reserve army of labor – are not conjunctural. This "social state" (or "welfare state" as it was known in England) was needed to assure the support or at least the neutrality of the working classes in its Cold War drive against the Soviet Union. After the collapse of Soviet Stalinism, and the so-called "death of communism", economic and political

rivalry between the imperialists took center stage. Thus today the European bourgeoisies are cutting "superfluous" social expenses and seek to maximize the exploitation of labor. The "welfare state" which reached its peak shortly after the middle of the last century proved but a brief exception rather than a new stage in the history of world capitalism. It's been back to "free enterprise" ever since the '80s. This is why it is illusory to expect a return of this moribund "welfare state."

Crisis of Proletarian Leadership

There is an political vacuum in today's Germany. On the one hand, the economic "reform" program shared by all parties in the Bundestag has given the capitalists a green light and the all-party anti-immigrant consensus has provided new openings to the fascists. On the other, the SPD's electoral free-fall (and shrinkage of its membership back to the level of the early 1950s) has provided a push to create an *ersatz*, a substitute social democracy. Following Schröder's late-May announcement of early elections, this was hastily thrown together around the figure of former SPD leader and super-chauvinist Oscar Lafontaine. The new Left Party unites the WASG (Election Alternative – Employment and Social Justice), a handful of disgruntled SPD/union bureaucrats and their "left" aides in the West, plus the PDS in the East. In the September vote the Left was the second largest party through East Germany, with roughly a quarter of the vote, and the largest in Berlin, with 34 percent, while taking 16 percent in the Saar, Lafontaine's home state. This electoral showing has awakened new illusions in the so-called extra-parliamentary left.

The Party of Democratic Socialism, which rose from the rubble of the Stalinist bureaucracy during the disintegration of the DDR (which they ceded to the West German imperialists on a platter), has up to now remained an eastern German regional variant of the social democracy. As such, it has eagerly sought to enter coalitions with the SPD, where Schröder's party would have them. In the capital, Berlin, a "red-red" SPD/PDS city government has carried out a "savings program" of cut-backs every bit as drastic as those ordered by the federal "red-green" cabinet. This includes slashing the budgets of three Berlin universities, cutting back full-day coverage in day care centers, layoffs of public sector workers and reducing the number of hours along with a 10 percent wage cut – not to mention cutting payments to the blind by half! In addition, Berlin cops have defended Nazi marches, attacked leftist demonstrations and carried out raids against Muslim residents as part of the anti-immigrant, "anti-terror" repression.

Now the PDS/WASG electoral alliance will have several dozen members of the Bundestag, they will be able to play the parliamentary game to the hilt. Although the bulk of the Left Party vote came from the East, two-thirds of the deputies are from the West, opening the way to future friction. But PDS manager Lothar Bisky and parliamentary star Gregor Gysi have laid down the law: no internal quarrels so that the parliamentary fraction can remain united. And what policies will the Left Party carry out? For the program to subsidize apprenticeships, it is dusting off an old SPD position paper. That way, says Gysi, if the SPD "becomes social-democratic again some time,"

they can work together (*Der Spiegel*, 10 October). In fact, the whole plan of the PDS/WASG tops is to make the new “party” respectable enough to be coalition-ready for the SPD by the time of the next elections. This will include backing any new military intervention by the Bundeswehr, as over Yugoslavia. Naturally, it will be called “peacekeeping.”

Any would-be radical leftists who placed their hopes in these social-democrats of the second mobilization will be sorely disappointed. *Trotskyists, who fight for a revolutionary workers party, give no electoral support to the “SPDSPDS” Left Party.*

A whole bevy of pseudo-Trotskyists, however, beginning with Linksruck (Left Turn, the German affiliate of the British Socialist Workers Party), Sozialistische Alternativ Voran (SAV – Socialist Alternative Forwards, linked to the Committee for a Workers International of Peter Taafe) and last but not least, the Gruppe Arbeitermacht (GAM – Workers Power Group, weighing in for the “League for the Fifth International”) has signed up for duty under the discipline of Lafontaine/Gysi. Of this trio Linksruck feels the most at home, since it has never been anything other than a hipper variant of the Jusos (the SPD’s youth group), “armed” with petitions to the bourgeois state on every topic under the sun. The SAV on the other hand, whose language on occasion can be a bit more “Marxist,” has been the object of an expulsion campaign since the beginning of the year. Too bad for the Taaffeites – infamous for their position that the cops are only “workers in uniform” and belong in the trade unions – who fit right into a party whose answer to racist terror is the recruitment of a few immigrants to the police!

As for the GAM, it called on the WASG to build a “class-struggle opposition” in the unions, which is pretty rich considering that the WASG tops include a host of mid- and upper-level bureaucrats of the Ver.di public workers and IG Metall metal workers unions! How can you form a class-struggle opposition in the unions with labor fakers who left the Opel Bochum strikers slowly turning in the wind while the IGM leadership actively sabotaged their strike? A genuine class-struggle opposition must fight to oust the entire pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy, including the WASG supporters, and forge a leadership committed to building a revolutionary workers party, not a slightly pinker version of the SPD!

The United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USec), heirs of the late Ernest Mandel, as is its usual social-democratic practice, has two sections in Germany, and again as usual, they split over the attitude to take toward the Left Party. The internationale sozialistische linke (isl – international socialist left) was for entry, while the Revolutionär Sozialistischer Bund (RSB – Revolutionary Socialist League) was against. In the aftermath of the Left Party’s electoral success, however, the RSB is trying to sidle up to the WASG/PDS lash-up, offering extra-parliamentary support for its maneuvering in the Bundestag corridors under the guise of building an “extra-parliamentary opposition.”

Left outside in the cold are a few other groups like the *Gruppe Spartakus* (part of the International Bolshevik Tendency, a parasitical growth on the International Communist League) which endlessly analyzes the antics of this alphabet

soup because it is in essence just another tadpole in the swamp. The German section of the ICL, the Spartakist Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands (SpAD), correctly calls for “No Vote for the SPD, Greens, WASG/PDS!” (*Spartakist* election supplement, 5 September). It also calls for cops out of the unions. However, the SpAD’s sometimes orthodox Trotskyist posturing is given the lie by its “critical” support to candidates of the SAV in Rostock municipal elections last year. The SpAD claims the Taaffeites were fighting against “social devastation.” Yet for the SAV this means not only calling on city authorities to take “administrative legal measures” (i.e., call on the police) to ban a Nazi march, but includes support for the “protests” of the cops, in the state of Hessen, for example! This police-friendly policy of the SAV is no minor matter in Rostock, where in 1992 the police stood by as fascists burned down an immigrants hostel. To claim that the SAV merited critical support was absurd, and says more about the demoralization of the SpAD than it does about any non-existent shift to the left by the Taaffeites.

At the time of the capitalist annexation of the DDR in 1989-90, in which the Social Democrats were the stalking horse for German imperialism, the SAV called on the SPD (in which they were buried at the time) to carry out a “socialist reunification” of Germany, meaning a capitalist counterrevolution under social-democratic leadership. At the time the SpAD fought tooth and nail against capitalist reunification and denounced the likes of the SAV as stooges of NATO social democracy. But following the collapse of the Soviet Union, a mood of defeatism set in among the ICL leadership, leading to the 1996-97 expulsion of long-time cadres in several sections, who went on to found the League for the Fourth International. One of the main accusations against these leading comrades was that while saying the Stalinists opened the road to counterrevolution and handed over the DDR to German imperialism, we did not say that the Stalinists *led* the counterrevolution, this role having been occupied by the Social Democrats. After several years of vituperating against the LFI over this issue, the now rudderless SpAD/ICL decided that the Stalinists didn’t lead the counterrevolution after all.

In Germany, as elsewhere in West Europe, today, the inroads of more than a decade of dismantling the “social state” has led to massive disaffection with the ruling social democrats. But the upshot has been the emergence of a new lawyer of “post-modern” social dems who seek to channel this discontent back into the dead-end of bourgeois parliamentarism. From the Italian PDS to the German Left Party, they don’t even bother to call themselves socialists any more, yet the ex-”far leftists” of yesteryear are rushing to jump on the caboose as the train leaves the station. The struggle against anti-immigrant repression, deportations, mass layoffs, and the wholesale destruction of social programs cannot be led by those who would restore the “social contract” of the Cold War social democracy, which, along with the DDR Stalinists, has ended up in the dustbin of history. The League for the Fourth International insists that the urgent need is to undertake the struggle for a revolutionary workers party, built in the fight to reforge Trotsky’s world party of socialist revolution. ■

Defend Venezuela Against Yankee Imperialism!

Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez drives the U.S. imperialists nuts. "I've always said that Cuba has the same effect on American administrations that the full moon has on werewolves," says former U.S. ambassador to Cuba Wayne Smith, adding: "That werewolf effect now applies to Chávez also."

This effect was on full display during the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in September. Washington started off by refusing to let Chávez' security detail and medical team into the country, keeping them locked in the presidential plane in a hanger 200 miles from New York. When the Venezuelan leader spoke at the General Assembly September 15, he complained that the empty Summit Declaration was a U.S. *diktat*. Chávez said the Summit was a failure (Venezuela and Cuba voted against the declaration) and urged that the United Nations move its headquarters from the U.S. He received vigorous applause, more than any other head of state who spoke there.

The media reacted with feigned disbelief when Chávez accused the U.S. of threatening Venezuela with "preventive war." That night on the ABC-TV program *Nightline*, he went further, accusing the Bush administration of planning an invasion and his own murder. In August, televangelist Pat Robertson called on national TV for the assassination of the Venezuelan president. *Nightline* host Ted Koppel responded that it was a "foolish thing to say" but that "certainly no one from the government condoned what he said." Besides, said Koppel, "you called President Bush an asshole." (This is a piece of creative translation: Chávez called Bush a *pendejo*, which translates roughly in idiomatic American English as a "jerk.")

How could Chávez say the U.S. was planning an invasion, Koppel asked. Chávez cited plans specifying "how many bombers to overfly Venezuela on the day of the invasion, how many aircraft carriers need to be sent... The plan is called Balboa." The U.S. couldn't control Venezuela any more than it has been able to control Iraq, Chávez said, and if it invades, it "should just forget the million and a half barrels of oil" Venezuela ships to the United States every day. The U.S. ambassador to Caracas later declared, "No 'Plan Balboa' exists" (AP, 29 September). Of course, there was an "Operation Balboa" a few years ago, he admitted, but that was just a "simulated military exercise."

U.S. governments have long carried out invasions, coups and murder to topple leaders they don't like, particularly in Latin America. Look at their never-ending quest to get rid of Cuban leader Fidel Castro (who has outlasted nine U.S. presidents), including everything from the Bay of Pigs invasion and a 45-year economic blockade to dozens of failed assassination attempts including exploding cigars and poisoned food. Or the September 1973 overthrow of Chilean president Salvador Allende in the bloody coup d'état

by General Augusto Pinochet. In December 1989, George Bush I invaded Panama to seize President Manuel Noriega, a CIA "asset" with ties to narcotraffickers who had become "inconvenient" for the U.S. "war on drugs."

Washington engineered the 2002 attempted coup in Caracas. Top State Department officials repeatedly met with the coup plotters. U.S. officers were in Venezuelan military headquarters at Fort Tiuna throughout the putsch, U.S. ambassador Charles Shapiro met with coup leader Pedro Carmona, a U.S. Navy communications ship offshore relayed signals for the putschists and jammed Venezuelan government communications while a Navy flotilla on a "training exercise" was alerted to evacuate U.S. citizens ("American Navy 'Helped Venezuelan Coup'," [London] *Guardian*, 29 April 2002).

"The U.S. has not planned, is not planning, will not plan and cannot plan to assassinate Hugo Chávez," the current American ambassador to Venezuela, William Brownfield, has claimed. "It would be a violation of both U.S. law and policy." Do tell. In reality, the supposed U.S. ban on assassinations issued in the mid-1970s following revelations of decades of CIA skullduggery has always had as many holes as Swiss cheese. Democratic president Bill Clinton signed a secret order authorizing the assassination of Osama bin Laden, and now Bush "has signed a series of findings and executive orders authorizing secret commando groups" to run operations "off the books," according to investigative journalist Seymour Hersh ("The Coming Wars," *The New Yorker*, 24 January).

That the Yankee imperialists are up to their necks in plots to oust Chávez is beyond doubt, and not only because of his ties to Cuba's Castro. Worried that turmoil in Venezuela could "infect" the rest of Latin America, U.S. rulers won't let up, despite Chavez' yearning for a return to the "good old days" of Democrat Clinton. The question is how to prevent another Pinochet-style bloodbath in Caracas. Chávez looks to his fellow officers in the Venezuelan military, several of whom blocked the April 2002 coup. But next time Washington's puppets may be better prepared. The key is revolutionary mobilization of the working class. The absence of this vital factor enabled the CIA to overthrow Guatemalan president Jacobo Arbenz in 1954.

Chávez has begun organizing civilian militias, and has ordered 100,000 Kalashnikov rifles to arm them, much to Washington's annoyance. But as an officer of the bourgeois army, he fears the power of the workers, and seeks to keep them under the command of the "Bolivarian" military. While fake revolutionaries hail lionize Chávez, Trotskyists seek to mobilize the international proletariat independently in its own class interests, under the leadership of revolutionary workers parties forged in struggle against all varieties of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalism.

Defense of Venezuela against U.S. imperialism requires international socialist revolution, from Venezuela to the United States itself. ■

Venezuela Workers...

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with a flat no. It's not only the ultra-reactionaries of the Bush administration, but also the liberal Democrats. In March 2004, Democratic candidate John Kerry said that Hugo Chávez was "fast on the road of becoming" a "dictator," and that "democracy is at risk" in Venezuela. The same way that his idol John F. Kennedy approved the Bay of Pigs invasion by the CIA and its Cuban *gusano* mercenaries, Kerry in office would have been as dangerous to Venezuela as Bush. We warn that it is necessary to categorically oppose both parties of U.S. imperialism.

The League for the Fourth International unconditionally defends Venezuela, a semi-colonial country, against the repeated threats of Yankee imperialism. It is an urgent task for revolutionaries and class-struggle militants, particularly in the United States, to mobilize the working class against U.S. intervention in Venezuela. This intervention not only takes the form of a coup d'état or the financing of coup-plotters of the "Coordinadora Democrática," but is also carried out through instruments such as the Organization of American States (the "Yankee ministry of colonies," in Che Guevara's famous phrase), the election front group Súmate and the Carter Center, which oversees the efforts to promote counterrevolution through electoral means. A class-struggle defense of Venezuela requires an all-out fight not only against the twin parties of U.S. capitalism, but also against the union tops who via the AFL-CIO labor federation have channeled millions from the CIA to the labor lieutenants of the corrupt Acción Democrática (AD) and COPEI politicians in the Venezuelan Workers Federation (CTV).

Defense against imperialism also requires a revolutionary response within Venezuela, beginning with the formation of worker-peasant militias. In the face of the bosses' lockout in December 2002-January 2003, we called for a class mobilization of the workers and all the exploited. We advocated workers control to seize companies that had been shut down and expel the bosses, and the formation of workers councils to organize supplies of basic necessities for the population and resistance against the employers' attempted takeover. We said as well that this required forging class-struggle union leaderships, independent of military tutelage, fighting against the puppets of imperialism and capitalist counterrevolution who are at the head of the CTV. We underlined that the onslaught against Venezuela is part of a global imperialist offensive, insisting on the need to fight to "Defend Iraq against imperialist war – Defend Cuba against internal and external counterrevolution!" (see "For Revolutionary Opposition to Pro-Imperialist Coup Attempt in Venezuela!" *The Internationalist* No. 15, January-February 2003).

At the same time, we declared forthrightly that the Venezuelan government of Hugo Chávez is a bourgeois nationalist and populist government. It is no secret to anyone that the Venezuelan government is shot through with elements that are seeking an accommodation at all costs with imperialism and domestic reaction. Working people must not place their confidence in a regime based on military officialdom, the backbone

of the capitalist state, which repressed leftist guerrillas in the 1960s, attacked the Caracas poor with a vengeance in 1989, whose commanders have already mutinied once in favor of imperialism – in the counterrevolutionary coup of April 2002 – and could very well do so again. This is the ABC of Marxism. We insist that in Venezuela today, as everyone on the planet, what is key is to forge a ***revolutionary workers party***, based on Leon Trotsky's program of ***permanent revolution***. Such a Leninist vanguard party is indispensable in order to mobilize the workers for the conquest of power and the formation of a ***workers and peasants government***, based on soviet organs of proletarian power, to begin the ***socialist revolution*** and its international extension.

Since the election of Hugo Chávez as president in December 1998, the turbulent events unfolding in the native land of Simón Bolívar have taken place in the framework of the Bolivarian Revolution proclaimed by Chávez and his Movement for the Fifth Republic. Although hinting at a continent-wide perspective, this movement has an indelible bourgeois nationalist character. But just as one cannot put an end to poverty under capitalism, neither can there be socialism in a single country, not even in several semi-colonial countries, but rather it must be built on a world scale. Against bourgeois nationalism it is necessary to counterpose proletarian internationalism. Within the capitalist framework, the Bolivarian dream of Latin American unification can be nothing more than "plowing the sea," as the founder of five South American republics lamented. This perspective can only be realized through workers struggle throughout the continent and in close collaboration with the U.S. proletariat.

Bourgeois "Democracy" and Socialist Revolution

Over the last four or five years there has been a wave of popular-front, populist or "center-left" regimes in Latin America: presidents Lucio Gutiérrez in Ecuador, Carlos Mesa in Bolivia, Alejandro Toledo in Peru, Ricardo Lagos in Chile, Néstor Kirchner in Argentina and above all Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in Brazil. Popular fronts are bourgeois political formations which chain the workers organizations to a sector of the bourgeoisie. Usually such class-collaborationist alliances are justified in the name of the unity of the "people," as in the case of Salvador Allende's Unidad Popular in the early 1970s. But as in the case of the Chilean UP, the "people united" didn't last very long in the face of the bitter class struggle: in general, popular fronts have a very short lifespan before they unravel, opening the way to rightist reaction and delivering a defeat (often bloody) to the working people who saw in these governments a hope of combating poverty.

These "progressive" bourgeois presidents were almost all elected or installed as a reaction against the experience of a decade of "neo-liberal" regimes which imposed the policies designed by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank generally known as "globalization." They include savage privatization of state-owned and semi-state industries (including telephone, water, airline and steel companies), with the resulting mass layoffs of unionized workers, together with the

destruction of pension and social security systems, the selling off of strategic resources (iron mines, oil fields and natural gas deposits) to “multinational” companies at ridiculous prices, a drastic fall in wages and an unprecedented rise in economic inequality, etc. Once in office, the populist and popular-front governments bring more of the same, following the dictates of the IMF and World Bank to the letter. As disappointment mounted among the working masses and even in large sectors of the middle class (the petty bourgeoisie), many of these presidents were overthrown or are today on the ropes.

In the face of this desolate panorama for the exploited and oppressed, there have been popular rebellions and sharp class struggles, of which the two Gas Wars in Bolivia (October 2003 and May-June 2005) are emblematic. Despite the great combativeness of the working classes, these revolts only resulted in the installation of another president like his predecessor, producing an inevitable demoralizing effect (although there has yet to be a bloody defeat on the scale of the Pinochet coup in Chile in September 1973). Thus today Chávez appears as a hero for millions of disappointed Latin Americans who see in the Venezuelan president the promise of a revolutionary solution to their suffering. As the target of constant harassment by Yankee imperialism, including multiple plots, destabilization attempts, a failed coup d'état and a bosses lockout seeking to wrest control of the key oil sector, Chávez is seen as the symbol of resistance to the various empire of the north.

Now, following the victory of the “no” vote in the (U.S.-inspired) recall referendum in August 2004, Chávez has radicalized his rhetoric. In a meeting with intellectuals and artists in Caracas last December, he called to “leave behind the capitalist model” and to “take up once again the idea of socialism.” Furthermore, the Latin American Information Agency (ALAI) reported on 6 December 2004: “Amid personalities who were part of a history of struggles such as Ahmed Ben Bella, the main independence leader in Algeria in 1962; the leaders of the Cuban Revolution, such as minister of culture Abel Prieto; the Sandinistas Daniel Ortega, Ernesto Cardenal and Tomás Borge, the Venezuelan president took up the idea of permanent revolution of Leon Trotsky. ‘There as no national solution to the problems. They are global and that is how we must confront them,’ he said.” Later, at the end of January in the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil, Chávez again cited Trotsky, saying that “every revolution requires the whip of counter-revolution in order to advance.”

It isn't the first time a bourgeois ruler has called himself socialist: Egyptian colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser, Iraqi strong man Saddam Hussein and even the “red prince” of Cambodia, Norodom Sihanouk, did so. Even Portuguese generals and admirals declared themselves socialists in the “Revolution of the Carnations” of 1974-75. Certainly it is unusual to hear a capitalist head of state citing the great Russian revolutionary, and many who claim to be Trotskyists have let themselves be seduced by this siren song. At bottom, it is a reflection of the fact that even in bourgeois circles there are those who do not believe in the supposed “death of communism” following the collapse of the Stalinized Soviet Union, which was not the land

of “real existing socialism” but rather a bureaucratically degenerated workers state. Chávez' rather eclectic list in which he includes the man who together with Lenin led the October 1917 Revolution, and later founded the Red Army and in 1938 the Fourth International might be a little strange. But the pseudo-Trotskyists have supported many of them, from Ben Bella and Fidel Castro to the Sandinistas. This only demonstrates that they have lost all confidence in the Trotskyist perspective of a *proletarian and internationalist* revolution, and that they have placed themselves at the tail of other petty-bourgeois and even bourgeois leaders and movements, as they do today with Hugo Chávez.

We do not have a crystal ball and we cannot predict how far Chávez' fascination for Trotsky will go. What we do have is the Marxist, Leninist and Trotskyist program, and we can rest assured that the capitalist state will not become socialist, not even in the 21st century. We must also underscore that the doctrinal inspiration of Chávez' bourgeois socialism comes from a different source. In his weekly television program, *Hello President*, of February 27, following the summit meeting on the social debt, he commented: “I think that Christ was one of the first socialists in history. Christ proclaimed equality and that is what socialism stands for; social justice, social equality and political equality.” More recently, on July 17, he went so far as to exclaim in his Sunday program: “Get thee behind me, Satan, diabolical and demonic system!” He continued: “There are two roads: socialism or capitalism. Those who want to go with Judas, to hell, let them go to capitalism; those who want to go with Christ, we will go for socialism.” In a recent opinion survey, 48 percent supported socialism, 26 percent opted for capitalism, and around a quarter expressed no opinion.

Beyond the Christian imagery, in Chávez' various explanations, 21st century socialism is identified with “democracy,” or democracy is portrayed as the road to socialism. The constant theme is that he conceives of Venezuela going over to “socialism” without bringing down the capitalist state. At most he refers (in his speech at the May Day celebration this year) to the need to “reconstruct a state based on revolutionary democracy.” But the Leninist theory of the state underscores that it is necessary to sweep away the present dictatorship of capital and replace it with the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is necessary to construct a new state (not reconstruct the current one), with a new state apparatus (notably army and police) based on organs of workers power, as the soviets were at the time of Lenin and Trotsky. Democracy always has a class character: between parliamentary *bourgeois* “democracy” (aborted in some cases, atrophied in others, false in every case) and the *workers democracy* of the soviets, there is a chasm which can only be crossed by means of social revolution. As Lenin noted in *The State and Revolution* (1917):

“Democracy is a state which recognizes the subordination of the minority to the majority, i.e., an organization for the systematic use of force by one class against another, by one section of the population against another.”

Chávez comments that “True democracy is impossible with capitalism, where it is a few powerful people [ruling] over weak

Fernando Llano/AP



After being freed in April 2002 coup, Hugo Chávez, with crucifix in his hand, asks for forgiveness and calls for conciliation with coup plotters.

majorities.” But the true implication of this assertion is not that it is necessary to fight for “more” democracy, or for it to be “popular” or even “revolutionary,” but rather that it is necessary to bring down the capitalist state and replace it with a proletarian state. Although he goes on at length about socialism, Chávez never talks about socialist *revolution*. But this is fundamental. In a key thesis of his perspective (both theory and program) of *permanent revolution*, Trotsky emphasizes that in the imperialist epoch, that of decaying capitalism, “the victory of the democratic revolution is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat which bases itself upon the alliance with the peasantry.” Faced with the need for profound transformations in property relations, “The democratic revolution grows over directly into the socialist revolution and thereby becomes a *permanent revolution*” (Leon Trotsky, “What Is Permanent Revolution? Basic Theses,” November 1929).

By posing the struggle in strictly democratic terms, Chávez opens the road to those like Jimmy Carter who want counter-revolution via (bourgeois) “democracy. The reference to the Christian roots of his “21st century socialism” is not empty rhetoric. After every clash with counterrevolution, the Venezuelan president has turned the other cheek, favoring dialogue with the coup plotters. Upon returning to Miraflores Palace after being freed in the failed military coup of April 2002, he appeared on television with a crucifix in his hand, declaring: “I ask for forgiveness and I am ready to rectify.” “It is not true that in my heart there is hatred against the upper classes,” he said (*La Jornada* [Mexico], 16 April 2002). He called for dialogue with the bourgeois opposition, at the same time as he freed leaders of the coup like Admiral Carlos Molina and allowed Pedro Carmona, the “dictator for a day,” to escape. They were later declared innocent by the Supreme Court, which argued that their was no coup but only a vacuum of power,

whereupon the conspirators began conspiring again.

Following the failure of the bosses’ lock-out in February 2003, Chávez called again on the seditious businessmen to sit down at the table of dialogue. Last year he met behind closed doors with Gustavo Cisneros, the media magnate (owner of *Venevisión* and the principal stockholder of *Univisión*) and second richest man in Latin America (after Carlos Slim of Mexico), who wants to be the Berlusconi¹ of Venezuela. At the same time he met with important capitalists in the states of Zulia and Carabobo. The Venezuelan president who speaks of how capitalism is out of date and the need to invent a new socialism has not moved a finger to touch the property of Cisneros, or of the Polar Group, one of the key financiers of the “*Coordinadora Democrática*.” On the contrary, he assures them that their business empires are safe and sound. Why these repeated calls for concili-

ation with a reactionary right which doesn’t want to conciliate at all? As a bourgeois nationalist ruler, he is in urgent need of arriving at an understanding with the “national” bourgeoisie – and with its masters in Washington and Wall Street.

Chávez’ Welfare Programs ...

Following his election as president in December 1998, the former colonel Hugo Chávez Frías has headed a bourgeois nationalist government of a “bonapartist” character, with its base in the armed forces, but with characteristics peculiar to semi-colonial countries. Marx coined the term “bonapartism” (basing himself on the historical conception of “caesarism” in the Roman Empire) to explain the nature of the Second Empire of Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte in France, a bourgeois regime that at a moment of crisis raised itself above the squabbles between the competing bourgeois clans to act as an arbiter, government on behalf of the higher interests of the capitalist class as a whole. In semi-colonial countries of belated capitalist development, however, the weak national bourgeoisie is forced at times to maneuver between imperialism and the proletariat. As Trotsky noted concerning the Mexican government of Lázaro Cárdenas:

“In the industrially backward countries foreign capital plays a decisive role. Hence the relative weakness of the *national* bourgeoisie in relation to the *national* proletariat. This creates special conditions of state power. The government veers between foreign and domestic capital, between the weak national bourgeoisie and the relatively powerful proletariat. This gives the government a Bonapartist character of a distinctive character. It raises itself, so to speak, above classes. Actually, it can govern

¹ Silvio Berlusconi, the right-wing Italian magnate who used his control of television and print media to become prime minister.

either by making itself the instrument of foreign capitalism and holding the proletariat in the chains of a police dictatorship, or by maneuvering with the proletariat and even going so far as to make concessions to it, thus gaining the possibility of a certain freedom toward foreign capitalists. The present policy [of the Mexican government] is in the second stage; its greatest conquests are the expropriations of the railroads and the oil industries.”

—Leon Trotsky, “Nationalized Industry and Workers’ Management” (May 1939)

Cárdenas also employed leftist rhetoric, for example with his program for “socialist education” in the rural areas. And like Cárdenas at the end of the 1930s, Chávez is introducing (in drips

and drabs) a regime of “co-management” in some state-owned industries, as a measure for enlisting the working class in defense of his government. But neither such measures nor his socialist phraseology alter the bourgeois character of the state, which continues to base itself on the armed forces and police committed to maintaining capitalism. Chávez’ tactics have consisted of going around this apparatus, creating new institutions (the missions) led by military and civilian cadres

who are supporters of his regime. For the moment, due to the high price of oil, he has been able to sustain and expand a series of social programs which previously existed only on a small scale. But sooner or later, the capitalist state apparatus will take revenge against the “experiment” of introducing a new “model” which is called “anti-neo-liberal.”

The characteristic programs of the Chávez government include, first of all, the various “missions.” Mission *Barrio Adentro* (Inside the Neighborhood) has provided the poor with free medical care, in neighborhood clinics staffed with more than 20,000 Cuban doctors. Mission Robinson I (named after Simón Rodríguez, the educator who was the mentor and companion of Bolívar and who adopted the name Robinson while in exile) has taught more than a million and a half illiterate people to read and write using Cuban methods. Mission Robinson II has enabled the newly literate to finish primary education (up to the sixth grade). Mission Ribas has made it possible with scholarships and other incentives for some 800,000 adults with to enroll to complete their secondary edu-

cation. Mission Sucre has given out 100,000 scholarships for university education. The markets of Mission Mercal have benefited some 10 million people, supplying products at subsidized prices and encouraging domestic agricultural production in a country which previously imported 70 percent of its food. There are also missions for public works (Mission About Face) and public housing.

At the time of the April 2002 coup, Chávez’ social programs had barely gotten off the ground. An American reporter who looked into the reasons for the failure of the coup wrote: “But Chávez’s policies have yet to produce the promised social revolution. There have been few tangible dividends for his poor supporters as the economy has contracted;

unemployment and underemployment have swelled as capital flight has accelerated. Many of his followers, however, are still willing to give him the benefit of the doubt because his intentions, they say, are good and it is not all his fault: the elite is withdrawing its resources.”

—Deborah Sontag, “In the Time of Hugo Chávez,” *New York Times Magazine*, 2 June 2002

With the rise in oil prices, this situation has changed substantially, with a corresponding rise



General Juan Perón and his wife Evita in 1950. Peronist bourgeois-nationalist regime pursued social welfare policies similar to Chávez’ “missions,” but they were gutted as WWII superprofits ran out.

in the approval rate of the government in public opinion surveys (currently running around 70 percent support, an astronomical figure in Latin America after six years in office). According to leaked reports, Cisneros was said to have admitted to Chávez during their private talk that it was an error to have tried to overthrow him in April 2002 when oil was at \$32 a barrel; to attempt it in 2004 via the referendum, when a barrel was \$45, was “madness leading to a fiasco.” The Venezuelan government has used the income produced by rising oil prices to finance the missions directly out of the budget of *Petróleos de Venezuela S.A. (PDVSA)*, the state-owned oil company.

At bottom, the social programs introduced by the Chávez government are the same sort of “welfare” programs typical of populist regimes in Latin America. They differ from Lula’s programs of “Zero Hunger” and “School Aid” in Brazil only in one important respect: they are being carried out on a large scale, while the programs of the Brazilian government are moribund. They are the same sort of social programs aimed at the poorest known as the “welfare state” that were introduced by European

social democrats at the onset of the anti-Soviet Cold War. But they are all programs of *capitalist governments* which don't alter the regime of private property of the means of production one bit. *They do not solve fundamental questions* like poverty and unemployment. Moreover, once they have achieved their political purpose (to compete with the Communists in the European case, to prevent an explosion of class struggles in the United States during the Great Depression of the 1930s), they simply disappear.

The Chávez missions can also be compared with the social works undertaken by the government of General Juan Domingo Perón in Argentina at the end of the '40s. The Peronist regime was another example of the "bonapartism *sui generis*" (of a unique kind) analyzed by Trotsky – that is, of governments which seek to balance between the pressures of imperialism and a strong proletariat. Perón also had very touchy relations with the U.S. imperialists (the famous slogan in the 1945 presidential campaign was [U.S. ambassador] "Braden or Perón"), without breaking with imperialism. The health and social security programs run by his wife Evita won him great popularity. But they were financed by the profits produced by the exports of beef and wheat to England during the Second World War. Once this exceptional source of financing dried up, the programs were cut back until they were eliminated in the capitalist reaction which overthrew the Peronist regime in 1955. The same fate could await Chávez' missions when oil prices fall.

... And a Growing Class Polarization

When Chávez' agrarian reform was promulgated at the end of 2001, it set off an outpouring of opposition from the business sector. The government says it has already handed out 2 million hectares to some 100,000 families, but until this year the peasants were settled on state lands and large private landholdings were untouched. After his victory in the recall referendum of August 2004, Chávez spoke of "deepening the Bolivarian Revolution" by intensifying land tenure reform. At the beginning of 2005 for the first time, two important estates were targeted: the El Charcote cattle ranch of the British company Vestey, and the Hato Piñero ranch in the Orinoco region. But the government intends to expropriate (with compensation) only the 40 percent of the British hacienda which is con-



Fernando Llano/AP

Peasants in the state of Cojedes demand expropriation of El Charcote cattle ranch, owned by British Vestey group, January 8.

sidered idle land, leaving the best lands in the hands of its owners. The Venezuelan land reform only affects idle or uncultivated land and doesn't affect modern capitalist farms in any way. Thus it isn't a whit more "radical" than the reforms decreed as counterinsurgency measures by pro-imperialist governments from the Philippines in the 1940s to Vietnam in the '60s and El Salvador in the '80s.

Nevertheless, the mere fact that Chávez proposed to "step on the gas pedal" on agrarian reform has led to a notable increase in tensions in the rural areas. At the beginning of February, the Ezequiel Zamora National Peasant Front (FNCEZ) held a "Peasants Congress in Defense of National Sovereignty and for Agrarian Revolution." Around 100 delegates met at the Berbere Cooperative, a collective farm of mainly black peasants. The delegates criticized the agrarian reform law, which exempts from expropriation any property of less than 5,000 hectares; they lambasted the slowness of the National Land Institute (INT) and complained that local judges support the landowners and order police to expel squatters. The conference also discussed armed self-defense. Later, on March 20, FNCEZ leader Luis Enrique Pérez was murdered by paid assassins working for the landowners who enjoy the protection of the military commander of the region. The latter has arrested peasants for carrying arms for their own protection. In a march in Caracas on July 11, the FNCEZ spoke of 130 assassinations of peasants and agricultural workers that have gone unpunished.

But in this country where the rural population amounts to barely 12 percent of the total, it is the labor sector that has been most affected by the growing class polarization. During the bosses' work stoppage that lasted from December 2002 to February 2003, a number of workers collectives occupied factories, shut down by their owners, in order to resume production. After the lockout had been defeated, the workers called on Chávez to expropriate these companies. The government paid no attention to them, and the plants were returned to the pro-coup businessmen. Nevertheless, several enterprises closed for good, leaving thousands of workers without a job. The latter have raised the demand for nationalization of closed plants under workers administration. The most famous case is that of Venepal, whose owners, after joining the lockout, didn't want to resume production. Following a takeover by the workers, the bosses declared

bankruptcy in September 2004. This January, Chávez decreed the nationalization of Venepal, now called Invepal, which is to be a company run under co-management by the state and the workers. However, the present noted:

“The expropriation of Venepal is an exception, not a political or governmental measure. We aren’t going to take over lands; if it’s yours, it’s yours. But we will go after closed or abandoned companies.”

Despite this declaration of the exceptional character of Venepal/Invepal, the measure emboldened workers in other companies to occupy closed plants and demand their expropriation. After a series of takeovers, in mid-July Chávez announced during his *Hello, President* TV program that 136 closed plants were going to be inspected with a view toward a possible expropriation. Two days later, the workers seized the tomato processing plant Caigua, a factory that had been reactivated with government credits, demanding that it should be placed under co-management. The meaning of this demand, raised by the Venezuelan president as an example of “21st century socialism,” has yet to be defined. In the first “co-managed” company, Cadafe, a state-owned power producer, it consists of nothing more than the presence of two workers representatives on a coordinating body, something that has been protested by the Fetralec electrical workers union. But the model enterprise for co-management is Alcasa, an aluminum processing plant in Puerto Ordaz, in the state of Bolívar, which is part of the state holding company, the Venezuelan Guayana Corporation.

The *New York Times* (3 August) recently published an article about Alcasa under the title, “Making a Place for Blue Collars in the Boardroom.” This paper, the leading spokesman for the “liberal” wing of U.S. imperialism, quotes the company president, Carlos Lanz, “a Marxist former guerrilla,” who said, “The workers are operating as a collective rather than receiving orders from a group of experts.” Alcasa has also been praised by spokesmen for the left, from Marta Harnecker to the socialist magazine *Monthly Review* (July 2005). At a political rally on July 9 called by the OIR (Opción de Izquierda Revolucionaria) in favor of a Revolutionary Workers Party for Socialism (PRTS), Lanz was a guest specially invited to talk about co-management. He criticized the “social-democratic approach to co-management as a form of manipulating the workers movement” and the “installation of purely decorative workers managers, without changing the social relations of production.” In contrast, he defended co-management as a “transitional slogan to develop the experience of workers control on the road to socialism.” Sounds good, but it should be noted that the person saying this is the boss of a capitalist state enterprise!

In the oil sector, the government proclaims that the “PDVSA belongs to the people” now. The right wing complains that more than 18,000 PDVSA employees were fired for participating in the bosses’ work stoppage. The courageous oil workers who, together with honest technical cadres and other workers volunteered their services at that critical movement, performed heroic labor in order to defeat the pro-imperialist coup organizers. But today, while Chávez talks of co-

management, the class-struggle oil workers are being harassed by the military cadres who are in charge of the sector. During the lockout by the bosses in cahoots with the CTV leaders, the demand for workers control was raised in several sectors, a call also supported by the League for the Fourth International. Above all in the PDVSA this step is necessary in order to take back the company from a gilded pro-imperialist bureaucracy. Instead, the new management has kicked two workers off the board of directors and has rehired technicians who joined in the work stoppage, while nepotism is spreading in the new “Bolivarian” technocracy.

Chávez-style co-management, even in its most advanced form, has nothing to do with the demand for workers control as it was put into practice by the Bolsheviks under Lenin and Trotsky. In that case, it was a transitional measure imposing dual power inside the factory, as a step toward dual power throughout the country, the antechamber to a revolutionary insurrection. At the economic level, it pointed toward expropriation *by the proletarian state*, and the incorporation of the company in a socialist planned economy. Experiments seeking to make “co-management,” “workers administration” and similar schemes work *under capitalism* will simply disappear like the New Lanark spinning plants of the utopian socialist Robert Owen or end up like Rochedale cooperatives going back to 19th century England, the Lip watch factory Lip in France in the 1970s or more recently the Bruckman and Zanon factories in Argentina: they would be capitalist companies like the rest, subject to the laws of the market. In Mexico, workers administration in Pemex (the state oil company) and the railways ended with the imposition of corporatist “unionism,” turning the labor bureaucracy into an integral part of management.

Beyond the battle over workers control, the axis of workers’ struggle in Venezuela must be the fight to build a class-struggle leadership of the proletariat, totally independent of the bourgeois state. In the first place, this requires a struggle to defeat the puppets of U.S. imperialism who for decades have manipulated the CTV in the interests of the two main capitalist parties, Acción Democrática and the Copei. Not only did they join in the rampant corruption of the AD and Copei governments, on multiple occasions the CTV tops acted as agents of the “AFL-CIA” in its counterrevolutionary machinations in Latin America, notably against the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. But the actions of CTV leader Carlos Ortega as one of the authors of the April 2002 coup and the bosses’ lockout at the end of that year represent a qualitative step placing him outside the limits of the workers movement. Today, he should be treated like any other of the coup conspirators.

The League for the Fourth International has insisted that the workers must “clean their own house” by sweeping out such sell-out leaders, these “old anti-Communist warhorses from the anti-Soviet Cold War.” Getting rid of them is not a task that can be subcontracted out to the bourgeois state without putting in danger the very existence of the independent workers movement. Therefore, the LFI strongly opposed the trade-union referendum in December 2000, whose purpose was to place the unions under the tutelage of the Chávez regime. Although Chávez may irritate

David Rochkind/Polaris



Worker at Alcasa, state-owned aluminum processing plant, now under “co-management.” Trotskyists call for workers control, a form of dual power at the plant level, as a step toward socialist revolution

the United States, we noted, he was imposing IMF economic measures and he will not hesitate to repress the workers if he considers it necessary. In this context we quoted the essay by Leon Trotsky on “Trade Unions in the Epoch of Capitalist Decay” (August 1940). Trotsky stressed that throughout the world there is a growing tendency toward state control of the unions, and that it is necessary:

“...to mobilize the masses not only against the bourgeoisie but also against the totalitarian regime within the trade unions themselves and against the leaders enforcing this regime. The primary slogan for this struggle is: complete and unconditional independence of the trade unions in relation to the capitalist state. This means a struggle to turn the trade unions into the organs of the broad exploited masses and not the organs of a labor aristocracy.

“The second slogan is: trade union democracy. This second slogan flows directly from the first and presupposes for its realization the complete freedom of the trade unions from the imperialist or colonial state.”

Today, following the sharp clashes of 2002, there has been a realignment in the workers movement with a growing rejection of the coup-plotting trade labor fakers of the CTV. Two years ago the National Workers Union (UNT) was born, incorporating several currents, including the government-allied Bolivian Workers Force (FBT), among whose leaders is Orlando Chirinos and even Ramón Machuca of the United Steel Workers Union (SUTISS), which claims to be autonomous. The UNT has continued to gain strength since its founding. In addition, new unions have been formed in some important companies, like Ford and Coca-Cola, where workers are under heavy assault by the bosses. The UNT has adopted socialist language, and even criticizes government plans for

“co-management,” calling for “workers control.” However, none of the main sectors of the UNT has adopted a revolutionary program aiming at preparing the socialist revolution. Rather, they seek to pressure the Chávez government to the left.

While various opportunist tendencies tail after Chávez, feeding illusions in the bourgeois nationalist president, the League for the Fourth International insists on the need to forge an independent revolutionary leadership. What’s fundamental for the future of socialist revolution in Venezuela is precisely to break with all wings of the bourgeoisie and to mobilize the working people to establish organs of workers power. In impor-

tant industrial zones such as the state of Carabobo and Ciudad Guayana, the upsurge in union struggles can lead to the formation of regional *workers councils*, grouping together a number of unions and also non-unionized workers, as was the case with the Chilean *cordones industriales* (industrial belts) which arose toward the end of the UP government of Allende. Such councils could mobilize the ranks to impose genuine *workers control*, not as class-collaborationist “co-management” together with the bosses, but rather as dual power at the plant level. In this way they would have the potential of evolving into genuine *soviets*, the organizational form for a future workers state.

Also possible and urgently needed is the formation of *self-defense groups* in every company and slum neighborhood, and of *worker-peasant militias* linked to the mass organizations of the working people. Just this May, Chávez announced plans to create popular militias, but they are to be under the command of the army. While it is necessary to coordinate with forces that are ready to fight against a new act of counterrevolutionary force, including with the Bolivarian Circles and elements in the military, it is vital to maintain the class independence of the defense organizations of the working people. It is also necessary for the organizations to arm themselves, and that the arms not be kept under lock and key in some military armory or union office. Don’t forget that Yankee imperialism launched its coup d’état in Guatemala in 1954 precisely at the moment when the bourgeois government of Colonel Jacobo Arbenz announced the formation of popular militias. But when Arbenz finally ordered that the arsenals be opened, the military officials refused to obey. The same must not happen in Venezuela tomorrow!

Forge a Trotskyist Party in Venezuela!

Hugo Chávez' central perspective ever since he began his Bolivarian Revolution, and which continues today as he talks of inventing a new "Venezuelan socialism of the 21st century," has been to carry out the "revolution" by means of the present state apparatus, which is, however, a capitalist state, tied by a thousand threads to the maintenance of bourgeois property relations. This perspective goes directly against the teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky concerning the nature of the state. In the last introduction to the *Communist Manifesto*, written by its two authors in June 1872, they noted that in the light of the experience of the Paris Commune (1871), the program of the *Manifesto* had "in some details been antiquated." They noted in particular: "One thing especially was proved by the Commune, viz., that 'the working class cannot simply lay hold of ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes'." This sentence is reproduced and commented on by Lenin in his fundamental work, *The State and Revolution*, which served as theoretical preparation for and later explanation of the October Revolution of 1917.

Lenin analyzed in detail why it was necessary to abolish parliamentarism, explaining how this "representative democracy" with its periodic elections serves as a screen to hide the domination of capital. He underlined the need to construct a new workers state, the dictatorship of the proletariat, which must be built on the basis of organs of workers power, such as the soviets (workers councils) which arose in the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917. Lenin cited Marx's "Critique of the Gotha Program" (1875) where the latter subjected the program of the German Social-Democratic Party to examination. The program called for "transformation" of the "present-day state" (a fiction, Marx said, to mask that it is a capitalist state) and to turn it into a "people's state" (charlatanism, since the "people" are divided into classes). Marx writes: "Between capitalist and communist society there lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but *the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat*."

These are not empty scholastic formulas but key programmatic elements in order to guide the socialist revolution. In his *Hello, President* program of July 17, Hugo Chávez said that "revolutionary democracy is the transition, the bridge, on the road to 21st century Bolivarian, Venezuelanist and Latin Americanist socialism." But history has demonstrated over and over that "democracy" is not a bridge to socialism but the road to massacres of the toilers, as in Allende's Chile. We don't have to go back to the time of the Paris Commune or the Russian Soviets to see this: in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the military commanders and judges persecute the peasants and protect the owners of the large estates (*latifundistas*), while the managers of the PDVSA "of the people" fire union militants and hire counterrevolutionary technicians, even as the president himself calls for accelerating agrarian reform and imposing co-management. No, the transition between present-day capitalist society and socialism – in the 21st century just

as in the 20th and 19th – is not "revolutionary democracy" but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat, supported by the peasantry.

The worst is that the groups which claim to be Leninist and even Trotskyist repeat and praise the Venezuelan president for his approach of "deepening the Bolivarian Revolution" when the urgent task is to *begin the socialist revolution*. There are different variants of the same policy. Perhaps the most shameless is that of the Militant tendency (which now calls itself the "international Marxist tendency"). Seeking to become Chávez' mentor on questions of socialism, Alan Woods, the present leader of this current, praises the Venezuelan president obsequiously:

"President Hugo Chavez has consistently revealed an unerring revolutionary instinct. He has striven to express the revolutionary instincts of the masses. That is his great strength! It has been shown yet again with the nationalisation of Venepal. However, at the tops of the Bolivarian movement there are all kinds of people. The President is surrounded by advisers, not all of whom are firm revolutionaries. Not all of them share the President's faith in the masses."

Woods exclaims, recounting a meeting with Chávez: "revolutionary Venezuela enjoys complete democracy" ("Encounters with Hugo Chávez," Marxist.com, 29 April 2004). He does not refer to bourgeois democracy, much less to workers democracy. Lenin insisted that there is no "pure" democracy, it always has a class character, but these charlatans who have the gall to call their tendency Marxist have discovered "complete democracy" in Venezuela. And with this they claim to be marching forward to socialism, they impeded only by the bad advisors who must be separated from the president.

The effort of the Militant tendency, which in Venezuela is organized in the CMR (Revolutionary Marxist Committees), to sidle up to the bourgeois nationalist president is nothing new. Of all the currents that claim to be Marxist and Trotskyist, this one is distinguished by having a systematic policy of entering *bourgeois* formations. This tendency was characterized from its origins in England by its "deep entrism" in the Labour Party, a capitulation to social democracy. But in the countries of the so-called Third World they tend to join with bourgeois nationalists, such as the Pakistan People's Party of Benazir Bhutto or the African National Congress of Nelson Mandela. In Mexico they are part of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), a capitalist party which for the last few years has headed the government of the Federal District (Mexico City). In a leaflet (dated August 1) directed to the World Youth Festival, they boast of having "played a fundamental role" in struggles such as the "historic UNAM strike" of 1999-2000. In reality, the role that they played was that of proselytizing for the PRD, which brutally repressed the striking students, among them various comrades of our Grupo Internacionalista.

If Alan Woods wants to be Chávez' *guru*, other opportunist currents calling themselves Trotskyist prefer to practice their policy of pressuring the bourgeois president at one step removed. The followers of the Argentine pseudo-Trotskyist caudillo Nahuel



Leon Trotsky (left) with V.I. Lenin and Lev Kamenev during the Second Congress of the Communist International, 1920.

Moreno were dispersed into several tendencies following the death of the progenitor of their current. One of the branches of Morenoism, the Unidad Internacional de los Trabajadores – Cuarta Internacional (UIT-CI), led by the Argentine Movimiento Socialista de los Trabajadores (MST – Socialist Workers Movement), has established relations with the OIR in Venezuela. They spoke in the recent OIR rally calling for the foundation of a PRTS. The UIT-CI not only defends the Chávez government in the face of coup plots like the bosses lockout at the end of 2002, but also gives it political support. They say that “we support with total clarity a ‘no’ vote in the recall referendum” of August 2004, which is to say that with total clarity they voted for the bourgeois president Chávez. They hail the election of Bolivarian candidates, picked with the “presidential finger,” in regional elections in October 2004. Summing up their policy, they write:

“We support the propositions of the OIR and of the new labor federation UNT, which seek to give continuity to the mobilization, in order to demand that the Chávez government adopt anti-imperialist and social measures that the population needs.”

–“Where Is the Bolivarian Revolution Going?”
Correspondencia Internacional No. 22 (January 2005)

Also participating in the OIR rally was another branch of Morenoism, the Socialism or Barbarism tendency led by the Argentine MAS (Movement Toward Socialism); the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR), part of the United Secretariat (USec) of the late Ernest Mandel, which tried with Ben Bella in Algeria and Castro in Cuba the same operation Alan Woods is attempting today with Hugo Chávez in Venezuela; and the International Socialist Organization (ISO) of the U.S., prodigal sons of another renegade from Trotskyism, Tony Cliff, who during the Korean War abandoned defense of the Soviet Union, calling it “state capitalist.” As can be seen here, there is a genuine convergence of all the “pseudos” who in practice have abandoned the struggle for a revolutionary vanguard, the very reason for the existence of the Fourth International

going back to Trotsky’s time. Today, and for the last several decade, they chase after every popular movement, each with their own particular formula to put on a Marxist disguise while they follow deeply anti-Marxist policies.

All these groups seek to find a place in the ranks of *chavismo*, some with a fig leaf of fake independence, others openly. Another shameful right-centrist group, the Liga Bolchevique Internacionalista (LBI) of Brazil, has tailed after ... the coup-plotting sectors of the CTV! Incredibly, in a declaration of 16 December 2002, the LBI characterizes the employers’ lockout as “a workers strike with mass support” and announces in its title that “Chávez ... seeks to dodge a severe political crisis by threatening a state of siege and military repression against the workers.” They accuse those defending the government of being “lumpens” who live off the “welfare of the Bolivarian Circles.” These fakers have signed up as fellow travelers of counterrevolution.

The League for the Fourth International underlines the need to fight for the independence of the proletarian vanguard from any bourgeois government and the various petty-bourgeois tendencies who want to divert the struggle of the working people into the dead-end of nationalism instead of fighting for international socialist revolution. We were for abstention in the recall referendum of August 2004, an inter-bourgeois political squabble, while calling for workers mobilization against the lockout/coup attempt in 2002 and the subsequent confrontations in order to crush the counterrevolutionaries. We fight to defend Venezuela against the threats of U.S. imperialism, also defending Cuba against the economic blockade, CIA provocations and attacks by the *gusano* exiles backed by Washington. When many fake leftists joined the imperialist outcry over human rights in Cuba, we defended the crack-down against the counterrevolutionaries who hijacked boats and planes at the time of the invasion of Iraq.

We seek to forge revolutionary workers parties throughout the world, fighting for socialist revolution in the capitalist countries, and in the deformed workers states (from Cuba to China, Vietnam and North Korea) for proletarian political revolution, to establish regimes based on genuine *soviets* (worker and peasant councils) as in the days of Lenin and Trotsky, to defend their gains against external and internal counterrevolution. In the face of the mounting class polarization in Venezuela, it is urgent to carry out a struggle to found an authentically Trotskyist nucleus, not of opportunist followers of Chávez’ bourgeois bonapartist nationalism but of fighters seeking to reforge the Fourth International. We fight for a workers and peasants government as part of an *Andean federation of workers republics* and a *Socialist United States of Latin America*, which would extend the socialist revolution to the proletariat in the U.S. imperialist heartland. ■

The above article is translated from an August 2005 supplement to El Internacionalista sold at the World Youth Festival in Caracas.

To Defeat Yankee Imperialism and Its Puppets

Fight for a Workers and Peasants Government To Begin International Socialist Revolution!

Venezuela: Workers to Power!

Ecuadorian youth climb the walls of Carondelet Palace to chase out the president who declared himself the "best ally and friend" of U.S. president Bush. Bolivian miners descend into the La Paz basin in order to shut down Congress with dynamite blasts and chuck the puppet president out of the Palacio Quemado (the Burned Palace), where he ruled on behalf of the imperialist energy concerns. Multitudes of Argentine housewives with their cacerolazos (pots and pans protests) throw out four presidents in the space of two weeks from the Casa Rosada (the Pink House). Picketers cut off highways, from Buenos Aires to Neuquen. Striking Brazilian workers boo the "traitor" president Lula of the Workers Party (PT) in his luxurious Palácio do Planalto in Brasilia. Mexican workers surround the Senate trying to prevent a vote on the anti-working-class "reform" of the social security system. Snapshots from the last five years show a continent boiling with social turmoil. And yet, the result of the unrest has been ... more of the same. The lesson is clear: there is an abundance of raw material for socialist revolution, but above all what is lacking is a revolutionary, proletarian and internationalist leadership.

In Venezuela, in contrast to what has happened in several other Latin American countries, in recent months there has been a shift to the left by the government of Hugo Chávez. Since the end of last year, the Venezuelan president has been speaking of the need to "transcend capitalism" and "invent a twenty-first



Venezuelan workers march in Caracas on May Day 2005.

century socialism," as he said in February in a summit meeting in Caracas on the "social debt." Many opportunist left groups praised Chávez' words as the harbinger of a new dawn for socialism after the counter-revolution that destroyed the Soviet Union. But a socialist revolution is not carried out by the decree of the head of a capitalist state, but only through the action of a conscious working class. What is most important for Marxists is the growing class polarization underway in Venezuela, with plant takeovers by the workers, peasant struggles demanding agrarian revolution, and demands for workers control to put a stop to the economic sabotage by the pro-imperialist bosses.

Hugo Chávez has become a real obsession for the Bush government: this past January, during Congressional confirmation hearings on her nomination as U.S. secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice railed over and over against the Venezuelan president. It reached the point that Republican senators

said her attack on Chávez "seems disrespectful to the Venezuelan people" who elected him, and asked: "Is it possible for you to say something positive about the Chávez administration?" (New York Times, 19 January). She responded

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Defend Venezuela Against Yankee Imperialism! 62