

The

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# Internationalist



Drawing the Class Line –

What Program to Defeat the War

## Drive U.S. Imperialists Out of Iraq!



Sue Kellogg/Internationalist

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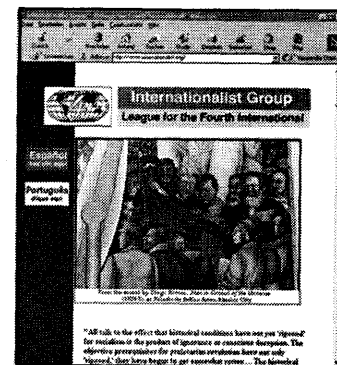
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Summer 2005

# Drawing the Class Line – What Program to Defeat the War? Drive U.S. Imperialists Out of Iraq!



Internationalist photo

**West Coast longshore union contingent marches in San Francisco, 20 March 2004. Mobilize workers power to protest repression, boycott military goods, strike against the war!**

**For Workers Strikes Against the War!  
"Hot Cargo" Military Goods!**

**Break with the Capitalist Parties  
of War and Racism!  
For a Revolutionary Workers Party!**

JULY 15 – United States imperialism has dug itself into a big hole in Iraq, and keeps digging deeper. Try as it might, the Pentagon has been unable to defeat the growing insurgency, and each new puppet government is as discredited and impotent as its predecessor. After the phony gunpoint "elections" on January 30, Washington trumpeted a "victory for democracy." Yet the rigged vote was boycotted by virtually the entire Sunni Muslim population, which correctly saw it as an attempt by the occupiers to establish a Shiite ascendancy.

Three months later, after weeks of wrangling between Shiite and Kurdish politicians, at the end of April a "government" was proclaimed. The insurgents promptly responded with a wave of attacks. A Pentagon report revealed that in the nine months ending in March 2005, there were 15,527 attacks against "Coa-

lition forces" throughout Iraq – roughly *60 a day* (*Newsweek*, 11 May). Since then the attacks have escalated. Over the last year 1,500 Iraqi military recruits, troops and police have been killed. The number of American and "allied" dead since the supposed end of combat in Iraq two years ago is now close to 2,000. Meanwhile, the brutal colonial occupiers have massacred tens of thousands of Iraqis.

The Pentagon is worried that it can't maintain current troop levels indefinitely. Already key units of the U.S. regular Army, Navy and Marines are on their second Iraq deployment and stretched to the breaking point. Many have been kept in Iraq by "stop-loss" orders, even though their period of enlistment was up. National Guard and Reserve units have been called up repeatedly, causing bitter complaints from spouses and employers about the toll of year-long deployments. "By next fall, we'll have expended our ability to use National Guard brigades as one of the principal forces," reported retired Army commander Barry McCaffrey, adding: "We're reaching the bottom of the barrel." The chief of the Army Reserve, Lt. Gen. James R. Helmly, is even blunter, saying the Reserve is "rapidly degenerating into a 'broken' force" (*New York Times*, 11 July).

As the casualties mount, war weariness has been growing



in the U.S. population. Since last fall, a steady majority opinion polls say that it was "not worth going to war in Iraq." This is coupled with widespread distrust of the administration including among those who voted for Bush. While Bush waves aside poll numbers, his handlers have been getting worried. So on June 28, Bush went to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, home of the 82nd Airborne Division and Army Special Operations, to stage a pro-war rally. But the assembled troops ignored the applause lines, sat on their hands and only clapped once before the end of their commander in chief's speech.

The Iraq war is clearly unpopular, but that hasn't stopped it. So what can be done? The "strategy" of the overwhelming majority of the left is to build an ever-larger antiwar movement. The U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in March-April 2003 provoked huge peace marches that brought millions of people into the streets worldwide to protest. In New York City, 500,000 protested a month before the war began, and 200,000 marched against the invasion while it was going on. Half a million came out to protest the Republican National Convention last August. On May 1, the international workers day, there was another round of antiwar protests around the globe. Yet these demonstrations have not even slowed down the slaughter.

The Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International warn that *pacifist parades will not and cannot stop an imperialist war machine hell-bent on conquest*. The capitalist warmongers can be defeated, by mobilizing the power of the international working class. Iraq rebels have already shown that the Pentagon's military machine is not all-powerful, despite its efforts to "shock and awe" that country into surrender. But the imperialists must be defeated from within. American workers are also targeted by this *bosses' war*, as their union gains are ripped up, pensions slashed and wages keep falling and jobs keep disappearing for more than three decades. Civil liberties in the imperialist citadels are under all-sided attack as well, from the USA PATRIOT Act to the pervasive "security" mania.

The answer is not impotent peace parades but bringing in the heavy battalions of labor. Already, the bulk of the union movement is on record opposed to the war, although these paper resolutions are coupled with "social-patriotic" appeals to "support our troops by bringing them home," for "jobs not war," and the like. Instead, what's needed is concrete *action* linking opposition to the imperialist war to an internationalist *class* fight against the capitalist rulers who destroy people's livelihoods and lay waste to entire countries in order to maximize their obscene profits and U.S. world domination.

What's standing in the way of this perspective is the pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy, whose very reason for existence is to keep workers' struggles in check, and the popular-front organizers of the antiwar movement who seek to chain opposition to the war to political support for the Democrats or some other capitalist party or politician. Above all, it is necessary to forge a leadership with the revolutionary program and determination to mobilize the power of the working class in struggle at the head of all the oppressed, breaking with the twin parties of American capitalism to *build a workers party that fights for international socialist revolution*.

## Rising Bourgeois Defeatism Over Iraq War

"Don't Be Fooled by the Spin on Iraq: The US Is Failing – and Hatred of the Occupation Greater Than Ever," wrote Jonathan Steele in the London *Guardian* (13 April).

While the capitalist press follows the wheeling and dealing of the corrupt Iraqi exile politicians and clerical zealots who rode into Iraq on the back of U.S. tanks, it barely reports the depth of opposition to the occupation throughout Iraqi society. On April 9, marking the second anniversary of the U.S. taking of Baghdad, a huge demonstration in the Iraqi capital demanded that the occupiers get out. "No, no to America! No, no to occupation!" they chanted. The *Los Angeles Times* (10 April) reports that, "Some estimates put the number of protesters at 300,000." A leading expert on Iraqi Shiites, Juan Cole, remarked: "If it were even half that, these would be the largest popular demonstrations in Iraq since 1958!"

Although sparse media reports described this as a Shiite event, a major Sunni organization, the Association of Muslim Scholars, said its followers also joined the demonstration. Cole reports that in addition, big anti-occupation demonstrations were held that day in Ramadi, a major center of Sunni insurgency, where virtually nobody voted in January, and in the Shiite city of Najaf, while in Baghdad "a small crowd of Iraqi Christians joined in the demonstration." This undercuts claims in the Western media of an imminent sectarian civil war between Sunnis and Shiites. Similar stirrings of solidarity against the occupiers occurred during the April 2004 siege of Falluja and the subsequent uprising in the Shiite South.

In addition to mass anti-occupation protests, the colonial occupiers are having to fend off an entrenched insurgency. This year the number of car bombings has escalated, with *five times* as many in the ten weeks from the beginning of March to mid-May as in all of 2004. Although this is largely a guerrilla war of attrition, occasionally the rebels have launched full-scale assaults. In early April, U.S. troops at the Abu Ghraib torture center came under heavy rocket fire by scores of insurgents who kept the jailers pinned down for 12 hours. On April 11, insurgents staged a massed assault on Camp Gannon on the Syrian border.

A number of U.S. officials are now openly talking of civil war. "With security experts reporting that no major road in the country was safe to travel, some Iraq specialists speculated that the Sunni insurgency was effectively encircling the capital and trying to cut it off from the north, south and west," wrote *New York Newsday* (12 May). It quoted Pat Lang, former top Near East intelligence official at the Pentagon, saying, "It's just political rhetoric to say we are not in a civil war. We've been in a civil war for a long time."

By last fall, even as Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry was trying to out-Bush Bush, calling for 40,000 more U.S. troops to Iraq, saner minds among the imperialists were beginning to think about the previously unthinkable. The London *Financial Times* (10 September 2004) published an editorial headlined, "Time to consider Iraq withdrawal." An article in the *New York Times* (26 September) asked "What if America Just Pulled Out?"

Since then, fully half of the second-rate imperialists and



U.S. neo-colonies in George Bush's "coalition of the willing" have grown increasingly unwilling and pulled out of Iraq, including Nicaragua, Spain, Dominican Republic, Honduras, Philippines, Thailand, New Zealand, Hungary, Portugal, Moldova and the Netherlands, as well as the Kingdom of Tonga. Poland, Ukraine, Bulgaria and Italy have announced the withdrawal of their forces this year.

Even Tony Blair's Britain is getting shaky. The July 7 bombing of London mass transport that killed more than 50 riders was an act of indiscriminate mass terror, deliberately striking at working people going to their jobs. But far from building support for the government and its "war on terror," many Londoners were reminded of the far-worse obliteration of Falluja by U.S. and "coalition" troops last year. As with the equally hideous bombing of a commuter train in Madrid in March 2004, the ultimate effect may be to increase already massive popular sentiment to get out of Iraq.

Last fall, talk of pulling out of Iraq was coming from imperialist think tanks and liberal intellectual journals. But similar views are being voiced at the highest levels of the U.S. military/strategic apparatus. In September, a National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq was so pessimistic (warning of civil war) that Bush ordered a purge of the entire top echelon of the CIA. Even so, in January CIA analysts said that as a result of the botched war, Iraq had become a "magnet for international terrorist activity." In early June, several Democrats and Republicans in Congress submitted joint resolutions calling for an "exit strategy" from Iraq. Among them was Walter Jones of North Carolina, a Republican right-winger who gained notoriety by having "French fries" renamed "Freedom fries" in the House cafeterias.

Now it is reported that due to the drain of operations in Iraq, top Pentagon planners may abandon the U.S.' long-standing "two-war capability" strategic doctrine, since they are far from winning one war in a semicolonial country. And another leaked document from Britain reports that the U.S. may have to drastically draw down its expeditionary force by mid-2006 no matter what conditions are in Iraq.

### Antiwar Popular Front

The growing *bourgeois defeatism* is significant, not only as a sign of the morass the imperialists have gotten into with the Iraq war, but also because this is what the opportunist left wants to hook up with in its "popular-front" antiwar movements. What they are offering to the ruling class is voting cattle to be herded to the polls (which is why mass peace demonstrations disappear like clockwork whenever elections roll around), and to *control the protests by keeping them within the safe confines of capitalist politics*.

Liberal and reformist "peace" groups seek a different *foreign policy* for imperialism and different *priorities* "at home." Revolutionaries, in contrast, seek to *defeat the imperialist system* that produces endless war, poverty and racism. The various competing "antiwar coalitions" in the U.S. have endless organizational squabbles, yet at bottom they are politically identical. All have ostensibly socialist groups at their



Hadi Mizban/AP

**Some of the up to 300,000 demonstrators at April 9 Baghdad demonstration demanding U.S. get out of Iraq.**

core who organize on a program of purely democratic demands in order to attract the support of bourgeois liberals.

To pull this off, however, they must maintain a certain pretense of radical politics. Otherwise they could easily be outflanked on the left by forces giving voice to the tremendous anger and outrage produced by the barbaric war and occupation of Iraq. Thus every practitioner of antiwar popular-frontism comes up with their own brand of combining pseudo-socialism with actual support for the bourgeoisie. Some are more openly rightist, others have a more leftist veneer. What is absent is the most fundamental question of revolutionary politics: the class line separating the proletariat from the bourgeoisie. Instead, the exploited and oppressed are tied to their class enemy in the name of the "people united" – which means the working people will always be defeated, from Spain to Indonesia to Allende's Chile and Lula's Brazil, *until they break from the popular front of class collaboration*.

In the U.S., the antiwar pop front line-up includes the social-democratic International Socialist Organization (ISO), which leads the Campus Antiwar Network (CAN). When the Stalinoid Workers World Party (WWP) had a divorce last year, they amicably divvied up their assets: WWP kept the International Action Center and set up a new antiwar group, the Troops Out Coalition (TOC), while its exes, the Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL), took International ANSWER. The liberal Maoists of the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) have Not In Our Name (NION). United for Peace and Justice is the home of the red-white-and-blue reformists, led by the Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism (CoC) but also including the Communist Party USA (CPUSA), Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) and its alter ego, Progressive Democrats of America (PDA).

The fractured antiwar milieu is currently rent by a debate over a "non-exclusionary peace movement," meaning which leftist competitors they will exclude while *including* their own favorite bourgeois ally (Ramsey Clark for the WWP/TONC, Ralph Nader for the ISO/CAN, "antiwar" Congressional Democrats like Dennis Kucinich and Barbara Lee for the UPJ). In recent months the more

right-wing outfits have boycotted events initiated by the slightly more left-talking groups. Last year, UPJ refused to join with ANN SWER because of WWP's support for North Korea; this year it boycotted a March 19 protest in New York because it didn't like the slogan of Iraqis' "right to resist." All sides have agreed to demonstrate in Washington, D.C. on September 24, but with two different slogans ("Troops Out Now" vs. "End the War on Iraq").

### For a Revolutionary Program to fight Imperialist War with Class War

The idea that wars can be stopped by endless peace marches is a democratic illusion, and one that can demoralize opponents of the war if "the movement" dwindles in size (as it has). Contrary to the right-wing "stab-in-the-back" myth that the U.S. pulled out of Vietnam because of "Hanoi Jane" Fonda and hippie peaceniks at home, that war was basically lost on the battlefields of Indochina. The U.S. was driven out, its army was ripped apart by conflicts between officers and soldiers, and its puppet South Vietnamese army collapsed. Even so, the imperialist rulers keep launching new wars: in the 1980s, a proxy war against the Soviets in Afghanistan, the invasion of Grenada, contra war on Nicaragua and the death squad slaughter in El Salvador; in the '90s, the first war on Iraq (Gulf War), the failed Somalia adventure, the first Yugoslav war (Bosnia) and the second Yugoslav war (Kosovo); since 2000, Afghanistan again, and now Iraq again.

The endless slaughter is caused by an imperialist system that will keep on generating war after war until it is brought down. With the end of the anti-Soviet Cold War, the U.S. imperialists looked around for new targets. The "war on drugs" was always problematic, since from Southeast Asia to Colombia the U.S. was in league with the biggest drug traffickers. Since 9-11, U.S. rulers have been pursuing a "war on terror," whose purpose is to terrorize the world into submission to American hegemony. Ultimately, the target is Washington's imperialist allies/rivals in Europe and Japan, as mounting trade war points toward a third world war.

After a century of imperialist-instigated war, mankind is faced with the stark alternative, as Rosa Luxemburg put it 90 years ago, of "socialism or barbarism." The ugly face of barbarism can be seen in the U.S. expeditionary force that has turned Iraq into a living hell. If the imperialists are not defeated, more and more of the planet will look like the inferno that Iraq is today.

Trotskyists call for *workers mobilization to fight the imperialist war with class war*. This includes the fight for *workers strikes against the war*, and for workers to "*hot cargo*" *military goods*. A taste of what can be done was given by the railway engineers in Scotland who in January 2003 refused to move a train loaded with munitions bound for Iraq. A month later, Italian railroad workers contacted anti-war and left groups and blocked the rails, attempting to stop trains loaded with war materiel leaving NATO bases bound for the Near East. If a dock strike in the U.S. were to cut off shipments of military supplies to Iraq, even for a short period, the effect would be dramatic. A gauge of how much such a prospect worries the American bourgeoisie was given on 7 April 2003 when police fired shotguns with "less-than-lethal" ammunition at antiwar pickets in the port Oakland,

California, wounding six longshoremen and arresting 25.

The Spartacist League's *Workers Vanguard* (No. 830) writes that, "occasional phrases to the contrary notwithstanding, the IG has no perspective of fighting to mobilize the proletariat in the U.S. and other imperialist centers to wage class struggle against imperialist war" (see article on facing page). The reality is the exact opposite. Despite our limited forces, the Internationalist Group has called for and, where possible, agitated for workers action against the war, such as for the U.S. West Coast ILWU dock union to refuse to ship military cargo. The SL, which used to call for this, dropped it like a hot potato when the government threatened to impose Taft-Hartley sanctions on the ILWU in October 2002 (see our articles "Strike Against Taft-Hartley! Hot-Cargo War Materiel!" and "SL: Hard to Starboard," in *The Internationalist* No. 15, January-February 2003). The League for the Fourth International, of which the IG is the U.S. section, also initiated a demonstration at the harbor of Rotterdam, Netherlands, calling on dock workers to halt military cargo.

Workers' power should be mobilized as well to fight the consequences of the war on the home front, demanding *abolition of the USA PATRIOT Act*. Numerous local unions and state and city labor councils have passed motions against this police-state measure, but as Congress gears up to renew it and tighten the screws of repression, this opposition should be trans-

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## League for the Fourth International

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## SL Tail on "Out Now" Pop Front

Recently several left groups have published '60s retrospectives, since current disputes are a virtual replay of those in the Vietnam antiwar movement. However, there have been some shifts in the meantime. The Socialist Workers Party (SWP), which prided itself on being the "best builders" of a popular-front antiwar movement, including using its National Peace Action Coalition (NPAC) goons to keep out reds, is no longer in the business. And the Spartacist League, which in the 1960s and '70s acted as a revolutionary opposition, now pretends that you can't have a popular front in the U.S., and has adopted the SWP/NPAC's "Out Now" slogan. So much so, that over a nine-month period last year, every other issue of the SL paper, *Workers Vanguard*, had an "Out Now" front- or back-page headline, except when it was every issue.

In an article last summer, "U.S. Out of Iraq Now!" (WV No. 830, 6 August 2004), the SL attacked the "dim and pseudo-revolutionary rhetoric" of the Internationalist Group as the supposed "flip side of the reformist left's pandering to liberal Democrats." WV writes: "The IG ludicrously denounces *Workers Vanguard* for demanding 'U.S. Troops Out of Iraq, Now!'" and "equates our slogans...with the reformist American Socialist Workers Party's 'Out Now' slogan during the Vietnam War, which was designed to appeal to bourgeois politicians who wanted to cut U.S. imperialism's losses and get out of Vietnam."

The SL, it seems, has invented a new form of pseudo-dialectics. Question: When does "Out Now" not mean "Out Now?" Answer: when the SL says it. Now you know.

Quoting from our article, "Sink U.S. Imperialism in the Quicksands of the Near East!" (*The Internationalist* No. 17, October-November 2003), WV sneers, "The IG thunders: 'The imperialists must be driven out of Afghanistan and Iraq. The Zionists must be driven out of the West Bank and Gaza.'" WV asks rhetorically: "What kind of idiots oppose the demand for the immediate withdrawal of imperialist troops?" It's classic. Unable to answer us politically, they set up a straw man, then blow it down with a huff and a puff of empty-headed irony.

What we wrote about the latter-day SL's new-found enthusiasm for the slogan "Troops Out Now" was that "this demand is addressed to the U.S. rulers, rather than to the world's workers and semi-colonial peoples and it echoes the sentiment of increasingly vocal sectors of the bourgeoisie." Taking up the question

again in response to a letter from a reader (*The Internationalist* No. 19, Summer 2004), we commented:

"Today, after barely a year of the U.S. occupation of Iraq, a sizeable portion of the American ruling class wants to get out. They just can't figure out how to do it without it looking like a loss. Left groups who call for 'troops out' while avoiding (or repudiating) a forthright stand for the defeat of the imperialists in Iraq in effect want to help them out."

In fact, in more than a dozen "U.S. Out of Iraq" headlines *not once* did WV call for the defeat of the imperialists in Iraq.

During the 1990-91 Gulf War, at a time when it was a voice of revolutionary Trotskyism, *Workers Vanguard* repeatedly called on its front page, as the SL did on its banners, to "Defeat Imperialism! Defend Iraq!" But when the U.S. invaded Afghanistan following the September 2001 attack on the World Trade Center, the SL suddenly dropped the call for defeat of U.S. imperialism. Moreover, it denounced the Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International, saying that in upholding this cornerstone of Leninism we were "Playing the Counterfeit Card of Anti-Americanism," and pandering to "'Third World' nationalists for whom the 'only good American is a dead American'" (WV No. 767, 26 October 2001). This is not only a monstrous lie, but a sinister smear of the sort that the Stalinists hurled at the Trotskyists at the time of WWII.

The WV 830 "polemic" against the IG claims that our position is contrary to the revolutionary history of the Spartacist tendency, on which we stand and which the "post-Soviet" SL now renounces. It cites the statement in *Spartacist* No. 5 (November-December 1965) that called "For the Immediate, Unconditional Withdrawal of All U.S. Troops from Vietnam!" Yet at the time, the liberal currents which dominated the "antiwar movement" opposed the demand for immediate withdrawal of troops. Today, the several competing antiwar popular-front groups agree to this demand. And WV neglects to mention that the same issue of *Spartacist* reprints a letter from its editor, James Robertson, noting that *Spartacist* also carried signs at the 1965 peace parade calling for "Victory for the Vietnamese Revolution!"

Moreover, in April 1967, the Spartacist League initiated a united-front revolutionary contingent "whose principal thrust is for the defeat of imperialism in Viet Nam and around the world,



for the victory of the NLF and the immediate unconditional withdrawal of all U.S. forces from Viet Nam" ("Anti-War Sell-out," *Spartacist* No. 10, May-June 1967). And in an October 1967 leaflet, "From Protest to Power," the SL called "For Anti-War Strike Actions." "Out Now" did not sum up Spartacist's position in the '60s, not by a long shot.

So after a year-plus of denouncing the IG for supposedly pandering to "anti-Americanism" by calling for the defeat of U.S. imperialism, the SL slipped in the phrase (saying "we, too, are for the defeat of U.S. imperialism") deep in the interstices of a 10,000-word speech. Then they could retort, "See, we said it." Yet the very purpose of the speech was to claim that *revolutionary defeatism* the program of Lenin and Trotsky against imperialist war, was nice in World War I but not relevant today.

While the SL today calls to "defend Iraqi peoples," talks vaguely of "class struggle at home" and may occasionally lip-synch the words "defeat U.S. imperialism," nowhere has it raised this as a call to struggle. This "omission" has a meaning in the real world. Thus an account of the SL's national conference last summer (reported in *WV* No. 841, 4 February) noted that at antiwar demonstrations:

"Most protesters, however, did not automatically see how our call to 'Defend Iraq Against U.S. Attack,' i.e., standing for the *defeat* of U.S. imperialism, was counterposed to such pacifist slogans as 'no to war' — a slogan pushed by the liberals and reformists in order to pressure the capitalist parties to adopt more pacific, 'humane' policies."

They didn't see how the SL's call to "defend Iraq" differed from the liberals and reformists because the latter's actual slogan, "U.S. Out Now," was the same as the SL's.

And the difference is not that the Spartacist League whispers "defeat U.S. imperialism" in an aside, stage left, or buried in the fine print, whereas the reformists don't. In fact, they do, in exactly the same way the SL does. For example, a brochure by the ISO's Campus Antiwar Network, "Why We Say: Bring the Troops Home NOW" calls for "the immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops," and then adds: "This means the U.S. must be defeated in its aim to occupy Iraq as a step to dominating the whole world." *Workers World* does the same. In a 2003 speech, WWP spokesman Larry Holmes says: "Right now the struggle to defeat U.S. imperialism in the Middle East is the key struggle in the world..."

So the whole "Out Now" crowd does it, not just the ex-Trotskyist SL. This is a classic opportunist fig leaf, a scanty cover for their real politics. So if defending Iraq "means" defeating U.S. imperialism, what is their problem with saying so loud and clear? Their problem is that they are appealing for the support of a sector of the bourgeoisie who want to pull out now precisely in order to avoid a debacle. For the Spartacist League, its call to "defend Iraq" while refusing to call up front to "defeat U.S. imperialism" is a centrist half-way house on the road to fully jettisoning the Leninist program on imperialist war. ■

## Drive U.S. Imperialism...

*continued from page 6*

lated into strike action. The workers movement as a whole should come out to *protest the government attempt to take over the East Coast dock union* (ILA). Along with the 2002 Maritime Transportation Security Act, pushed particularly by the Democrats, this is part of a "bipartisan" drive to militarize the docks and carry out union-busting in the name of the "war on terror."

In the face of anti-immigrant racism, including from Democratic Party liberals like Hillary Clinton, the workers movement should bring out its forces to demand *full citizenship rights for all immigrants*. Attempts by fascists like the Minuteman Project to stage immigrant-bashing provocations and "border patrols" should be swept away by union-based *worker/immigrant defense groups*, knowing full well that fascist squads who today threaten immigrants will be used tomorrow to break strikes. The Internationalist Group has actively fought to *drive military recruiters off campuses*, and has called for united-front student-teacher-worker action to run these modern-day slave catchers out of the schools and universities.

A working-class fight against imperialist war includes defending those countries already targeted by the U.S. While on May 1, the UPJ marched in lock-step with Washington calling for "no nukes," we called to *defend the North Korean deformed workers state and semi-colonial Iran* and their right to acquire any weapons they require to fend off U.S. imperialism. We also defend the other deformed workers states (China, Cuba and Vietnam) and semi-colonial countries such as Venezuela which are in imperialism's crosshairs. As opposed to the "U.S. Out Now" crowd with its (implicit or explicit) appeals to what the Stalinists used to call "peace-loving" imperialists, Trotskyists fight not to "bring the boys home" but to *drive the imperialists out of Iraq*.

As the Internationalist Group wrote in a leaflet distributed at May Day marches in New York:

"We fight the *imperialist system* which breeds endless wars, racism, poverty and the other scourges that beset the planet. We warn that more Iraqis will be indiscriminately rounded up and thrown into U.S. dungeons to be tortured and killed, that more Iraqi children will die of hunger, that more countries will be invaded, until the warmongers are stopped by a greater power, that wielded by the workers of the world united in revolutionary struggle.

"The Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International stand with the German revolutionary socialist Wilhelm Liebknecht, who proclaimed 'not a penny, not a man' to the imperialist system. *We defend the Iraqi people* against the conquerors who have laid waste to their country. We struggle for the *defeat of U.S. imperialism*, the rapacious 'sole superpower' which is by far the greatest threat to working people, the poor and oppressed, and to the future of humanity. Against the twin capitalist war parties, we seek to forge a *revolutionary workers party*. Following the Bolshevik example of V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky, the IG/LFI calls for *class war against the imperialist war* and for *internationalist socialist revolution to smash imperialism*." ■

## Zionist Flack and “WMD” Fabricator Jailed in Government Witchhunt

# Free Judith Miller!

JULY 11 – On July 6, Judge Thomas F. Hogan of the federal district court in Washington, D.C. sentenced *New York Times* reporter Judith Miller to jail for refusing to divulge her confidential sources to a secret grand jury investigation. Miller faces up to 120 days behind bars, charged with civil contempt of court, until the grand jury ends its term or she cracks and agrees to name names. Another reporter, Matthew Cooper of *Time* magazine, cut a last-minute deal by agreeing to talk after reportedly receiving a “personal release” from his high-level source freeing him from his commitment to maintain confidentiality. His publisher had already agreed to turn over his notes.

Conservatives love to rail at the “liberal media,” yet the entire bourgeois press serves the interests of the ruling classes that run this and every other capitalist country. The *Times* in particular assiduously censors and couches the news in its idealized role as the beacon of the “free but responsible (to the bourgeoisie) press.” For her part, Judith Miller is notorious as a purveyor of treacherous misinformation and a conduit for official disinformation. She played a sinister role in whipping up war fever to justify the U.S. imperialist invasion of Iraq by reporting bogus “evidence” of Saddam Hussein’s non-existent “weapons of mass destruction” (WMD). She has served as one of a select group of “experts” on the Near East for Zionist lobbies.

Nevertheless, the jailing of the *Times*’ Miller is an ominous attempt to throttle the press and get the mass media to march in ever-tighter lockstep with the mass murderers in the White House and the Pentagon. In the interest of fighting ever-increasing state control of information, we demand that the warmongering fabricator and Zionist flack Judith Miller be freed.

The case for which Miller is being jailed is curious indeed. On 6 July 2003, former U.S. ambassador Joseph Wilson published an Op-Ed article in the *Times* titled, “What I Didn’t Find in Africa,” reporting on his failure to find any evidence to back U.S. claims that Iraq had purchased uranium yellowcake in Niger. The response of highly placed officials in the Bush administration was to leak to conservative columnist Robert Novak the information that Wilson’s wife, Valerie Plame, was an undercover CIA operative working on weapons proliferation. Since it has been made a crime to reveal the names of U.S. intelligence agents, Wilson and various liberals called on the administration to investigate.

The White House agreed to an investigation, which has dragged on for two years, presenting secret “evidence” to a grand jury in Washington. But under the leadership of special prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald of the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Chicago office, the inquiry rather than focusing on high-level White House officials who supplied the leak, or right-winger Novak who published it, instead has gone after journalists who accused the White House of “outing”



**Judith Miller on PBS Newshour in August 2002 peddling war propaganda about non-existent Iraqi “weapons of mass destruction.”**

Plame as payback for Wilson’s refutation of a key plank of the U.S. justification for war (Cooper) or who didn’t print the leak the Bush administration wanted leaked (Miller).

Why the feds have decided to jail the chief peddler of their “WMD” war propaganda we don’t know. Moreover, it’s no crime in our book to publish the names of CIA undercover operatives, who target those who would fight against U.S. imperialism. As far as we’re concerned, former sleuths like Philip Agee, in his memoir *Inside the Company: CIA Diary* and subsequent writings, as well as publications like *Counterspy* and *Covert Action Information Bulletin*, and Julius Mader’s manual, *Who’s Who in the CIA* (published by East Germany in the late ’60s), performed a public service by shining light on “the Company’s” deadly deeds.

The leaking of the name of the spouse of an administration critic is obviously a different kettle of fish. James Wilson and Valerie Plame Wilson were placed on the Bush administration’s equivalent of Nixon’s “Enemies List,” against whom all manner of “dirty tricks” were to be used in order to “screw” political opponents. Some in the media have argued that the *Times* and Miller shouldn’t have gone to the wall on this case, since whoever they are shielding is bound to be a certified sleazeball, like Bush’s chief political operative Karl Rove or Vice President Cheney’s chief of staff Lewis Libby. No doubt, but it makes no difference.

With Miller’s track record, it is highly unlikely that anyone who isn’t on the government’s payroll would talk to her in the first place. Many *Times* staffers reportedly flee at her approach, no doubt worried about contamination, nuclear/bio-chemical or moral. It wouldn’t surprise us one bit if she was a source of the leak. But the



**Members of Newspaper Guild protest against jailing of *New York Times* reporter Judith Miller, July 6.**

federal investigation is not about discovering who Miller talked to or who “blew the cover” of Valerie Plame. The White House turned that inside out and is using this case to punish the “liberal media” and to intimidate any insider who would dare blow the whistle on the government’s dirty secrets.

Time Warner, Inc., which publishes *Time* magazine, argued that it had to comply with Judge Hogan’s order because the press is not “above the law.” But “the law” is a reflection of the balance of class forces. Moreover, 49 out of 50 states have journalistic “shield laws” which permit (in differing degrees) reporters to refuse to hand over the names of informants whose identities they promised to protect. All sides understand that without the expectation that they will be shielded against retribution, few “whistle-blowers” will come forward to reveal what they know, for fear of the consequences.

Yet there is no federal shield law, which journalists’ unions including the Newspaper Guild and Communications Workers of America have called for. As several courts have recently ordered journalists to reveal their sources or go to jail, and since the Supreme Court refused to issue an injunction in this case, a crescendo of attacks can be expected on the state laws that supposedly safeguard journalistic investigations. Already there is self-censorship: the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* has announced that it is withholding two “profoundly important” stories “of significant interest to the public,” because “jail is too high a price to pay.” And after *Time* caved in order to protect its corporate profits, anyone thinking of spilling the beans to a big media journalist knows they can’t rely on any assurances they are given.

The Judith Miller case is part of an offensive to build an impregnable wall of government secrecy and persecute anyone who would breach it. Last year, more than 15 million government documents were classified, more than doubling since 11 September 2001; federal departments are now classifying documents at the rate of 125 a minute, 2 every second, including everything from mine safety reports to the fact

that Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet is interested in “fencing, boxing and horseback riding” (*New York Times*, 3 July). Requests for documents under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) are met with endless delays or simply refused.

Meanwhile, the administration has beaten down a series of recent “unfriendly” investigative reports, *even though in each case the basic facts were true*. Last fall, in the 2004 election campaign, CBS-TV news anchor Dan Rather ran a piece on *60 Minutes* about how George W. Bush had been a “no-show” in his military service in a “champagne unit” of the Texas Air National Guard. Questions were raised about a typed report by the unit’s commander, although his secretary confirmed that its contents reflected his views. Rather was forced out and several journalists were fired; although they all stood by the story, CBS retracted the report.

This spring, *Newsweek* reported that a Pentagon investigation found that interrogators at the Guantánamo prison camp had flushed a Koran down the toilet. After this news set off angry protests in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the White House declared that there was no evidence except the prisoners’ complaints (which by their definition don’t count). Under fire, *Newsweek* (owned by the liberal *Washington Post*) backed down and issued a retraction, in which it said it would curb the use of confidential sources. Yet a week later, the Pentagon reported that guards’ water balloons drenched a Koran, obscenities were scrawled in a Koran, an interrogator stomped on a Koran and a guard urinated on the Muslim holy book, supposedly by accident!

Bush is taking a cue here from his British poodle, Tony Blair, whose government viciously responded to a British Broadcasting Company report that the prime minister’s director of communications, Alastair Campbell, had “sexed up” a September 2002 dossier making the case for war on Iraq on the grounds that Saddam Hussein had nuclear weapons that could be launched within “45 minutes.” The defense minister leaked the name of the source of the BBC interview, David Kelly. Campbell did hype the intelligence, which was “dead wrong” in the first place, but official panels absolved the PM, Kelley was (at the very least) driven to suicide, and the BBC was purged.

*New York Times* executive editor Bill Keller is keen to cast his paper and reporter Miller as profiles in courage, ready to brave jail in order to honor their commitment to maintaining the confidentiality of sources. The *Times* is much enamored of its front-page motto, “all the news that’s fit to print,” and its vow “without fear or favor.” Yet this self-proclaimed “newspaper of record” generally hews closely to the government line about what news is fit to print. Keller (son of George, long-time CEO of the oil giant Chevron, which included Condoleezza Rice on its board) recently had to admit that even liberals consider the *Times*, and the “mainstream media” generally, as “lapdogs of the Bush Administration, instigators of the war in Iraq” (*The New Yorker*, 14 February).

The *New York Times* is no defender of a “free press” and Judith Miller is no First Amendment heroine. The *Times*’ own



**This broken-down trailer was alleged by U.S. to be mobile bio-weapons lab, a claim repeated by Judith Miller, later shown to be false. Miller peddled fabrications by Iraqi exile Ahmad Chalabi, who received more than \$1 million from U.S. for his "information collection program."**



year-after evaluation of its coverage of Iraq leading up to the war delicately remarked that some of its reporting was "not as rigorous as it should have been" (*New York Times*, 26 May 2004). It admits that it "fell for misinformation" from exile sources such as Ahmad Chalabi, the convicted embezzler with longstanding ties to the Israeli Mossad who was the favorite of the Pentagon war hawks. But its retrospective carefully does not mention the particular role of Miller, who reproduced Chalabi's lies and fabrications in story after front-page story about Iraq's alleged "weapons of mass destruction."

Miller herself is no ordinary journalist. Although she reportedly does not speak Arabic, she has covered the Near East for almost two decades, with a focus on Islamic fundamentalism and Saddam Hussein's Iraq; likewise, although she has no scientific background, she became the *Times*' expert on bio-terrorism. Miller was touted as one of a list of "experts" on the region by the Middle East Forum, run by Daniel Pipes (son of the notorious anti-Soviet crusader Richard Pipes and co-author of statements of the Project for a New American Century). The MEF is a Zionist lobby whose mission includes "fighting radical Islam (rather than terrorism)," "more robustly asserting U.S. interests vis-à-vis Saudi Arabia" and driving Syria out of Lebanon. It is also the parent group of "Campus Watch," which targets academics critical of Israel.

Miller uses translations from the Arab press provided by MEMRI (the Middle East Media Research Institute), whose staff is loaded with "former" members of Israeli intelligence (see Brian Whitaker, "Selective Memri," London *Guardian*, 13 August 2002). And while Miller's articles on Hussein's non-existent WMDs played a key role in U.S. war propaganda during the run-up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, it was not the first time she played this role. A dozen years earlier, Miller co-authored a best-seller that made the case for the Gulf War, *Saddam Hussein and the Crisis in the Gulf* (1990). That book was written together with Laurie Mylroie, who worked at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, a think tank associated with the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC).

Judith Miller's ties to pro-Israel lobbies and "neo-conservatives" in the Bush administration are only a particularly egregious case of the age-old links between bourgeois gov-

ernments and the bourgeois press. Sometimes this consists of interchanging roles, like Leslie Gelb, who went from the defense department in the LBJ administration to the *Times* (where he was correspondent, columnist and Op Ed page editor) to assistant secretary of state in the Clinton administration. In other cases it is via carefully cultivated relations with privileged sources, like liberal Bob Woodward's entrée to the White House which enables him to write "behind the scenes" accounts based on cozy relations with George Bush and Colin Powell. The Bush gang like its predecessors is constantly seeking to "spin" the news through its favorite journalists.

The scribbling classes like to think of themselves as a "Fourth Estate," a distinct branch of government, whose job is to keep tabs on the rest. This harks back to late 18th-century France, where in the Estates General (the parliamentary body called together by the dying monarchy), in addition to the three main "estates" of the feudal order (clergy, nobility, burghers), an informal "fourth estate" of journalists and publicists inhabiting the press gallery was a key component in the constellation of power. And indeed, a proliferation of newspapers and periodicals played an important role as spokesmen for the radical petty bourgeoisie and ascendant bourgeoisie in the French Revolution.

But the *New York Times* and the rest of the bourgeois media today and for the last two centuries are no *Ami du Peuple* (Friend of the People, the newspaper of the Jacobin revolutionary Jean-Paul Marat). Rather, they are the friends and confidants of the high and mighty, as mouthpieces for the capitalist ruling class. In France, the classic land of the revolutionary press, in the post-revolutionary period the bourgeois press was up to its necks in virtually every corruption scandal, from the Panama stock swindle of 1888 to the Stavisky affair of 1934, as well as in the 1894-1906 Dreyfus affair when a Jewish officer was framed-up and convicted of treason. On the pages of the big papers. Press corruption in the '30s played a significant role in the crumbling of the Third Republic in the face of burgeoning right-wing reaction.

In the United States, for all the noble talk of defending "freedom of the press" going back to the 1735 seditious libel prosecution of New York newspaperman John Peter Zenger, a more accurate description of the role of the media is H.L. Mencken's aphorism,

"Freedom of press is limited to those who own one." Journalists like *Time's* Matt Cooper may talk a good line, before caving in, but it is the bosses of the big business media (owned by defense contractors and entertainment conglomerates) who call the shots. This is true both of the right-wing scandal-mongering gutter press like Rupert Murdoch's *New York Post*, and of the "gray old lady," the staid "establishment" *New York Times*.

The *Times* recalls its glory days of printing the Pentagon Papers (a secret study of Washington decision-making in the Vietnam War, prepared by Leslie Gelb when he was at Defense) over the objections of the Nixon White House (represented by then assistant attorney, now Supreme Court chief justice, William Rehnquist). They don't mention how the *Times* buried news of the impending 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion of Castro's Cuba at the request of the Democratic Kennedy administration; how Arthur Sulzberger let the CIA park its agents in *Times* bureaus around the world and at the Agency's request pulled the paper's correspondent out of Guatemala on the eve of the 1954 coup; or how in the 1920s Adolph Sulzberger sat on the story about the Teapot Dome oil scandal (of illegally leasing the naval oil reserves to private companies) to avoid embarrassing the Republican Harding administration.

In recent years, particularly with the Internet (created and controlled by the Pentagon), there has been a rise in media "watchdogs," both right-wingers like the late Reed Irvine's AIM (Accuracy in Media), who specialize in witch hunts, and liberals like FAIR (Freedom and Accuracy in Reporting), who track the Bush administration's countless Iraq lies. (FAIR called on the *Times* to reveal its sources in the Plame case.) Some media "defense" organizations such as the Committee to Protect Journalists serve as fronts for intelligence agencies' efforts to destabilize "unfriendly" governments like Castro's Cuba. While they voice platitudes about the "free press," the bottom line is they all reflect the views and interests of different sections of the bourgeoisie.

The *Times's* mild *mea culpas* over its Iraq coverage came about because the U.S. colonial occupation is in deep trouble. For that matter, the *Times* published the Pentagon Papers because the U.S. ruling class had split over continuing its losing war in Vietnam. And it only published the papers after the Supreme Court okayed it. On the other hand, you don't see *Times* editors talking about how in the '80s they found "fit to print" bogus stories about Soviet "toy bombs" in Afghanistan, a total fabrication cooked up by the CIA. In Afghanistan the U.S. prevailed, they figure, setting the stage for the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union, so what's to confess? Out of that imperialist victory, achieved by funneling hundreds of millions of dollars to murderous Islamic fundamentalists, came the Taliban, Osama bin Laden and 11 September 2001.

The image of the press as crusading reporters, ferreting out dark secrets and meeting with confidential sources in underground parking garages, is left over from the Watergate period. Richard Nixon had won reelection to a second term, and his determination to crush antiwar protests was summed up in the phrase "No Mr. Nice Guy." But even top-level military brass by that point viewed the Vietnam War as unwinnable, and when Nixon operatives messed up a "black

bag" burglary at a Democratic Party office, a top-level "Deep Throat" spilled the story to Woodward and Bernstein of the *Post*. That leaker turns out to have been FBI deputy director Mark Felt, who ordered break-ins against antiwar radicals. Felt was angry over not being named J. Edgar Hoover's successor, but the leaks exposed the government's machinations and made possible further revelations about the CIA.

That was then, and now we are in a different political period, in which the American ruling class is determined to lord it over the entire planet as the "sole superpower" and "indispensable nation." While they have gotten bogged down in the quicksands of the Near East, recalling the quagmire of the jungles of Vietnam, the dominant sector of U.S. imperialism is not now prepared to pull out of Iraq. Meanwhile, Republican right-wingers who feel they have an electoral "mandate" (with the support of barely a quarter of the electorate), are trying to tighten their clamp on the courts that put Bush in office in the first place. Veteran radio journalist Daniel Schorr recalled how in 1976 a public outcry stopped a House committee from holding him in contempt of Congress for refusing to name his source for a secret report on CIA skulduggery. "Today they would send me to jail without a murmur," he commented.

The bourgeois press has always been the handmaiden of capitalist power, a "whore of the republic," who bestows her favors on her various benefactors who stalk the corridors of power. Legions of American journalists were "embedded" with U.S. military units during the Iraq invasion. Judith Miller was among them, but went even further and tried to take over Mobile Exploitation Team (MET) Alpha searching for the ever-elusive "WMDs," which were her claim to fame. But while Miller is an extreme and particularly noxious example, up there with the *Times's* Baghdad bureau chief John Burns and columnist Thomas Friedman, the entire U.S. "mainstream media" were in bed with the government, as were the Democrats, who dutifully voted for the declaration of war, the war budget, the Patriot Act and all the rest.

The Bush administration long ago took the measure of the "liberal media" and found them to be a bunch of pushovers, just as pusillanimous as the loser Democrats they are allied with. As "lapdogs for the Bush Administration," they hardly need to be housebroken. A little bit of intimidation was enough to force the retirement of Dan Rather, fire four CBS journalists and wrest a retraction from *Newsweek*. A decade earlier Ted Turner's CNN bowed to George Bush I and sacked Peter Arnett, who had been a thorn in the government's side with his reports from Baghdad during the Gulf War. Now a little jail time for the *Times's* Judith Miller will serve as a rap on the knuckles for her bosses on 43rd Street and a reminder not to get out of line.

But much as we despise the kept press of the bourgeoisie and its cynical posturing, while underscoring its role as censors and public opinion manufacturers for the ruling class, it is important to understand that this case is part of a rising tide of repression. Again, this case is not about finding who "outed" Valerie Plame; the sordid journalist who fingered her (Novak) is not being prosecuted, and instead they went after the magazine that denounced this as White House retribution (*Time*) and the newspaper that didn't print the "authorized" leak (the *Times*).

*continued on page 25*



**Today They Want to Take Away Our Driver's Licenses,  
And Tomorrow? Mobilize the Working Class Now to Resist!**

## **"Real ID": Sinister Anti-Immigrant Measure A Step Toward Police State**

The immigrant population of the United States is under attack, the target of a racist assault unleashed by the highest levels of government. On May 11, the Senate and House of Representatives in Washington approved a draconian immigration law, known as the "Real ID Act," which purports to establish uniform norms for driver's licenses issued by the 50 states. Although it is presented as an "anti-terrorist" measure, in fact its target is the 11 (or more) million undocumented immigrants who live and work in this country.

The racists figure that with a stroke of the pen by George Bush, who signed the law that same night, they will prevent "illegal aliens" from driving. If it were carried out, this would not only be a personal trauma for millions of families, who need to drive a car in order to survive, but also a heavy blow against important sectors of the capitalist economy, which depend on workers without legal rights for their low-wage labor. More than likely, it will make the lives of this vital sector of the working class an even worse nightmare, while raising the price on the black market for "substitute" documents.

Still more sinister, for the entire U.S. population, with this step we are getting closer to the dreaded national identification card, a police-state measure that both right-wing Republicans and not a few liberal Democrats have been advocating for decades. The peremptory command, "Show your papers," will not only be something heard in old movies about the Nazi dictatorship, where the German police shout "*Ausweis zeigen!*" or under the South African apartheid regime with its pass laws; it will be a daily experience at highway roadblocks, subway inspections and the entrances to buildings, schools and hospitals. *This racist abuse against immigrants is the opening wedge of an attack on the democratic rights of all.*



Hoy

**Protest last year against the NY Department of Motor Vehicles' "suspension" (cancellation) of driver's licenses of undocumented immigrants.**

In the face of the very real threat represented by the Real ID Act, together with previous immigrant-bashing laws such as the U.S.A. Patriot Act and the immigration "reform" of 1996, many immigrant rights organizations have placed their hopes in the capitalist courts and liberal bourgeois politicians. The same day the Senate approved the federal driver's license law, a New York Supreme Court judge, Karen Smith, ruled that the NY Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) cannot cancel the driver's licenses of undocumented immigrants for lack of a valid Social Security card. The DMV was not authorized by the state legislature to regulate immigration matters, she declared, granting the injunction sought by the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Educational Fund (PRLDEF).

Human rights defense groups cried victory. "Green Light for Driver's Licenses for the Undocumented," headlined the New York daily *Hoy* (11 May). Yet the injunction will not be implemented, since the state attorney general (Democrat Elliot Spitzer) appealed the decision to a higher court, and now it may be overruled by the new federal law.

The next day, a bill was introduced in the U.S. Senate and

**Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!**



House of Representatives, sponsored by Senators Ted Kennedy, a liberal Democrat, and John McCain, a conservative Republican. The hard-core anti-immigrant racists of FAIR (Federation for American Immigration Reform) announced they would oppose the measure because it would "increase illegal immigration" and supposedly legalize the status of the undocumented. Yet the authors of the "Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act of 2005" underlined that this is not the case. Representative Jim Kolbe (Republican, Arizona) said straight out:

"They are illegal immigrants – they have broken the law and must be punished. That is why this legislation includes strict fines and penalties for those already in this country illegally and tough punishments for employers who hire illegal immigrants."

You couldn't put it more clearly. According to this bill (S. 1033/H.R. 2330), the fines and penalties for undocumented immigrants will exceed \$2,000 per adult, the visa will only last for six years, applicants will be subjected to a security background check, they will have to pay back income taxes, will have to register with draft boards for military service, and will be deported if they are out of work for more than 60 days. All in all, it is clear that only a small portion of undocumented workers would make use of this hypothetical H-5B visa.

As for the H-5A visa foreseen under the Kennedy-McCain bill, this is nothing but a recycling of President George Bush's proposal to once again create the category of "guest workers" – a form of indentured servitude – who after their allotted time in the U.S. is up will be sent "home." Announced in his annual State of the Union address in January 2004 and then trumpeted in a meeting of the two ranchers, Bush and Mexican president Vicente Fox, the proposal became a dead letter in the face of the pressure of the Republican right wing.

The new "bipartisan" bill was written so as to invite the support of the U.S. president – the sponsors explicitly say as much – but it will probably end up sharing the fate of Bush's earlier initiative. And although it has been hailed by bourgeois Hispanic groups such as LULAC (League of United Latin American Citizens) and MALDEF (Mexican-American Legal Defense and Education Fund), it does nothing for undocumented workers but instead seeks to "punish" them.

The bitter truth is that the whole "debate" over immigration is subordinate to the fundamental issue of the imperialist "war without end" which U.S. rulers proclaimed following the 11 September 2001 attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Both Democrats and Republicans used 9/11 to justify their slaughter, which like all imperialist wars over the last century has intensified anti-immigrant hysteria. Im-



**U.S. tries to seal off Mexican border with racist wall.**

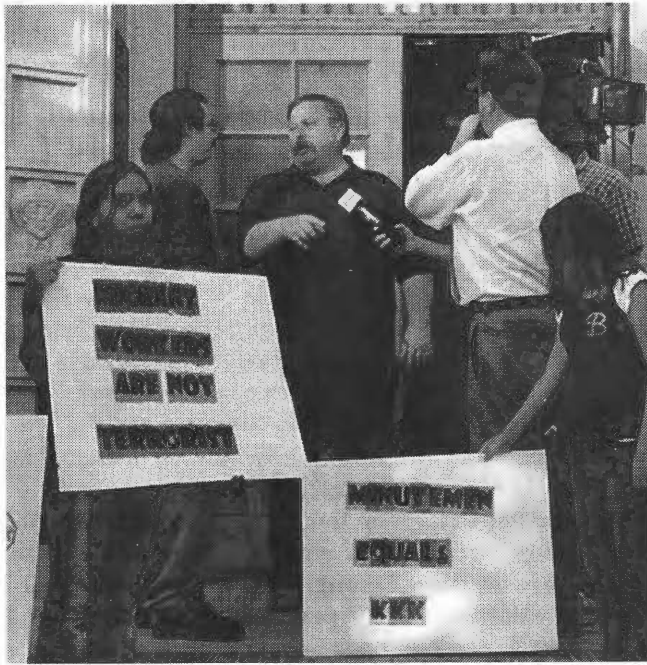
mediately after the war on Afghanistan was launched, thousands of Arabs and South Asians were rounded up and arrested. They were held incommunicado, and the government even refused to release their names. Around the country discrimination against immigrants escalated.

To celebrate his second-term election victory, President Bush ordered a human slaughter in the Iraqi city of Falluja that was worthy of the Nazi regime (or the Israeli army against Palestinians, or U.S. imperialism in Japan, Vietnam, etc.). Closely linked to the war and the increased electoral clout of the far right is the rise of paramilitary vigilante groups along the border with the aim of hunting immigrants.

Groups like the Minuteman Project and the Arizona Guard strut around with AR-15 rifles and Glock pistols in their "road-blocks" which consist of folding chairs and coolers stocked with beer. They were buoyed by the success in last November's election of the "Arizona Citizen and Taxpayer Protection Act" initiative, which would deny immigrants the use of public services. The racist paramilitaries are only the most blatant expression of the across-the-board onslaught against immigrant workers. *These cowardly thugs should be run off by the power of the organized working class.*

The calls by liberal groups on Bush and Congress for an "amnesty" are doomed to defeat. And why the hell is it necessary to amnesty those who have committed no crime? In order to tear down the walls that are being built, to shatter their xenophobic laws and defeat racist reaction, it is necessary to mobilize the tremendous power of the multiracial and multinational working class. To begin with, very concrete actions such as a *New York City taxi strike against the "Real ID" law* would make clear to the ruling class how much it depends on immigrant workers ... and the chaos that this racist act will unleash.

Internationalist revolutionaries fight for *full citizenship rights for all immigrants*, which was one of the first acts



**Protest against Minuteman fascist meeting in Goliad, Texas, June 20.**

undertaken by the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. For communists and all class-conscious working people, the workers have no country – we belong to an international class. And as was the case in tsarist Russia, in the U.S. today it will take *international socialist revolution* to overcome the national borders that the capitalists impose on us to divide us from our brothers and sisters on the “other side.”

### Racist Anti-Immigrant Onslaught

Following September 11, there was a sudden upsurge in racist attacks on immigrants. Sikh taxi drivers set upon in the center of Brooklyn because they wear turbans, fires set at mosques. The City University of New York (CUNY) launched a “war purge” against “undocumented” students, against which the Internationalist Group initiated a campaign of protest involving trade unionists and associations of immigrant workers (among them taxi drivers).

Already in preceding months there had been a rash of potentially deadly attacks against Latin American immigrants in Farmingville and then Farmingdale on Long Island. In this climate poisoned by chauvinism, in December 2003, the administration of NY governor George Pataki and his director of the DMV decided to make their “contribution” to the “war on terror,” by demanding from all drivers a valid Social Security number, or their licenses would be revoked.

With the backing of the Department of “Homeland Security,” the New York Department of Motor Vehicles mailed thousands of letters in a selective way, which had the effect of terrorizing immigrant families throughout the state. They demanded that the recipients come to the DMV offices within two weeks to verify the Social Security number with which they obtained their licenses. According to the authorities, of the 600,000 letters sent out, more than 250,000 were not answered.

So far they have suspended some 7,000 drivers’ licenses, but they intend to do the same with the remaining quarter of a million. This will have disastrous consequences. Many immigrant workers will lose their job. “I Need to Drive to Work!” read signs in various protests against this discriminatory action. People also need to drive a car to take children to school and go to hospitals.

In California in October 2003, now ex-governor Grey Davis, seeking to get votes on the eve of a special recall election, signed a law allowing undocumented immigrants to get driver’s licenses. However, the current governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger, annulled this law, after winning the election with the votes of racist supporters of “English only,” who in the past have approved a whole series of propositions denying immigrants access to fundamental services.

Thus the governor deprived hundreds of thousands of immigrants of a basic identification document, with the predictable result of an increase in the number of drivers on the highways who have no license and no insurance. Now, in a characteristic note for this racist actor, friend of the Austrian fascist Jörg Haider and admirer of the political talents of Hitler, Schwarzenegger has come out in favor of the anti-immigrant vigilantes on the southern border.

As for the “Real ID” law, it requires that driver’s licenses be based on a number of documents (birth certificate, Social Security card, proof of citizenship or legal residency, etc.), with additional biometric information, in a machine-readable format. Although it doesn’t specify what technology is to be used, it will probably be the same RFID (radio frequency identification) chip, the so-called “spy chip,” that the U.S. government wants to force all countries to use in their passports.

The law insists that if any state refuses to follow these rules, then in the rest of the country their licenses will not be recognized as an identification document. The residents of those states would have to use other documents, such as a passport, to get on a plane or eventually to travel by train. In fact, in places like New York, the mutual hostility with the rest of the country is such (in antiwar demonstrations there have been signs with the slogan, “U.S. Out of N.Y.!”) that demanding a passport for those entering or leaving New York could get to be very popular, on both sides of the Hudson River!

The “Real ID” law was tacked onto the supplementary military budget covering the cost of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. It was unanimously approved by the Senate without a single hearing and without debate (as was also the case in the House of Representatives). The director of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) technology and liberty program, Barry Steinhardt, warns: “This is a national ID, there’s no question about that. It may be issued by the 50 states, but it’s going to be the same documents, which will be backed up by a huge database.”

And once it exists, it won’t just be used for driver’s licenses. It will also doubtless be required to open a bank account, buy a house, or get treatment at a hospital. And it’s not only in the U.S. that this is happening – in Britain the Blair government, after being reelected by the votes of barely 20

percent of the electorate, is ratcheting up the pressure to ram through "fast-track" approval of a national ID card in a matter of weeks.

The scope of the new U.S. law is not limited to an ID card. The first section introduces a series of measures to make it more difficult to obtain political asylum or to stop deportation. From now on, anyone requesting asylum must submit "evidence" that would "corroborate" their allegations of maltreatment. As if torturers the world over, like the psychopaths at Abu Ghraib who were carrying out the orders of secretary of war Rumsfeld, would take photos of their deeds, and then give their victims an affidavit of torture that could be handed to the ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement – the latest incarnation of the *migra*, the hated U.S. immigration cops). The same section permits deportation even while an asylum petition is being heard, preventing courts from stopping it if the government claims that the individual belongs to or supports any organization on an administrative black list.

Another part of the law exempts the construction of a wall or barrier all along the border from any legal prohibition or restraint. The new "security" budget assigns some \$455 million to hiring more criminal investigators, ICE agents and deportation officials, and another \$177 million for more Border Patrol agents. It also authorizes unlimited sums to investigate and implement ground surveillance technologies (videocams, sensors and motion detectors).

The law is a veritable grab-bag of anti-immigrant repression, and has unleashed a wave of opposition in Mexico in particular. The Fox government sent a note of protest, in part to recover from the angry protests over the Mexican president's racist remark that Latino immigrants do the jobs that "not even blacks want to do." Even Cardinal Norberto Rivera called the U.S. pretense of sealing the border "ridiculous," criticizing the "walls of shame" (*La Jornada*, 16 May).

It is instructive that the new legal attack on immigrants, the most vulnerable section of the U.S. working class, was approved as part of the legislation financing the continuation of the imperialist war in the Near East. In point of fact, imperialist wars always involve an intensification of police repression and racist victimization "at home." This represents a consensus within the ruling class (both Democrats and Republicans voted for the war and for the draconian repressive laws such as the U.S.A. PATRIOT and Real ID acts) on the need to regiment the population and fence off the borders.

This bipartisan war front is also reflected in the increasing activity of fascist groups. While the Minutemen prowled along the Arizona border, other immigrant-bashing groups are springing up, such as NumbersUSA or the Coalition for Secure Driver's Licenses. And in line with new technologies, campaigns such as "reportillegals.com" and "noinvaders.org" incite the population to spy on and turn in their neighbors via the Internet.

This also creates the climate for outbreaks of xenophobic hatred against immigrants, like the racist "Tsunami Song" broadcast over the Hot 97 radio station in New York, last January, which reveled in the deaths of Chinese, Asians, Africans, children and mothers in the Indonesian tidal wave.

But by far the most dangerous of the scum who profit from tragedy and groove on oppression are the racist capitalist state with its attacks against the exploited and oppressed.

### **Mobilize the Multi-Ethnic and Multi-National Working Class Against Bipartisan Racist Offensive**

Following 9/11, the arrest of thousands of Arab and South Asian immigrants and the surge of chauvinist discrimination represented a blow against the whole of the U.S. working class. In recent months, the bourgeoisie, bogged down in Iraq, has undertaken a racist campaign of repression aimed at terrorizing millions of immigrant working people here.

The "Homeland Security" Administration seeks to "encourage states and localities to help enforce immigration laws," first in Alabama and then in Colorado, Idaho and Virginia, according to the *New York Times* (12 April 2004). Simultaneously, the federal government has carried out huge raids, such as the one at Newark, New Jersey's "Liberty Airport" where they arrested 134 passengers on one day in April 2004, or the Border Patrol raid in San Bernardino and Riverside counties of southern California, where they hauled in more than 150 immigrants (*Los Angeles Times*, 10 June 2004).

Between April 4 and 10 of this year, the new attorney general, Alberto Gonzales, carried out "Operation Falcon," in which more than 10,000 "fugitives" were arrested, among them a high percentage of immigrants, both legal and "illegal."

There have been numerous protests against the rise of anti-immigrant repression, but almost all are oriented toward seeking the support of bourgeois politicians. At a picket of over 100 people outside the Manhattan offices of the NY DMV on 13 April 2004, a series of clergymen and bourgeois politicians begged the governor to revise his decree. They stressed that an increase of unlicensed drivers would lead to more uninsured vehicles, raising insurance rates for everyone.

The month before, they took 500 immigrants to lobby the state legislature in Albany. In subsequent recommendations to the DMV, they outrageously suggested to "make licenses and other identification documents more fraud-proof" by using holograms and tamper-resistant paper. They want to divert immigrants' discontent into the sterile channels of bourgeois parliamentarism, and in so doing they legitimize talk of "secure" immigration.

More recently, the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC) put out a press release (18 May) fostering illusions in the Kennedy-McCain bill, which supposedly represents a "historic opportunity" for "comprehensive immigration reform." They call the plan a "win-win" solution, beneficial for both workers and bosses, and claim that it represents a "path to permanent residency and eventual citizenship."

The NYIC says, "We are eager to work with our lawmakers and President Bush to improve the bill." They don't mention the passage of the "Real ID" law, nor the fact that the Kennedy-McCain bill they praise would impose thousands of dollars of fines and penalties on undocumented immigrants

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## Mobilize to Defeat the Witchhunt! Basic Democratic Rights Under Attack

# Lynne Stewart Conviction Is Legal Terror

*The following leaflet was issued by the Internationalist Group on February 16.*

The conviction of radical civil liberties lawyer Lynne Stewart along with court interpreter Mohammed Yousry and paralegal Ahmed Sattar is a major blow against fundamental democratic rights in the United States. On February 10, after a trial that lasted almost seven months and jury deliberations of almost two weeks, a verdict was read out declaring Stewart, Yousry and Sattar guilty on all counts of the government's frame-up indictment. Stewart, who is 65, could spend the rest of her life behind bars, facing up to 30 years in jail for this bogus conviction. The government's intimidation tactics, which included repeatedly flashing the image of Osama bin Laden on a screen in the courtroom, evidently worked on the jury. Following the verdict, Stewart walked out of the courthouse to face a phalanx of reporters, photographers and TV cameras where she courageously vowed to "fight on. I'm not giving up," she promised. "I know I committed no crime. I know what I did was right." "Our civil liberties are eroded," she said, adding, "I hope this will be a wake-up call to all the citizens of this country, that you can't lock up the lawyers." As Stewart and her husband Ralph Poynter walked through the media gauntlet, supporters of the Internationalist Group led chants calling to "Free Lynne Stewart" and "The trial was a travesty, No police state!"

Stewart's original indictment was announced on prime time TV by then attorney general John Ashcroft. Following the verdict, his successor, Alberto Gonzales, the former White House counsel who endorsed use of torture against prisoners in Guantánamo and Iraq, declared that the verdicts send a message "that this department will pursue both those who carry out acts of terrorism and those who assist them." The message was then trumpeted by the capitalist media. The next morning, the jingoistic *New York Post* splashed Stewart's photo on the front page with the one-word headline "TRAITOR" and the kicker, "Terror Lawyer Lynne Guilty." The *Daily News* headlined "Terror Helper." The right-wing *Sun* and *New York Times* voiced the same theme in more staid language. The "embedded" bourgeois press marched in lockstep just as they did during the U.S. invasion of Iraq, and in the anti-Soviet hysteria around the McCarthy-era trial of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who were tried in the same courtroom. This is no accident, for the Stewart



Sue Kellogg

**Lynne Stewart, flanked by her husband Ralph Poynter, speaks to the press after frame-up conviction, February 10.**

trial and conviction are a strategic element of the government's wholesale assault on democratic rights as it seeks to regiment the population for Washington's terrorist "war on terror" whose aim is to nail down U.S. imperialist world domination.

In its first attempt, in March 2002, the U.S. government accused the defendants of aiding terrorism. When Judge John Koeltl threw out the charges as unconstitutionally vague, the government came back with a "superseding indictment" in which it accused the three of "conspiracy" to aid terrorism, murder, kidnapping. For the government, draconian conspiracy laws have the inestimable advantage that they don't have show proof of defendants actually *doing* something, only that they "conspired" to do it. Many of these laws were originally enacted on the pretext of going after drug trafficking "kingpins" and then widely used against labor leaders, radicals and others the government has targeted for repression. The latest batch of these laws, enacted under the Democratic administration of Bill Clinton and then expanded under Republican George W. Bush, purportedly go after "terrorists." In fact, they are being used to jail lawyers, immigrants and anyone else who fits the feds' "profile" of the "enemy within," while not one person has been charged in connection with the 9/11 World Trade Center attack.

The first "amended" charge against the three defendants is for "conspiracy to defraud the U.S. government" to violate "Special Administrative Measures" (SAMs) imposed since 1997 by

the U.S. Bureau of Prisons on the jailed sheik ~~Abdel Rahman~~, whose court-appointed lawyer was Lynne Stewart. Using a Clinton-era "anti-terrorist" law, the government declares it has the right to simply decree a gag order on any prisoner it deems a threat to national security, putting them in solitary confinement, cutting off all contact with the press or any other "special measure" it deems appropriate. The evidence against Stewart and her associates came principally from secret wiretaps on their phones and secret television surveillance of Stewart and Yousry's prison meetings with Rahman. Under U.S. law, lawyer-client communications are supposed to be confidential, and the government is not allowed to listen in. However, in the wake of the passage of the post-9/11 "U.S.A. PATRIOT Act," Attorney General Ashcroft issued an order that henceforth the government had unlimited discretion to eavesdrop on confidential attorney-client conversations, with no judicial oversight, of any one they have in custody.

Judge Koeltl ruled that the government had a right to impose the SAMs, and they were thus not challenged by the defense in the court hearings before the jury. Yet defenders of democratic rights must vigorously oppose and denounce these police-state measures. This is the domestic equivalent of the government's assertion that it has the right to hold prisoners incommunicado indefinitely, without right to a lawyer, at the Guantánamo Bay naval base it stole from Cuba. It is part and parcel of the Bush administration's claim that in conditions of wartime, the president under his authority as commander-in-chief of the armed forces has an unlimited right to set aside any and all laws that he finds inconvenient for the prosecution of war. Hence, the government's claim that it is not bound by Geneva Conventions against torture or maltreatment of prisoners of war. The conviction of Lynne Stewart and the other defendants on this charge of "conspiracy to defraud" for allegedly violating a blatantly unconstitutional government order is a measure of how far the U.S. has gone down the road toward a police state. Her supposed "crime" was to divulge a communiqué by Sheik Rahman. In contrast, in 1920 Socialist leader Eugene Debs ran for president from jail, having been locked up for his opposition to that imperialist war. Today, he would have been silenced by a "SAM."

The charges against Stewart, Yousry and Sattar of conspiracy to murder, kidnap and instigate violence were all cooked up on the basis of the flimsiest "evidence." The Rahman statement to the press withdrew the sheik's endorsement of a "ceasefire" agreement between his Islamic fundamentalist supporters and the Egyptian government, which had several hundred of them in prison. For the government, this amounted to a call for "violence" even though, in fact, the "ceasefire" was never rescinded. The claim that this amounted to a conspiracy to commit murder was based on the indiscriminate terrorist attack by Islamists on European tourists in Luxor, Egypt, which took place two years before any of the actions alleged by the government against the defendants. A *fatwa* (religious decree), issued by Sattar in the sheik's name in the wake of the September 2000 provocation by Ariel Sharon at the Al Aksa Mosque in Jerusalem, was taken by the government as supposed proof that de-

fendants were calling to "kill Jews everywhere." In fact, no evidence was presented that anyone was ever killed or harmed on the basis of the bogus "*fatwa*" – that's the beauty of "conspiracy" laws for a government bent on repression. In contrast, following Sharon's provocation hundreds of defenseless Palestinians, many of them young children, were gunned down by Israeli soldiers. Yet the wanton slaughter of Palestinians is not a crime in the eyes of the Zionists' imperialist godfathers in Washington.

The government's case was crude, and its courtroom tactics even cruder. Projecting the larger than life-size image of Osama bin Laden on a giant screen in the courtroom on more than one occasion, they were sending the "message" to the jury that the defendants were "enemies," even "traitors," and the judge's admonitions that they were not being tried for any connection with bin Laden or 9/11 had no effect in disguising this blatant appeal. In his summary, the craven government prosecutor repeated, over and over, at least 50 times in succession, that the defendants allegedly wanted to "kill Jews wherever they are," "kill Jewish people," "murder Jews," etc. Moreover, this came in the government's "rebuttal" to the defense summation, to which the defense had no right to reply. Deliberately seeking to whip up an "anti-terrorist" frenzy, the prosecution's case against Stewart is an ominous threat to any lawyers who dare to defend those accused of aiding "terrorism," such as the thousands of immigrants (mainly of Near Eastern and South Asian origin) who were indiscriminately rounded up and jailed, and in many cases viciously abused, without ever being granted a right to a lawyer (and even refusing to give out the names of those it had picked up in its dragnet).

The prosecution, the rigged trial and outrageous verdict against Stewart, Yousry and Sattar will have more than a "chilling" effect on civil liberties in the United States. It effectively eliminates the Sixth Amendment constitutional right to an attorney, as the National Lawyer's Guild underlined in condemning the verdict and calling for a "National Day of Outrage" over this atrocity. Stewart's attorney, Michael Tigar, vowed to vigorously appeal the verdict and said he was confident it would be overturned. Yet the guilty verdict (against all the defendants, on all counts) shocked many in the courtroom, who may have had illusions that justice would be done. In the current climate, with the present courts (including the Supreme Court that in December 2000 installed George W. Bush as president and commander in chief of U.S. imperialism by fiat), there can be no confidence that the outcome will be overturned. In fact, the verdicts show once again that there is no justice for working people, immigrants, the poor and oppressed in the capitalist courts.

The trial of Lynne Stewart comes amid a growing climate of intimidation. Since the election of George Bush last November, two leading journalists have been ousted even though the substance of their reports has never been disproved: CBS-TV news anchor (and anti-Soviet Cold Warrior) Dan Rather, for broadcasting information about how Bush evaded National Guard duty during the Vietnam War; and more recently the CNN news director, for stating the obvious fact that more than

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# Revolution



## CUNY Internationalist Clubs Call for United-Front Action **Drive Military Recruiters Off Campus!**

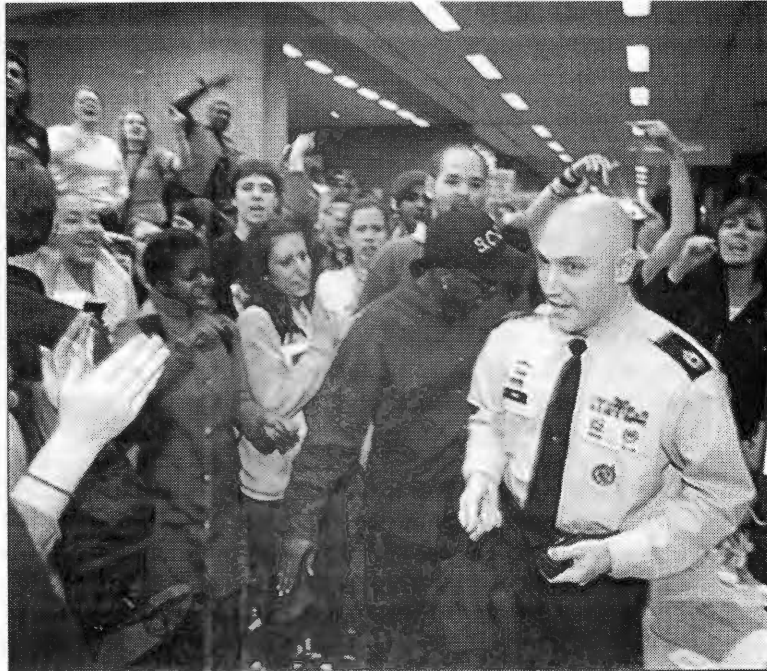
While the United States of American Imperialism continues its occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, the manpower for its colonial "crusade" is being stretched to the limit. Because of the mounting opposition to the slaughter the U.S. is carrying out in Iraq, the volunteer army is running short of volunteers. For four months in a row this spring, the Army failed to meet its recruiting quota. In May, even after lowering the quota by 17 percent, it still missed its reduced goal by 25 percent. The Army Reserve, meanwhile, has been missing its monthly quota since last October of 2004.

To get around the trouble it is having getting its targets (mainly minorities and working-class youth) to sign up for the slaughter in Iraq, the military has raised the age limit (to 39) and lowered educational requirements (10 percent of recruits have dropped out of high school). Meanwhile, recruiters are adopting desperate tactics, even more deceitful than their usual pitch ("we'll pay for your college education"). Potential recruits are shown how to mask drug tests and fake a high school diploma; according to CBS News, one recruiter threatened a young man with arrest if he didn't show up at the induction center.

It got to the point that the Army held a "values stand-down" for a day of lectures about ethics May 20, which many dismissed as a public relations stunt. But even so, the "hard sell" is reportedly taking a "hard toll" on the pitchmen themselves. Since October 2002, at least 37 members of the Army Recruiting Command have gone AWOL. A recruiter in New York said he was having "stomach problems and searing back pain," in addition to "bouts of depression" and had even "considered suicide" (*New York Times*, March 27). Raking in cannon fodder for the imperialist war machine just ain't what it used to be, it seems.

The government is making up for the shortfall with even more aggressive measures spying on high school and college students. It turns out that the Pentagon's "Joint Advertising Market Research Studies" division and a private contractor have secretly established a data base of 30 million 16-to-25-year-olds, including height, weight, Social Security numbers, grade-point averages, e-mail addresses and phone numbers! This is a blatant violation of the federal Privacy Act. In addition to such illegal tactics, the No Child Left Behind "educational reform" law orders schools to turn over information on all high school students, unless their parents sign a waiver.

The main problem the military faces in filling its quotas



Ted Warren/AP

**Protesters at Seattle Central Community College, January 20, ripped up Army literature and drove off recruiter.**

is that the brutal reality of the Iraq war is sinking in. With the death toll of U.S. soldiers now over 1,700 (compared to *tens of thousands of Iraqis* killed during the invasion and two years of colonial occupation), it's becoming clear that instead of "see the world" and "be all that you can be," enlisting means "go to Iraq and die." On top of this, mounting opposition to the war is being expressed in protests against military recruiters in schools and on campuses around the country.

On January 20, Inauguration Day, while George Bush was being coronated with imperial trappings in Washington, there were protests ranging from a "jazz funeral for democracy" in New Orleans' French Quarter (with a coffin bearing the Constitution and the USA Patriot Act) to a walkout by over 1,000 students at the University of Washington and Seattle Central Community College. At SCC, protesters chased military recruiters off campus. Calling them a "mob," the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* (4 February) reported: "The students hurled insults and water bottles, according to witnesses, forcing the recruiters to flee under the protection of campus security officers."

As the protests spread, college authorities began responding with repression of the protesters. On March 9 and 10, students at San Francisco State University and City College of New York protested the presence of military recruiters at





**Revolutionary Reconstruction Club sparked protests that ran military recruiters out of Bronx Community College every week for more than a month. Above, March 17 demonstration.**

campus job fairs. At SFSU over 100 people surrounded the Army and Air Force tables and after 90 minutes drove them out. This led to the arrest and suspension of three students and a staff worker at CCNY, and the suspension of several students at SFSU as well as sanctions against the International Socialist Organization and Students Against the War, affiliated with the ISO-led Campus Antiwar Network.

Despite the arrests and threats, protests have continued to mount. In Seattle, a walkout by 150 students on May 23 shut down three recruiting centers, while high school parent-teacher-student associations voted to ban military recruiters in the schools (*Seattle Weekly*, 15 June). Many of the protests have been at community colleges and state universities, as the Pentagon seeks to recruit its officer corps from the elite private universities. But at Columbia University in New York, the university senate voted overwhelmingly against reinstating the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC), which was terminated during the anti-Vietnam War protests three decades ago.

At the City University of New York, student clubs which publish *Revolution* newspaper (in accordance with the Internationalist Group) have been organizing to drive the military recruiters off campus. The same day antiwar protesters were arrested at CCNY, the Revolutionary Reconstruction Club at Bronx Community College held the first of several protests that ran the recruiters off campus every week for more than a month. A May 5 leaflet by the Internationalist Club at Hostos Community College reported:

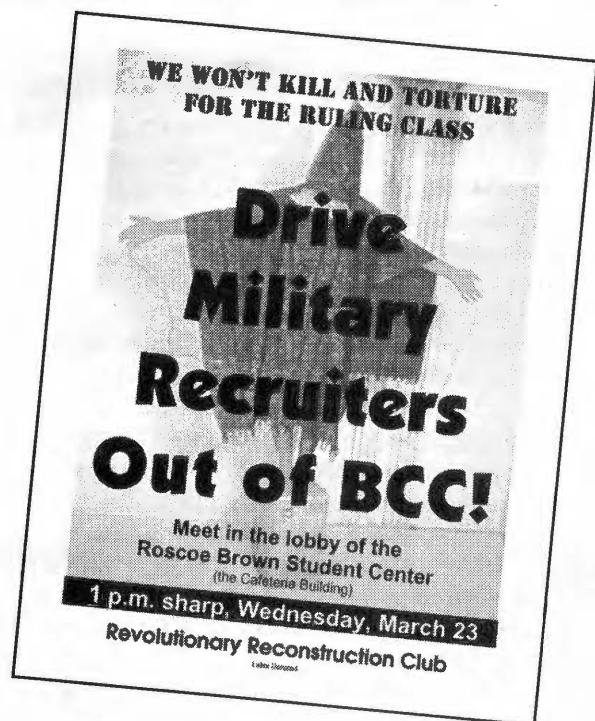
"When the Army showed up in camouflage fatigues at BCC on March 17, students in the cafeteria took up the chant, 'Military recruiters off campus now!' One called out, 'I'm not going to die for their army.' As students yelled, 'Out, out, out!' the recruiters disappeared. On March 23, the Army showed up again, did an about face and headed for the door.

On April 7, the Air Force exited as students chanted, 'Bye, bye, bye, military off campus.' On April 14, the Marines came and went, and when a united-front protest was called on April 21, the military didn't even try to show their faces."

Most left groups protesting the Iraq war and military recruiters carefully tailor their appeals to "democratic" demands that are acceptable to liberals, seeking to build a "broad" (class-collaborationist) antiwar movement. The Campus Antiwar Network, for example, says "Only the immediate withdrawal of US troops can bring any real possibility of democracy in the Middle East." CAN and other groups such as the "Troops Out Coalition" led by the Workers World Party call to "bring the troops home," and for different "priorities" ("education, not occupation," "books, not bombs").

In contrast to this fundamentally social-patriotic and pacifist appeal, the RRC and CUNY Internationalist Clubs took a revolutionary *class* position, calling to *defeat* the imperialist war and to break with all the capitalist parties (Democrats, Republicans, Greens, Nader). We point out how the colonial occupation is linked to racist repression in the U.S., and call for working-class action against the bosses' war, "at home" and abroad. Our flyers proclaimed, loud and clear, "We Won't Kill and Torture for the Ruling Class." A March 23 leaflet by the Revolutionary Reconstruction Club at BCC described the successful protest the week before when recruiters showed up in the campus cafeteria:

"The recruiters were unable to go about their deadly 'business' of preying on students there. They kept making calls on their cell phones, evidently seeking orders. At one point they were escorted down the hall by campus cops. FINALLY, OUR PROTEST DROVE THE RECRUITERS OUT OF THE BUILDING. As students yelled 'Out, out, out!' they disappeared.



"Club members and others marched across campus chanting 'Military recruiters off campus now,' 'Defeat U.S. imperialism!' and 'Workers strikes against the war!' We gathered in front of the Career Development building. One young woman spoke about how the military convinced her 17-year-old brother to sign up; he will be sent to Iraq in August. Her cousin is already in Iraq, and her godsister has also been sent to Iraq.

"Another young woman who joined the protest spoke about a co-worker who was killed in Iraq, leaving six brothers and sisters. She told how the military recruiters descend on Lehman High School, in her neighborhood, 'every time there's a graduation.' A young man active in the RRC told how his stepsister in the National Guard had to drop out of school. After coming back from one stint in Iraq, she was sent back again.

"During the protest, speakers from the RRC and CUNY Internationalist Clubs stressed that the real interest of working-class, poor and minority people in the U.S. is to side with the Iraqi people's struggle to drive out the colonial occupation. We linked the torture and occupation in Iraq to racist killings by cops in the Bronx, like that of Amadou Diallo. The Democrats and Republicans are responsible for the war and the cops, we explained – we need a workers party! Speakers pointed out how tuition hikes and TAP [financial aid] cuts drive poor students into the arms of the military. One poster demanded: No Tuition - Open Admissions.

"A speaker compared the military recruiters to the slave catchers who before Abolition made money by seizing escaped slaves and returning them to their masters. Frederick Douglass and other radical abolitionists organized mass mobilizations to drive the slave catchers and bounty hunters out."

The BCC protests demanded that all charges against the CCNY Four be dropped, and the Internationalist Group distributed a leaflet (see below) at several CUNY campuses calling to shut down CCNY over the arrests and for united-front action by students, faculty and campus workers to drive all military and cop recruiters out of City University.

## Police-State Repression at City College

### Students, Faculty, Workers: ***Mobilize to Shut Down CCNY*** **Military Recruiters Out of CUNY!**

*The following leaflet was issued by the Internationalist Group on March 17*

On the eve of the second anniversary of the U.S.' invasion of Iraq, the administration of the City University of New York is waging war on the "home front." CUNY officials are attempting to stifle opposition by imposing a police lockdown on the 19 campuses of the largest urban university in the country. On Wednesday, March 9, three City College undergraduate students (Nick Bergreen, Justino Rodriguez and Hadas Thier) were brutally arrested during a peaceful protest against the presence of military recruiters on campus and charged with everything from disorderly conduct to resisting arrest and assault. Two days later, an administrative assistant in the theater department, Carol Lang, was seized by police at her workplace in the presence of representatives of her union (DC 37). Lang was locked up in

The Tombs, the holding pen in downtown Manhattan, and finally released at 12:30 a.m. on Sunday. The CCNY Four face up to a year in jail on these bogus charges.

What happened at City College on March 9 was a textbook case of police provocation. As soon as the CCNY students and staffers began chanting "U.S. out of Iraq!" and "Recruiters off campus" at a National Guard table at a job fair, they were jumped by a mob of 20 security guards and hustled off into a corridor where the protesters could be beaten behind closed doors. According to witnesses, Bergreen was tackled by a private goon, then pinned to the floor with a foot on his back. Rodriguez was thrown against the wall by a campus cop; when he called out, "look what they're doing to me," a guard slammed his head against the wall again. Thier was arrested for taking pictures of this cop brutalization with the camera on her cell phone. A New



# War on Iraq, CUNY Under Attack

York *Newsday* (14 March) reporter wrote: "Not a single student or staffer I talked to who was there saw anyone attack a security guard. It was the other way around, they said."

These arrests were no "mistake," this is not campus cops gone wild or "out of control," as some liberals have suggested. They are totally under control and in control – that's the point that university authorities are making with this crackdown. CCNY president Gregory Williams parroted the cops' cock and bull story about three protesters supposedly "assaulting" 20 security guards (including rent-a-thugs from the Burns Security agency). CUNY immediately suspended the three students and the secretary, without a shred of due process. Thier, a petite woman, was branded a "continuing danger" and barred from setting foot on campus. Although CUNY "peace officers" are not police, they are empowered to make arrests, carry weapons and use deadly force (their arsenal includes hollow-point bullets, munitions that even the NYPD is not supposed to use). They are a menace to all who study or work at CUNY. It is urgent that students, faculty and staff mobilize to demand: **Drop the charges! Rescind the suspensions! All cops off campus!**

Already the New York Civil Liberties Union has raised "concerns about the state of free speech on campus." They're right to be concerned: free speech and academic freedom are under full-scale assault in the halls of academe. But the right to protest won't be won by appealing to campus authorities not to be so "heavy-handed." Already, the CUNY tops are circulating "guidelines" for "demonstrations/disruptions" which include pens to confine anyone who dares to protest. CUNY tops seem intent on provoking a "free speech" fight, such as the 1964 "battle of Berkeley" when thousands of University of California students took over Sproul Plaza and imposed their right to free political expression. They want an explosion of student unrest? They should get more than they bargained for. **For student-worker mass action to drive military recruiters out of CUNY!**

The cop assault on antiwar protesters was no isolated incident at CUNY. Protesting this on the faculty Senate Forum, CCNY professor Bill Crain noted the parallel with the persecution of Miguel Malo going back to August 2001. Malo was holding a sign protesting cuts at Hostos Community College when he was assaulted by CUNY security personnel, who after viciously beating him then arrested him on the same frame-up assault and resisting arrest charges now being used against the CCNY protesters. Crain himself, a tenured professor and head of the CCNY College of Liberal Arts and Sciences faculty council, was arrested and sent to The Tombs last summer for the "crime" of attempting to enter Baruch College after showing his CUNY faculty ID. Repression at CUNY is extreme, and it is escalating.

This is part of a wave of neo-McCarthyite repression in universities around the country. And just as the late 1940s and '50s witch hunt was the home front of the anti-Soviet Cold War, to ferret out the "enemy within," the new purges are part and parcel of the bipartisan imperialist "war on terror." Two years ago, York College adjunct professor Mohammed Yousry

was "relieved of teaching duties" (fired) after the government charged him with aiding "terrorism" as a court-appointed translator. An investigating committee of the American Association of University Professors condemned this as a violation of academic freedom. Then last December, Susan Rosenberg was fired as an adjunct at John Jay College on the explicit grounds that her presence might offend the cops who populate the college.

A few blocks downtown from CCNY, at Columbia University a full-scale campaign of Zionist persecution is underway targeting Palestinian and Near Eastern professors on bogus charges of harassing Jewish students. Recently, Columbia professor Rashid Khalidi was dropped from an NYC Department of Education professional development program after the conservative *New York Sun* denounced him for rightly calling Israel's occupation of Palestinian areas "racist." Earlier, a huge campaign was orchestrated by the *New York Post* and the rest of the right-wing gutter press demanding that Columbia University professor Nicholas De Genova be fired for advocating the defeat of U.S. imperialism in its war on Iraq. Currently, yahoos in the Colorado state legislature are trying to get Ward Churchill, a professor of Native American studies at the University of Colorado, fired for writing that the 11 September 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were U.S. imperialism's "chickens coming home to roost."

The arrests at CCNY last week are another vivid example of how the government is intent on criminalizing "unpatriotic" dissent in wartime. Everyone remembers how they locked up 1,800 demonstrators arrested on the flimsiest pretexts in order to make New York City "safe" for the Republican National Convention. Throughout the last century, imperialist war abroad has meant police-state repression at home. During World War I, the revolutionary syndicalists of the Industrial Workers of the World (the "Wobblies") were jailed by the hundreds for their "free speech" fights against the imperialist slaughter. In World War II, the Trotskyists and militant union leaders were imprisoned for opposing the second imperialist global war. In addition, there were the tens of thousands of Japanese Americans thrown into concentration camps in that war, and the thousands of Near Eastern origin arrested and held incommunicado as the U.S. launched its war on Afghanistan.

This repression cannot be fought by appealing for justice from the capitalist injustice system. Three and a half years after his frame-up arrest, Miguel Malo's case is still stuck in the courts. Nor will calls on the state attorney general (Democrat Elliot Spitzer) to conduct an "outside investigation" achieve anything. The Democrats are just as hot for repression as the CUNY Trustees appointed by Republicans Giuliani, Bloomberg and Pataki. Democratic mayoral contender "Freddie" Ferrer just declared that the cops who fired 41 bullets at African immigrant Amadou Diallo, killing him in cold blood on the doorstep of his home, committed "no crime." The Democrats as well as Republicans voted for wars on Af-

*continued on page 58*



# Militant Protest Sinks BMCC "Homeland Security" Program

At "CUNY Day" on March 23, Borough of Manhattan Community College students and faculty celebrated the demise of the "Homeland Security" program planned by the downtown Manhattan campus of the City University of New York. The sinister program was dropped because of the campaign of protest and exposure initiated by the CUNY Internationalist Clubs last fall.

To the strains of a trumpet playing a funeral dirge, members of the BMCC Student Government Association and the faculty union, the Professional Staff Congress, kicked off the CUNY Day events by marching into the campus cafeteria with a coffin bearing a sign saying: "SGA - PSC Say: R.I.P. Homeland Security Program." SGA president Jason Negron noted, "Normally a funeral is a sad event. This is a happy occasion. We killed the Homeland Security program, and now we're burying it. We're proud of that."



Internationalist photo

Following the revelations published last October in *Revolution*, the newspaper of the CUNY Internationalist Clubs, students and professors angrily reacted to the attempt by the school administration to sneak in this program.\* Planned courses included "interrogation techniques" and "technology for surveillance." On December 9, a spirited protest marched through BMCC chanting "No 'Homeland Security' at BMCC." Posters of the infamous photo of an Iraqi torture victim of U.S. "interrogation" at the Abu Ghraib prison asked, "Interrogation 101, Coming Soon to BMCC?" Two weeks later, a meeting of the BMCC Faculty Council erupted in what the right-wing *New York Sun* called a "firestorm" of protest, in which 15 students and professors indignantly denounced the program.

"'Homeland Security' Certificate Plan Is Dropped," reported the *Clarion* (February 2005), newspaper of the CUNY faculty union, the Professional Staff Congress. This victory was also featured on the front page of the CUNY Graduate Center *Advocate*, which reported that BMCC President Anthony Perez told the paper "the college is no longer moving forward with the proposed certificate program" while extensively quoting the Internationalist Group on the fight against it.

A memo by CUNY University Student Senate chair

Lauren Fasano reported that Perez had formally told her the "BMCC administration would not be moving forward with the implementation of this program" and that reconsideration of the program "was very unlikely." As Fasano notes, "both students and faculty were adamantly against the program being implemented."

Perez' slippery phrase about "not moving forward" with the program is certainly deliberate, leaving the door open to trying to resuscitate it later when no one is looking. So BMCC students and faculty held a funeral ceremony to drive the last nails into the coffin of the "Fatherland Security" program and to make sure it stays dead and buried.

Vigilance and energetic protest were able to defeat this brazen attempt to draft CUNY into the U.S.' imperialist "war on terror," which is really an attempt to terrorize the world's population into submission. Students and faculty at the BMCC campus of 19,000 students, located less than a mile from the World Trade Center, were not intimidated by the government-sponsored war hysteria. As speakers at the March 23 event noted, the war on Iraq is also a war on working people, students, minorities and immigrants here.

After the victory of shutting down the "Homeland Security" program, the CUNY Internationalist Clubs call on opponents of imperialism and the militarization of the universities to redouble efforts and mount a university-wide action to drive military recruiters off campus!

\* See "'Fatherland Security' Hits CUNY," *The Internationalist* No. 20, January-February 2005

# Trial Adjourned, Again, To Sept. 6

## Persecution of Miguel Malo Continues



Internationalist photo

Supporters of Miguel Malo rally in his defense opposite Bronx Criminal Court at June 7 hearing.

**Drop the Charges!  
Stop the Witchhunt!**

### PRESS RELEASE OF CUNY ACTION TO DEFEND MIGUEL MALO

On June 7, the trial of Miguel Malo was once again postponed, this time until September 6. It was at least the 45th time the Hostos Community College student leader has had to appear in court since he was arrested in August 2001, for the "crime" of holding up a sign in the south Bronx campus of the City University of New York (CUNY). In a courtroom filled with 30 of Malo's supporters, the prosecution sent a substitute Assistant District Attorney to say that the D.A.'s office was not ready for trial – after 46 months!

Earlier in the morning, a lively rally took place in front of Bronx District Attorney Robert Johnson's office across the street from the court. Some 40 students, faculty and activists chanted, "CUNY is not a prison, Defend Miguel Malo," and "Defend Miguel Malo, Drop the charges now!" Demonstrators also linked the prosecution of Miguel with recent arrests of students and a staff member at City College who were protesting the presence of military recruiters on campus.

Miguel Malo, a former Student Senate president at Hostos Community College, faces up to a year in jail for protesting cuts in bilingual and ESL (English as a Second Language) academic programs and increased academic fees. Malo was arrested and falsely charged with assaulting two "peace officers" at Hostos.

### Piden retirar cargos a activista estudiantil



Miguel Malo, activista estudiantil.

JOSE AGUIRRE/EL DIARIO

EL BRONX, NY. — Estudiantes y profesores de Hostos Community College llevarán a cabo hoy una manifestación frente a la Corte Criminal de El Bronx, en defensa del estudiante Miguel Malo, acusado de agredir a un oficial de seguridad durante una manifestación contra cortes de cursos bilingües y de inglés como segundo idioma.

Durante un foro en defensa de Malo realizado ayer en Hostos, el estudiante dijo que ha luchado durante cuatro años contra el sistema, "y todavía me siento con fuerzas para seguir luchando".

De acuerdo con los defensores del estudiante, Malo enfrenta un año de cárcel "por el crimen de sostener una pancarta de protesta".

El hecho ocurrió durante una manifestación en el 2001 en Hostos, en la

que —según alegan los defensores— Malo fue agredido por un guardia de seguridad del plantel.

Durante más de tres años, Malo ha tenido que comparecer en corte en más de 40 ocasiones.

Según un comunicado de prensa, Miguel Malo era vicepresidente del Senado Estudiantil de Hostos Community College cuando fue arrestado "por sostener una pancarta fuera de la cafetería, en protesta contra los recortes en la educación bilingüe, el aumento de los pagos para el ESL y la reducción del horario de la biblioteca".

El juicio contra Malo efectuado en el 2003 fue declarado nulo. El otro proceso por los cargos de agresión se iniciará hoy y, de ser hallado culpable, podría ser sentenciado a un año de cárcel.

### Article on Miguel Malo case from *El Diario-La Prensa*.

In fact, the CUNY officers brutally assaulted him.

As Malo's supporters left the courtroom Tuesday, they ridiculed the judicial system. Hostos students said they would be introducing a new course to the curriculum this fall, "Injustice 101." Subject matter would include: "self-assault," how police attack individuals, then accuse their victims of assault; and "testifying," how police lie on the stand — theory, technique and practice. The first class will be held at Bronx Criminal Court on September 6, at 9:30 a.m., to see the criminal injustice system in action.

Malo's first trial in December 2003 was rigged from the start, as the judge repeatedly prevented the defense from calling witnesses and raising Miguel's right to free speech, finally ending in a mistrial. Renowned radical defense attorney Lynne Stewart took up Malo's defense, but could no longer represent him after a frame-up conviction in a federal "anti-terrorism" show trial. In his second trial, Miguel is being defended by Karen Funk, who represented some of the 1,800

Internationalist photo



**At Hostos College meeting to defend Miguel Malo sponsored by Professional Staff Congress and student groups on June 6, professor holds up picture of Miguel Malo's back covered with welts following his release from police custody in August**

defendants arrested in protests against the 2004 Republican National Convention.

At the pre-hearing rally, protesters also highlighted the case of CCNY staff worker Carol Lang, who came to court on behalf of Miguel. Ms. Lang was arrested in her office after the March 2005 protest against military recruiters, and now faces a second month of suspension without pay. All those who defend the right of free speech are encouraged to come to a demonstration supporting Carol Lang on Monday, June 13, at 10:00 a.m. outside CUNY's central office 535 East 80th Street in Manhattan.

The persecution of Miguel Malo, Carol Lang and others underlines the urgency of defending the right to protest in wartime. As demonstrators chanted on Tuesday, "War on Iraq, CUNY under attack." Miguel Malo has received support from the CUNY faculty union (the Professional Staff Congress), University Faculty Senate, University Student Senate, student governments throughout the CUNY system, as well as labor, community and immigrant rights groups.

## Lynne Stewart...

*continued from page 18*

a dozen newsmen had been shot down in Iraq by U.S. forces. Now appeals courts have decreed that prominent journalists are to be jailed for refusing to reveal their sources. Even though most states have laws protecting journalists' right to maintain the confidentiality of their informants, in order to protect press freedom, the courts have ruled that this right is trumped by ... "national security," just as the government claims it can throw lawyer-client confidentiality out the window in the name of fighting "terrorism." Yet by far the biggest terrorist of them all is the United States government, and the purpose of these prosecutions is precisely to terrorize the American population.

This is part of the imperialist war "at home," which is at bottom a capitalist war against working people and the oppressed. The legal "injustice system" only serves to carry out this onslaught, as it has done in every imperialist war, from locking up reds in World War I, to locking up Japanese Americans and Trotskyists dur-

ing World War II, and locking up immigrants in the current war. The response must be to mobilize independently of the capitalist politicians, who are all responsible for the wave of repression, as the Democrats try to "out-Bush Bush" in their calls for "anti-terror" repression on the docks, threats against North Korea, and the like. It must be clearly stated that the bourgeois state is not "neutral" nor can it be pressured into doing justice; on the contrary, with its courts, cops and armed forces, it is the armed fist of the capitalist class. The Internationalist Group, which has been active in supporting the defense, says that Lynne Stewart should be honored for her courageous battle to uphold democratic rights. We say that the fight against the frame-up prosecution and conviction of her and her co-defendants must be waged by mobilizing the *class power* of the international working class against the imperialist war and the domestic repression that is its internal front.

*Free Lynne Stewart! Defeat the Witchhunt! No Police State!*

## Free Judith Miller...

*continued from page 12*

It is part of a broader offensive to bring the pliant liberal media to heel, and a drive by the regime to enforce government secrecy as part of the "war on terror." As we have remarked before, imperialist war abroad means police-state repression "at home," to regiment the country for war without end.

Judith Miller was not only a cheerleader for the invasion and "drum major for war," in liberal media critic Norman Solomon's phrase, she is at the very least a conscious and eager accessory to mass murder, with the blood of thousands of dead Iraqis on the keys of her laptop computer. But she is being jailed as part of the onslaught against the right of free speech that is supposedly "enshrined" in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Class-conscious workers and all defenders of democratic rights should demand that Judith Miller be freed in order to defend their right to know the secrets of the government that oppresses them and the rest of the world.

Today, we occasionally get a peek at a tiny part of those dark secrets through the rare unauthorized leak, like the photos that emerged of the pervasive torture, sexual degradation and murder of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib. It will take *international socialist revolution* to reveal the full scope of the crimes dreamed up by these sick warmongers in the White House, the Pentagon and Langley and justified by their camp followers in the capitalist media.

In the early days of the Soviet republic, under Lenin and Trotsky, amid a flowering of culture suddenly freed from the shackles of the tsarist autocracy, revolutionary architects Konstantin Melnikov and the Vesnin brothers (Aleksandr and Viktor) drew up plans for the Moscow offices of the Communist newspaper, the Leningrad *Pravda* (The Truth). Both designs had windows on all sides so that the workers could look in and see what the journalists were up to. Needless to say, under Stalin's bureaucratic rule these plans were never realized. When workers soviets rule, led by a genuinely revolutionary party, such a building will be built as the home for a revolutionary press that really is an *Ami du Peuple*. ■



## From Iraq to Brazil:

# Women's Liberation Is Only Possible Through Socialist Revolution

*The following is a translation of a bulletin of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil, section of the League for the Fourth International. It is based on forums held by the LQB at the state teachers union of Rio de Janeiro (SEPE-RJ), in Rio (February 18) and Volta Redonda (February 23).*

On this March 8, International Women's Day, women's rights are under attack on a worldwide scale. In Iraq, the colonial occupation authorities are imposing a Shiite ascendancy, while in the heart of the empire, the right to abortion is threatened not only by the Republicans of George Bush but also by the Democrats. Here in Brazil, in the third year of the government headed by Luiz

Inácio Lula da Silva and his Workers Party (PT), we have not even won the elementary right for women to control their own bodies and to end an unwanted pregnancy. There are more than 1.4 million clandestine abortions annually in Brazil, and thousands of women die every year due to complications resulting from them. At the same time, almost 14 million women, constituting 45 percent of all women wage earners, and above all black women, earn the minimum wage (or less), one of the lowest in the world. But Lula's popular-front government, which ties working people and women to their exploiters and oppressors, *opposes winning the right to abortion and defends, tooth and nail, a starvation minimum wage.*

We in the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista, who have vigorously opposed the PT's popular-frontism for the last 15 years, fight for the unlimited right to free abortion on demand, at the simple request of the woman, along with high-quality health care; for day care centers, open 24 hours a day, to attend to the needs of working mothers; for equal pay for equal work; for the socialization of household tasks and the integration of women into social labor outside the home. At the same time, we warn that simply doubling the minimum wage of misery (over a space of four years!), as the World March of Women proposes, would leave millions of women workers condemned to poverty. The feminists accept the capitalist system, only seeking to soften its consequences. We Trotskyists, on the other hand, insist that no bourgeois government will, or can, undertake the economic mea-



Marcha Mundial das Mulheres

**Contingent of the Contag (agricultural workers union) in the World March of Women in São Paulo, 8 March. The fight against women's oppression is inseparable from the fight against exploitation.**

sures which are necessary to lay the basis for genuine equality between the sexes and for the liberation of women from their age-old oppression, and that women's liberation will only be possible by uniting the efforts of men and women workers in *international socialist revolution.*

## March 8 – International Women's Day – and Revolutionary Struggle

International Women's Day is a proletarian holiday. From the beginning of the 19th century, women have been fighting for their rights: an eight-hour workday, against child labor, equal votes for women. In 1857, some women strikers in New York City marched on March 8 to demand equal wages and working conditions. In the great NYC garment workers strike of 1908-09, the women workers commemorated this date. Inspired by this struggle, the woman socialist (later Communist) leader Clara Zetkin proposed to the Second International that it officially adopt March 8 as International Women's Day. It was first celebrated in Germany in 1911. Two weeks later, 148 women workers in a garment factory in New York died in a tragic fire, a tragedy which subsequently impelled the struggle to unionize women.

March 8 was celebrated in Russia for the first time in 1913, organized by the Bolsheviks, who in their newspaper put forward analyses of the oppression of women and a program for emancipation. In 1914, Anna Ulianova Elizarova – Lenin's sister – published the first issue of *Rabotnitsa* (The Woman

Worker), under extremely trying circumstances, since the police rounded up and arrested the entire editorial board of the paper except for her. This was the first magazine devoted specially to questions about women's liberation in Russia, and indeed, in the world. Nadezhda Krupskaya, Lenin's companion, wrote in the lead article of the first issue of *Rabotnitsa*: "That which unites the working woman with the working man is much stronger than that which divides them. They are united by their common lack of rights, their common need, their common conditions which are the exploitation of their labour, their common struggle and their common goals."

The most important International Women's Day in history occurred in Petrograd on 8 March 1917, when women textile workers undertook a strike "for bread and peace" involving more than 90,000 workers. It was the beginning of the Russian Revolution, which resulted in the taking of power by the soviets, under Bolshevik leadership,<sup>1</sup> in the October Revolution which gave rise to the first workers state in history. Among the prominent communist women leaders were Rosa Luxemburg, leader of the German Communist Party, who was assassinated in January 1919 on the orders of the social-democratic leadership, Alexandra Kollontai and others. The young Soviet republic soon legalized abortion and divorce, establishing legal equality for women. Even more important, it began to lay the economic foundations that would make possible the liberation of women (child care centers, collective restaurants and laundries, etc.). The Communist International adopted the Bolshevik practice of creating special bodies for work among women, in order to win the best women fighters to the revolutionary cause.

Many of these gains were reversed or limited following the political counterrevolution carried out by Stalin and the layer of nationalist bureaucrats who betrayed the internationalist policy of the Bolsheviks Lenin and Trotsky. But the economic basis of the collectivized means of production remained, even though greatly weakened, until the social counterrevolution that destroyed the Soviet Union and the deformed workers states of East Europe in 1989-1992. That is why the Trotskyists, in fighting for a proletarian political revolution to overthrow the parasitic bureaucracy, always defended the USSR against imperialism and the threat of capitalist restoration. Following the reestablishment of capitalist rule, the lives of working men and women became a genuine hell. In East Germany (formerly the German Democratic Republic – DDR) the percentage of women working outside the home fell from 95 percent to 50 percent, and more than 500,000 teachers were fired as "communists."

<sup>1</sup> The soviets (workers councils) arose both in the failed Russian Revolution of 1905 and in the victorious Russian Revolution of 1917, becoming the basis for the early Soviet state. They were later usurped by the seizure of political power by the conservative, nationalist bureaucracy under Stalin in 1923-24. The Bolshevik party was led in 1917 by V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky. In contrast to the "broad" social-democratic parties, which almost uniformly capitulated to "their own" bourgeoisie in the first imperialist world war, the Bolsheviks were a party of the revolutionary vanguard, which took a revolutionary defeatist position in World War I, laying the basis for the subsequent conquest of power.

## Global Reactionary Offensive Against Women

Currently, International Women's Day is commemorated in various countries, but this tribute has lost its true sense as a day of proletarian struggle. The bourgeoisie with its ideological apparatus only wants to demonstrate the value of women as a housewife, mother, and wife. There is a whole effort to confine women to the home. One of the instruments used for this is the genre of romance novels, in which the woman is always passionate, seeking marriage in order to build a family. Friedrich Engels, in his book *The Family, Private Property and the State*, shows us how the devaluation and oppression of women began with the forming of the monogamous family which, together with the accumulation of an economic surplus of goods gave rise to inheritance and the need to guarantee paternity, leading to the formation of classes and of the state, in order to defend the interests of the ruling classes. In this way, women were confined and became the property of men.

With the development of industry, the bourgeoisie needed women's labor power. As a result, women returned to work, one of the key aspects of their emancipation, but under conditions of exploitation, turning women into cheap labor. Without any assistance in taking care of children, without free child care, restaurants and laundries, work became a burden for women. Today, new high-tech industries preferentially hire young women workers, many of them single mothers. Women are now employed in many jobs, but with wages below those earned by men. But even with all the oppression, women continue to struggle for their rights, which continues to worry the bourgeoisie.

As the French utopian socialist Charles Fourier wrote, almost two centuries ago, in 1808, in a memorable phrase quoted by Karl Marx in *Capital*: "The degree of emancipation of woman is the natural measure of general emancipation." For Marxists, the counterpart to this observation is that the liberation of women from their centuries-old oppression and exploitation is tightly linked to the struggle of all sectors of the oppressed. (See the LQB pamphlet, *Libertação da mulher mediante a revolução socialista*.)

Around the world, attacks against women have been brutal, particularly in the semi-colonial countries. The *Jornal do Brasil* (6 February 2005) recently published an article titled, "Where It's a Risk to Be a Woman":

"In India, the number of women is quite a bit lower than the number of men: for every 1,000 men, there are 927 women. In Punjab, the average is 793. The preference for male babies leads to feticide of female embryos. In the state of Punjab, in the north of the country, cases of severe malnutrition are far more prevalent among newborn girls, 18.35 percent, compared to 2.35 percent among male babies, according to government statistics. The number of boys who have learned to read and write is twice that of girls; as concerns treatment of sickness, boys get preference here as well. In this country, 80 percent of the Indian population are of the Hindu religion, which believes in the perpetuation of the family by the patriarchal line. Many women suffer maltreatment at the hands of their husbands or parents-in-law if they don't have a male baby."

In northern Nigeria, the *sharia* (Islamic law) was introduced. The League for the Fourth International protested the case of Safiya Hussain, a 35-year-old woman who was condemned to death by stoning for the supposed "crime" of adultery (see "Stop the Execution of Safiya Hussain, Free Her Now!" *The Internationalist* No. 13, May-June 2002).

### In Afghanistan and Iraq: Women Under Colonial Occupation

Today in Afghanistan, the imperialists brag about the supposed "triumph" of "democracy" since Afghan women vote. Yet Afghan women are still bound to feudal slavery. U.S. president Bush boasts of invading the country and overthrowing the Taliban regime in order to liberate women. But the Taliban, like their *mujahedin* rivals who are now in power in Kabul, were financed, trained and armed in the 1980s by the imperialists who set up a counterrevolutionary force to combat the Soviet Union and the bourgeois reform regime in Afghanistan. At that time, the Islamic warriors killed men and women teachers for teaching young girls to read and write. The entire Brazilian "left" (PT, PSTU,<sup>2</sup> PCO,<sup>3</sup> POR<sup>4</sup> and others) joined in the anti-Soviet hysteria, while authentic Trotskyists proclaimed, "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan! Extend the Social Gains of the October Revolution to the Afghan Peoples!"

After Gorbachev and the Stalinist bureaucracy withdrew Soviet forces from the country, a step which was a mortal blow to the very existence of the Soviet Union, the situation of Afghan women suffered a grave setback: education for girls was outlawed, women teachers were fired. Ten years later, the imperialists "discovered" the hellish situation of Afghan women, in order to turn these issue into a battle flag for their terrorist "war on terror." While many leftists remained silent about the oppression of women in Afghanistan, and even excused it with references to Islamic culture, the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista and the Comitê de Luta Classista (Class-Struggle Caucus, a union opposition group linked to the LQB) denounced this. In 2002, the congress of the National Confederation of Education Workers (CNTE), the CLC delegate put forward a motion stating, among other things:

"In Kabul and elsewhere, women, with the exception of a few especially courageous cases, continue to be confined in the mobile prison of the *burka* (a veil which covers a woman's entire body, making her a creature without a face). They still walk like shadows among the ruins of the cities and villages destroyed by the bombs of imperialism's fundamentalist allies over more than 20 years and then by the current war of the imperialists. Now that 'freedom' has supposedly been achieved, the capitalist spokesmen say that women use the *burka* not due to the terror of the Taliban but because they supposedly 'freely' decide to cover themselves with this shroud.

<sup>2</sup> Partido Socialista dos Trabalhadores Unificado, United Socialist Workers Party, followers of the late Argentine fake-Trotskyist Nahuel Moreno.

<sup>3</sup> Partido Causa Operária, Workers Cause Party, allied with the Argentine Partido Obrero of Jorge Altamira, another pretender to Trotskyism.

<sup>4</sup> Partido Operário Revolucionário, Revolutionary Workers Party, followers of the Bolivian pseudo-Trotskyist Guillermo Lora.

The imperialists 'won,' and Afghan women lost again."

The reformist PSTU put up a woman supporter to argue against voting for this motion.

Following their "triumph" in Afghanistan at the end of 2001, the imperialists invaded Iraq in March 2003, imposing bloody colonial rule. The spokesmen for Yankee imperialism claim that their aim was to free the Iraqis from the yoke of the "diabolical" dictator Saddam Hussein. On the contrary, they submerged the Iraqis in hell. Recently, after rigging pseudo-elections at gunpoint at the end of January, the colonial administrators are now rigging a Shiite pseudo-government. These satraps of the real emperors of the Mesopotamian lands have declared their intention to impose *sharia* (Islamic law) which would place women formally under the control of men, isolating them and institutionalizing the denial of their democratic rights. The "Iraqi Governing Council" which served as a front for the imperialists already tried this, approving Decree 137 in December 2003, which unleashed protests by women in Baghdad and other Iraqi cities.

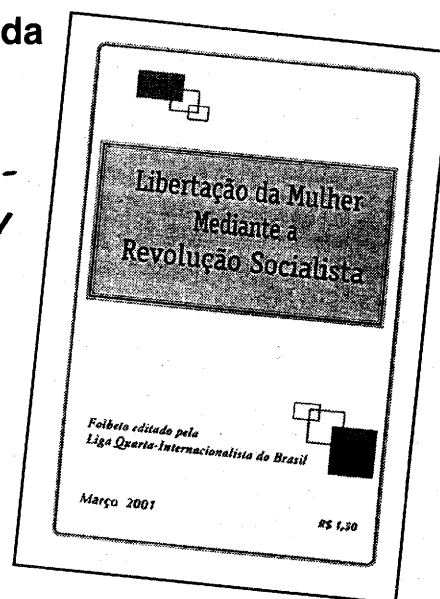
Until the Gulf War of 1990-91, Iraq was one of the most secular countries of the Near East, although social progress was largely limited to the urban centers. Women in the capital and big cities dressed in European clothes, as did the men; young women even wore mini-skirts. This was not only reflected in the clothing: there were significant numbers of women professors, doctors and teachers. But this was not because of any virtue on the part of Saddam Hussein, a brutal nationalist dictatorship along the lines of Chiang Kai-shek in China before the revolution. In the 1960s and '70s, Hussein was the CIA's "man in Baghdad," specializing in coups d'état and killing communists.

The relative advances of Iraqi women were the result of the fact that the country experienced the beginnings of a social revolution in 1958, with the fall of the Hasehmite monarchy

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imposed by the British. The first law on the status of the individual was issued in 1959 by the government of General Kassem, which included a woman minister from the Communist Party. Haifa Zangana, a former novelist who was later imprisoned by Saddam Hussein, recounts.

"Women were involved in the 1920 revolution against British occupation, including in fighting. In the 50s, political parties established women's organisations. All reflected the same principle: fighting alongside men, women were also liberating themselves. That was proven in the aftermath of the 1958 revolution ending the British-imposed monarchy when women's organisations achieved within two years what over 30 years of British occupation failed to: legal equality. 'This process led Unicef to report in 1993: 'Rarely do women in the Arab world enjoy as much power as they do in Iraq ... men and women must receive equal pay for equal work. A wife's income is recognised as independent from her husband's. In 1974, education was made free at all levels, and in 1979 it was made compulsory for girls and boys until the age of 12.'"

—Haifa Zangana, "Quiet, or I'll call democracy," *Guardian* [London], 22 December 2004

The Communist Party's participation in Iraq's capitalist government after the 1958 uprising followed the Stalinist dogma of "two-stage revolution," giving political support to the bourgeois nationalist Kassem. Later they did the same with Saddam Hussein. As a result of this reformist betrayal of the interests of Iraqi workers, thousands of communists were shot.

Even so, Hussein was not able to eliminate all the social gains which were won at that time, despite seeking accommodation with the Islamic fundamentalists. What he was unable to do, the imperialists are now accomplishing: throw women back into medieval conditions. Today, Iraqi women who go into the streets without their black veil (*abaya*, a garment-prison which covers the entire body, from head to toe) runs the risk of being killed, if not by the Shiite fundamentalists allied with the U.S. occupiers, then by the Sunni fundamentalists who dominate the opposition to the colonial regime. Today, Trotskyists fight for the defeat of the imperialists in Iraq and Afghanistan and in defense of the peoples of these countries, greeting every blow against the colonial regime. But we do so from proletarian and internationalist positions, at the same time as we warn of the danger posed by the Islamists who are by no means enemies of imperialism but, on the contrary, seek coexistence with the "Great Satan."

### In Brazil, Lula's Popular Front Perpetuates the Oppression of Women

In Brazil, the woman question is directly linked to the whole gamut of social oppression. It is inseparable from the struggle of landless peasants. The most important figure who has come to symbolize the violent victimization of women is Margarida Maria Alves, the agricultural workers union leader who was murdered 20 years ago at the instigation of the sugar mill owners of Paraíba. Her death is commemorated every other year on August 26 by the "March of the Margaridas." Although Lula's popular front now occupies the Palácio do Planalto (the presi-

*continued on page 56*

## How Imperialism "Liberated" Afghan Women



Emilio Morenatti/AP

American president George Bush justifies the U.S. invasion and occupation of Afghanistan by claiming that it freed women from slavery under the Taliban regime. Today they can vote for Washington's hand-picked president (above, October 2004 elections), while they remain shrouded in *burkas*, the head-to-toe garment that turns them into faceless beings.

The Taliban came to power with U.S. consent, the result of American policies in the 1980s of fomenting bands of Islamic fundamentalists in the war against Soviet forces in Afghanistan. The latter were defending a bourgeois government that implemented some timid reforms, among them educating women.

Most of the Western left opposed the Soviet intervention. Genuine Trotskyists, in contrast, called for "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" Below: students of both sexes study together at the University of Kabul in the 1980s.



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## LRP Social Democrats Who “Prefer” the Draft PLP “Communists” Who Won’t Defend Iraq

# Which Side Are They On? Opportunists Straddle the Class Line



Shawn Baldwin/New York Times

Iraqis face off with U.S. soldiers in Baghdad market, May 2004.

With the U.S. occupation army bogged down in Iraq and Pentagon planners desperate for young men and women to feed the voracious imperialist war machine, they have run into deepening resistance on the “home front.” In recent months, as opposition to military recruiters has spread on campuses across the country, a number of left groups have gotten in on the act. But they do so from differing political standpoints. The Internationalist Group has campaigned against military recruiters in the schools and universities since the onset of the Afghanistan war. We call for workers strikes against the war, and for workers to refuse to handle military cargo. Standing on the program of Lenin and Trotsky, we *defend* the Iraqi and Afghan peoples under attack and fight to *defeat* the imperialists through proletarian action pointing the way to socialist revolution.

In contrast, various opportunists, avowed socialists and communists, deliberately pitch their appeals in terms acceptable to *supporters* of imperialism, whose concern is that the war is bad for the system. Reformist outfits like the International Socialists (ISO) and Workers World Party (WWP) typically work through front groups who appeal to bourgeois liberals with talk of “peace and democracy,” calling for alter-

nate “priorities” (“education not occupation”), while studiously avoiding any mention of a fight against capitalism or for socialist revolution (see article, page 3).

Two groups which strike a more leftist posture are the League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP) and the Progressive Labor Party (PLP). While mouthing Marxist phrases, the LRP and PLP, with their respective social-democratic and Stalinist politics, end up on the wrong side of the class line. Each has its particular quirks, but during the second Cold War they chimed in on the imperialists’ anti-Soviet chorus. Labeling the USSR “state capitalism” (ISO), “statified capitalism” (LRP) or “imperialism” (PLP), they all *refused to defend the homeland of the October Revolution, despite its bureaucratic degeneration under Stalin and his heirs, against the imperialist onslaught.*

### LRP for a Draft Imperialist Army

Following the brutal arrest of three students and a campus staff worker for protesting military recruiters at New York’s City College in March, the LRP issued a leaflet calling vaguely for the “broadest possible campaign for the dropping of all charges.” (The IG put out a leaflet calling for shutting down CCNY over





Scene from Michael Moore film, *Fahrenheit 911*. Military recruiters "trolling" for prospects in parking lot of Flint, Michigan mall.

this outrageous campus repression, see page 21.) While patting itself on the back, saying that it was "proud to have taken part in all the anti-imperialist, anti-racist and working-class actions at City College for the past twenty years," the LRP judiciously neglected to mention in its flyer, coming in the midst of a struggle against recruiters on several City University (CUNY) campuses, that it *favours a military draft* (conscription). When black Democrats Charles Rangel and John Conyers came out for a draft on the eve of the invasion of Iraq, the LRP wrote:

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

—"No Draft" Is No Answer," *Proletarian Revolution* No. 66, Winter 2003

What grotesque concern for the needs of the ruling class! The LRP can claim to be for the defeat of U.S. imperialism in Iraq, but by *opposing struggle against the introduction of military conscription in wartime*, the LRP is adding its grain of sand to *promoting imperialist militarism*. All the more so when it repeats its pseudo-Marxist arguments today as mounting U.S. casualties in Iraq have put the Pentagon in a bind. The Joint Chiefs of Staff need more troops to kill and die in enforcing their murderous occupation of Iraq? The LRP declares its "preference" on how to supply the "cannon fodder." Trotskyists say instead that since the ruling class must have an army, *in fighting for socialist revolution we fight against every means by which the imperialist war machine gets its manpower*, whether by recruiters trying to hoodwink poor and minority students, or by a draft.

Going back to the 1950s, the political resumé of LRP founder Sy Landy is marked by the program of Max Shachtman, the renegade who broke with Trotskyism on the eve of World War II. Capitulating to the bourgeois liberal outcry over the Hitler-Stalin pact, Shachtman refused to defend the Soviet Union, homeland of the 1917 October Revolution, against imperialism, calling for a

mythical "Third Camp" supposedly located somewhere between imperialism and the USSR. Trotsky insisted that despite the crimes of Stalin, the colossal conquest of a collectivized economy must be defended against capitalist restoration. Trotsky stood for military defense of the Soviet degenerated workers state while calling for the workers to carry out a political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy, whose search for "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism endangered the existence of the USSR. "Those who cannot defend old positions will never conquer new ones," he wrote. Shachtman, following the logic of his counterrevolutionary line, ended up openly embracing U.S. imperialism in the Korean and Vietnam wars.

Significantly, the latter-day Schachtmanites of the LRP came up with their pro-draft line right at the onset of Cold War II, when Democratic U.S. president Jimmy Carter wanted to bring back the draft in order to fight the USSR in Afghanistan. The Soviet Union intervened in December 1979 to defend a wobbly secular regime in Kabul against a U.S.-orchestrated Islamic fundamentalist onslaught. When the liberal-nationalist Afghan government enacted a limited land reform and universal coeducation, reactionary landlords and mullahs rose up in opposition. But these "holy warriors" (*mujahedin*) soon became deadly pawns in the imperialists' "great game." The CIA mounted the largest operation in its history, recruiting, financing and heavily arming an army of tens of thousands of mercenary cutthroats to wage "jihad" against "godless communism." The Stalinist bureaucrats in the Kremlin reacted purely defensively and eventually Gorbachev ordered a treacherous withdrawal.

The viscerally anti-Soviet LRP called Afghanistan an "inter-imperialist war" and attacked anti-draft protests from the right. "The liberal imperialist wing of the anti-draft 'movement' is suspicious of Carter's Cold War moves and prefers a more cautious approach to save the inter-imperialist deal (détente) with the USSR," wrote the LRP, trying to dismiss all opposition to the draft as a liberal plot ("Marxism and the Draft," *Socialist Voice* No. 9, Summer 1980). In contrast, revolutionary Trotskyists (then organized in the Spartacist tendency) emphatically called to "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" and to extend the gains of the October Revolution to the Afghan peoples. We also called to "Stop Solidarność Counterrevolution!" in Poland, while most of the left in the West joined the imperialists in calling for "solidarity with Solidarity." The LRP had its own peculiar twist, criticizing Solidarność leader Lech Walesa and Pope Wojtyła (John Paul II) for supposedly pushing the Polish workers onto their knees before the Stalinists, and claiming the Catholic Church was "a bastion of the ruling Stalinist power" (*Socialist Voice* No. 12, February-March 1981).

In justifying their "preference" for a military draft, the LRP





## Which Side Are They On?

When Carter called for military draft to fight Soviets in Afghanistan, LRP denounced Soviet intervention as “imperialist” and declared “preference” for a draft U.S. army. Trotskyists hailed Red Army fighting U.S. imperialists’ “holy warriors” in Afghanistan. Left: Carter adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski takes aim in Khyber Pass. Right: Afghan women’s militia in 1988.

argued that this was “an application, under different circumstances” of Leon Trotsky’s call for a “proletarian military policy” (PMP) in 1940. It claims that “Trotsky maintained that revolutionaries had to favor conscription and universal military training,” as if he (like they) favored a conscripted *imperialist* army. In fact, Trotsky called for “military training under workers control,” and wrote: “Conscription? Yes. By the bourgeois state? No” (“On Conscription,” July 1940). While the LRP outrageously pretends that Trotsky was also for the PMP in Nazi Germany (workers control of training for Hitler’s army?!), the founder of the Red Army was in fact appealing, albeit in a mistaken manner, to the workers’ desire to fight fascism, as he explicitly said. Yet this call undercut the correct insistence by Trotsky and the Fourth International that World War II was *not* a fight against fascism but an inter-imperialist war over carving up the world in which the workers had no side except to defend the Soviet Union.

The LRP willfully distorts Trotsky, but in fact his call for a “PMP” was a misdirected attempt to apply the methodology of the Transitional Program to an issue affecting the backbone of the capitalist state, the armed forces. To be clear, calling for trade-union control of military recruitment and training in a situation of dual power or great revolutionary agitation, such as during the Spanish Civil War, which was very much on Trotsky’s mind at the time, would be a different matter. We ourselves, then in the Spartacist League, called for union control of military training in Nicaragua in the 1980s when the petty-bourgeois Sandinista government was facing a U.S.-sponsored *contra* army. We wrote then:

“While the Sandinistas appeal to patriotism, building a republican army as in the Spanish Civil War, Trotskyists insist that it is necessary to construct a proletarian army to defeat the counterrevolution. Communists and class-conscious worker militants must call for *military training under trade-union control*, for the formation of *workers militias* based on the factories, for *soldiers committees* in the army and the *election of officers*.”

—“Nicaraguan Elections and Yankee Blackmail,” *Workers Vanguard* No. 367, 23 November 1984

In Nicaragua, where the capitalist army of the previous Somoza dictatorship had been destroyed, popular militias had been established and there was a war against counterrevolutionary forces, this call was entirely feasible, as part of a struggle to build a workers army. But calling for union control of military training in the U.S., where capitalist rule remained solid, on the eve of the Second World War, was a step toward social patriotism and a concession to Allied war propaganda.\*

The LRP also seeks to put Lenin’s imprimatur on their policy, citing the Bolshevik leader’s article, “The Military Program of the Proletarian Revolution” (September 1916). They quote his statement that women of an oppressed revolutionary class will tell their sons facing conscription to “learn the military art properly,” not in order to shoot their class brothers of other countries but to fight against the bourgeoisie. But Lenin is talking here of the response to an existing draft in the midst of a war in which all the armies were conscript armies, not about the attitude of the proletariat toward the *introduction* of military conscription. What Lenin had to say on that, in the same article, was:

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

Was Lenin supporting conscription by the capitalist state to an imperialist standing army? Obviously not.

Lenin was quoting the German socialist Wilhelm Liebknecht’s famous phrase “Not a Penny, Not a Man for Militarism,” the title of his famous 1887 leaflet explaining why the Socialists had refused to vote for Chancellor Otto von Bismarck’s bill to finance a conscript imperial army for the purposes of colonial conquest. Against this, Liebknecht called for the general arming of the people and the formation of a “people’s army.” The LRP also tries to claim

\*For further discussion on this issue, see “Documents on the ‘Proletarian Military Policy,’” *Prometheus Research Series* No. 2, February 1989.

Bill Gentile



**Where call for trade-union control of military recruitment and training was correct: women soldiers of Nicaragua's Sandinista Army, 1985.**

Friedrich Engels' support for bourgeois conscription, quoting his article "The Prussian Military Question and the German Workers Party," in which Engels writes: "Universal conscription is the necessary and natural extension of universal suffrage; it enables the electorate to carry out its resolutions arms in hand...." (What the LRP leaves out here are the words "against any attempt at a coup d'état.") Yet Engels' article was written in 1865, that is, in the pre-imperialist epoch when Germany was still divided into a plethora of semi-feudal principalities, and when the Marxists supported a war for German unification.

But this is not just about the LRP scavenging and abusing quotes from Engels, Lenin and Trotsky. Its sophistry is intended to justify an ostensibly socialist organization *shamefully declaring that it "favors" a conscript army over a volunteer army in the midst of an imperialist war.* When the Pentagon can't find volunteers to fill its enlistment quota to continue the colonial occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, the LRP declares that "'no draft' is no answer," and indeed, that "a drafted army allows the workers to receive essential military training." Its claim that "we oppose any and all bourgeois armies – drafted, mercenary or hybrid" is a fig-leaf. Since "the capitalist state must retain a military force," the LRP declares which kind of *capitalist* military force it "prefers." Pacifists may push the illusion of "disarming" the bourgeoisie, but revolutionaries seek through mass protest and working-class action to hinder the bourgeoisie's ability to raise an army for imperialist invasion and colonial occupation. The LRP's policy, on the other hand, would make them *facilitators of imperialist militarism.*

In fact, the LRP's line goes back, not to Trotsky, Lenin and Engels, but to the pre-World War I social democrats. Jean Juarès, leader of the "moderate" wing of the French Socialist party, wrote a whole book, *L'Armée nouvelle* (1910), in which he declared, "Everywhere it is the workmen and socialists who demand military service for all." In the same book, Juarès also declared, "The Communist Manifesto that the workers have no fatherland, and instead declares that 'Never would a proletariat which had aban-

doned the defense of national independence ... find vigor enough to conquer capitalism.'" German socialist August Bebel, speaking at the 1907 International Socialist Congress, explicitly rejected the thesis of the Manifesto, declaring patriotically: "What we fight is not the fatherland as such, which belongs to the proletariat far more than to the ruling classes, but the conditions that exist in this fatherland in the interest of the ruling classes."

And in a speech the same year on the budget in the Reichstag (imperial parliament), the SPD deputy Gustav Noske declared:

"Our position on the military system flows from our conception of the principle of nationalism.... Let our people have the best education, and let our youth receive the best possible physical training. Then we in Germany will have the best soldiers...."

*Noske's infamous 1907 "defense of the fatherland" speech, along with the similar expressions by Bebel and Juarès – this is the heritage the LRP embraces, these are the true progenitors of its social-democratic "preference" for a conscript army.*

The LRP's ritualistic disclaimer about "opposing" all bourgeois armies is empty rhetoric. The fundamental fact is that *these neo-Shachtmanite social democrats oppose any efforts to block the introduction of military conscription and favor a conscript imperialist army over a "volunteer" army, at a time of imperialist war when the Pentagon is frantic to fill its pipeline with new recruits.* The LRP's claim to be for the "defeat" of U.S. imperialism in Iraq is essentially empty. It is not combined with fighting for concrete proletarian action in the imperialist countries, such as workers strikes against the war, "hot cargoing" military goods, etc. But the LRP's denunciation of any and all opposition to the draft, if it had any effect, would amount to concrete aid to the imperialist war effort.

The LRP cynically equates all opposition to introduction of military conscription with calls for draft evasion. Groups such as "No Draft, No Way" do, in fact, call for "draft resistance" including individual draft evasion. In this they are supported by the ISO, WWP and Revolutionary Communist Party, through their respective antiwar fronts (Campus Antiwar Network, Troops Out Coalition, Not in Our Name). This "option" was fairly widespread during the Vietnam War, but was largely limited to the middle class. Young workers were generally not able to dodge the draft, having no "2-S" (student) deferments available to them. While opposing introduction of the draft, we stand with Lenin, who insisted in his January 1917 lecture on the 1905 Russian Revolution that:

"It is not sufficient simply to denounce, revile and 'repudiate' militarism, to criticize and prove that it is harmful; it is foolish peacefully to refuse to perform military service. The task is to turn the inevitable hostility of the proletariat tense and train its best elements, not only in a general way, but concretely, so that when popular ferment reaches the highest

pitch, they will put themselves at the head of the revolutionary army."

Where there is an existing military draft, Trotskyists explain that individual 'resistance' is not only powerless but means radicals voluntarily separating themselves from the mass of working-class youth. If drafted, rather than proclaiming "we won't go," class-conscious workers encourage struggle against the war from within the ranks of the military, while gaining military training. Such struggle became quite widespread during the later years of the Vietnam War, with over a dozen national soldiers' antiwar organizations and newspapers, scores of coffee houses for antiwar soldiers, and hundreds of attacks annually on officers by draftees fed up with the slaughter. (Already in Iraq, the first instances have been reported of "fragging" U.S. officers.) But using the opening to raise the revolutionary consciousness of workers in uniform and train the best elements is quite different from favoring the introduction of a draft in an imperialist war.

### PLP Denies National Oppression

The Progressive Labor Party, for its part, purports not only to be communist, but uniquely communist because of its singular rejection of socialism, which Marxists from Marx on have insisted is the necessary initial stage of constructing a communist society. Dismissing the need for development of the productive forces to make possible the generalized abundance on which a classless society can be built, the PLP talked of the possibility of building communism "if a group of teenagers were dropped off on an uninhabited island with nothing but stone tools" (*Road to Revolution IV* [1982])! PL started out as Communist Party Stalinists who became Maoists, striking a militant, if muddle-headed stance. They still retain vestiges of their earlier line(s), claiming that fascism is here, for example, and are virulent Trotsky-haters. But lately, the PLP has been drifting back to "progressive" liberalism reflecting its CP origins.

If the LRP tries to cloak its opportunism with Marxist erudition, the PLP likes to pose as stereotypical American workers (proclaiming "don't be a sucker for the bosses," calling Soviet leaders "skunks" over Vietnam, etc.). One favorite PL chant from the '60s, only intelligible with a heavy Brooklyn accent, was "Off the bosses' armed forces!" On the question of the draft, the PLP's newspaper *Challenge* has had a number of articles about struggles against the introduction of conscription, while advocating working within the capitalist army. But while the LRP yearns for the draft to send young workers into the army, PL encourages supporters to volunteer for the army and ship out to Iraq. "One of the hardest things to realize as a communist is that I'm actually going to war, for a cause with which I completely disagree," writes "Red Soldier" in a gee-whiz account in *Challenge* (17 November 2004).

As discontent mounts within the colonial occupation forces in Iraq, one cannot categorically exclude work within the imperialist army, which has significant internal contradictions. The refusal of the heavily black, South Carolina-based 343rd Quartermaster Company to obey a direct order to deliver fuel to a base north of Baghdad last October is vivid evidence of spreading discontent. The fact that the 23 Army Reserve soldiers were

disciplined but not court-martialed indicates that the Pentagon brass fears that the example of this clear *mutiny* could spread. To dismiss these soldiers as simply a "mercenary army," as the LRP does, is to ignore these contradictions; to talk simply of an "economic draft," as much of the "antiwar movement" does, glosses over the fact that these soldiers in fact volunteered.

But the PLP's orientation of sending people into the professional army long predates the present situation. And it is part of a general policy: *Challenge* regularly runs letters from supporters who sign "Red Churchgoer" and the like, recounting PLP's interchanges with fellow (pro-Democratic Party) congregants. So much for Marxist atheist materialism! The fact that these supposed communists could even conceive of such "tactics" shows that they haven't the slightest regard for (or even conception of) the fundamental *class line* separating the bourgeoisie from the proletariat. Since its Maoist phase, PL has equated the Soviet degenerated workers state with imperialism, and for years it routinely referred to pro-capitalist union misleaders as "social-fascist" and even "fascist." (Lately, the PLP has taken a softer line on the labor bureaucracy as it joins bureaucratic lash-ups to try to get into union office.)

PL's claim that the Soviet Union (after Stalin) and China (even before Deng Xiaoping) had become capitalist – the flip side of the Stalinist dogma that under Stalin and Mao the USSR and China were "socialist" – is an idealist, anti-Marxist conception that the class character of the state changes depending on the presence of communist or capitalist *ideas*. Yet Progressive Labor has had to recognize, under the relentless pounding of material reality, that the actual counterrevolution that took place during 1989-92 and led to the destruction of the Soviet Union had "devastating consequences" on revolutionary struggle worldwide. Thus the latest issue of the PLP magazine *The Communist* (Spring 2005) states, in an article ("Dark Night Shall Have Its End") reeking of historical pessimism:

"The most significant error our Party made in the period following Road to Revolution IV [1982] was to underestimate the significance of the old movement's collapse. We correctly identified the restoration of capitalism in the former Soviet Union and China. We failed, however, to understand the devastating consequences that this development would have on the revolutionary process world wide and the new life it would breathe into U.S. imperialism...."

"In the decade and a half since the Soviet Union's voluntary break-up [in 1992], U.S. rulers have received a blank check to wreak murder and mayhem in the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere. The end of socialism, and the subsequent (though possibly temporary removal) of the USSR as a key rival imperialist superpower, also enabled the U.S. rulers to dodge many of capitalism's inevitable contradictions. Even more critical, it has had a chilling effect on class struggle all over the world."

Thinking PLers ought to be scratching their heads asking how all this could be the result of the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union, if that allegedly took place in 1956 when Khrushchev took power, as PLP claims.

Since these self-proclaimed "communists" refused to defend the bureaucratized post-Stalin Soviet Union against imperialism,



it's no surprise that PL doesn't defend Iraq against imperialist war and colonial occupation. At the time of the U.S./UK invasion, in March-April 2003, *Challenge* regularly referred to the Saddam Hussein regime as "fascist," and did not call to resist the invasion. Since then, PLP publications have frequently referred to the "the Jihadist war against US imperialism," and to "Jihadists, nationalists, liberal Democrats" who "have no solutions for us." Certainly, the Sunni Islamic fundamentalists, Shiite theocratic gangs and remnants of the brutal Baathist Iraqi nationalist dictatorship which today dominate resistance to the occupation are no friends of the Iraqi working people. But following Lenin, genuine communist opponents of imperialism greet all blows by the occupied against the colonial occupiers. We also call on Iraqi workers to organize resistance on a *class* basis, politically independent of and organizationally separate from the reactionary Islamists and bourgeois nationalists, to mobilize mass class struggle against the imperialist occupation. And *that* PLP does *not* call for.

In discussions with supporters of the Internationalist Group at antiwar marches and conferences, PLers have argued that the Iraq war is a war between two bosses' governments, in which workers have no side. They refuse to recognize the existence of *national* oppression. We pointed to the example of the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, where the Italian imperialists subjugated a nation ruled by a theocratic regime headed by the emperor Haile Selassie, which rested on feudalistic serfdom (particularly of the subjugated majority Oromo people by Amhara masters and the Abyssinian Orthodox church) and maintained slavery of black Africans. This was recognized by no less than Marcus Garvey, and Mussolini's propagandists justified their invasion as abolishing slavery (just as Bush and liberal Democrats justified the invasion of Afghanistan as liberating Afghan women). What was the Marxist position in that conflict?

Communists were duty-bound to **defend feudal Ethiopia, a country fighting for independence against Italian imperialism**. But just as PLers see the Iraq war and occupation today as a conflict between two groups of bosses, leaders of the British Independent Labour Party in the 1930s declared that the Italo-Ethiopian war was "a conflict between two rival dictators." Leon Trotsky wrote, in a letter to an English comrade:

"To these politicians [of the ILP] it appears that this fact relieves the proletariat of the duty of making a choice between two dictators. They thus define the character of the war by the political *form* of the state, in the course of which they themselves regard this political form in a quite superficial and purely descriptive manner, without taking into consideration the social foundations of both 'dictatorships.' ... Should a dictator place himself at the head of the next uprising of the Indian people in order to smash the British yoke — would [ILP spokesman James] Maxton then refuse this dictator his support? Yes or no? If not, why does he refuse his support to the Ethiopian 'dictator' who



H.V. Drees/Bettman Archives

**Ethiopian troops firing anti-aircraft gun at Italian plane, 1935. Trotsky defended Ethiopia against Italian imperialism.**

is attempting to cast off the Italian yoke?

"If Mussolini triumphs, it means the reinforcement of fascism, the strengthening of imperialism, and the discouragement of the colonial peoples in Africa and elsewhere. The victory of the Negus [Haile Selassie], however, would mean a mighty blow not only at Italian imperialism but at imperialism as a whole, and would lend a powerful impulsion to the rebellious forces of the oppressed peoples. One must really be completely blind not to see this."

—Leon Trotsky, "On Dictators and the Heights of Oslo" (April 1936)

Not only Trotsky called for defending colonial peoples even if they fought under reactionary leaders in battles against imperialism. During World War I, Lenin wrote that "if tomorrow, Morocco were to declare war on France, or India on Britain, or Persia or China on Russia, and so on, those would be 'just' and 'defensive' wars, *irrespective* of who attacked first; any socialist would wish the oppressed, dependent and unequal states victory over the oppressor, slave-holding and predatory 'great' powers" (*Socialism and War*, August 1915).

Lenin wrote powerfully in defense of the reactionary-led "Boxer Rebellion" (1898-1900) against European encroachment in China, as Marx and Engels did of the "Sepoy Revolt" (1857-58) in India (see pp. 36-40). Even at a time when Marx held an erroneous view (later abandoned) of colonial rule bringing about economic progress, although entailing tremendous suffering of the colonized masses, he defended revolts by the colonial subjects without prettifying their reactionary leaderships. This flows from the recognition in the *Communist Manifesto* that for the proletariat to free itself it must free the vast majority of humanity from capitalist exploitation and the many-sided oppression it entails. Indeed, as the Second Congress of the Communist International insisted, in order to struggle against the clergy,

Islamic and other reactionary and medieval elements, and to break the hold of the khans, landowners and mullahs, the communists must uphold the independence of the proletarian movement while being the most determined fighters for liberation from the national oppression of the colonies and semi-colonies.

Progressive Labor says the line of all Trotskyist groups includes "support for nationalism, whether 'progressive' or not, among 'oppressed nations'" (*The Communist*, Spring 2004). This is radically false. What is true is that the supposed "communists" of PL, in order to oppose nationalism, find it necessary to put the very existence of oppressed nations in ironic quotation marks. Authentic Trotskyists stand with Lenin in opposing the bourgeois ideology of nationalism while fighting all forms of national oppression. The Fourth International's program of *permanent revolution* calls on communists in the colonial and semi-colonial countries to fight for agrarian revolution and national liberation from the imperialist yoke through the *working-class conquest of power* at the head of the impoverished peasantry and oppressed peoples, undertaking socialist tasks and extension of the revolution internationally. As part of this struggle, Trotsky insisted "It will be the duty of the international proletariat to aid the oppressed countries in the war against oppressors. ...

The defeat of every imperialist government in the struggle with the workers state or with a colonial country is the lesser evil" (*Transitional Program*).

A genuine struggle against imperialist war cannot be waged by means of popular-front pacifist coalitions in collaboration with bourgeois liberals, as the reformists are always cobbling together – usually with a new front for every war. To put an end to more than a century of endless imperialist wars requires waging class war against the capitalist system that spawns them. As part of this struggle, the treacherous role of groups such as the League for the Revolutionary Party and the Progressive Labor Party which use Marxist verbiage to hide their capitulation to the bourgeoisie on crucial issues (favoring conscription to the imperialist military and refusing to defend oppressed nations under attack by imperialism) must be firmly exposed. As Trotsky's 1934 theses "War and the Fourth International" underscored:

"The exposure of the thoroughly reactionary, putrified and robber nature of modern capitalism, the destruction of democracy, reformism and pacifism, the urgent and burning need of the proletariat to find a safe path away from the imminent disaster put the international revolution on the agenda with renewed force."

## 1857 Writings Throw Sharp Light on Iraq Today

# Marx on the Sepoy Revolt

*In Iraq today, a tenacious insurgency has bogged down the colonial occupation forces, creating difficulties for U.S. imperialism internationally. To get around this, Pentagon and White House spokesmen denounce insurgent atrocities in a vain attempt to cover up the far-worse U.S. record of mass murder of tens of thousands of Iraqis and its systematic use of torture in its prison camps from Abu Ghraib to Guantánamo. This is a time-worn script.*

*Proletarian revolutionaries call to drive the imperialists out of Iraq and greet blows struck against the brutal U.S. occupation army, its dwindling allies and Iraqi puppets. At issue is the need to defeat the colonial occupation and defend the Iraqi peoples. At the same time, communists give no political support to the insurgents, who range from Iraqi nationalist remnants of the Saddam Hussein regime to Sunni and Shiite Islamic fundamentalists.*

*In line with their usual practice of tailing after whatever is popular, some left groups uncritically hail the "Iraqi resistance," including whitewashing the various bourgeois and medievalist currents involved. Others point to the reactionary politics of the insurgents as a justification for refusing to take the side of the victims of imperialism in this continuing war, making a mockery of their own claim to be communists.*

*In the early stages of struggles against colonial rule, those who first take up arms are frequently remnants of the conquered regime and other backward-looking forces. A look at the writings of Marx and Engels on the 1857 Sepoy Revolt in India and of Lenin on the 1900 Boxer Rebellion in China is instructive, for they too greeted attacks on the capitalist empire-builders while fighting for independence and for workers revolution in the imperial homelands.*

It is fashionable in some academic circles to dismiss the writings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels on Asia as "Eurocentric" or even as sharing the colonialists' view of Europe's "civilizing mission" in the East. This view is propagated by a variety of ex-New Left, "post-modernist," "post-colonialist" and other anti-Marxist academics for whom ethnicity and nationality take precedence over class. Interestingly, this argument is made both by outright apologists for colonialism, such as Shlomo Avineri (in the introduction to his collection, *Karl Marx on Colonialism and Modernization* [1968]), and by

Third Worldist anti-colonialists such as Samir Amin (in *Eurocentrism* [1989]) and the Palestinian nationalist Edward Said (in *Orientalism* [1978]). What they all have in common is that they take Marx and Engels' very earliest writings as their final word on the subject, even twisting these to fit their theses, and deliberately ignore the voluminous denunciations of the imperialists by the founders of modern communism.

Marx and Engels were the first to analyze how socialist revolution grew out of capitalist development. Recognizing the progressive work of the ascendant bourgeoisie in breaking

through the barriers of feudalism, they initially held an erroneous view that colonialism would play a similar role in patriarchal and feudal or semi-feudal societies being drawn into bourgeois relations, although at a tremendous human cost. Thus Engels supported the French conquest of Algeria (and the U.S.' 1848 war against Mexico). But he and Marx soon revised these views. By 1857, Engels was praising the "intrepid" Algerian leader Abd-el-Kader (whose cause he had described as "hopeless" three years earlier), and writing of the "Arab and Kabyle tribes, to whom independence is precious and hatred of foreign domination a principle dearer than life itself.... The tribes still assert their independence and detestation of the French regime."

Even some of Marx's early writings have been willfully distorted by those who tendentiously paint the communist revolutionary as "Eurocentric." Edward Said took exception to Marx's descriptions (in his June 1853 article on "The British Rule in India") of the stagnation of Indian village life and his observation that these "idyllic village-communities...had always been the solid foundation of Oriental despotism," such as the Mogul Empire which kept the Indian subcontinent in thrall for several centuries, as had earlier conquerors. Yet in his July 1853 companion article on "The Future Results of British Rule in India," Marx made clear that he had no love for the British Raj (imperial rule in India), writing:

"The Indians will not reap the fruits of the new elements of society scattered among them by the British bourgeoisie, till in Great Britain itself the now ruling classes shall have been supplanted by the industrial proletariat, or till the Hindoos [Indians] themselves shall have grown strong enough to throw off the English yoke altogether."

Engels' later writings have been similarly distorted by apologists for imperialism, such as his statement in a September 1882 letter to Karl Kautsky that "the countries inhabited by a native population, which are simply subjugated – India, Algeria, the Dutch, Portuguese and Spanish possessions – must be taken over for the time being by the proletariat and led as rapidly as possible towards independence." This has been portrayed as if Engels was advocating a positive "colonial policy" of "raising" the natives, as the European colonialists claimed to be doing. Yet the very opposite is the case. In the very next sentence, Engels wrote:

"How this process will develop is difficult to say. India will perhaps, indeed very probably, make a revolution, and as a proletariat in process of self-emancipation cannot conduct any colonial wars, it would have to be allowed to run its course; it would not pass off without all sorts of destruction, of course, but that sort of thing is inseparable from all revolutions. The same might also take place elsewhere, e.g., in Algeria and Egypt, and would certainly be the best thing for us."

Not only did Marx and Engels look forward to a revolu-



Attack on British troops by Sepoy mutineers, 30 July 1857.

tion that would throw off colonial rule in India and other colonies, they greeted revolts by the colonial subjects even when in some cases they were initially led by reactionary forces. The classic case of this was the revolt by the Sepoys, the mercenary troops of the Indian army raised by the British to maintain their colonial domination of the subcontinent. In more than 30 articles written between June 1857 and September 1858, Marx and Engels closely followed the development of the revolt.

R. Palme Dutt, the leading spokesman on India for the British Stalinists, who upheld British colonial rule of India through World War II, denounced the 1857 Sepoy Rebellion as "the last attempt of the decaying feudal forces, of the former rulers of the country, to turn back the tide of foreign domination" (*India To-day* [1970]). But this negative verdict was not that of Marx and Engels. They did not pretend that the mercenary soldiers who started the rebellion represented a progressive class, but they perceived that what started as a military mutiny had become a national revolt. And they saw that the drain on the British empire caused by the rebellion made it the "best ally" of the revolutionary cause in Europe.

In his first article on "The Revolt in the Indian Army" (30 June 1857), Marx notes:

"The Roman *Divide et impera* [Divide and rule] was the great rule by which Great Britain, for about one hundred and fifty years, contrived to retain the tenure of her Indian empire. The antagonism of the various races, tribes, castes, creeds and sovereignties, the aggregate of which forms the geographical unity of what is called India, continued to be the vital principle of British supremacy. In later times, however, the conditions of that supremacy have undergone a change.... No longer conquering, it had become *the* conqueror. The armies at its disposition no longer had to extend its dominion, but only to maintain it. From soldiers they were converted into policemen; 200,000,000 natives being curbed by a native army of 200,000 men, officered by Englishmen, and that native army, in its turn, being kept in check by an English army numbering 40,000 only."



Marx noted that the revolt broke out among the ~~Muslim~~ troops of the Bengal Army, who objected on religious grounds to biting off cartridges which had been smeared with pig fat. This was only the spark. There had been mutinies before, but this was something new:

"It is the first time that Sepoy regiments have murdered their European officers; that Mussulmans and ~~Hindus~~ [~~Muslims~~ and Hindus], renouncing their mutual antipathies, have combined against their common masters; ... that the mutiny has not been confined to a few localities; and lastly that the revolt in the Anglo-Indian army has coincided with a general dissatisfaction exhibited against English supremacy on the part of the great Asiatic nations...."

In subsequent articles Marx summarized a speech to the House of Commons by the British Tory opposition leader Benjamin Disraeli on the Indian revolt, who also noted that the old principle of "divide and rule" had been replaced by "the principle of destroying nationality. The principle has been realized by the forcible destruction of native princes, the disturbance of the settlement of property, and the tampering with the religion of the people." Marx noted reports that Sikhs had joined the rebellion, concluding that soon other facts will "ooze out" making it clear that what was considered "a military mutiny is in truth a national revolt."

Then as now, the colonialists' war propaganda emphasized the "atrocities" committed by the rebels against army officers and colonists. Marx countered this by using the official "Blue Books" of a House of Commons investigation to expose the systematic use of torture by the British, who claimed to represent "civilization," in subjugating the Indian masses. Marx remarked that dispassionate and thoughtful observers "may perhaps be led to ask whether a people are not justified in attempting to expel the foreign conquerors who have so abused their subjects. And if the English could do these things in cold blood, is it surprising that the insurgent Hindoos should be guilty, in the fury of revolt and conflict, of the crimes and cruelties alleged against them?" ("Investigations of Tortures in India," 28 August 1857).

A few days later, Marx generalized his point that the responsibility for any atrocities lay with the English rulers:

"The outrages committed by the revolted Sepoys in India are indeed appalling, hideous, ineffable – such as one is prepared to meet only in wars of insurrection, of nationalities, of races, and above all of religion; in one word, such as respectable England used to applaud when perpetrated by the Vendéans on the 'Blues,' by the Spanish guerrillas on the infidel Frenchmen, by Servians [Serbs] on their German and Hungarian neighbors, by Croats on Viennese rebels, by Cavaignac's Garde Mobile or Bonaparte's Decembrists on the sons and daughters of proletarian France.<sup>1</sup> However infamous the conduct of the Sepoys, it is only the reflex, in a concentrated form, of England's own conduct in India, not only during the epoch of the foundation of her Eastern Empire, but even during the last ten years of a long-settled rule. To characterize that rule, it suffices to say that torture formed

an organic institution of its financial policy. There is something in human history like retribution; and it is a rule of historical retribution that its instrument be forged not by the offended, but by the offender himself.

"The first blow dealt to the French monarchy proceeded from the nobility, not from the peasants. The Indian revolt does not commence with the Ryots [peasants], tortured, dishonored and stripped naked by the British, but with the Sepoys, clad, fed, petted, fattened and pampered by them. To find parallels to the Sepoy atrocities...all we want is to study the first Chinese war,<sup>2</sup> an event, so to say, of yesterday. The English soldiery then committed abominations for the mere fun of it.... The violations of women, the spittings of children, the roasting of whole villages, were then mere wanton sports, not recorded by Mandarins, but by British officers themselves....

"The cutting of noses, breasts, etc., in one word, the horrid mutilations committed by the Sepoys, are of course more revolting to European feeling that the throwing of red-hot shell on Canton [China] dwellings by a Secretary of the Manchester Peace Society, or the roasting of Arabs pent up in a cave by a French Marshal,<sup>3</sup> or the flaying alive of British soldiers by the cat-o'-nine-tails under drum-head court-martial, or any other of the philanthropical appliances used in British penitentiary colonies. Cruelty, like every other thing, has its fashion, changing according to time and place....

"John Bull [symbol of the English man in the street] is to be steeped in cries for revenge up to his very ears, to make him forget that his Government is responsible for the mischief hatched and the colossal dimensions it has been allowed to assume."

–"The Indian Revolt" (4 September 1857)

As the revolt dragged on, the British had to reconquer first the capital of Delhi and then the second center of the revolt, Lucknow, on the Ganges, concentrating an army of 20,000 British soldiers, 10,000 Indian troops judged reliable and 10,000 Nepalese Gurkhas. By January, Marx wrote to Engels, "In view of the DRAIN OF MEN and BULLION which she

<sup>1</sup> The Vendée was a clerical-reactionary-led peasant revolt in 1793 against the Republican army ("the Blues") during the French Revolution. Spanish guerrillas fought against Napoléon Bonaparte's army that ousted the Bourbon monarchy in 1808. The Habsburg monarchy used Croatian troops to put down a republican uprising in Vienna in October 1848. General Cavaignac, who had commanded army units in the conquest of Algeria, used a bourgeois militia, the *garde mobile*, to smash the Parisian workers uprising and massacre the insurgents in June 1848. In 1849, Louis Napoléon organized a private army, the Society of December 10, that carried out a coup d'état in 1851, establishing France's Second Empire.

<sup>2</sup> The First Opium War (1839-42) waged by Britain, which began China's transformation into a semi-colony.

<sup>3</sup> In November 1856, John Browning, the British governor general of Hong Kong, ordered the bombardment of the city of Canton, setting the stage for the Second Opium War (1856-58). While pursuing Algerian insurgent leader Emir Abd-el-Kader in June 1845, French General Pélissier trapped a group of Arabs in a cave. Since they refused to surrender, he ordered a fire set that suffocated everyone in the cave (some 500 or more people, including many women and children).

will cost the English, India is now our best ally.”

In the end, the British were able to drown the Sepoy Rebellion in blood. In a final article on “The Revolt in India” (17 September 1858), Engels wrote:

“For the present, the British have reconquered India. The great rebellion, stirred up by the mutiny of the Bengal army, is indeed, it appears, dying out. But this second conquest has not increased England’s hold upon the mind of the Indian people. The cruelty of the retribution dealt out by the

British troops, goaded on by exaggerated and false reports of the atrocities attributed to the natives, and the attempt at confiscating the Kingdom of Oude, both wholesale and retail, have not created any particular fondness for the victors. On the contrary, they themselves confess that among both Hindoos and Mussulmans, the hereditary hatred against the Christian intruder is more fierce than ever. Impotent as this hatred may be at present, it is not without its significance and importance.”

## Lenin on the “Boxer Rebellion”

At the end of the 19th century, a mass revolt broke out in northern China against European imperial encroachment and Christian missionaries. This uprising was known in the West as the “Boxer Rebellion.” Led by a secret society, the Fists of Righteous Harmony, it sought to restore the imperial China of old, and was soon given backing by the Manchu Qing dynasty. The imperialist press was filled with horror stories of attacks on Europeans. This colonialist view was later popularized in the 1963 film *55 Days at Peking*. But in the very first issue of *Iskra*, the newspaper of the Russian Marxists, Lenin wrote a stirring article (“The War in China,” December 1900) resolutely taking the side of the anti-Western rebels. Excerpts are published below:

“Russia is bringing her war with China to a close; a number of military districts have been mobilised, hundreds of millions of rubles have been spent, tens of thousands of troops have been dispatched to China, a number of battles have been fought and a number of victories won – true, not so much over regular enemy troops, as over Chinese insurgents and, particularly, over the unarmed Chinese populace, who were drowned or killed, with no holding back from the slaughter of women and children, not to speak of the looting of palaces, homes, and shops. The Russian Government, together with the press that kowtows to it, is celebrating a victory and rejoicing over the fresh exploits of the gallant soldiery, rejoicing at the victory of European culture over Chinese barbarism and over the fresh successes of Russia’s ‘civilizing mission’ in the Far East.

“But the voices of the class-conscious workers, of the advanced representatives of the many millions of the working people, are not heard amid this rejoicing. And yet, it is the working people who bear the brunt of the victorious new campaigns, it is the working people who are sent to the other end of the world, from whom increased taxes are extorted to cover the millions expended. Let us, therefore, see: What attitude should the socialists adopt towards this war? In whose interests is it being fought? What is the real nature of the policy now being pursued by the Russian Government?

“Our government asserts first of all that it is not waging war against China; that it is merely suppressing a rebellion, pacifying rebels; that it is helping the lawful government of China to re-establish law and order. True, war has not been declared, but this does not change the situation a bit, because war is being waged nonetheless. What made the Chinese attack Europeans, what caused the rebellion which the British, French, Germans, Russians, Japanese, etc., are so zealously



Marxist Internet Archive

V.I. Lenin (in Paris in 1910).

crushing? ‘The hostility of the yellow race towards the white race,’ ‘the Chinese hatred for European culture and civilization’ – answer the supporters of the war. Yes! It is true the Chinese hate the Europeans, but which Europeans do they hate, and why? The Chinese do not hate the European peoples, they have never had any quarrel with them – they hate the European capitalists and the European governments obedient to them. How can the Chinese not hate those who have come to China solely for the sake of gain; who have utilised their vaunted civilisation solely for the purpose of deception, plunder, and violence; who have waged wars against China in order to win the right to trade in opium with which to drug the people (the war of England and France with China in 1856); and who hypocritically carried their policy of plunder under the guise of spreading Christianity? The bourgeois governments of Europe have long been conducting this policy of plunder with respect to China, and now they have been joined by the autocratic Russian Government. This policy of plunder is usually called a colonial policy. Every country in which capitalist industry develops rapidly has very soon to seek colo-



nies, i.e., countries in which industry is weakly developed, in which a more or less patriarchal way of life still prevails, and which can serve as a market for manufactured goods and a source of high profits. For the sake of the profit of a handful of capitalists, the bourgeois governments have waged endless wars, have sent regiments to die in unhealthy tropical countries, have squandered millions of money extracted from the people, and have driven the peoples in the colonies to desperate revolts or to death from starvation. We need only recall the rebellion of the native peoples against the British in India and the famine that prevailed there, or think of the war the English are now waging against the Boers.

"And now the European capitalists have placed their rapacious paws upon China, and almost the first to do so was the Russian Government, which now so loudly proclaims its 'disinterestedness.' It 'disinterestedly' took Port Arthur [Lushun] away from China and began to build a railway to Manchuria under the protection of Russian troops. One after another the European governments began feverishly to loot, or, as they put it, 'to rent,' Chinese territory, giving good grounds for the talk of the partition of China. If we are to call things by their right names, we must say that the European governments (the Russian Government among the very first) have already started to partition China. However, they have not begun this partitioning openly, but stealthily, like thieves. They began to rob China as ghouls rob corpses, and when the seeming corpse attempted to resist, they flung themselves upon it like savage beasts, burning down whole villages, shooting, bayonetting, and drowning in the Amur River unarmed inhabitants, their wives, and their children. And all these Christian exploits are accompanied by howls against the Chinese barbarians who dared to raise their hands against the civilised Europeans. The occupation of Nichuang and the moving of Russian troops into Manchuria are temporary measures, declares the autocratic Russian Government...; these measures 'are called forth exclusively by the necessity to repel the aggressive operations of Chinese rebels'; they 'cannot in the least be regarded as evidence of any selfish plans, which are totally alien to the policy of the Imperial Government.'

"Poor Imperial Government! So Christianly unselfish, and yet so unjustly maligned! Several years ago it unselfishly seized Port Arthur, and now it is unselfishly seizing Manchuria; it has unselfishly flooded the frontier provinces of China with hordes of contractors, engineers and officers, who, by their conduct have roused to indignation even the Chinese, known for their docility. The Chinese workers employed in the construction of the Chinese Railway had to exist on a wage of ten kopeks a day – is this not unselfish on Russia's part? How is our government's senseless policy in China to be explained? Who benefits by it? The benefit goes to a handful of capitalist magnates who carry on trade with China, to a handful of factory owners who manufacture goods for the Asian market, to a handful of contractors who are now piling up huge profits on urgent war orders (factories producing war equipment, supplies for the troops, etc., are now operating at full capacity and are engaging hundreds of new workers)....



Fitz Neumann/Cowles Archive

**Chinese fight British troops in 1900 "Boxer Rebellion."**

"But the policy of the tsarist government in China is not only a mockery of the interests of the people – its aim is to corrupt the political consciousness of the masses. Governments that maintain themselves in power only by means of the bayonet, that have constantly to restrain or suppress the indignation of the people, have long realised the truism that popular discontent can never be removed and that it is necessary to divert the discontent from the government to some other object. For example, hostility is being stirred up against the Jews; the gutter press carries on Jew-baiting campaigns, as if the Jewish workers do not suffer in exactly the same way as the Russian workers from the oppression of capital and the police government. At the present time, the press is conducting a campaign against the Chinese; it is howling about the savage yellow race and its hostility towards civilisation, about Russia's tasks of enlightenment, about the enthusiasm with which the Russian soldiers go into battle, etc., etc. Journalists who crawl on their bellies before the government and the money-bags are straining every nerve to rouse the hatred of the people against China. But the Chinese people have at no time and in no way oppressed the Russian people. The Chinese people suffer from the same evils as those from which the Russian people suffer – they suffer from an Asiatic government that squeezes taxes from the starving peasantry and that suppresses every aspiration towards liberty by military force; they suffer from the oppression of capital, which has penetrated into the Middle Kingdom.

"The Russian working class is beginning to move out of the state of political oppression and ignorance in which the masses of the people are still submerged. Hence, the duty of all class-conscious workers is to rise with all their might against those who are stirring up national hatred and diverting the attention of the working people from their real enemies. The policy of the tsarist government in China is a criminal policy which is impoverishing, corrupting and oppressing the people more than ever. The tsarist government not only keeps our people in slavery but sends them to pacify other peoples who rebel against their slavery." ■



## Harsh Settling of Scores Among the Bourgeoisie

# Mexico: Pre-Election Battle Over Immunity

Over a million people march in the Mexican capital, April 24, in opposition to lifting the immunity of Federal District (Mexico City) head of government Andrés Manuel López Obrador. A week later, the government of President Vicente Fox dropped the charges against the Mexico City mayor.

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MEXICO CITY, April 25 – The presidential electoral race has begun unusually early. Although the elections are more than a year off, in July 2006, and even though none of the three main bourgeois parties has officially decided who would be their candidate, a sharp clash at the top between various sectors of the Mexican bourgeoisie is shaping up. The most dramatic manifestation of this intense “family quarrel” is focused on the political trial which President Vicente Fox of the National Action Party (PAN) and the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) have initiated lifting executive immunity from Andrés Manuel López Obrador, head of government of the Federal District (Mexico City), with the clear aim of preventing him from running as the presidential candidate of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD).

In the battle over the *desafuero* (lifting official immunity), the Grupo Internacionalista warns that the threat of a future anti-democratic prohibition is being used, with considerable success, to gain sympathy and political support for López Obrador and the PRD, a bourgeois nationalist party, in the face of the heavy handed measures of the PRI and PAN seeking to keep their place in the seat of power. While defending the elementary democratic right of any political party to run in the



María Luisa Severiano/Jornada

**The popular front mobilizes: Mexico City's Zócalo filled to overflowing in April 24 march against lifting executive immunity of Andrés Manuel López Obrador.**

elections with whatever candidates it chooses (even in the case of the big capitalist parties), we point out that the workers, peasants and other sectors of the exploited and oppressed must not let themselves be hoodwinked by the electoral maneuverings nor place any confidence in any side in this dispute among the bourgeoisie. In the roulette wheel of bourgeois “democracy,” it is capital that decides the outcome of the game. With the beginning of the pre-electoral period, we repeat that it is urgently necessary to **break with the popular front** around the PRD, which chains the workers to a sector of the ruling class. For those who seek to sweep away the present regime of poverty and repression, the key is to **forge a revolutionary workers party** in opposition to all the bosses' parties.

The Fox government has tried in vain to impose a series of “structural reforms” in order to comply with the demands of the imperialist financial institutions and their junior partners in the Mexican bourgeoisie. This includes selling off the energy sector to private capital (both domestic and imperialist), dismantling what remains of the pension and retirement system used by the PRI-

**Break with the Popular Front Around the PRD!  
Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!**

government<sup>1</sup> to domesticate the working class, as well as the complete elimination of the labor gains that hamper, even in a small way, the capitalists' insatiable thirst for profits. Dissatisfied with the inability of the rancher from Guanajuato (Fox) to get the job done, the Mexican bourgeoisie is looking around for different alternatives in carrying out its starvation policies. The PRI, despite its interminable internal squabbles, has proclaimed its readiness to return to the presidency. Similarly, the PRD seeks to demonstrate to its capitalist-imperialist masters its responsibility and ability to control social discontent and keep it inside the harmless channels of the bourgeois political institutions.

The current political maneuver of the Fox government and the PRI against López Obrador has the eventual purpose of preventing his name from appearing on the ballot next year. What they are seeking is that, once he is subject to trial, according to Article 111 of the Mexican Constitution, López Obrador will be denied the right to participate in the elections. But it will be months before this is concretized. At the present time, he isn't even the candidate of the PRD (others, including the perennial PRD presidential hopeful Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, are also vying for the nomination), and no party has presented, much less registered, its standard bearer. *For now, 14 months before the elections, this is a pre-fraud being readied against a pre-candidate in a pre-electoral period which is serving as a pretext to swell support for the popular front.* Should Fox and the PRI be so bold as to carry out their idiocy – imposing a ban on the politician who is, by far, the most popular of the potential candidates in the public opinion polls – then we would defend the right of López Obrador to run for president, in the framework of our efforts to debunk his candidacy and those of the other capitalist parties.

For communists, the guiding principle is always to fight for the revolutionary political independence of the proletariat and all the oppressed from the politicians, parties, governments and state of their capitalist bosses and oppressors. This counterposes us all along the line to opportunist groups who, using the pretext of defending his democratic rights, have joined the cause of López Obrador and the popular front focusing on the PRD.

In fact, the current struggle against lifting López Obrador's official immunity amounts to the launching of his primary election campaign. Not only his detractors say so – “Autodestape” [Self-nomination] trumpets the front page of *La Crisis* (25 April) – so do his supporters. One could also draw this conclusion from the huge and very professional political marketing campaign summed up in the posters featuring a portrait of López Obrador, proclaiming “You Are Not Alone.” With 250,000 jamming into the Zócalo [Mexico City's principal square] last August 29, some 500,000 this April 7, and more than a million in the same Constitution Plaza yesterday, López Obrador has demonstrated his “drawing power” to the political operators and kingpins of Mexican bourgeois politics: “With the March, López Obrador Makes Leap in the Election Polls, According to Deputies,”

<sup>1</sup> During the 71 years of its unbroken rule, the Institutional Revolutionary Party and its predecessors (PRM, PNR) ran what was in effect a one-party capitalist state, dubbed the PRI-government, in which the institutions of the party and the government were interchangeable.

headlined *La Jornada* (25 April). In the name of defending democratic rights, an attempt is being made to build “the most important citizens' political movement in the history of the Republic” – in other words, a popular front – declared the parliamentary fractions of the PRD, the PT (Labor Party) and PVEM (Greens) in the Chamber of Deputies.

As for democratic rights, Marxists point out that the *fuero*, or official immunity, for those holding positions of executive power in a capitalist state, blocking any legal action against them so long as they are in office, is a *fundamentally anti-democratic* weapon. *Parliamentary immunity*, which prevents the arrest of legislators, is a protection inherited from feudal times which prevented the king (or president) from simply decreeing the arrest of any opponent and throwing them into the dungeons of the regime. In contrast, in the name of assuring “governability,” *executive immunity* protects the supreme commanders of the repressive bodies which impose the dictates of the bourgeoisie. Presidential immunity (Article 110 of the Constitution) exempted Luis Echeverría from prosecution for ordering, as Mexico's interior minister, the Tlatelolco Massacre of 2 October 1968, in which hundreds of student demonstrators were mowed down, and for later unleashing the Corpus Christi Massacre on 10 June 1971, this time as president of the republic. His immunity continued until his six-year presidential term ended in 1976.

Along with executive immunity, there are a whole series of similar measures and judicial doctrines (*sovereign immunity*, which protects governments from prosecution; *lèse majesté*, which makes it a crime to insult the head of state; and *executive privilege*, which permits heads of government to declare their deliberations and internal documents secret) which Marxists categorically oppose. The purpose of all these types of immunity is to provide capitalist rulers with maximum *impunity* so that they can make use of the measures they consider necessary in order to suppress social discontent. Nevertheless, even though lifting López Obrador's immunity was not in and of itself an anti-democratic act, removing him as the elected head of Mexico City's government would be an abuse that must be condemned. This is a result of Mexico's judicial principles which, at bottom, *do not* presume that a defendant is innocent until proven guilty. Yet while the squalid political motives of the Mexican Congress were obvious when it removed López Obrador's immunity on April 7, the electoral aims of his supporters are no secret either.

Obviously there is no comparison between what Andrés Manuel López Obrador is accused of and the truly bloody crimes committed on a large scale by the PRI regime during the seven decades of its “perfect dictatorship” (a phrase of the rightist Peruvian novelist Mario Vargas Llosa). The charges against López Obrador are an obvious and downright ridiculous smear: the accusation is that for a couple of weeks he ignored a judge's order blocking construction of an access road to a new hospital. There is nothing to suggest that he even ordered or signed anything about this, so he is being held responsible for the action of one or another of his subordinates in the Federal District government. The charge is absurd – but there are certainly things for which it would be eminently justified to lift the immunity of the DF head of government. Among them:



- the August 2003 evictions of residents occupying “irregular” lots in the *delegación* (borough) of Xochimilco, which, ironically, were purchased from neighborhood associations linked to the PRD itself (see “Mexico 1985: From the Earthquake to the Popular Front,” in *The Internationalist* No. 20, January-February 2005);
- the capital police running amok in the framework of the “zero tolerance” campaign of the Public Security Secretariat (SSP) of the Federal District, advised by Giuliani Associates, the consulting company of the former mayor of New York (at a cost of US\$4 million to the public treasury), including the nighttime roadblocks of public transportation in order to “pat down” the passengers, supposedly looking for arms (with the obvious purpose of intimidating the population);
- imposing a state of siege on the community of San Juan Ixtayopan last November, following the lynching of three agents of the Federal Preventive Police (PFP), presumed to be carrying out counterinsurgency intelligence activities; or
- the layoffs of Federal District employees, most recently of 29 workers, mostly women, by Locatel (a telephone service to locate missing persons), who were fired at the end of March and then persecuted by the police, which dissolved a protest meeting and arrested one of the organizers.

Nor should the assault by riot police against the National University [UNAM] student strikers ordered by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas on 4 August 1999 be forgotten, or the bloody charge by the SSP's *granaderos* (paramilitary police), who viciously pounded students with riot batons and heavy shields as they were protesting outside the American Embassy on December 11 of the same year calling for freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal, an action ordered by the chief of police of Rosario Robles. In both cases, these events took place when the PRD leaders were head of the Mexico City government. We would be happy to see them both in the defendant's dock for this “abuse of power” and these acts of violence, but such cases will go nowhere in the bourgeois judicial system, and under Mexican doctrines of executive immunity they would be impossible.

Beyond the legal particulars, the huge turnout for López Obrador's rallies reflects a spreading sense of disillusionment due to the fact that the long-awaited defeat of the PRI in the 2000 elections did not translate into any benefit for the population. Quite the contrary, it opened the way for Fox to carry out the same privatizing policies that characterized the last PRI administrations under presidents De la Madrid, Salinas de Gortari and Zedillo. But that is no reason to draw the conclusion that some other bourgeois politician promising “democratic change” would do any better. If López Obrador is the next occupant of Los Pinos [the Mexican president's residence], he will do the same as his predecessors.

### Fox Regime Fails, PRD Wants Its Turn

The experience of the Fox regime underlined that the fall of the PRI did not change the capitalist class interests controlling Mexico (both of the weak local bourgeoisie and its senior partners in Washington and Wall Street) that required a heavy-handed regime. They could not tolerate more

than a pretense of “democracy” in Mexico, which is barely separated from the United States by the longest land border anywhere between the semi-colonial “Third World” and the imperialist “First World.” In the framework of capitalism in its epoch of imperialist decay, the working class can only expect an intensification of the bosses' attacks, an increase in poverty and ever more mechanisms for subjugation. The response to the disenchantment produced by the Fox government must be an intensification of revolutionary struggle.

When Fox took over at the end of 2000, the so-called “government of change” announced the definitive arrival of the longed-for reign of democracy. Grandiloquent promises about economic growth and political reforms enticed the unwary and the gullible. Proclaiming the onset of a “transition without turbulence,” his main aim was to implement new mechanisms for social control that would be cheaper and more effective than those used by the PRI-government. After decades of serving the bourgeois order, the corporatist<sup>2</sup> mechanisms of social control that characterized the PRI regime had grown sclerotic and increasingly ineffective at containing the working-class discontent engendered by the debt crisis of the early 1980s. The bulky state apparatus seemed outdated and too expensive to maintain. Under Fox, the PRI recipe of repression together with “social benefits” was reduced to pure repression. As we wrote four years ago, while the Fox government took its first steps:

“From the decaying semi-bonapartist regime we have gone over to a ‘government of the brand names’ with the presence in the cabinet (appropriately selected by corporate headhunters) of representatives of the Carso Group (the mining and retailing conglomerate of Carlos Slim), the Vitro Group (glass), Cemex (cement), Bimbo (bread), Modelo (beer), Maseca (tortillas), along with Proctor & Gamble and Union Carbide.... When Fox talks of a ‘plural and inclusive’ government, the former Coca-Cola executive means including a top executive of Pepsi-Cola.”

—“Fox Drops the Mask,” supplement to *El Internacionalista*, 8 March 2001

This government made up of the direct representatives of a whole series of capitalist trusts, along with representatives of the most rabid groups of Catholic and even fascist reaction, aimed to dismantle the remains of the “social state” inherited from the PRI. The new regime prepared to use the classic mechanisms of the bosses' white terror, but in the end felt too weak to do so. It depended in the final analysis on the same state apparatus as the PRI regime. In the face of this,

<sup>2</sup> The PRI-government maintained a corporatist regime, in which all sectors of society were organized under direct government control. Workers, peasants, students, housewives, musicians, architects, teachers, street vendors, military officers, etc., were all compulsorily enrolled in corresponding PRI organizations. The corporatist Mexican “unions” – rather than being workers' organizations, albeit with sell-out pro-capitalist misleaders, as is the case in most of the capitalist world – were actual mechanisms of employer and state control. In exchange for this rigid control, the CTM, CT and other corporatist federations provided a degree of social benefits, which recent governments of both the PRI and PAN have increasingly eliminated.



the PRI is attempting a comeback, offering a "decisive government" that knows how to impose the policies required by the bourgeoisie, no matter how much repression is necessary. The PRI gangsters present themselves as rough and ready types who "know how to do the dirty work."

Meanwhile there is the bourgeoisie's back-up option of the popular front constructed around the PRD from 1988 on. In the mid-'80s, the debt crisis caused a drastic fall in the living standards of the working people, while pauperizing large sectors of the urban and rural petty bourgeoisie. Following a wave of workers' strikes (Cananea miners, Sicartsa steel workers, Volkswagen, Ford), student and teacher protests (the anti-tuition struggle at UNAM in 1986-87, the CNTE [National Educational Workers Coordinating Committee] strike of 1989), and unrest in the countryside culminating in the Zapatista Indian uprising of 1994, the Mexican bourgeoisie urgently needed a fireman to extinguish potentially explosive social struggles.

From the moment it appeared on the scene, the PRD has been nothing but an updated version of the PRI. Founded by former members of that party, together with a series of groups belonging to the "socialist left" (i.e., dyed-in-the-wool reformists), the PRD systematically sought to grab the lead of any social movement that threatened to go beyond bourgeois limits. The intention was to channel struggles towards "peacefully" dissolving into the bourgeois parliament. After more than a decade of leading the struggles of the exploited and oppressed to defeat, the popular front became increasingly unpopular among those who had been its base. The UNAM strike of 1999-2000 was a turning point, as tens of thousands of students refused to sell out the strike, in what had been an indisputable bastion of the PRD, contrary to what PRD supporters at the university tried to do in their zeal to protect Cárdenas' presidential candidacy in July 2000.

Today, following Fox's attacks on López Obrador, a good part of the population has been outraged by the deceitful use of the bourgeoisie's own rules. The "silent demonstration" of April 24 in the Zócalo brought out 1,200,000 people, according to Federal District government figures, making it the largest political mobilization in Mexican history. Although some bourgeois media insist on making López Obrador out to be some kind of irresponsible "radical," the truth is that he is a classic bourgeois-nationalist politician who reactivated the Cárdenas popular front. His list of do's and don'ts for the "movement of peaceful resistance" against the lifting of immunity stresses that there must be no "blocking or occupying of public or private facilities." Using the typical empty jargon of populism, he is seeking to carry out pressure politics with the permission of the national bourgeoisie and its imperialist masters. And that is just what has happened.

With the exception of some employers' associations, the



José Luis Magaña/AP

**President Vicente Fox reviews the paramilitary Federal Preventive Police, July 2004.**

Mexican bourgeoisie has been worried that the disputes at the top could wind up setting off an uncontrollable social conflagration. Bourgeois analysts are asking why Fox generated a "social confrontation" where none existed before, and if Andrés Manuel López Obrador will be able to contain his supporters. After every mobilization for "AMLO," as he is widely known, the media relax and breathe easier, saying things "came off without a hitch." Some in the bourgeois media have even spread fears in the stock markets in order to gain support for him. Thus *Milenio* (6 April) proclaimed across eight columns, "Market Falls Because of *Desafuero*," only to announce a few days later that AMLO's speech in the Zócalo brought "confidence to the financial markets."

The attack on López Obrador is not the plot between Fox and the American imperialists that pseudo-Marxists like the Militante group make it out to be. On her visit to Mexico in early March, hawkish American secretary of state Condoleezza Rice stated that the U.S. government would accept a left-wing government in Mexico. According to a report in *Reforma* (10 March), "Rice ruled out the idea that electoral victories by governments headed by left-wing politicians could worry the United States," citing Lula's government in Brazil, with which President Bush has "excellent relations."

With his mammoth peaceful mobilizations of April 7 and 24, Andrés Manuel López Obrador is showing how he can keep social mobilizations in check. He can also count on the support of the "independent" trade unions, whose bureaucratic leaderships are joining the recently revived popular front with undisguised enthusiasm. The leadership of the Mexican Electrical Workers Union (SME) announced that it will include "the issue of López Obrador in the demands for May Day," while 40 other unions announced that they would hold meetings throughout the country on May 3 to 11 "in order to express their rejection of the lifting of Andrés Manuel López Obrador's immunity, in defense of democratic life and against the privatizations the government is attempting to impose" (*La Jornada*, 24 April).

## The Opportunist Left Climbs Aboard the López Obrador Bandwagon

The “independent” union bureaucrats are careful to say that they don’t necessarily give “political support” to López Obrador, but are only mobilizing in defense of “democracy.” That same day, a series of “union, peasant, civil, student and feminist organizations, along with artists and intellectuals” were calling to “form a common front against imposition” (of the president by the PAN and PRI). The organizations involved “made clear that the intention is not to push the presidential candidacy of López Obrador,” but instead to act in “defense of democracy and political freedoms” ... and to propose “solutions for the main problems facing the nation.” This is a classical popular front, which like any class-collaborationist political alliance is based on a program of the lowest common denominator: the supposed defense of democracy, justice, liberty and other bourgeois lies. As Leon Trotsky wrote on the eve of the imperialist Second World War, “in the colonial and semi-colonial countries – not only in China and India, but in Latin America – the fraud of the ‘People’s Fronts’ still continues to paralyze the working masses, converting them into cannon fodder for the ‘progressive’ bourgeoisie” (“Manifesto of the Fourth International on the Imperialist War and the Proletarian World Revolution” [May 1940], in *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1939-40]*).

An example of those who equate the “struggle against the *desafuero*” with the “struggle for democracy” is the latest issue of *El Socialista* (No. 302, April 2005), the newspaper of the Partido Obrero Socialista (POS – Socialist Workers Party, followers of the late Argentine pseudo-Trotskyist Nahuel Moreno). The cover consists of a large photo of López Obrador, with the slogan in big type: “We Will NOT Permit the Anti-Democratic Maneuver of Fox, the PRI and the PAN. For the Right to Vote for AMLO or for Any Candidate.” In the back-page article, the POS comes out for a struggle against the lifting of immunity, consisting of a general strike:

“In order to effectively defend democratic rights and defeat the neo-liberal plans, a general strike must be prepared in this country. What is posed is not only overthrowing the *desafuero*. It is also indispensable to direct the struggle against Fox’s government itself and the PRI-PAN alliance that supports it and intends to carry out the unpopular structural counter-reforms.”

This argument, which sums up the approach of many other reformists, seeks to put a tiny fig leaf over what is, in fact, *political support to López Obrador and the popular front around the bourgeois PRD*. In order to justify their shameless defense of such an anti-democratic institution as executive immunity, these leftist groups are obliged to present their stand as if they were essentially defending the democratic right to run in the elections. But here a little problem arises, that López Obrador isn’t even the candidate of his party. The fact is that AMLO has not been excluded from the ballot, and what he is doing at present is mounting an *election campaign* on the basis of struggle against the *desafuero*, drawing in a series of opportunist left organizations that are incapable

of resisting the pressure of 1.2 million people in the streets.

The opportunist groups are all perfectly conscious of the PRD’s maneuver over the *desafuero*. They just want to get a piece of the action. One organization that initially had some qualms in this respect is the Liga de Trabajadores por el Socialismo (LTS – League of Workers for Socialism), tied to another Morenoite current led by the Argentine PTS. In a declaration issued at the end of March, the LTS wrote:

“Without approving the clearly authoritarian measures of the government, which show that this degraded bourgeois democracy is incapable of respecting its own laws and mechanisms of control and institutional swindling, the socialists of the LTS cannot fail to point out that the constitutional provision for official immunity is in itself reactionary (and thus cannot be supported, defended or approved), for it is on this basis that the ruling class – ever since the Middle Ages – has granted immunity for actions against the ruled.”

On this basis, the LTS explicitly refused to come out against the lifting of López Obrador’s immunity. But now that has changed. In the latest issue of its paper, it writes:

“The socialists of the LTS had taken the position that official immunity is a reactionary institutional mechanism, an institution that has been used under PRI rule, and most recently under the current alternate regime, in order to grant immunity to mass murderers and repressors like Echeverría, and to PRI and PAN politicians. But since today the lifting of immunity represents a jump in slashing the most basic democratic rights, we reject it as a maneuver to politically exclude a candidate who has the support of millions of people, and we demand the unrestricted right for AMLO to participate in the elections.”

—*Estrategia Obrera* No. 43, 16 April

So now the LTS can breathe a sigh of relief and assume the traditional position of the Morenoites, of swimming *with* the current of every petty-bourgeois or bourgeois movement. For them, this is nothing new. What they have always wanted is a more combative popular front. Following the electoral fraud of 1988, both sides of the Morenoite movement, which had only recently split, called for a general strike to impose Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas as president. One of the two Morenoite wings even urged the candidate to call the strike. But Cárdenas, with the decorum of the proper bourgeois that he is and his long experience as a PRI politician, declined the temptation and in fact *demobilized* the *cardenista* masses, just as López Obrador is promising to do today.

Another outfit which outrageously claims to represent Trotskyism, but in reality only distorts it, is the Militante group, which has been very active in the demonstrations against the lifting of López Obrador’s immunity. “If there is *desafuero*, there will be revolution!” it stridently proclaimed in its newspaper (*Militante*, 2 April). So from the Morenoite call for a general strike we have gone on to a call for revolution ... in favor of a bourgeois candidate, using the excuse of “resisting” electoral fraud more than a year before the election! Militante has the nerve to call itself the “Marxist tendency” of the PRD, a capitalist party, thereby contradicting the most basic principal of Marxist politics: the class inde-

pendence of the proletariat with respect to ~~all the bourgeois~~ parties. If the Morenoites specialize in tailing ~~after every mass~~ movement, from Peronism to the Russian counterrevolution led by Yeltsin, the Militante current with its ~~policy of "deep~~ entrism" prefers to disguise itself completely ~~and adopt the~~ posture of "consistent" PRDers.

That has not, however, saved it from the ~~anti-worker~~ actions of the PRD government of the Federal District. ~~Among~~ the fired Locatel workers were supporters of ~~Militante~~ among them Beatriz Godínez, who was arrested and held for 15 hours by the police of "her" capitalist government. In the most recent issue of its paper, Militante writes:

"Despite being against the attacks on AMLO on the part of the bourgeoisie and imperialism, we were fired by the Federal District (DF) government; despite having supported the demonstration that overflowed the Zócalo in the capital on April 7, we were repressed by the DF government. So we say that it is necessary to turn the PRD into an instrument for struggle and [that] the DF government must immediately turn around its labor policies 180 degrees. Either it is with the workers or it is against the workers."

Their own experience ought to teach them that the government of AMLO "is against the workers," but we're not going to hold our breath until they learn this ABC of Marxism. To be sure, in the same article Militante refers to the 60,000 (!) members of the Bank and Industrial Police as "workers in uniform." These dupes don't recognize the class character of their party, nor of the armed fist of the bourgeoisie. Generations of workers have received valuable lessons from the experience of repression (the "university of hard knocks") about the nature of the capitalist state. But it seems that these PRD "Marxists," who love AMLO and are crazy for Hugo Chávez, must be really slow learners ... or they just don't want to accept this lesson of the class struggle.

### GEM / ICL Caboose on the Popular Front Train

If for the Morenoites (POS and PTS) and Militante the formulas for tailism are old hat, at this point the left centrists of the Grupo Espartaquista de México (GEM) are not exactly novices either, and they are picking it up quickly. After almost a decade of fighting against the popular front around the PRD, just at the moment when Cárdenas won the elections for the Mexico City government in 1997, the GEM (drifting off into abstentionism and abandonment of the revolutionary Trotskyist program) declared that there is not – and cannot be – a popular front in Mexico. The Grupo Internacionalista, whose founders came out of the GEM amid a series of expulsions in different sections of the Spartacist tendency (the International Communist League, or ICL), insisted that right at that moment it was more necessary than ever to fight for the working class and the oppressed to break with this pernicious class-collaborationist alliance. Our Open Letter to the GEM (May 1997) was titled, "To Fight the Popular Front, You Have to Recognize That It Exists."

This wasn't just a "difference of analysis," as some members of the ICL later tried to claim in order to minimize it, but rather a fundamental programmatic question. The ICL's revisionism on the popular front opened the way for a whole series of new and shame-

ful political revisions. It discovered that in Mexico there were still feudal remnants, only to later discover that this "discovery" was false and anti-Marxist. Not accidentally, the thesis of "semi-feudalism" was the favorite justification of the Stalinists for their popular-front alliances with "democratic," "progressive" and even "anti-imperialist" sectors of the national bourgeoisies of the colonial countries. This was followed by the claim that the corporatist "unions" in Mexico – mechanisms for the direct subjugation of the working class by the capitalist state, who organize squads of strikebreakers and are responsible for the assassination of hundreds of working-class fighters – are supposedly part of the workers movement. As we pointed out at the time, *the GEM didn't want to recognize the popular front in Mexico because it didn't want to combat it.*

Now we have the proof. *The ICL and the GEM have hitched their wagon as the caboose onto the popular front train.* *Workers Vanguard* (No. 846, 15 April), the newspaper of the Spartacist League/U.S., the main section of the ICL, has published on its front page an article titled, "Mexico: Down with Fox's Attack on Mayor López Obrador!" As a subtitle it adds: "Break with the PRD! For the Political Independence of the Working Class!" This whispered aside, stage-left only serves as a fig leaf, showing that their entry into the constellation of the popular front is fully conscious and shameful. Taking sides for López Obrador against Fox's attack, no matter what provisos are tacked on, is giving him political support. Think of parallel cases: "Down with the Republican Attack on President Clinton!" during the impeachment proceedings, for example. Or, "Down with Bush's Attack On Gore!" following the 2000 elections, when the U.S. presidency was decided by a right-wing Supreme Court. No matter how many times one might say "Break with the Democratic Party!" this would indisputably amount to political support to a section of the bourgeoisie.

The text of the WV article consists of a translation of a leaflet by the GEM distributed in the April 7 demonstration. Repeating in almost identical terms the (new) position of the Morenoites, the GEM states:

"We communists of the Grupo Espartaquista de México are opposed to the attempt to strip Andrés Manuel López Obrador of his political immunity (a process called *desafuero*) while giving him no political support. The attempt by Fox and his PRI accomplices to prevent a bourgeois-nationalist candidate from running in the elections is a blow to the democratic rights of the population. Its target is ultimately the masses who in vain place their hopes in the PRD as an alternative to the rapaciousness of the PAN and the PRI. In opposing this *desafuero* we are defending our class's right to organize and fight against the capitalist class as a whole."

We repeat that executive privilege, whether for the head of the Mexico City government or the president of the republic, granting immunity against prosecution, is an anti-democratic measure, and that until now López Obrador's right to present his candidacy has not been denied. To claim otherwise is to jump feet first into the electoral schemes of the PRD, which attacks the *desafuero* in order to broaden political support for the *popular front*. The popular front makes it utterly clear that it is seeking the support of people who say

*continued on page 57*



# Over a Dozen Hacienda Luisita Strikers and Their Children Killed Massacre of Sugar Plantation Workers in the Philippines

**Mobilize the Working Class to  
Avenge the Martyrs and Win Strike!**

*In late 2004, the deadliest slaughter of Filipino workers in recent years took place as police and army troops fired on a crowd of striking agricultural and sugar mill workers and their supporters. Despite the massacre, the Hacienda Luisita plantation and refinery workers refuse to give up, and their strike continues. We print below our article on their struggle from the Internationalist web site ([www.internationalist.org](http://www.internationalist.org)), and an excerpted declaration by the comrades of the Revolutionary Communist Group in the Philippines.*

DECEMBER 7 – In the afternoon of November 16, Filipino police and army units carried out a brutal massacre of striking sugar plantation workers at Hacienda Luisita, located in Tarlac province in central Luzon, north of Manila. After a stand-off with the strikers the day before, some 1,000 cops and troops were sent to the hacienda headquarters, accompanied by two armored personnel carriers, fire trucks and water cannons. Launching a volley of tear gas grenades, Army riflemen fired

point-blank into the picketers' front lines using live ammunition. A 60-calibre machine gun was also used. Truncheon-wielding police chased migrant workers into their barracks and later combed the ten barangays (villages) where hacienda workers live. "Soldiers were allegedly 'zoning' Barangay Motrico, dragging men out of their homes and lining them up to be arrested," the *Philippines Daily Inquirer* (17 November) reported. Dead bodies were found scattered all around the main gate and the barracks. A total of 14 people were reported killed, including two children suffocated by the tear gas, and some 200 injured, over 30 with gunshot wounds. A total of 133 strikers and their supporters were arrested.

The Hacienda Luisita massacre is the worst slaughter of Filipino workers in recent years. It underlines the fraud of bourgeois "democracy," which rains death on the exploited and oppressed fighting for their rights. It is all the more significant because the police and army attack was ordered directly from the central government, by Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas, and was carried out on behalf of the Cojuangco family, prominent landowners including former president Corazon Cojuangco Aquino. The current president, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, responded to the mass killing with empty platitudes and "prayers." Spokesmen for the Hacienda justified the bloodbath as a "legitimate exercise of state power," saying the work stoppage was "illegal and left-inspired." Plantation workers had gone on strike November 6 demanding the reinstatement of some 327 union-

Manila Indymedia



**Protesters at Hacienda Luisita in front of banner of the Ambala peasant organization, November 2004.**

ists, including nine union leaders, fired ten days earlier by the management of the hacienda and the sugar mill (Central Azucarera de Tarlac, CAT). As thousands of strikers and their supporters occupied the facilities, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) declared it was assuming jurisdiction for the dispute and ordered in three military battalions to take down the picket lines and disperse the strikers.

Hacienda Luisita tries to sell itself as luxurious modern resort, complete with covered tennis courts, swimming pool with Jacuzzi, a championship golf course, business park and "simple yet elegant" hotel, "your hacienda home." Yet this "fusion of agriculture and industry" is based on the superexploitation of workers who live a miserable existence enforced by an age-old system of "landlordism and state terrorism," as the magazine *Bulatlat* (21 November) put it. The Philippine Army's Camp Aquino, headquarters of the Northern Luzon Command, is located just across MacArthur Highway from the plantation. When Corazon Aquino was president in January 1987, 13 members of a left-wing peasant group were killed by Marines at the Mendiola Bridge in Manila as

## Overcoming the Circle Spirit

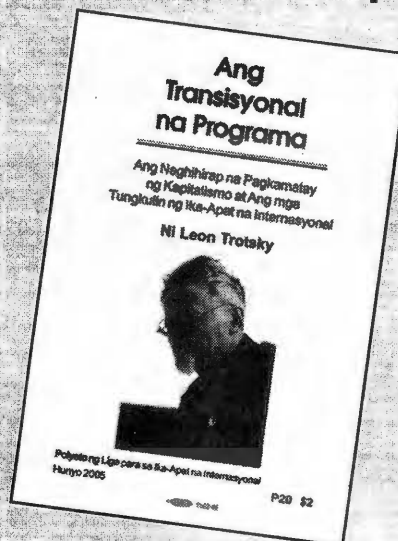
### Where to Begin: Forging a Trotskyist Nucleus in Philippines

The Rebolusyonaryong Grupo ng mga Komunista (RGK – Revolutionary Communist Group) was formed in early 2002 out of a grouping of young militants who had broken away from the dominant Maoist/Stalinist organizations over a period of roughly three years. This grouping was investigating Trotskyism and established contact with the International Communist League (the Spartacist tendency). However, the launching of the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in September 2001 posed a sharp test for revolutionaries, and when the ICL backtracked on its previous policy of fighting for the *defeat* of the imperialists, retreating to a general call for class struggle, several comrades resolved to break with this caricature of Leninism.

With the formation of the RGK, it was decided that its first tasks were to translate Lenin and Trotsky's writings into Tagalog, to critique the program of the "Lagmanite" current that split from the Communist Party (CPP) of J.M. Sison, and to begin organizing work with youth and worker contacts. A modest beginning was made with translations, starting with Trotsky's "Three Concepts of the Russian Revolution," which is available on the Marxist Internet Archive. As the ICL had accused the comrades of having the position of the League for the Fourth International on the war on Afghanistan, it was decided to investigate the politics of the LFI. After reading the LFI's statements on the war and its founding declaration, it was decided to establish contact.

Beginning in early 2003, a process of discussion and joint work began between the RGK and the LFI, leading to the production of several important pieces of propaganda. In addition to translating the LFI's statement on the war on Iraq, statements by the RGK were prepared in collaboration with the LFI concerning the need for working-class struggle against imperialist war, as opposed to the popular-front class collaboration of the opportunist left, exposing leftist illusions in a comic-opera nationalist "coup" plot, and other subjects. A key document produced by extensive discussion with the LFI was the statement on "The Class War in Southeast Asia," which served to clarify the Trotskyist position on the struggles of oppressed peoples in the Philippines and Indonesia, in the context of the struggle for international socialist revolution.

This beginning was enough to draw the ire of the CPP, which included the RGK on a list of "counterrevolutionary" organizations published in its newspaper, *Ang Bayan*, in December 2004, noting the link to the LFI. However, the organizational development of the group did not proceed apace with the propaganda. The RGK remained essentially a loose-knit circle of the type Lenin wrote of in his fundamental work, *What Is To Be Done?* where he laid out the need for a party of professional revolutionaries that could overcome the severe limitations of a circle existence (and the accompanying circle



spirit). As a result of the uncohered nature of the group, a planned conference between representatives of the LFI and the RGK in late 2004 was aborted.

After a period of dispersal and reflection, several comrades who had participated in the work of the RGK have resolved to begin anew the attempt to build a Trotskyist nucleus in Philippines, this time on a solid Leninist basis rather than the amorphous informal grouping that did not make the leap required by the tasks we face. As a first step, the organizational functioning of the RGK is placed in recess, in favor of a study group in conjunction with the LFI and on the basis of the Declaration of the League for the Fourth International. Propaganda concerning the Philippines and regional questions as well as translations of LFI materials will be issued directly in the name of the LFI.

With that aim, the translation of Trotsky's Transitional Program into Tagalog, done by comrades of the RGK, is being issued as an LFI pamphlet, including explanatory footnotes making this key document by the Bolshevik co-leader of the Russian October Revolution accessible to young Filipino militants.

The transition from a loose Marxist circle to a programmatically based revolutionary cadre organization has always been a difficult process (including for Lenin in Russia), frequently involving splits and some comrades falling by the wayside. But the need for an authentic Trotskyist party in Philippines is more urgent than ever. As new "people's power" protests break out in this semicolonial country, which would install yet another corrupt bourgeois regime to replace the present client government of flunkies of U.S. imperialism, Trotsky's critique of the dead-end of popular-frontism is as relevant today as it was 70 years ago.

*Nico V. for comrades of the RGK*

thousands marched on the Malacañang presidential palace demanding land reform. The 1987 march was led by agricultural workers from Hacienda Luisita. Later, 17 farmers including women and children were massacred by Marines in nearby Nueva Ecija province on "suspicion" that they were guerrillas of the Maoist-led New People's Army. Now Arroyo, whose husband's family owns plantations in the sugar island of Negros Oriental, has her first crop of martyrs.

But faced with the murderous attack of the bourgeoisie, the response of the reformist left, both Stalinists and social democrats, has been to appeal to the capitalist rulers for "democracy. On November 18, the BMP (Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino – Filipino Workers Solidarity) staged a "sympathy noise barrage" calling on the Congress, that corrupt den of bourgeois politicians, to carry out an "independent and impartial investigation" of the Luisita Massacre. On November 30, the BMP and allied PM (Partido ng Manggagawa – Labor Party) occupied the DOLE calling for resignation of Labor Secretary Sto. Tomas while the House of Representatives held a hearing on the massacre. Representatives of Bayan Muna, Anakpawis and Gabriela party lists also sponsored the call for a Congressional investigation. But no "investigation" by the political instrument of the ruling class will be "impartial" or "independent," much less win the strikers' demands and avenge their dead. Reflecting this focus on pressuring the bourgeoisie, ULWU unionists linked to the Bayan Stalinist/popular-frontist coalition turned back representatives of the Trotskyist Rebolusyonaryong Grupo ng mga Komunista (RGK) who traveled to Tarlac to show their solidarity with the Luisita strikers.

In the face of an anti-Communist campaign labeling the strikers guerrillas, the CPP denied that the National People's Army was present at Hacienda Luisita. The fact that there were no casualties among the police and army is proof enough of this. But although the strikers had exercised proletarian power by seizing the plantation and sugar mill, the CPP/NPA calls for "land to the tiller," i.e., for a bourgeois-democratic land reform to turn agricultural workers into smallholding peasants rather than fight for workers revolution. Tarlac was a center of peasant insurgency at the time of the Hukbong Mapagpalaya ng Bayan (HMB) or the People's Liberation Army, led by the Stalinist Communist Party of the Philippines (PKP) during the

late 1940s and 1950s. At one point Huk guerrillas reached the outskirts of Manila. But they were ultimately defeated, not merely by military superiority of the U.S.-backed forces, but because the imperialists (through Colonel Edward Lansdale) and their puppets (notably war minister Ramon Magsaysay) stole the guerrillas' thunder with a counterinsurgency land reform.

Appealing to the Arroyo government or to the den of corruption of the Philippine Congress for a fair investigation will be no more successful than earlier campaigns for compensation of the victims of the Mendiola massacre. Destruction of the hacienda system of large landholdings will not be accomplished by begging the capitalist rulers to break up their profitable estates and hand land titles over to the impoverished peasantry. That is a program for more Mendiola and Luisita massacres, and for swindles like the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP), by which landowners like the Cojuangcos managed to hold on to their ill-gotten estates through frauds like the bogus "stock distribution option," creating the fiction that the employees were part "owners" of Hacienda Luisita. Trotskyists fight not for the bourgeois-democratic demand of agrarian reform but for agrarian revolution, for the peasants to seize the lands while agricultural and refinery workers take over the plantations and mills in conjunction with revolutionary struggle by the urban proletariat.

The response to this new act of capitalist barbarism must be a mobilization of the entire Filipino working class. Such massacres can galvanize mass discontent, as occurred in Russia following the 9 January 1905 slaughter of workers led by the priest and police agent Father Gapon who sought to petition the tsar with their grievances, leading to the 1905 Revolution. A few years later, the 1912 killing of strikers in the Lena River gold fields in eastern Siberia provoked mass demonstrations of up to half a million workers in Moscow and St. Petersburg, setting the stage for the workers upsurge of early 1914 which was cut short by the outbreak of World War I, but then reappeared in 1917 and brought down the tsarist autocracy through workers revolution. The key, in Russia a century ago and in the Philippines today, is to forge a revolutionary leadership, a Bolshevik workers party, that can unite poor peasants, urban slum dwellers, national minorities and oppressed peoples and all other oppressed sectors behind the power of the proletariat.

## After the Hacienda Luisita Massacre –

# Filipino Workers: Defend Sugar Strikers!

*We print below the excerpted statement of the RGK:*

DECEMBER 5 – The Rebolusyonaryong Grupo ng mga Komunista calls on the workers, peasants, women and youth organizations to unite in actively defending the picket lines of the striking Hacienda Luisita workers! We also urge the Central Azucarera de Tarlac Labor Union (CATLU) and the United Luisita Workers Union (ULWU) to welcome any support – be it morally, financially, and physical support – that other workers, peasant, urban poor, women and youth organizations extend regardless of organizational affiliation or tendency. The brutal

and bloody dispersal in the picket lines at Hacienda Luisita, owned by the Cojuangco family of former president Cory Aquino, is an injury to our class brothers and sisters! We Trotskyists say: an injury to one is an injury to all! The working class should mobilize throughout the Philippines to demand immediate withdrawal of the police and army, and to win the just demands of the Hacienda Luisita strikers.

The abominable act against the strikers committed by elements of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP) on November 16, killing 14



Video: SIPAT, via Bulatlat



Dabet Castañeda/Bulatlat

**Strikers at Hacienda Luisita flee from police (left), November 16. Workers carry off body of murdered comrade (center). Banner of CATLU union says, "Enough! We Are Hungry!"**

including 2 children (due to suffocation), should be indignantly protested through solidarity strikes by workers not only in the province of Tarlac but also in the whole sugar industry – where workers belonging to the Central Azucarera de Bais (CAB) in Bais City in Negros Oriental are also on strike – and especially against companies owned by the Cojuangcos, like the Philippine Long Distance Telephone company and San Miguel Brewery, here in Metro Manila. Militants should fight for such solidarity strikes of workers and employees to encompass all mass workers organizations, regardless of political tendency, not only from the Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU – May 1st Movement) affiliated unions (allied with the popular-frontist BAYAN coalition<sup>1</sup>, the Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino (BMP – Solidarity of Filipino Workers) allied with the SANLAKAS front<sup>2</sup>, and the National Federation of Labor (NFL) – to which the

<sup>1</sup>Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN – New Patriotic Alliance), whose acronym spells “people” in Pilipino, was founded during the Marcos dictatorship. Following the popular-front program of the Stalinists in the 1930s, it seeks to build a nationalist “democratic front” including members of the bourgeois opposition. Bayan is regularly accused by the AFP of being a front for the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) of José Maria Sison, its National People’s Army (NPA) and the underground National Democratic Front (NDF).

CAB Employees Union (CABEU) belongs.

Particularly in the present context, where Filipino workers are under full-scale attack by the government of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, backed by the Bush regime in the U.S., the sugar workers’ strike must not be isolated. The enormous power of the organized working class must be mobilized urgently in support of the striking workers in Luisita and Bais! The fight of the Luisita and Bais workers must be taken up by the working-class movement rather than seeking salvation through the intervention of the bourgeois state – Arroyo, the bourgeois congress and the Department of Labor and Employment.

Urgently posed is the question of the continued militarization of Hacienda Luisita where at almost every major intersection there are military and security checkpoints. The working-class movement must demand the withdrawal of all military, police and anti-worker

*continued on page 57*

<sup>2</sup> Sandigan ng Lakas at Demokrasya ng Sambayanan (SANLAKAS – Upholder of People’s Power and Democracy) was led by Filemon (“Popoy”) Lagman, founder of the BMP union federation and former head of the Manila committee of the CPP, who was assassinated in February 2001. Lagman also founded the Filipino Workers Party (PMP – Partido ng Manggagawang Pilipino).

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## **"Dictocrat" Gutiérrez Falls...And Then? A New President Is Installed, Nothing Changes**

# **Ecuador: The "Rebellion of the Outlaws" – A Marxist Analysis**

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

APRIL 25 – For the third time in less than a decade, the Ecuadorian president has been kicked out of the seat of power due to explosive demonstrations in the streets ... and he is replaced by another bourgeois president, no less reactionary, through the machinations of the Army and the U.S. embassy Abdalá Bucaram in 1997, Jamil Mahuad in 2000, and now Lucio Gutiérrez: in each case, they were thrown out of office after months of angry protests against their austerity policies, the mounting corruption of their regimes and for selling out to Yankee imperialism – only to have everything end up the same as before. Gutiérrez was replaced by his vice president, Alfredo Palacio, a cardiologist who studied in the United States and who, after a few empty gestures of pseudo-independence, will govern this capitalist semi-colony as before. This isn't only happening in Ecuador: in Bolivia in October 2003, a workers uprising overthrew the murderous president Gonzalo Sánchez de Losada, there was general rejoicing, his vice president Carlos Mesa was installed, and everything stayed the same. We are seeing a rerun of an old film, and we already know the tragic ending.

It is necessary to put an end, once and for all, to this infernal cycle of brutal, submissive governments and abortive uprisings that don't break the capitalist mold. In Quito, amid the generalized satisfaction over the flight of the coup-plotting colonel, many people are complaining that he didn't receive his just desserts. The "dictocrat" Gutiérrez (as he dubbed himself), a dictator disguised as a democrat, was able to save himself by the skin of his teeth, flying off to a golden exile in Lula's Brazil; the kleptocrats on the run, like Bucaram, Gustavo Noboa and Alberto Dahik, have escaped once again. But it is not a matter of one man, or a handful of thieves, as hated as they may be. Beyond the egregiously illegitimate



Guillermo Oyarzun/Reuters

**Demonstrators in front of the Carondelet Palace after Congress removed President Lucio Gutiérrez from office, April 20.**

character of the Supreme Court installed by the recently absconded president, there will never be justice for the exploited in the bourgeois courts. The attempts by the masses of workers, peasants and Indians to get rid of the avaricious caste of politicians who have dominated Ecuadorian politics since colonial times will continue to be frustrated. *¡Que se vayan todos!* ("They must all go!") chant the demonstrators. But *how* are they to be thrown out, and *what* will replace them?

Fed up with the corruption of Lucio Gutiérrez' regime, many of the demonstrators in Quito these past few days come from the middle class, or even the bourgeoisie. However much noise they make with their *cacerolazos* (banging pots and pans), puncturing balloons and honking horns, they will do nothing to change the situation that produces presidents like Gutiérrez, Noboa, Mahuad and Bucaram and others of their ilk. In reality, a large part of the opposition comes from the traditional, oligarchical upper class, from generals who never liked taking orders from a colonel, and from society matrons who consider Gutiérrez, the former military aide of Bucaram, a vulgar and uncultured *arriviste*. What is urgently needed is a working-class response, a revolutionary *class* offensive, to throw out all the rotten ele-

**Break the Infernal Cycle, Fight for Socialist Revolution!**

ments who inhabit the circles of power. Gutiérrez was the candidate of a *popular front*, which chains the working people to sections of the bourgeois ruling class. From Spain in the 1930s to Chile in the '70s and Ecuador today, these class-collaborationist coalitions always turn out bad for the working people who elect them. It is not enough to overthrow the president or dictator of the day – it's necessary to sweep away the whole capitalist system that produces and reproduces poverty (now dollarized<sup>1</sup>) among its starving wage slaves.

We must not forget for a minute that Lucio Gutiérrez was elected president with the support of practically the entire Ecuadorian left and the Indian movement. He was considered a hero for his role during the January 2000 uprising, when he was part of the short-lived Junta of National Salvation. While the opportunists praised the phony Indian-military "unity," the Trotskyists of the League for the Fourth International warned of the danger of allying with the officer corps of the military. We stated in the title of our leaflet, dated 27 January 2000, that "Alliance with Bourgeois and Military = Defeat for the Exploited." As Gutiérrez took office, we noted in the newspaper of our Brazilian section that "this bourgeois populist in olive green is no 'red'; he will govern the Andean country in favor of the rich and powerful, dutifully implementing the starvation measures of the International Monetary Fund and the other 'multinational' agencies that follow Washington's orders" (*Vanguardia Operaria* No. 7, January-February 2003). And that's just what happened.

So that everything *doesn't* stay the same, the LFI emphasizes that it is necessary to go beyond the successive popular uprisings and take up the struggle for a *workers, peasants and Indians government* which undertakes *socialist revolution*, not only in this small Andean country but which extends throughout the region, from Bolivia to Venezuela, today a powder keg of social discontent, and to the very imperialist centers where hundreds of thousands of Ecuadorian workers now live. The main tasks facing the Ecuadorian working people, peasants and Indians, and all those who fight against centuries-old oppression in the land of *huasipungo*<sup>2</sup>, must include: fight to *defeat imperialism*, concretized in the *workers mobilization to throw the U.S. military out of the Manta Base* and the rest of the country, and to sink the Free Trade Agreement; against the "democratic" outlook of the reformists, it is necessary to fight for *workers and peasants councils*, potential organs of proletarian power, and for the most conscious elements to unite and *forge the nucleus of a revolutionary workers party*, based on the program of *permanent revolution* and acting as a *tribune of the people*, championing all the oppressed.

<sup>1</sup> On January 9, 2000, President Mahuad announced that Ecuador would dollarize its economy. This was a key factor in provoking the Indian uprising of January 21. Following the defeat of the uprising, Gustavo Noboa, the new president, installed on orders of Washington and the army high command, reaffirmed this policy and in March the Ecuadorian congress adopted the U.S. dollar as the country's official currency.

<sup>2</sup> *Huasipungo* is a form of servitude, a kind of debt peonage, tying the Indians to the land and requiring them to work several days a week for the landowner in exchange for a minuscule wage and access to a tiny plot.

## A Middle-Class Mobilization

The protests against the Gutiérrez government were constant almost from the beginning of his presidency. A few months after he took office, the Indian and leftist ministers had to resign, with their hands dirty from having helped dress up a cabinet dominated by right-wing economists and sinister military figures from Gutiérrez' party, the Sociedad Patriótica 21 de Enero<sup>3</sup>. In the second half of 2004, there were a series of marches and occupations by retired workers demanding a raise in their miserable pensions and opposing plans to privatize Social Security. There were also strikes by government and health workers. But the workers' struggles only indirectly influenced the current anti-government mobilization, and for the first time in 15 years the Indian movement was absent from the protests. The starting point was a dispute within the bourgeoisie over a purge of the Supreme Court ordered by Gutiérrez in December 2004. The former court was dominated by the Social Christian Party (PSC) of León Febres Cordero, the new court by judges of Bucaram's Ecuadorian Roldosista Party (PRE)<sup>4</sup>, allied with Gutiérrez.

On February 16, the PSC and Izquierda Democrática (ID)<sup>5</sup> called a demonstration of 200,000 people in the capital, among them a contingent of some 14,000 businessmen. The recent protests were set off by the decision of Gutiérrez' Supreme Court at the end of March to cancel the criminal charges against Bucaram, Gustavo Noboa and Alberto Dahik (vice president in the government of Sixto Durán in the mid-1990s). This step unleashed an explosion of popular anger. Simultaneously, the unions were protesting against the bill known as the "Ley Topo" (Mole Law – so-called because it undermined a whole series of government institutions), which was up for discussion in Congress on April 6. The government's bill sought to respond to the demands of the International Monetary Fund by modifying 18 different laws with the purpose of privatizing public services and criminalizing protests. It called for up to 16 years imprisonment, for example, for anyone affecting activities in the oil fields (like striking). Due to the pressure from the streets and squabbling among the bourgeois parties, the Ley Topo was voted down by Congress on April 7.

With protests mounting, the mayor of Quito, Paco Moncayo (ID), called for a civic work stoppage on April 12, which in the end didn't attract much participation. Moncayo hasn't exactly won the support of Quito's workers with his layoffs of municipal workers. Nevertheless, that night Radio

<sup>3</sup> Named for the 21 January 2000 uprising, the PSP is essentially a military lodge, centered on the mid-level officers who were cashiered for participating in the coup attempt.

<sup>4</sup> Named after Jaime Roldós Aguilera, a bourgeois populist president who died in office in 1981. A small insular country with a tiny traditional ruling class, divided among feuding clans, Ecuador has a long history of personalist parties. The *roldosista* movement, based in the port city of Guayaquil, grew out of the Nationalist Velasquista Party, named after José María Velasco Ibarra, who was president of Ecuador five times between 1934 and 1972, when he was ousted by the military.

<sup>5</sup> Democratic Left, a bourgeois "left" party affiliated with the social-democratic Second International.



La Luna, a local station, broadcast the appeal for the first *cacerolazos* (pots and pans demonstrations). The next day, Gutiérrez declared that his opponents were just a bunch of "forajidos," or outlaws. Radio La Luna responded by printing up signs saying, "I am a *forajido*, too." Then, holed up in the Palacio de Carondelet, the presidential palace, on April 15, Gutiérrez decreed a state of siege. The response of the Quito population was immediate: they poured into the streets to defy the military and police forces.

The police unleashed a ferocious repression. They fired off innumerable tear gas grenades – up to 1,500 in one hour – producing a toll of 3 dead and 130 hospitalized for asphyxiation. Shots were fired point-blank from the Welfare Ministry at the peaceful demonstrators, who in response burned down the building. Gutiérrez tried to bring in buses from eastern Ecuador filled with supporters of the Federation of Evangelical (Protestant) Indians in order to form shock groups. This desperate measure flopped when the buses were blocked by Quito demonstrators. Throughout the week from April 13 to 20, day after day, night after night, tens of thousands marched at different points in the capital. Protests were called informally using cell phones and e-mail. On April 19, with students in the lead, around 100,000 people gathered in the Plaza Grande. Lucio Gutiérrez' end was near.

While the street protests served as a detonator, the overthrow of the president was actually carried out from within the bourgeois state apparatus and with the approval of Washington. At 8 a.m. on April 20, U.S. ambassador Kirstie Kenney went to consult with the president at the Carondelet palace. At the end, an embassy spokeswoman declared that Washington was worried by the crisis, and it must be resolved soon. Minutes later, the chief of police resigned. Even beforehand, when Gutiérrez proclaimed the state of siege, the fact that the commander in chief of the army, General Luis Aguas, was not standing at his side was widely noted. In the face of the continuing demonstrations, at noon on the 20th, the head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff issued a statement saying that the armed forces had decided to "withdraw support from President Gutiérrez," in order that the country could "return to a climate of peace." Ten minutes later, following a marathon all-night session, Congress voted to oust the president "for abandoning his post," even though at that moment Gutiérrez was in the presidential palace giving orders. In the same way, in 1997 Congress deposed Bucaram (nicknamed "El Loco") on the grounds of "insanity."

"The 'dictocrat' is gone! An outlaw victory!" declared an editorial of the Indian publication *Llacta!* (20 April). One anti-working-class president is gone, and now there is another. The system remains intact: so where is the victory? Even the arch-reactionary ex-president Febres Cordero greeted the people of Quito for having "delivered a historic lesson and said 'enough' to the dictatorship" – although his No. 2, Jaime Nebot, the mayor of Guayaquil, added: "We won't accept anarchy of any kind" (*Hoy*, 21 April). If the United States delayed a bit the approval by the Organization of American States (OAS), which Che Guevara called the "Yankee ministry of colonies," this was only to make perfectly clear for the new president who he had to answer to. President Palacio named a minister

of finance, Rafael Correa, who prior to assuming office had called it "immoral" that a country should pay 40 percent of its budget (as Ecuador has) to cover interest on the foreign debt. The minister of government, Mauricio Gandará, talked of revising the treaty covering U.S. use of the Manta air base. But in a semicolonial country like Ecuador, such declarations for internal consumption are quickly contradicted in deeds by submitting to the dictates of their imperialist masters. On April 25, Palacio met with Ambassador Kenney and announced that in the end there would be no altering of the Manta treaty, or any other agreement with the U.S.

### The Opportunist Left: Aides-de-Camp of Gutiérrez and the Bourgeoisie

With the fall of Lucio Gutiérrez and the insistent demand in the streets, "*¡Que se vayan todos!*" (They Must All Go!), the bourgeois and reformist politicians are getting nervous. If all the politicians go, "then who will govern," asked Pachakutik deputy Salvador Quishpe, and answered: "It will be chaos." Quishpe says that the matter of the Supreme Court must be settled and the date for elections moved up, "and then we will go." Pachakutik, a bourgeois Indian party which for fear of losing its ministerial posts didn't want to break with the president in 2003 until Gutiérrez finally showed them the door, will not lay a finger on the bourgeois state. The head of the Communist Party (PCE), pro-Cuban Stalinists, stayed on as an advisor of Gutiérrez until mid-2004, and the PCE stuck with the president almost up to the end. For his part, Luis Villacís, deputy for the Popular Democratic Movement (MPD), the electoral front of the Marxist-Leninist Communist Party of Ecuador (PCMLE), responded to the demand that they all must go: "We respect that one sector thinks that, but we don't belong in the same bag as those who sold out." No, sir, that's exactly the bag where you belong. The MPD sold out, first in order to get a minister, a presidential advisor and a governor in exchange for its support to Gutiérrez, and then, after being chucked out in July 2003, it sold out again in December 2004 in exchange for a justice in the president's puppet Supreme Court.

In contrast, the Trotskyists of the League for the Fourth International warned from the very first minute how Gutiérrez proclaimed himself the "best friend and ally" of U.S. president Bush in Latin America, and we underlined the "bitter fruits" of the support of the support by the left and Indian movement to the populist president (see "Ecuador: The 'Colonel of Hunger' Imposes IMF Measures," in *El Internacionalista* No. 3, May 2003). While MPD and Pachakutik ministers settled into their easy chairs in Gutiérrez' cabinet, the president was raising the prices of fuel, electricity, public transportation and medicines, in addition to granting the use of the Manta air force base to the U.S. armed forces, which used it in their "Plan Colombia" against insurgents in the neighboring country. That same year we published a pamphlet, "Ecuadorian Hotbed on the Brink of Explosion" (July 2003), warning that in the face of the clear bankruptcy of the reformist Stalinist and bourgeois Indian politicians it was more urgent than ever to form the nucleus of

a party that raises the banner of Leon Trotsky's theory and strategy of *permanent revolution*.

Basing himself on the analysis of the three Russian Revolutions (1905, February 1917 and October 1917), Trotsky emphasized that in countries of belated capitalist development, whether semi-feudal and/or semi-colonial, it is impossible in the imperialist epoch to achieve the democratic goals of the great bourgeois revolutions without the proletariat taking power, with the support of the poor and landless peasants, and then proceeding to carry out the first tasks of international socialist revolution. This was the program of the Bolshevik Revolution, led by V.I. Lenin and Trotsky. On the very night of 7 November 1917, Lenin announced from the podium of the Congress of Soviets (the workers, soldiers and peasants councils): "We must now set about building a proletarian socialist state in Russia. Long live the world socialist revolution!" However, following Lenin's death in early 1924, a triumvirate headed by Stalin seized power in the Soviet state and imposed another, nationalist and conservative, line. In the face of the imperialist encirclement of Russia and the absence of proletarian revolutions in Europe, the nascent bureaucracy succumbed to defeatism, inventing the dogma of "socialism in one country."

This monstrosity directly contradicts Marxism, which holds that while the revolution may break out in any place, socialism, a classless and stateless society of abundance, can only be built on an international scale, with the participation of the most highly economically developed countries. The counterpart abroad to this anti-Marxist contraband of Stalin and his flunkies was the "two-stage revolution," in which the first stage would be (bourgeois) "democratic." Seventy years ago, this reformist policy was synthesized in the form of the People's Front, which ties the working people and their organizations (unions, parties) to supposedly progressive sectors of the bourgeoisie. The socialist stage is postponed "to the Greek kalends" (that is, to a time that will never come), while the democratic stage always ends in defeat for the working class – and frequently in a massacre of leftists carried out by the bourgeois democrats and "dictocrats." The experience of Lucio Gutiérrez' government, elected with the votes of the workers, peasants and Indians, is another ill-fated result of popular-frontism.

The Ecuadorian Stalinists (and other reformists) pretend that there is no proletariat in this impoverished country with a large peasant and indigenous population. That is not the opinion of the bourgeoisie, however, which mobilizes its uniformed hordes to repress striking workers with bullets and blows. Every time the oil workers go into action, orders are issued to arrest their union leaders. This false sociological scheme is only a pretext to justify the "stagist" policy of not fighting for workers revolution, and instead supporting whatever bourgeois populist comes forward, whether he is called Lucio Gutiérrez or whatever. In Ecuador, as with almost all the capitalist countries of Latin America, Asia and Africa, the Trotskyist perspective of permanent revolution retains its full validity, while Stalinist or openly social-democratic popular-frontism represents the road to defeat. Yet many of those who today claim to be Trotskyists have abandoned the path of workers revolution and talk of "democracy."



Pablo Martínez Monsiváis/AP

**Gutiérrez met with Bush in Washington, 10 February 2003, declaring Ecuador the "best ally" of the U.S. in Latin America and signed letter with IMF imposing brutal cutbacks. At that time left groups including the PCM/EMI and PCE as well as the Indian party Pachakutik were part of Gutiérrez' government. They cry "betrayal," but it was they who betrayed.**

A constant among all these tendencies is the attempt to form a left wing of a bourgeois "democratic" movement. In line with this, the followers of the fake Trotskyist United Secretariat (USec) of the late Ernest Mandel dissolved some time ago into the ranks of Pachakutik. The largest Latin American pseudo-Trotskyist tendency, the International Workers League (LIT, according to its initials in Spanish and Portuguese), announced with great fanfare that "Ecuador is Undergoing a Revolution!" (article dated 22 April, published by the Brazilian Partido Socialista dos Trabalhadores Unificado (PSTU – United Socialist Workers Party), the leading section of the LIT. They even offer a computer screen saver with this slogan! Proof of this "revolution" is that "the Ecuadorian masses ... passed over all the institutions of the bourgeois state – the courts, Congress, the presidency and the armed forces – to demand 'Lucio out! They must all go!'" The LIT passes over the fact that the bulk of these "masses" were middle-class, and that this demand originated in Argentina in the demonstrations against the bourgeois Radical Party president De La Rúa at the end of 2001, where in conjunction with the *cacerolazos*, it expressed the exasperation of a petty-bourgeoisie ruined by the economic crisis. The industrial workers were largely absent from that mobilization, and after having five presidents in the space of two weeks, they ended up with elections that installed ... a new Peronist president, Néstor Kirchner.

If Ecuador is already undergoing a revolution, rather than an agitated period that could turn into a pre-revolutionary situation, we should ask *what kind* of revolution is underway. The LIT article speaks of forming "people's power" based on "popular assemblies" that would be "alternate organs to the institutions

of the bourgeois state.” “Popular” in the mouths of these opportunists means *not working-class*, and since there is no intermediate kind of state, this means that they would be organs of another type of bourgeois state. The Ecuadorian Movimiento al Socialismo (Movement Toward Socialism), affiliated with the LIT, in a leaflet of 30 April (“Lucio Out! They Must All Go!”), in which they adopt the popular slogan as their own, speaks of a “government of the working class united with the peasants and oppressed sectors,” but with a bourgeois-democratic program: non-payment of the foreign debt, no to the Free Trade Agreement and Free Trade Area of the Americas, no to the Plan Colombia and the Manta base, agrarian reform (as opposed to Trotsky’s call for agrarian revolution in conjunction with a workers insurrection), carrying out the demands of the indigenous nations, defense of the rights of working people, more money for education and health, and that’s it.

The petty-bourgeois reformist outlook of chasing after corrupt politicians is quite distinct from the revolutionary workers program of fighting against capitalism, and indeed it can even be coopted by right-wing forces. Another fake-Trotskyist tendency which is enamored of the “they must all go” slogan is the Militante group, which calls for generalizing the neighborhood assemblies which were formed in parts of Quito and to elect delegates to a “general *cabildo*” or town meeting (“Ecuador: Popular Rebellion Overthrows Lucio Gutiérrez,” *El Militante*, 21 April). This bourgeois-democratic program is no accident: in Mexico, the Militante group is part of the PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution), a nationalist capitalist party; in Venezuela, Militante gives enthusiastic political support to another president who is a colonel in a bourgeois army, Hugo Chávez. A dissident Morenoite current, the Argentine PTS (Partido de Trabajadores por el Socialismo – Socialist Workers Party) calls in an article on Ecuador to establish “democratic forms of self-organization,” and a “united front of the masses,” concepts which have nothing working-class about them as far as their class character is concerned. “The masses must fight for Palacio must go, and They must all go, and fight for a genuinely free and sovereign Constituent Assembly,” writes *La Verdad Obrera* (22 April). Calls for constituent assemblies, any and everywhere, characterize the Morenoites ever since their maestro discovered the “democratic revolution” in the 1980s.

### Forge a Trotskyist Nucleus in Ecuador!

At certain times, above all in the struggle against a bonapartist dictatorship or semi-feudal and pre-capitalist authoritarian regimes (such as tsarist Russia), it is correct for proletarian revolutionaries to tactically raise the slogan of a constituent assembly in order to mobilize the peasant and petty-bourgeois masses generally on behalf of unfulfilled democratic demands. For more than a century and a half of independence, Ecuador in effect denied Indians the right to vote, keeping them in servitude in the form of *huasipungo* and maintaining semi-feudal large estates. But today the country is a typical bourgeois semi-colonial pseudo-democracy, with all that this implies: police violence against workers, discrimination against Indians and blacks, unconditional sub-

mission to imperialism. Ecuador has had seven constituent assemblies in the last century, the most recent being in 1997, exceeding even the number of coups d’état. The response to the failure of the multiple Indian uprisings since the early 1990s, and now the “rebellion of the outlaws” by the urban petty bourgeoisie, is not to hold yet another constituent assembly, or to revive the “parliament of the peoples” in an attempt to give a future revolution a (bourgeois) democratic character, but instead to fight for a *workers, peasants and Indians government* to begin the *socialist revolution*.

This revolution, by its very nature, must be international in scope and internationalist in program. Any kind of national “socialism” in a small Andean country is a reactionary and impossible nationalist dream. The “rebellion of the outlaws” has had strong nationalist overtones, particularly at the beginning when the Ecuadorian tricolor flag was ubiquitous. Several of the authors of the rebellion are well-known bourgeois nationalist figures, such as the mayor of Quito, Paco Moncayo of Izquierda Democrática, who is a former general who commanded the Ecuadorian forces in the 1995 Cenepa River war with Peru. (Gutiérrez also took part in this war, while the PCMLE accused the government of “selling out the fatherland” for abandoning national territory in the peace settlement.) A Trotskyist organization in Ecuador would have taken a *defeatist* position in that reactionary border war (as Peruvian Trotskyists would have also), and today it must be the champion of unity with the Peruvian working class. In view of the constant anti-government struggles of the Bolivian workers, peasants and Indians, the Peruvian workers’ struggles against the government of Alejandro Toledo, the tenacious guerrilla war in Colombia, and the growing radicalization of Venezuelan workers under the bourgeois populist regime of Hugo Chávez, the perspective of an *Andean federation of workers republics*, and of a *Socialist United States of Latin America*, is very relevant today.

The key is to construct nuclei of genuinely Trotskyist parties in all these countries, vanguard revolutionary organizations which do not abandon in practice the program of permanent revolution, without which there will be no liberation of the Ecuadorian, Bolivian, Peruvian, Colombian and Venezuelan workers. A Trotskyist nucleus would fight against any political support to populist governments, whether of Gutiérrez in Ecuador or Chávez in Venezuela; against all forms of nationalism, popular-frontism and democratizing reformism, warning against the bourgeois character of the “rebellion of the outlaws” (quite different from the workers and peasants uprising in Bolivia in 2003). At the same time, it would seek openings so that the rebellion of the working masses can break out of the capitalist channels, which otherwise will lead to yet another defeat for the exploited and oppressed. It would also struggle in close collaboration with the Trotskyists in the imperialist countries, particularly the United States and Europe, in favor of a working-class mobilization against the colonial invasions and occupations, and to smash the imperialist system through international socialist revolution. For the reorganizing of an authentically Trotskyist Fourth International! ■



## Women's Liberation...

*continued from page 29*

dential palace), men and women peasants activists continue to be cut down in cold blood by hired *jagunços* (the landowners' private armies of professional killers). A stunning proof of this is the recent assassination of the nun Dorothy Lange by a gunman sent by a *fazenda* (estate) owner who has been accused of using slave labor. And while the Lula government has cancelled out the anti-worker programs of the IMF to the letter, not even complying with his own minimal goals of land reform, he purports to be responding to the miserable conditions of the very poorest with welfare programs like "Zero Hunger" and "Family Stipend." But these programs don't go beyond alludicrously tiny donation of food to starving families.

The oppression of women is intimately linked as well to the problem of street children, who suffer privation, humiliation, aggression, torture and even murder, mainly at the hands of the police. The most famous case was in Rio de Janeiro in 1993, when eight youngsters who slept in the city center, near the Candelária church, were shot to death by cops. But this is not only a historical question. The *Jornal do Brasil* (30 January 2005) reports in a headline, "Young People Exterminated – In One Year, 51 Children and Youths Died Violently in the Center. NGOs Suspect Planned Action." Children and youths are also at the mercy of the gangsters of the prostitution and drug-trafficking industries, and of the military officials who terrorize the *favelas* (slums) in the name of the "war on drugs," which in reality is a war on the poor. Today, torture is more frequent than it was during the years of the dictatorship (1964-1985), only now there is no protest, since it isn't the offspring of the middle class that are being tortured but slum dwellers.

In Latin America, the Catholic church (both directly and through organizations like "Pro-Life Family") along with numerous Protestant fundamentalist sects are bastions of social reaction, who seek to chain women to the family. They are implacable adversaries of the right to divorce, to the use of contraceptives and abortion, even in the case of anencephalic fetuses (which lack a brain). The main leader of Catholic forces in Congress, Severino Cavalcanti, the author of a bill proclaiming the "Day of the Unborn," was just elected president of the Chamber of Deputies as a result of maneuvering by Anthony Gortinho of the PMDB<sup>5</sup>. The current governor of the state of Rio de Janeiro, Rosinha Garotinho, also of the PMDB, is infringing on the Constitution which promises secular schools, an achievement won during the Enlightenment. She wants to return to the Middle Ages, to the time of obscurantism, imposing religious education by fire and the sword.

Abortion is one of the most fundamental points in the defense of women. Under this capitalist system, many women

are unable to care for their children and end up abandoning them. Women voted by a large majority for Lula's Workers Party in the 2002 elections, and many PT women activists now occupy leading posts in the government. Last July, the National Conference on Policies for Women approved guidelines for legalizing abortion. However, despite this, the PT has not defended the right to abortion. Lula himself asked the conference to show "a woman's patience" toward his government (*Folha de S. Paulo*, 16 July 2004). Feminist organizations thought they had finally succeeded in moving the PT government when in September the Ministry of Health issued a "technical norm" calling for medical care in the case of women who had undergone abortions, and the Supreme Court approved an injunction which authorized abortion in cases of anencephalic fetuses. But these steps were blocked.

Now only openly reactionary forces have put obstacles in the way to winning the right to abortion. The Catholic church has defenders inside the PT, such as Ângela Guadagnin of São Paulo, a member of "Pro-Life" in her diocese, who has now come out against expanding laws which at present permit abortion only in the case of rape and where the mother's life is in danger. Other prominent PTers who are ferociously opposed to the right to abortion are the PT senator Marina Silva, from the state of Acre, and Hélio Bicudo, who was deputy mayor of São Paulo under the mayoralty of Marty Suplicy. In an interview with *Folha de S. Paulo* (13 December 2004), Bicudo declared the debate over abortion to be "inopportune" and proclaimed himself "absolutely opposed" to abortion in the case of fetuses which lack a brain.

Now the federal government has announced that it will make no change in the laws on abortion, leaving it up to the members of Congress to vote according to their "conscience" on the matter (in contrast to the vote on pension "reform," when PT legislators who voted against this attack on the working people were expelled from the party). But even the "left" doesn't seriously fight the PT's refusal to legalize abortion. It is allied with Catholic partisans of Liberation Theology inside the PT, and doesn't combat retrograde forces because they joined in electing this popular-front government that supports the capitalist system. Certainly, every September 28 they ritually celebrate the Latin American Day for the Legalization of Abortion. But for this March 8, International Women's Day, even the World March of Women doesn't mention the right to abortion in its "Worldwide Letter of Women for Humanity." Its "17 demands" only make a timid reference to "recognize the right of women to decide about their own lives, their bodies and their reproductive functions." This is no accident, because the march is based on the international women's conferences sponsored by the United Nations (in Beijing and Cairo), which refused to defend the right to abortion due to the pressure of Islamic governments, the Catholic church and fundamental Protestant churches.

At bottom, feminists and the reformists of the PT do not fight for the rights of women because they do not fight against the ruling class and the bourgeois government that defend its interests. For the same reason, they do not defend the rights of

<sup>5</sup> Non-Governmental Organizations, the supposedly private social-service groups that are in fact generally funded by governments or charities and foundations set up by leading capitalists in order to channel discontent and combat the left.

<sup>6</sup> Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement, a movement set up under the dictatorship to serve as a pseudo-opposition to military rule.

homosexuals, victimized by reactionary forces that consider gays a "danger" to the family, the base for traditionalism and conservatism in capitalist society. We Trotskyists fight for the abolition of the family as proclaimed in the *Communist Manifesto*, and for its replacement by collective institutions that liberate women from domestic slavery. At the same time we call for full equality in the rights for gays, including the right of marriage or civil unions.

The truth is that this bourgeois popular-front government continues the same policies of the presidents that preceded it. Its priorities are those of the big businessmen; it has carried out to the letter the anti-worker programs of the IMF. PT women in prominent government positions, such as the former governor of Rio de Janeiro, Benedita da Silva, and the ex-mayors of São Paulo Marta Suplicy and Luiza Erundina not only have done nothing for women's rights, they were ferocious strikebreakers in the interests of capital, sending the police to break heads of men and women trade unionists in struggle. Only by building a genuinely revolutionary workers party which fights for international socialist revolution can we win the definitive emancipation of women from their oppression, thereby freeing the creative capacity of half of humanity from the impediments that stand in the way of a life of dignity and full participation in a society without classes. ■

## Philippines Massacre...

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armed groups – in and out of uniforms – like the dreaded "Yellow Army," the anti-communist private militia of Danding Cojuangco<sup>3</sup>. There should be active defense of the picket lines by the CATLU, ULWU and CABEU unions in the Central Azucarera de Tarlac and Bais by setting up defense guards against scab operations. Unions of all tendencies as well as peasant, urban poor, women and youth organizations can contribute to this effort, which could inspire workers throughout the country. Build militant mass picket lines that nobody dares cross!

*Solidarity with the striking workers of Hacienda Luisita! Extend the picket lines to the heartland of the Cojuangco empire! For solidarity strike action in Metro Manila and throughout the sugar industry!*

In the face of the bloody attack on Luisita and the strike of the workers in Bais, we warn that the workers movement should not rely on state intervention. Calling for the resignation of the secretary of labor, Patricia Santo Tomas, and the intervention of the capitalist and landlord dominated Congress, as the popular-frontist BAYAN and the reformist social-democratic AKBAYAN (Citizens Action Party) are doing, will only go to waste. The program of popular frontism of such groups as BAYAN, SANLAKAS and AKBAYAN serves as the left cover of the bourgeoisie in the maintenance of its domination, exploitation and oppression on the Filipino working masses!

<sup>3</sup> Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco was a crony of ousted President Joseph Ejercito Estrada (and brother of former president Cory Cojuangco Aquino) who was given control of the San Miguel Brewery by Estrada.

What is needed is a class-struggle leadership and program that above all teaches the working class and all of the oppressed to break from the control and influence of the bourgeoisie, its state, and its left covers. The working class must fight for its revolutionary political independence from this corroding influence and from the illusionary popular-front programs peddled by various "mainstream" (i.e., reformist) left groups to be able to move forward consciously towards fighting not only for economic demands but also for proletarian contrevolution. That will take a genuine revolutionary-internationalist workers party that carries out the program of permanent revolution as the Bolsheviks did in 1917 in Russia. ■

## Mexico Immunity...

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they are not going to vote for López Obrador. Participating in events against the *desafuero* "does not imply support to the candidacy (for the presidency) of Andrés Manuel López Obrador nor the PRD," says the SME (electrical workers union), using the same justification as the GEM. The latter denied the very existence of a Cárdenas popular front, only to now become a *sputnik* (fellow traveler) of the López Obrador popular front.

Don't forget that when the POUM (Workers Party of Marxist Unification) entered the orbit of the Spanish People's Front in the 1930s, it began its capitulation with the excuse that it was only fighting to free jailed strikers from the Asturian miners strike of 1934, that it supposedly did not agree with the People's Front program, etc. When the ICL today says it is defending democratic rights by supporting legal immunity for López Obrador, when it claims that the imperialists favor Fox over AMLO, they are repeating the electoral propaganda of the PRD and joining in its campaign. And when they claim there has been a qualitative leap backwards in the consciousness of the working class, what they're really talking about is the pronounced rightward evolution of their own consciousness.

## Break with the Popular Front! Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!

The Trotskyists of the Grupo Internacionalista, on the other hand, stress that a PRD president in Mexico wouldn't be a bother for imperialism nor for the Mexican ruling class, and that democratic rights can only be won through the taking of power by the working class. Independently of whether the next president is Roberto Madrazo of the PRI, Santiago Creel of the PAN, López Obrador (or Cárdenas) of the PRD or any other bourgeois candidates, their predictable policies on economic matters, repression and servile submission to the dictates of the northern colossus will be practically identical. *The working class must prepare a class counteroffensive against its rapacious bosses.* It is urgently necessary for the exploited and oppressed to take the future in their own hands. That requires forging a revolutionary workers vanguard party, which fights for socialist revolution in Mexico and its extension beyond the border, to the rest of Latin America and into the heartland of the empire of the north. ■

## "Real ID"...

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seeking to regularize their immigration status.

The impotence of the purely symbolic protests organized by the liberal Democrats and union bureaucrats is obvious. Neither the New York governor nor the legislature did anything against the driver's license suspensions, the "Real ID" was rushed through at full steam and the judge's ruling nullifying the DMV's action was stayed. The Kennedy-McCain bill is a new attack against immigrants who lack papers, as well as having little chance of passage in the present political climate.

Instead of the dead-end of bourgeois politics, it is urgently necessary to undertake a genuine class struggle of the workers and the oppressed for fundamental democratic rights for immigrants. The multiracial, multiethnic and increasingly multinational working class of the United States must mobilize to demand **full citizenship rights for all immigrants, now!** This is inseparable from the fight to **defeat the imperialist war**, through international proletarian class struggle, such as **workers strikes against the war**.

We combat all forms of discrimination, to **defend bilingual education**, demand **translators in the hospitals**, etc. In the face of threats to prevent immigrants from traveling by car, which comes down to throwing tens of thousands of workers out of their jobs, there should be a New York City taxi strike. If this sector, overwhelmingly composed of immigrant drivers, were to stop work, even for a single day, it would make the Wall Street economy "scream."

Against factory raids, a protest by some hundreds of workers in the traditional garment center of Manhattan would have an enormous impact. In the face of an upsurge in deportations or a new wave of massive detentions, the working class should mobilize to block them, in the streets and in the airports.

One of the most important steps to block the blows of the repressors would be a **massive and militant unionization campaign**. However, the biggest obstacle to a successful campaign to unionize millions of immigrant workers is the trade-union bureaucracy itself, politically subordinated to the Democratic Party and highly integrated into the machinery of the capitalist state. Out of loyalty to the bourgeois order, it refuses to use class-struggle methods, saying they are "illegal." The key is to oust the bureaucrats, break with the Democrats, and **forge a multiracial, multinational revolutionary workers party**.

Such a vanguard party, internationalist in its very essence, must be the staunch defender of the interests of all working people, wherever they are from – a champion of all those who suffer social oppression. It would fight in particular for the liberation of black people, a key question under American capitalism, built on the bedrock of slavery, whose effects continue up to today. For communists, there are no "illegal" immigrants, we are all citizens of the world. In order to carry out this principle, summed up in the watchword "workers of the world, unite," it is necessary to sweep capitalist society into the dustbin of history by means of international socialist revolution. ■

## Shut Down CCNY...

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Afghanistan and Iraq, and for the U.S.A. PATRIOT Act of police-state repression that is its domestic face. The endless war and escalating repression must be fought by combating the imperialist system that spawns them.

In contrast to the "social-patriotic" rhetoric of many liberal and reformist opponents of the Iraq war, who want to change U.S. policies and priorities ("books not bombs"), the Internationalist Group, together with the Internationalist Clubs at Hunter College and Hostos Community College and the Revolutionary Reconstruction Club at Bronx Community College, fights for the **defeat** of U.S. imperialism and in **defense** of the Iraqi and Afghan peoples. We have insisted that the war on semi-colonial countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan (and threats against bureaucratically deformed workers states such as North Korea and Cuba) are part of the same war being waged by the capitalists against working people here. At CUNY, the Internationalist Clubs have taken the lead in defending Miguel Malo and in exposing the planned Homeland Security program at the Borough of Manhattan Community College. After an uproar among students and faculty, that attempt to turn BMCC into "Torture U" was withdrawn.

The Revolutionary Reconstruction Club has been fighting to drive military and cop recruiters off campus for more than two years. On March 10, as CCNY students were protesting the arrests the day before, the RRC organized a **march** against military recruiters at a BCC job fair. Today, **March 17**, another march is being held at Bronx Community College with leaflets declaring: "We Won't Kill and Torture For the Ruling Class – Drive the Military Recruiters Out of BCC!" The RRC and Internationalist Clubs at Hunter and Hostos have called for united-front action throughout CUNY to mobilize masses of students, faculty and campus staff **against** the recruiters as a concrete blow against the imperialist war.

The imperialists can be defeated. The U.S. is already **bogged down** facing a burgeoning insurgency in Iraq. And **opposition** on the home front has not disappeared, despite the reelection of George W. Bush as imperialist warmonger-in-chief. The **League** for the Fourth International, of which the IG is the U.S. section, fights for workers action against the imperialist war, including "hot cargoing" (refusing to transport) war material and **workers strikes** against the war. That this is not only necessary but possible is indicated by the fact that on March 19, Local 10 of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) in the San Francisco Bay Area, is refusing to move cargo in protest against the Iraq war. A one-day work stoppage is only a small taste of what it will take, but it points in the **right direction**. Solid, sustained workers action to block the war would shake the Pentagon, the White House and Wall Street.

To bring the imperialist war machine to a grinding halt we must bring down the capitalist system. And that requires above all a revolutionary workers party, part of a reformed Fourth International, to lead the fight for socialist revolution around the globe. ■



## Bolivia Explodes...

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stoppage in El Alto, already in its second week, unlimited strikes have been called in key cities, including the mining centers of Oruro and Potosí. Tin miners have taken their place at the head of protests demanding nationalization of gas and oil. The slogan "*Obreros al poder*" (workers to power) is chanted by miners, teachers and other sectors, as working people increasingly talk of revolution. Yesterday, the leader of the Central Obrera Boliviana (COB – Bolivian Labor Federation) declared that if Congress does not immediately pass a nationalization law, "we are going to burn it down at any moment."

The protests also oppose rightist demands for "autonomy" of the richest, "whitest" departments (provinces) of this predominantly Indian country. Some leaders of the peasant movement are demanding that a "constituent assembly" be called, which in reality would be a parliamentary escape valve to defuse the mass unrest. These self-proclaimed "moderates" want more royalties from the foreign-owned energy companies, as their ranks are being won over to the demand for nationalization. Recalling the army massacre of over 100 protesters two years ago, demonstrators chant: "Yesterday, bullets. Today, hunger. The solution: revolution." Yet reformist union tops are seeking to use the mass radicalization to engineer a "civilian-military" regime, "like Hugo Chávez" in Venezuela.

*The desperate need of the hour is for genuinely revolutionary leadership.* The splits in the ruling class and divisions among the protesters have produced a temporary stand-off. But this cannot last. Meanwhile sinister counterrevolutionary forces are gathering. Graffiti have appeared on the walls of La Paz with slogans like, "Be a patriot, kill a unionist." Mainstream papers like *La Razón* taunt President Carlos Mesa as impotent for fearing that the first "*mueritito*" (little dead person) could set off an insurrection. Avid plotting by right-wing politicians, together with unrest in the armed forces, raises the spectre of a military coup. This danger was highlighted yesterday when rightist congressmen conspicuously boycotted the scheduled reopening of Congress after a two-week "recess," preventing a quorum.

This new crisis stems directly from the 2003 "gas war," when then-president Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada ("Goni"), one of Washington's regional favorites, was driven from power after his savage massacre of demonstrators touched off a workers uprising. In the absence of revolutionary leadership, the armed forces and U.S. embassy gave power to Goni's vice president, Mesa. Taking over with words of reconciliation, the former journalist sought to divert the rage of October into empty democratic ritual. Reformist labor and peasant leaders granted the new government an "intermission." But in the months since Mesa took office, the masses have grown more desperate while sections of the ruling class look for a "solu-



David Mercado/Reuters

**Riot police fire tear gas at demonstrators demanding nationalization of Bolivia's oil and gas resources, May 27.**

tion of force" to stifle rebellion with an iron hand.

Today, the workers have taken to the streets vowing to carry out the "agenda of October 2003." Union leaders call to drive out the corrupt and discredited parliament, a remnant of Goni's presidency, and for a "government of workers, peasants and the poor." But what do such calls mean, when they are maneuvering with military officials? The League for the Fourth International insisted then, as we do today, that the key is forging a revolutionary leadership fighting on the program of permanent revolution. As we wrote at the height of the 2003 uprising:

"It is urgently necessary to show a revolutionary class road: through elected strike committees, made up of delegates who can be recalled by the ranks at any moment, as well as workers self-defense committees and groups. Neither Vice President Carlos Mesa nor any kind of bourgeois 'constituent assembly' are what's called for, but rather revolutionary workers, peasants and soldiers councils along the road to a workers, peasants and Indians government. It is necessary to give flesh and blood to the slogan, 'Workers to power.' In order to do so, what's required is to form the nucleus of a genuinely revolutionary party, a Bolshevik-Trotskyist party."

—"Bolivia Aflame: 'Gas War' on the Altiplano, Workers to Power!"

*The Internationalist* No. 17, October-November 2003

This is the revolutionary agenda that is, once again, sharply posed today.

### Class Struggle Over Gas, Oil and Power

The current protests were detonated on May 5, when the Bolivian Congress passed a new hydrocarbons (gas and oil) law guaranteeing imperialist energy conglomerates' profits. This was the last straw for workers and the poor in El Alto, La Paz and other centers where, 19 months earlier, streets ran red with their blood in protests against Goni's sweetheart contracts with the energy conglomerates. Fearing mass out-





**Peasant women carrying the multi-color wiphala flag of the indigenous movement arrive in La Paz May 23 in march to protest energy law.**

rage, Mesa did not sign the new law himself, leaving that piece of dirty work to the head of Congress, Hormando Vaca Díez, a senator from Santa Cruz who leads a bloc of rightist parties intimately associated with the deposed Goni.

After Vaca Díez signed the law on May 17, the expected explosion of mass discontent was immediate. Congress fled the capital and Mesa left in what one paper called "an operation quite similar to an escape" (*Página 12* [Buenos Aires], 25 May). In March, Mesa said he was resigning in protest against the "crazy" demands of labor and peasant groups, only to retract his resignation and vow to stay in office until 2007. The weakness of this improvised president has led some bourgeois sectors to ask that early elections be called to replace him, while others look towards the army for salvation.

The turmoil in Bolivia is generated by two main forces. One is the increasing militancy of workers and peasants demanding that the country's huge gas and oil reserves benefit the mass of the population. The other is the "autonomist" push by bourgeois forces in the gas-producing eastern and southern regions to grab more of the fabulous wealth and keep out the Indian masses of the highlands whom these ultra-rightists disdain with undisguised racism. Santa Cruz was the base of the military dictators who ruled Bolivia for a decade after 1971.

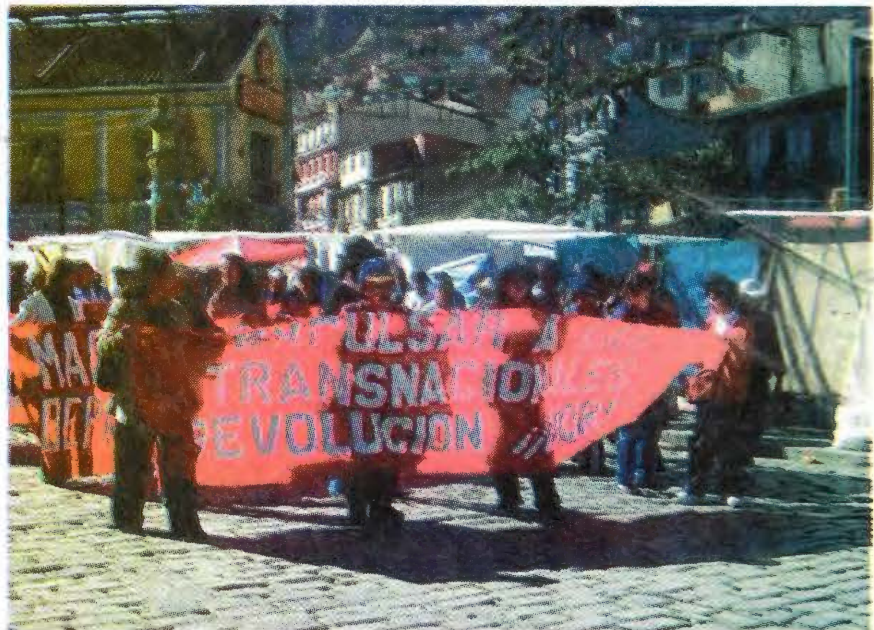
Living in poverty for generations, millions of Bolivians feel history has cheated them out of the wealth generated by the resources this

country has depended on since the Spanish Conquest: the silver mines of colonial times that made Potosí a synonym for riches; the tin the British and American empires required, notably for armaments and canned food during World Wars I and II. Now the vast reserves of natural gas are exported for the benefit of "multinational" (imperialist) companies – Enron, Shell, British Petroleum, Repsol and others – while Bolivia remains the second poorest country of the Americas. Even much of the middle class fumes over the centuries of looting of Bolivia.

Behind the militancy is the feeling that Carlos Mesa deceived the population with false promises of reform after taking over from Goni in October 2003. In July 2004 he held a referendum using tricky language to legitimize the gas companies' super-profits as well as Mesa's own unelected government.

He has loyally served the imperialist corporations and the American embassy, even getting the Bolivian Senate to approve immunity for U.S. troops. Mesa gave in to "autonomy" demands from right-wing entrepreneurs in Bolivia's richest regions, scheduling elections for departmental governors in August. Now he is visiting the Army barracks seeking support for a crack-down on the rebellious workers, peasants and Indians.

A key role in propping up Mesa has been played by Evo Morales, leader of largely Quechua coca-growing peasants of the



**Demonstrators descend from El Alto to La Paz, May 30. Banner reads: "Expel the Multinationals, Revolution Now!"**



David Mercado/Reuters



**Miner from Caracoles tin mine with dynamite during May 19 protest against energy law.**

Cochabamba region and head of the Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS – Movement Towards Socialism). Morales has been lionized on the left internationally and demonized by right-wing spokesmen, but at each crucial juncture his reformist MAS has provided crucial support to Mesa. Morales put a phony “anti-imperialist” spin on Mesa’s gas referendum; today he plays with words to claim that gas is “already” nationalized through royalties and taxes. There are also the envoys sent to La Paz by the popular-front government of Lula in Brazil and Peronist Argentine president Kirchner, acting as firemen for Yankee imperialism to put out the flames of revolution in the region.

As the MAS tries desperately to curtail the militancy of mass protests, Morales is increasingly discredited and has taken to saying “the rank and file have outflanked us.” Yet when Carlos Mesa was installed, he received open support or an explicit “truce” from the *entire* range of labor, slum and peasant leaders – from Morales’ rival in the peasant movement Felipe Quispe to Jaime Solares of the COB labor federation and Roberto de la Cruz of the El Alto COR union group. Many leftists hailed “victory” against Goni. But as we wrote at the time, “toppling the hated president and replacing him with his anointed successor [Mesa] is hardly a victory.” The LFI denounced “the *betrayal* by the misleaders of the workers and peasants – including those who claim to be revolutionaries – in granting a ‘truce’ to the new president.” We pointed out:

“Mesa is a puppet of the armed forces and imperialism, and has the backing of the White House, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. We warn that the new president is wedded to the same program of privatization, poverty and pillaging of the country by the ‘multinationals’ as his godfather Sánchez de Lozada. But the final outcome is yet to be determined. The workers are still on the alert, ready to mobilize again. We stress that the central demand continues to be, **Workers to power!** The urgent task is still **the construction of the nucleus of a genuinely Trotskyist Bolshevik party.**”

– “Bolivian Workers Uprising Knifed, Workers Still on Battle Footing,” *The Internationalist* No. 17, October-November 2003

### **Rightist “Autonomy” Demands and the Constituent Assembly**

The second motor force of current turmoil comes from the right, with demands for regional “autonomy” raised by the Civic Committee of Santa Cruz de la Sierra department in eastern Bolivia, bordering Brazil, and Tarija department bordering Argentina in the south. The Santa Cruz capitalists and landowners are taking a page from slaveholders in the U.S. South by threatening to secede if their demands for even more wealth and power are not satisfied. The more Mesa gives in to them, the more they demand. After the president acceded to their agitation for election of a new governor, they used this to call their own “autonomy” referendum.

While the Santa Cruz elite sometimes couches its demands in democratic phrases, they are openly racist: as one of Bolivia’s “whitest” regions, they want “autonomy” from the protests launched by Indian miners and peasants of Bolivia’s western *altiplano* (high plateau). In this sense, their “autonomy” demands are the very opposite of calls for autonomy by oppressed peoples like the Indians of Chiapas, Mexico. What the *cruceña* bourgeoisie wants is a bigger slice of the dollar profits from gas and oil production centered in this region.

Prominent in Santa Cruz mobilizations have been the Camisas Negras (black shirts), shock troops of a fascistic organization calling itself “Nación Camba” (Santa Cruz Nation). Today, armed thugs of the UJC, the youth group of the Civic Committee, attacked a march of some 500 peasants, brutally injuring several women, who were demanding nationalization of hydrocarbons and a constituent assembly. Threats and blackmail from Santa Cruz capitalists have been met with indignation by workers and peasants in the rest of Bolivia. The “autonomy” demands have also brought condemnation from members of the bourgeoisie’s own armed forces, who see them as inimical to “territorial integrity.”

Meanwhile, the regional bourgeoisie faces conflict in its own backyard. Yesterday, demonstrators in the capital of the department of Tarija took over congressional delegates’ offices in solidarity with protests on the altiplano. Last month in Santa Cruz, soldiers and police evicted eighty families, members of Bolivia’s Landless Peasant Movement (MST), from an hacienda in the Los Yunque region. Representatives of the Guaraní and other indigenous peoples of Bolivia’s east denounce discrimination by the local authorities, stating that if Santa Cruz and other eastern regions get autonomy, they want to separate from them.

For his part, Evo Morales of the MAS is pleading for “consensus” between the “agenda” of the La Paz protests and the “agenda” of the Santa Cruz bourgeoisie. The mechanism is supposed to be a constituent assembly. The MAS has long called for such a body to rewrite the Bolivian constitution, hoping to get a bigger slice of power. The promise to call a constituent assembly was one of the crucial means by which



Mesa worked to defuse the October 2003 uprising. This is hardly a revolutionary demand in Bolivia, which has had at least a dozen constituent assemblies since independence. The idea that Bolivia's bitter class struggles over wealth and power can be resolved through this supposedly democratic mechanism is a reformist utopia of class peace.

It is no wonder that the constituent assembly plan is approved by the World Bank! This is not a case of popular masses rising up against a dictatorship or monarchy, or entire sectors excluded from formal parliamentary democracy, in which calls for a constituent assembly can be appropriate. What is starkly posed in Bolivia today is workers revolution or capitalist counterrevolution. The eastern bourgeoisie seeks to turn its region into a Bolivian version of the reactionary Vendée which opposed the French Revolution of 1789. They must be decisively defeated, not conciliated. In Bolivia today, the call for a constituent assembly is a counterrevolutionary trap, which must be opposed by the struggle for a successful workers revolution.

What is urgent today is to form *workers councils* (like the soviets of the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917). Such councils can draw in the urban and rural poor, indigenous peoples, youth and oppressed women, and rank and file soldiers unwilling to carry out the murderous orders of the bourgeois officer corps. With social agitation at a fever pitch, *workers, peasants and soldiers councils can and should be formed now* as a concrete step to take the struggle forward from the current stalemate. While the pieces of dynamite used in demonstrations make a loud noise, they are no substitute for the arming of the working class: *workers and peasants militias* are crucial to defend the Bolivian working people today.

To rip the gas and oil resources out of the capitalists' claws, rather than looking to the parliamentary politicians or a bourgeois nationalization, the working class "should seize the oil, mining and gas facilities, imposing their expropriation without compensation and workers control by the ranks of production and distribution," as we wrote in 2003.

The only way out is a *workers, peasants and Indian government* based on this *proletarian* democracy of workers councils. "*Obreros al poder!*" in Bolivia can be transformed from a slogan to a reality only as part of the fight for an *Andean federation of workers republics*, a socialist revolution that extends to the workers of the imperialist centers as well.

### Coup Talk from Right and "Left"

Coup rumors multiply by the hour, centering on the figure of rightist Santa Cruz senator Hormando Vaca Díez, who according to the constitution would be next in line to succeed Mesa if the president stepped down (just as Mesa put on Goni's tricolor presidential sash when his former boss fled for Miami). Yet this is only one variant in the many scenarios for a possible coup d'état in a country that had so many military takeovers it was often called "Golpilandia" (Coup-Land). For almost two decades liberals have spread the illusion that such coups are a thing of the past, but the purpose of the capitalist armed forces is precisely to use organized violence in defense of the power and wealth of the ruling class. It is not for nothing

that in Bolivia, the symbol of the Military Police is a ravenous bulldog menacingly baring its teeth.

Yet fatal illusions in capitalist officers and police are spread by leaders of workers, peasant and "left" organizations. Evo Morales of the MAS demagogically calls for army and police to occupy the oil and gas fields. Jaime Solares of the COB has repeatedly called for an "alliance" with "patriotic" military officers and support for "an honest military officer like Hugo Chávez" of Venezuela. In speeches against last year's referendum, Solares grotesquely boasted of contacts with generals who wanted a tougher line against the "threat" from Chile (which won Bolivia's seacoast 125 years ago in the War of the Pacific).

Suicidal illusions in "patriotic military officers" have been put forward as well by the Miners Federation leadership, which explicitly hailed two army colonels, Julio Herrera and Julio César Galindo, who made a *pronunciamiento* on May 26 proclaiming a "Generational Movement" and offering to lead a civic-military junta in which "we young officers would take charge of this country's government." Support for a military man on horseback to "save the nation" is an old path in Latin America, covered with corpses of the workers and oppressed. Most recently in Ecuador, former colonel Lucio Gutiérrez used populist demagoguery to rope in labor, peasants and the left, only to turn against them in the service of Washington and the International Monetary Fund, as the League for the Fourth International warned he would do.

COB officials have also harked back to the 1970-71 Bolivian regime of General Juan José Torres – when the left and labor movement formed a "Popular Assembly" whose illusions in Torres' military populism paved the way for the bloody rightist coup of Hugo Banzer. This policy of class collaboration crystallized in the "Anti-Imperialist Revolutionary Front" (FRA) formed in exile by Torres, other officers, and almost all the Bolivian left, most prominently the main organization falsely describing itself as Trotskyist, the Partido Obrero Revolucionario (POR – Revolutionary Workers Party) of Guillermo Lora.

Today, POR spokesmen in the leadership of the La Paz teachers union warn against a military coup while criticizing illusions in a constituent assembly preached by most of the reformist left. Yet the POR has remained deeply committed to the strategy of the FRA, even saying this front "could include the entire police, as an institution" and demanding "Bolivianization of the armed forces."

A smaller centrist organization that calls itself Trotskyist is the Liga Obrera Revolucionaria-Cuarta Internacional (LOR-CI – Revolutionary Workers League-Fourth International), affiliated to the Fracción Trotskista led by the Argentine PTS. The LOR-CI has spread its own illusions in the possibility of the police "committing themselves to the defense of the workers and the people" (*Lucha Obrera*, 24 February 2003).\* Its

*continued on page 67*

\* In response to our criticisms of its line on the February 2003 police mutiny in Bolivia, the LOR-CI accused us of falsifying their position (in *Revista de los Andes*, Fall 2004). After being shown quotations from their paper, LOR-CI cadres conceded that our criticism was not only accurate but politically correct. To our knowledge, however, they have yet to publish the correction they vowed to print on this matter.

## Eyewitness La Paz

# Bolivian Capital Shut Down by Mass Protests

LA PAZ, JUNE 6 – *Al parlamento hay que cerrarlo, a los corruptos hay que colgarlos:* “We have to close down parliament and hang those crooks,” Aymara Indians sang in today’s enormous demonstration. Theirs was one of the seemingly endless columns of marchers pouring down from the slums of El Alto into the center of the Bolivian capital. *Mesa y Goni, el mismo engaño, leyes malditas han firmado,* they continued, to the tune of an Andean *huayño*: “Mesa and Goni, the same trickery, signing accursed laws.” Carlos Mesa, the current president, is the successor to Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada (“Goni”), who unleashed massive repression in a failed attempt to crush the upheaval of October 2003.

The Plaza San Francisco in central La Paz overflowed today with angry workers, peasants and slum dwellers. “Mass marches and dynamite explosions rocked the capital,” reported the radio. Miners and factory workers joined peasants from the *altiplano* (highlands) and the Yungas below La Paz, teachers, organizations of the unemployed and many tens of thousands of others demanding “Nationalization of gas and oil.”

“No autonomy for the oligarchy of Santa Cruz,” demanded the marchers, enraged at Mesa’s agreeing to the “autonomy” referendum extorted by the elite of that lowland eastern department (province), together with that of other gas-rich regions, as a weapon against the western Indian highlands. A placard denounced the Santa Cruz upper crust as “remnants of Pizarro,” the Spanish conquistador of the Andes who is a fitting symbol of the centuries of pillage that have left the overwhelming majority of the Bolivian population mired in the deepest poverty.

The marchers’ mood was radical and angry. Hundreds of demonstrators carried signs denouncing the ruling class in the most explicit terms: *Burgueses, los días son contados* – Capi-



Internationalist photo

**Tens of thousands of Bolivian workers, peasants and poor people converge on Plaza San Francisco in the capital, La Paz, calling to shut down the corrupt parliament and nationalize gas and oil resources.**

**FLASH** – 10 p.m. – Bolivian President Carlos Mesa just submitted his resignation in the face of mass protests. Who will succeed him is an open question, supposedly to be resolved tomorrow by the Bolivian Congress. Mesa “governed” for 19 months after taking over from the previous president, Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada. That mass murderer was driven out by a workers uprising against the bloody repression he unleashed attempting to crush protests against his deals with a “multinational” gas cartel. Since then the political, social and economic crisis has only escalated. Today a huge march of workers, peasants and slum dwellers occupied the center of the capital, already cut off by road blockades that have shut access to the city. Mesa’s resignation is a demonstration of the incapacity of Bolivia’s ruling class to resolve the basic problems facing this impoverished Andean country. If the rightist head of Congress is named his successor, mass outrage will escalate further. The threat of a military coup is real. The only solution: **¡Obreros al poder!** – Workers to power!

talists, your days are numbered. "Death to the Bolivian bourgeoisie," "We've had it with bourgeois parliamentary maneuvers," read hand-lettered signs.

Class outrage boiled over, as Indian women yelled at well-dressed passersby to take off their neckties. Armed with sticks, some of them with nails protruding, women in traditional *aguayo* shawls and *pollera* petticoats forced shops and street peddlers to close down. In the wealthy neighborhoods of southern La Paz, normally arrogant members of the upper crust literally cower behind their metal gates.

Smoke from burning tires mixed with the teargas fired by riot police against demonstrators who tried once again to take the Plaza Murillo, seat of the national government. The city is running out of fuel as a result of the road blockades by peasant and labor organizations throughout the country.

The Catholic Church is demanding an end to mobilizations as part of the "dialogue" it is frantically seeking. In their attempts to "mediate" an end to the bitter class struggle that has brought this country to a virtual standstill over the recent weeks of protest, Church leaders met today with Evo Morales, leader of the Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS). Morales has been a key prop of Mesa's increasingly isolated government. Today, the MAS leader spread more illusions in the Bolivian Parliament, calling on it to "completely recover" the country's oil and gas reserves through an amended energy law (see "Bolivia Explodes in Sharp Class Battle," page 80).

Yet the contempt for the bourgeois Congress angrily expressed by the marchers who brought La Paz to a halt today reflects widespread disgust not only with Goni's allies who control parliament, but increasingly with the institution itself. In today's demonstration, calls for nationalization were much more common than slogans for the "constituent assembly" Morales has demanded and Mesa has agreed to call in new maneuvers aimed at ending the mass mobilizations.

But bourgeois nationalizations are not enough to free the exploited from centuries of poverty. Expropriation of the gas and oil "multinationals," without compensation, must be brought about by the action of the working class seizing the installations in the fight for a revolution that puts power in the hands of the exploited themselves, a socialist revolution.

Already, protesters have seized two oil wells in Camiri, a city in eastern Bolivia best known as the site of the military trial of associates of Che Guevara's guerrilla group in 1967. Today, the Transredes oil facility, which ships 150,000 barrels per day, was occupied by protesters. Earlier the refinery in Cochabamba was occupied by workers. Outside La Paz, peasants cut off the river that supplies water to the capital.

Rumors escalate that the president may call out the army for massive repression, or that the armed forces may take matters into their own hands. Sticks of wood, even sticks of dynamite, are far from sufficient to defend the working people against this threat. In the Plaza San Francisco today, a retired miner from Catavi-Siglo XX bought the new *El Internacionalista* pam-



Miners from the historically militant Huanuni tin mine march in La Paz June 6.

Internationalist photo

phlet on Bolivia and told us, "The working class here used to be armed. The one who put an end to that was General Barrientos," who led a military coup in 1964 and used populist demagoguery, including speeches in Quechua in which he proclaimed a "military-peasant alliance" – against the workers.

The need for self-defense groups, nuclei of workers and peasants militias, is palpable. Together with workers and peasants councils like the soviets of the Russian Revolution, they can win over the plebeian ranks of the army, against the officer corps which has carried out unnumbered massacres against miners, factory workers, peasants and students. Yet leading sectors of the COB (Bolivian Labor Federation), including its general secretary Jaime Solares, continue appealing to nationalist officers.

Today's mass meeting voted resolutions for nationalization of oil and gas and the seizure of the oil fields and gas wells, and for a "People's and Indian Government," a populist formula which very deliberately seeks to appeal to sectors of the bourgeoisie and armed forces. This is a formula for defeat. The League for the Fourth International, in contrast, calls for a *worker-peasant-Indian government* to carry out socialist revolution to bring down the bloody rule of the bourgeoisie. Immediately posed is the formation of workers, peasants and soldiers councils on which such a revolutionary government would be based.

Only the *class* power of the proletariat, gathering all the exploited and oppressed around the banner of workers revolution, shows a way out. The absence of a genuinely revolutionary party – the crisis of proletarian leadership – is the only reason the Bolivian bourgeoisie has not been swept away, as thousands of marchers demanded today.

In the Plaza San Francisco, dozens of workers and Indian peasants told us of their anger and their hopes today and listened with passionate interest when we said how revolution in Bolivia could set the region aflame and win support from workers across the borders and across the world. "The *burgueses* keep us in hunger," "They have stolen everything all the way back to the days of silver," "We need to throw them out," demonstrators said. A party like the Bolsheviks of Lenin and Trotsky must be forged to lead this struggle.

Mobilizations are to continue tomorrow, as the bourgeois Congress is scheduled to convene. ■



## Miners and Peasants vs. Police and Army

# Pitched Battles in the Streets of La Paz

### Form Workers, Peasants and Soldiers Councils!

**LA PAZ, JUNE 7** – Pitched battles erupted in Bolivia's capital Tuesday, after last night's announcement by President Carlos Mesa that he had submitted his resignation to Congress.

With a notable escalation of government repression, the fiercest confrontations were between police and miners who occupied the steep streets around the central Plaza San Francisco. Workers, slum dwellers and peasants tried once again to fight their way into the Plaza Murillo, seat of Bolivia's government. For many hours thereafter, dynamite blasts alternated with the firing of teargas and plastic bullets. The dynamite explosions were even more deafening than yesterday: the miners broke the dynamite sticks into pieces ("cachorros") that were twice as large as before.

Armed soldiers came down from the barracks to occupy Plaza San Francisco and "guard" several trucks seized from the miners, saying dynamite and a rifle were found inside. Various demonstrators were hospitalized, reportedly including at least two seriously wounded miners; more than 50 were arrested.

In disciplined ranks, miners from the Caracoles cooperative marched down the Prado, the capital's central boulevard, proudly displaying their dynamite. They were met with applause, as the miners are seen as the embodiment of the history of struggle of Bolivia's working people. After the vicious privatization of the mines carried out two decades ago, cooperative miners have repeatedly clashed with miners working for wages at private mines as well as those few owned by the government. The fact that both cooperative and salaried miners came out in force today, using their dynamite to hold off waves of police attacks, was highly significant.

Streets were torn up and the paving stones – together with wood, tires, street signs and debris – were used to build barricades all along the streets in the old colonial sector of the city, which was enveloped in vast clouds of tear gas. Aymara women in traditional dress were doubled over, vomiting and pleading for water as the gas bit into their lungs. (The effect of the gas is intensified by the thin oxygen at the high altitude.) Street vendors, market women and passersby screamed at the police in outrage at the attack on the demonstrators.

In the late afternoon, a woman worker took refuge in a coffee shop with her young daughter after fleeing a new round of gas: "the police fired gas at us just for looking at the miners' trucks they seized and saying what we thought about it." Her father and grandfather were miners, she said, and "this whole country used to live off what the miners produced. Now



David Mercado/Reuters

**Bolivian tin miners from Caracoles seek cover from tear gas during fighting in La Paz, June 7. Tens of thousands of workers and peasants surged through the city, fighting running battles with police and army.**

it's gone and there's gas, but the Santa Cruz politicians want to grab the money for themselves." After her husband lost his job, she went to Brazil to work "under lock and key" in a textile sweatshop in São Paulo, but the few dollars she made were taken away by the immigration police.

Marching past the transit police barracks, a column of peasants chanted "*Fusil, metralla, el pueblo no se calla*" – Neither rifles nor machine guns will silence the people. This particular contingent came from Cochabamba, Oruro and areas in Bolivia's east, which is run like a private fiefdom by the "white" elite lording over a largely indigenous population.

Referring to the reactionary heads of Congress and of the House of Representatives, Humberto Vaca Díez and Mario Cossío, the marchers chanted: "*Vaca, Cossío, la misma porquería*" – Vaca, Cossío, the same crap – and "*Vaca al matadero*": Vaca (Cow) to the slaughterhouse.

Backed by the Organization of American States (and its master, U.S. imperialism), Vaca Díez insisted today that the presidential succession must be "orderly" and "constitutional," meaning that he should become president. Next in line are



**Miners prepare to battle police and army with dynamite, June 7.**

Cossío and the head of the Supreme Court, another associate of the despised former president “Goni” (Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada), who fled in the face of the October 2003 uprising. What all the bourgeois commentators agree on is that the present “vacuum of power” cannot continue.

With the support of key parties from Goni’s coalition, Vaca Díez declared yesterday that Congress will convene in the city of Sucre on Thursday to vote on Mesa’s resignation and who will succeed him, declaring that the “presence of the state” is necessary to “impose order.” In response, Mesa went on national television to plead with Vaca Díez not to take over the presidency because then “we will have a Congress without results, and we could have an explosion” and “a civil war.” Stressing that his own resignation is “irrevocable,” Mesa came out in favor of early elections.

While the Santa Cruz senator is the darling of many rightist sectors, others openly prefer a military coup. The idea of Vaca Díez becoming president, and his bellicose posture towards current protests, is viewed by many demonstrators as willful provocation; he is rightly denounced as a partner in all the massacres carried by the megacoalition of rightist and “moderate” bourgeois parties that put Goni in office.

As polarization continues to deepen, some middle-class residents in the city center yelled “Indians go home” and other racist insults. Meetings were held in a number of affluent neighborhoods to discuss “defense” against the demonstrators, who in the nightmares of the elite are the reincarnation of the Tupac

Katari Indian rebels who besieged colonial La Paz in 1781.

Attempts to defuse the conflict through “mediation” continued, with splits among slum dwellers organizations in El Alto regarding negotiations with the government. Meeting with Church leaders preaching the gospel of “dialogue,” Evo Morales, the peasant leader who heads the reformist Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS), declared his support for early elections. Meanwhile, the La Paz daily *La Razón* (7 June) reported that “as a result of pressure from its base,” the MAS had “hardened” its position to come out for nationalization of oil and gas – the predominant slogan in these days’ protests – while asking for “the formation of a pre-Constituent Assembly.” In other words, a body even more impotent than the empty Constituent Assembly Morales has demanded over the past years.

On the radio, in the midst of today’s battles, constant advertisements funded by “NGOs” (supposedly “non-governmental” organizations actually funded by imperialist agencies) extol the virtues of the promised Constituent Assembly, for Indians, for women, for youth, etc. Denounced by mouthpieces of U.S. imperialism, Morales has sought to prove his respectability and “reliability,” seeking support from the NGOs as well as European social democrats, Lula’s popular front in Brazil, and Hugo Chávez of Venezuela.

One of President Mesa’s last acts was to call mid-October elections to a Constituent Assembly linked to a referendum on the ultra-reactionary demand for “autonomy” of Santa Cruz and other oil and gas-rich areas whose rulers want more dollar profits for themselves. The eastern bourgeoisie has repeatedly opposed even token juridical recognition of the existence of multiple ethnic groups in Bolivia, whose Aymara, Quechua, Guaraní and other indigenous peoples have been brutally oppressed for centuries.

Today’s bitter escalation of class battles gave the lie once again to the democratic illusions spread by Morales and others, including centrists on the left (see “Bolivia Explodes in Sharp Class Battle”). Even as the right wing demonstratively held off reconvening Congress, the MAS parliamentary delegation showed up anyway, just to demonstrate their loyalty to the “institutional” framework that has proven incapable of fulfilling even the most elementary needs of the masses.

On the streets, in the markets, in taxis, everywhere, Bolivians speak with contempt of Carlos Mesa as the president “*que no pudo*” – who couldn’t. The “instability” convulsing this country (and much of Latin America), is not fundamentally caused by passing political phenomena. The convulsions are caused by the capitalist system, which is manifesting growing instability on an *international* scale.

Today’s confrontations ended in a new impasse. On the streets people meeting each other for the first time ask “What is the way out? Why is nobody showing what needs to be done?” While the masses are enraged at the bourgeois government, they are still asking it to solve the nation’s problems, notably through nationalization of oil and gas.

In the absence of revolutionary leadership, they have not reached the awareness that the working masses themselves are the only ones who can begin to solve these problems: this means

the proletariat taking power at the head of all the oppressed. Workers and peasants defense groups (the basis for workers and peasants militias) are a burning necessity of the day, as is the formation of workers, peasants and soldiers councils to organize the exploited and oppressed masses in struggle. These councils could then form the basis for a workers, peasants and Indian government.

In the struggle to build a genuine Trotskyist party in Bolivia, deep roots can be sunk among the masses in the course of the present battles. As combative miners fight their way through clouds of tear gas, the situation cries out for revolutionary leadership to combat the petty-bourgeois nationalist misleaders and provide a clear program for proletarian power. The crucial task in these tumultuous days is to forge the nucleus of such a party that can lead the way to international socialist revolution. ■

## Bolivia Explodes...

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trademark, however, has been to add the adjective "Revolutionary" to Evo Morales' demand for a Constituent Assembly.

Constituent assembly fetishism follows the tradition of Nahuel Moreno, the Argentine pseudo-Trotskyist from whom the PTS/LOR-CI tendency is derived. In the 1980s, Moreno called for "democratic revolution" in Latin America and for "new February revolutions," referring to the February 1917 overthrow of the tsar. Genuine Trotskyists fight for new *October* Revolutions.

In the recent period the LOR-CI has given increasing emphasis to the call for a Popular (or People's) Assembly. The word *popular* is chosen in order to emphasize that such bodies will *not* be working-class in character. This is why the Stalinists called their strategy of class collaboration the Popular or People's Front, why Salvador Allende called his alliance with bourgeois politicians and "constitutional" officers (including a certain General Augusto Pinochet) the Unidad Popular, and why reformists the world over, preparing new defeats, chant "The people united will never be defeated."

The key lesson of the 1971 Popular Assembly is precisely that it tied the workers to Torres, doing *nothing* to prepare them against the Banzer coup. On the programmatic level this sellout was prepared by the so-called "socialist theses" passed by the COB in 1970, which in a deal between the Stalinists, the POR and others, mixed leftist phrases with calls for "an anti-imperialist popular front." Yet today, the LOR-CI calls for a program "based on the best contributions of historical COB documents like the Theses of Pulacayo and the Socialist Theses of 1970" (LOR-CI declaration, 21 January).

More than any other country in Latin America, Bolivia's political language has been influenced by what is widely considered "Trotskyism," going back to the Theses of Pulacayo written by the POR and approved by the miners union in 1946. This is both a product of, and a factor contributing to, the enormous combativity shown by generations of Bolivian workers. Yet at each crucial juncture, those laying claim to Trotskyism subordinated themselves to nationalist bourgeois

politicians and military men. That is the opposite of the real content of Trotsky's program of *permanent revolution*, which addresses just such situations as that of Bolivia today.

As Trotsky concluded from the experience of revolutions in Russia and China, the fundamental problems of a semi-colonial country like Bolivia can be addressed only through a revolution in which the working class seizes state power, supported by the peasantry and the urban poor. Only socialist revolution can break the stranglehold of imperialism, resolve the land question (including expropriation of landed estates in Santa Cruz, untouched by the agrarian reform of Bolivia's 1952 National Revolution), and win real democratic rights for the oppressed, first and foremost Bolivia's indigenous majority. As Trotsky stressed, this permanent revolution must open the road to genuine socialism – a classless society of abundance – through its extension to the industrially advanced centers of world capitalism.

The key is to build an authentically communist workers party to head the struggle. Neither populist military officers nor a "constituent," "revolutionary constituent" or "popular" assembly, but the revolutionary *class* power of workers soviets and militias is what is required to lead the masses of working people, peasants and all the oppressed to victory over the dangerous enemies confronting them today. This means a political struggle against the current leaders, who seek ever new ways to promote the old bourgeois nationalism, playing on the country's relative geographic isolation and remoteness.

*The workers of Bolivia are not alone.* This new upsurge occurs in the context of increasing turmoil in Latin America. In Ecuador, the military populist Lucio Gutiérrez is the latest of a series of presidents driven from power in recent years. In Brazil, class collaboration has shown its bankruptcy anew as Lula's popular front faces bitter disaffection from the working class. Peru has been shaken by a series of local rebellions. Labor strikes and political crises have wracked Mexico. In the United States, where workers face the repressive "home front" of the imperialist war on Iraq, a dynamic and growing sector of the working class, immigrant workers, forms a "human bridge" to upheavals in Latin America. Only an *internationalist* perspective, for extending revolution throughout the Americas and world-wide, can confront the danger of imperialist intervention faced by any genuine revolution.

International socialist revolution was the program of Lenin's Bolsheviks, who led the Russian workers to power under the slogan "*All power to the soviets!*" and, with the Red Army led by Leon Trotsky, defeated the armed intervention of more than a dozen capitalist powers. This program was carried forward by Trotsky's Fourth International, which we fight to reforge.

Leaving La Paz in October 2003, Bolivia's miners vowed, *Volvemos* – We will return – saying, "If you need to overthrow someone again, let us know." The facile analysts who wrote off their power were proven wrong yet again. Now the miners have returned, and they mean business. It is high time to build the revolutionary leadership, the genuine Bolshevik Trotskyist party, crucial to their victory at the head of the heroic workers and peasants of Bolivia. ■



## *Eyewitness La Paz*

Leaders Proclaim “Popular Assembly” in El Alto

# Bolivian Workers Move Against Threatened “Constitutional Coup”



Miners in forefront of battle against imperialist puppet governments in Bolivia. Facing threat of “constitutional coup,” thousands mobilized in the streets of La Paz June 8 calling to drive out the corrupt Congress. (Internationalist photo)

**LA PAZ, JUNE 9** – Thousands of miners and peasants have moved to surround the central zone in the city of Sucre where the Bolivian Congress was scheduled to meet this morning to decide on a new president. Huge demonstrations demanding the nationalization of gas and oil resources forced unelected president Carlos Mesa to resign. Now parties from Bolivia’s military dictatorships and the regime of Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, which massacred protesters in October 2003, are vowing to install Hormando Vaca Díez in the presidency. This hard-line senator from Santa Cruz has vowed to “impose or-

der” in the face of the mass mobilizations that have shut down the capital and much of the country for the past weeks. His attempt to take over has been characterized as a “*golpe blanco*” (a “bloodless” or “constitutional” coup d’état). Meanwhile, the threat of an outright military takeover is very real.

Radio reports state that up to 6,000 miners from Potosí, Oruro, Uyuni and other areas have joined with peasants from Potosí and southern Cochabamba to converge on Sucre demanding that Vaca Díez abandon his attempts to become president. Simultaneously, the Federation of Miners Cooperatives

***For a Worker, Peasant and Indian Government!***



### Resignation offer by President Carlos Mesa leaves vacuum of power, as rightists plot military

(Fencomin) marched through El Alto, the sprawling impoverished city on the heights above La Paz, saying if Vaca Díez does not resign there will be "civil war." Even sectors of the bourgeoisie are worried that the country could blow apart: the mayor of La Paz launched a hunger strike against the prospect of Vaca becoming president. The leader of the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS), Evo Morales, a party based on the coca-growing peasants of the Cochabamba region, is calling for the head of the supreme court to take over and call new elections. In return, Morales is offering to call off protests, knifing the miners and urban workers in the back.

Yesterday, however, hundreds of members of the Federation of Mine Workers of Bolivia (FSTMB), historically the backbone of the labor movement, headed up a huge march through La Paz chanting "Death to the bourgeois parliament," "Not 30 or 50 (percent tax on gas exports), but nationalization," "With gas, without gas, miners in La Paz" and other slogans. In a communiqué, the FSTMB criticized the demand for new elections as an attempt to "evade the nationalization of hydrocarbons" (gas, oil, etc.), stating that "the existing democratic system has degenerated and collapsed" and calling for a "people's revolutionary government" and a "Great National Popular Assembly."

The call for a "popular assembly" has been a central theme of what the bourgeois press sees as the "radical" wing of the protests, sometimes counterposed to Morales' call for a "constituent assembly." Frequently, the demand is linked to slogans for "*poder popular*" (people's power) and a "*gobierno popular*" or "*gobierno del pueblo*" (people's government). The reference to a "people's" assembly is a deliberate effort to distinguish such a body from a *workers* council such as the *soviets* that were the organizing center of the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917. The call for a "popular assembly" means a class-collaborationist perspective, seeking an alliance with "pro-

gressive" elements of the bourgeoisie, whatever its more leftist-posing proponents may claim. And as with Salvador Allende's Unidad Popular government in Chile, *popular-frontist class collaboration spells defeat for the exploited and oppressed.*

Yesterday morning, a meeting in El Alto formally called into being an "Asamblea Popular Nacional Originaria" (National Popular and Native People's Assembly). The meeting was called by the Bolivian Workers Federation (COB), the FSTMB miners union, the United Bolivian Peasant Union (CSUTCB), the national street vendors union, the Regional Workers Federation (COR) of El Alto and the Federation of Neighborhood Assemblies (Fejuve) of El Alto, with delegates from 60 organizations including the La Paz provincial transport union, La Paz municipal teachers union, Public University of El Alto and others. The first resolution of the "APNO" declared El Alto to be the "general headquarters of the Bolivian Revolution," while other resolutions described it as an "instrument of people's power," called for delegates to be elected in assemblies and open meetings (*cabildos*), and for the formation of self-defense committees and supply committees in every sector.

Opportunist leftists were quick to hail the new APNO as a "counterpower" against the capitalist state. The right-wing press went apoplectic, with a fire-and-brimstone editorial in *La Razón* today accusing the El Alto militants of "intimidation," "terror," seeking a "totalitarian regime," being like "Hitler's Nazism, Mussolini's fascism," and the like. In fact, in October 2003 *El Alto was the target of a genuine reign of terror* by a dictatorial regime, which the bourgeois media wholeheartedly supported. Yet the incipient Popular Assembly, as presently constituted, is far from being an organ of dual power. It was called into being in a temporary "vacuum" at the head of the government, while the capitalist state in the form of the army and police is still very much in place. For several leaders of the APNO, its proclamation was a fallback position, as in the case of COB leader Jaime Solares, who at key moments has been angling for a "civil-military" regime with "patriotic" military officers, or Fejuve leader Abel Mamani, who is seeking a national dialogue under the aegis of the Catholic church.

The current Popular Assembly is essentially a leadership cartel whose future evolution is uncertain. A genuine centralizing organ of dual power, a soviet, would have to grow out of dual power bodies throughout the country, which do not presently exist. Beyond the mass mobilizations, it is necessary to form workers councils of delegates, recallable at any time, as well as peasants councils and councils of rank and file soldiers. They must institute workers control of vital factories, mines, transportation and communications facilities; act as decision-making and executive bodies under proletarian leadership rather than talk-shops for rhetorical hot air; organize self-defense groups (the core of worker and peasant militias) under the authority of the mass organizations of the working people; and undertake the distribution of food and vital supplies to the population.

The battle with the bourgeoisie will not be won simply by passively digging in for an endless strike – it is necessary to undertake positive steps to establish workers power. Today, for example, with supplies of gas for cooking dwindling to zero in

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# Miners Block Rightist Would-Be President, Bourgeoisie Installs “Harvard Boy” Rodríguez Bolivia Was “On Brink of Civil War”

June 9 was a day when Bolivia came to the edge of civil war, but the bourgeoisie suddenly pulled back from the brink. Faced with the burgeoning mobilization of miners and peasants, they decided to switch tactics. Up to the last minute, right-wing forces backed by the U.S. embassy had been pushing to install hardliner Hormando Vaca Díez as president. They were happy to see Carlos Mesa go, blaming him for failing to defeat the mass demonstrations demanding nationalization of the country's oil and gas resources. By the end of the day, just before midnight, Congress swore in a stop-gap president: Supreme Court head Eduardo Rodríguez. “Harvard Boy” Rodríguez, who has been an advisor to the U.S. embassy, was proposed by Mesa and Evo Morales, leader of the peasant-based Movement Toward Socialism (MAS). Bolivia's rulers counted on Morales to demobilize his “troops” in return, which he did. By Friday morning, blockades were being lifted from roads around the country.

As Thursday dawned, it looked like Bolivia was heading for a coup d'état. Dressed in battle fatigues and flanked by the rest of the Military High Command, Admiral Luis Aranda (Bolivia doesn't have access to the sea, but it does have a Navy) announced at a morning press conference that the armed forces were on a “state of high alert” and prepared to “act if necessary.” On TV you could see behind the commander in chief a figure moving silently in the shadows. It was Gonzalo



Juan Karita/AP

**Army troops try to block miners near Yatolo where troops killed Potosí cooperative miners' leader Juan Carlos Coro Mayta.**

Valenzuela, a lawyer who was the advisor of the narco-dictator Luis García Mesa and who organized the bloody repression of the 1985 miners' “March for Life.” Aranda declared that the military (“the last bastion of the fatherland”) was opposed to anything that went against the constitution, including the proclamation of a “National Popular and Indigenous Assembly” the day before in El Alto.

Calling on Bolivians to “avoid national suicide by calling a political and social truce,” a communiqué by the High Command pledged to defend the “constitutional succession.” The

generals' call on Congress to “listen to all the actors who are making their voices heard” was seen as an admonition to Vaca Díez. As head of the Senate he was first in line to succeed Mesa when Congress convened in Bolivia's second capital, Sucre, later in the day. It was further reported that Mauricio Balcázar, brother in law of ex-president Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada (“Goni”), as well as Eduardo Sfeir, a former advisor to the U.S. embassy, traveled to Sucre on the plane with Vaca Díez. Balcázar was at a meeting in Washington in March, along with Goni and his “minister of death,” Carlos Sánchez Berzaín (Bolivia's interior minister during the October 2003 massacre), where a plot was hatched to install Vaca Díez as president and oust the “vacillating” Mesa.

Vaca Díez is a sinister figure. Backed by the same “mega-coalition” that supported the mass murderer Goni, he is a leader of the misnamed “Revolutionary Left Movement” (MIR). The latter was founded in 1971 amid the resistance to the coup by General Hugo



Juan Karita/AP

**Hormando Vaca Díez arriving in Sucre for emergency session of Congress, June 9. A few hours later he fled to army base to hide from demonstrators.**



Banzer, but in the 1980s became a junior partner in the second Banzer government. Vaca Díez was part of the wing of the MIR linked to major drug traffickers under the Banzer regime, and was implicated in judicial investigations of drug money funneled to MIR leader Jaime Paz Zamora. Vaca Díez earned the thanks of American ambassador David Greenlee by seeking to legislate immunity for U.S. forces in the country. (The bill failed in the face of vociferous opposition from workers and peasants.) In recent days, the Senate president won embassy support for a plan to declare a paper "nationalization" of gas and oil that left the "multinational" energy companies in control, while cracking down on protests.

What Vaca Díez means by "imposing order" on the country was shown by an incident in March 2004. A distraught miner, Eustaquio Picachuri, "invaded" the main hall of Congress protesting against the pensions law which wiped out the retirement of several thousand former mine workers. The haughty response of Vaca Díez was to order the military to "remove that terrorist from my palace." When officials sought to subdue him, Picachuri set off dynamite charges that blew him apart. The U.S. embassy hailed the "anti-terrorist" action of the Senate president that killed Picachuri. Vaca Díez is a senator from Santa Cruz in the east and is closely linked to the local oligarchy that finances fascistic goon squads that have viciously beaten Indian demonstrators.

With the stage set for a "*golpe blanco*" (a "constitutional" or "bloodless" coup) or, "if necessary," an outright military takeover, protest actions spread through the country as Congress was about to meet. Outgoing president Mesa warned of the danger of a blocked Congress, and the national police chief said Bolivia was "one step from civil war." Miners marched in La Paz and El Alto denouncing the bourgeois parliament. The number of road blockades reached 120 or more, paralyzing transport in most of the country. In La Paz, even the middle class polarized, with some neighborhood associations supporting the marchers and others organizing for "defense" against "those Indians."

Although Congressional leaders moved the vote to Sucre to escape the pressure of the masses in La Paz, thousands of workers and peasants began converging on the city. Sixty trucks filled with miners were reported on the way from Oruro alone. By mid-day Thursday, rather than a coup it appeared Bolivia could indeed erupt in civil war.

In Sucre, soldiers were photographed bringing boxes of ammunition into the legislative palace. As local workers marched on the Plaza 25 de Mayo, police kept them at bay by gassing the crowds. The angry opposition to Vaca Díez' power grab was brought to the boiling point at 1:30 p.m. when army troops shot and killed a cooperative miners leader from Potosí, Juan Coro Mayta, on the road from Yatolo to Sucre. The La Paz daily *La Razón* wrote with disdain of Mesa's fear that a "*muertito*" (one little dead person) could bring down the government. Now a miner had been killed in order to install Vaca as president, and the masses erupted. A peasant leader from Chuquisaca declared, "Vaca Díez will only leave Sucre torn limb from limb." The Senate leader fled to a military base for protection; other Senators sought refuge in the government palace or hotels. By 6 p.m., it looked like Vaca could be lynched.

At that point, Vaca called it quits and, no doubt after frenzied phone calls with the U.S. embassy in La Paz, the decision was made to appoint Eduardo Rodríguez, chief justice of Bolivia's Supreme Court, as the new "constitutional" president. In a hurried session of Congress, Rodríguez was sworn in at a quarter to midnight, without a presidential sash for the photographs, and received an embrace from Vaca Díez.

Evo Morales and many other leaders of peasant and labor organizations had seized on the masses' justified hatred of this belligerent rightist to focus demands on "No to Vaca," setting the stage for yet another "negotiated transition" to yet another capitalist president to carry out the orders of U.S. imperialism and the local ruling class. Morales called for Rodríguez to be named president in order to organize early elections. Yet Rodríguez is not only a political associate of despised former president "Goni," but a business associate as well: in his private practice the Harvard-educated lawyer defended mining companies owned by Sánchez de Lozada and his clan.

Morales and other leaders of the MAS called for a "truce" and an "intermission" in the struggle, to give Rodríguez time to carry out his "commitments." Yet Rodríguez, like Mesa before him, has not said a word in favor of nationalizing the gas and oil companies, and the "accelerated" elections have yet to be scheduled.

So after weeks of massive demonstrations against the Mesa government, road blockades and running battles between protesters and the police and army, what comes out of it is ... a Mesa II government. Right-wing politicians, joined by *La Razón* – still smarting over the failure of Vaca's attempt to grab the presidency – point to agreements Mesa signed with cooperative mine enterprises in order to accuse him of using the cooperative miners to attempt "genocide" – against the parliament!

For their part, opportunists will declare this a "partial victory," but although the extreme right-winger was blocked, another rightist oligarch was installed in his place. Meanwhile, many highway blockades are lifted and strikes interrupted. This is not any kind of a victory but a setback to the workers' and peasants' struggles against the imperialists, their energy cartel and the semicolonial government that serves them. And whether or not the "intermission" is brief or extended, the fact is that this setback was prepared not only by Morales, but also by the sometimes militant-talking labor and peasant leaders who sought "unity" with the leader of the MAS and then cry "traitor" as he sells out. Morales is only doing what they all did in October 2003, and what he did again during the July 2004 referendum on gas, when he served once more as a crucial prop for Mesa. His is a betrayal long foretold.

In March, the last time Mesa offered to resign as president, the COB union federation, the MAS of Evo Morales, the CSUTCB of Felipe Quispe, the Regional Workers Federation (COR), Federation of Neighborhood Councils (Fejuve) and other organizations of El Alto joined in a "revolutionary unity pact" against "the multinationals and neoliberalism." As soon as the new hydrocarbons (gas and oil) law was passed, this popular-front pact split and the squabbling began again. But they could get together in the first place because even the reputed radicals

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## Myth and Reality

# El Alto and the “People’s Assembly”

*The following eyewitness report deals with the National and Indigenous People’s Assembly (APNO) formed by labor, peasant, Indian and slum dwellers’ organizations at the height of the mass demonstrations, strikes and road blockades that brought down President Carlos Mesa.*

EL ALTO, Bolivia – The Asamblea Popular Nacional Originaria (APNO) met on the evening of June 10 in the headquarters of the El Alto Federation of Neighborhood Associations (Fejuve), a few blocks from La Ceja, where the road down to La Paz begins. The meeting took place the night after Supreme Court head Eduardo Rodríguez was sworn in as temporary president of Bolivia, at the end of a day when the entire country was convulsed by protests and troop movements (see “Bolivia Was ‘On Brink of Civil War’”).

On June 9, miners and peasants effectively blocked the attempt of rightist Senate head Hormando Vaca Díez to seize the presidency. But installing Chief Justice Rodríguez in the Palacio Quemado presidential palace is no victory for the workers, quite the contrary. Like his predecessor Carlos Mesa, the new president received backing from the armed forces, the U.S. embassy, and the most prominent “left” leader, Evo Morales of the peasant-based Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS – Movement Towards Socialism). Mesa resigned 19 months after taking over from Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, whose massacre of El Alto demonstrators failed to crush the upsurge of mass protest in the October 2003 “gas war.”

The formation of the People’s Assembly was hailed by quite a few self-proclaimed socialist and would-be revolutionary groups as the birth of a new soviet-type body. Indeed, the resolution founding the assembly on June 8 proclaimed El Alto the “general headquarters” of the Bolivian Revolution. Yet behind the rhetoric, the reality is quite different. The APNO is not a centralizing organ of dual power, which doesn’t presently exist despite the considerable mass mobilization of recent days, but rather what we have called “a leadership cartel whose future evolution is uncertain.” In fact, the June 10 meeting of the People’s Assembly, its third, was so far its last.

The APNO meeting took place right after plenary sessions were held of the Central Obrera Regional (COR – Regional



Federation of *gremiales* (street vendors and shop owners) marches in La Paz, June 8. This petty-bourgeois sector has played leading role in protests, as well as in Fejuve neighborhood associations and COR labor federation in El Alto.

Labor Federation), whose offices are next door, and the nationwide labor federation, the COB (Bolivian Workers Federation). By the time the meetings were held, many road blockades were already dismantled throughout the country. In El Alto, buses and “micro” vans were running to and from La Paz. Pressure was building to end demonstrators’ blockade of the distribution of the tanks of liquid gas used for heating and cooking. With the help of the MAS, the Catholic Church and local authorities like the mayors of El Alto and La Paz, the ruling class and its media were pushing hard to demobilize protests.

### I. The Fejuve, the COR and the Working Class of El Alto

Before describing the meetings themselves, it is important to have a clear idea of El Alto’s social and political forces as reflected in the Asamblea Popular.

The international press often depicts El Alto as one huge slum. Certainly, the residents of Brazil’s *favelas*, the 2.5 million residents of Nezahualcóyotl outside Mexico City or the *villas miseria* of Lima and Santiago would recognize the widespread poverty here in the Andean *altiplano*. With many basic services lacking, raw sewage runs through central streets near La Ceja, while dogs prowl through huge piles of trash.

From El Alto’s inception, its population has had to fight for housing, transportation and education. A recent example was the bitter struggle to establish the Public University of El Alto (UPEA), whose students, faculty and workers have played

a prominent role in the current protests, as they did in October 2003.

Racist discrimination is part of daily life for many *alteños*. Posh neighborhoods in the southern part of La Paz rely on this predominantly Aymara Indian city to provide maids, cooks and day laborers, treating them with ingrained racism and denouncing them as *revoltosos* (rebellious upstarts) when they protest.

These conditions have fueled a radical-plebeian outlook among broad strata of the population. Neighborhood associations (in both El Alto and in poorer sections of La Paz) display banners demanding nationalization of gas and oil, and denouncing "multinational" companies like the gas cartels and the French-owned Aguas de Illimani which sought to cash in on privatization of water. In mass demonstrations, the *vecinos* often chant that *all* members of Congress must resign or be kicked out.

Yet as the new president Rodríguez took office, the Fejuve, led by Abel Mamani, was increasingly divided. While denouncing Evo Morales' "betrayal," its spokesmen were actually following his lead. Together with the COR, it continued to issue radical statements at the same time as it prepared to seek new deals with the new president.

The pattern for this was set by former COR leader Roberto de la Cruz in October 2003. De la Cruz was portrayed in the bourgeois media as a wild-eyed rabble rouser and lionized in the papers of various opportunist leftists. But the day after Carlos Mesa, vice president of the hated president Sánchez de Lozada ("Goni"), took over the presidency, De la Cruz met with him and agreed to a "truce," defusing the October upheaval.

As we wrote then, De la Cruz and the other leaders sold out the workers and Indians (see "Bolivian Workers Uprising Knifed, Workers Still on Battle Footing," *The Internationalist* No. 17, October-November 2003). This treachery became a stepping stone into bourgeois politics for De la Cruz: when his term as COR leader ended, he got elected to the El Alto city council as head of his own political party, M-17 (October 17th Movement). While the former COR leader is now widely derided as an opportunist, his successor Edgar Patana has shown that he is cut from the same cloth.

The populist politics of the Fejuve correspond to its social base: it is dominated by the *gremiales*, the small merchants who control retail business in this important commercial center. Importantly, this is *also* the case of the COR: the most vocal, numerous and influential section of the Regional Labor Federation of El Alto are the *cuentapropistas* (the self-employed), ranging from deeply impoverished street vendors to owners of small stores.

Tailing Fejuve leaders and middle-class intellectuals who theorize about a "democratic, non-class" answer to the centuries-old oppression of Bolivia's Indian majority, many leftists speak in the name of "the people" in general. Some go so far as to claim there is "no working class" here. Not so.

*El Alto is an industrial city.* By official figures it includes more than 5,000 industrial enterprises, ranging from *microempresas* (small workshops) to large gas, textile, leather, food, paper, cement and pharmaceutical plants. The COR itself includes a wide range of workers, most prominently the YPFB

gas plant workers, butchers (El Alto processes much of the region's meat) and other food workers, textile and clothing workers, COTEL and cell phone company employees, municipal employees, even unions of shoe-shine boys and ice-cream vendors. In addition, several thousand "relocated" miners live in the city, particularly in the districts of Santiago I, Santiago II and Ciudad Satélite. Their association is affiliated to the COR, and they played an important role in the October 2003 uprising.

Then there are the workers who belong to the Federation of Factory Workers, much of whose leadership has historically supported the positions of the Bolivian Communist Party (PCB, the main Stalinist party) and which is affiliated to the COB national labor federation but not to the COR. The Federation's members include the workers at the Coca-Cola and Pepsi-Cola bottling plants and the Pil milk products factory; Cementos Viacha and the Texturbol, Hilasa, Polar and other textile plants strung along the highway to Viacha; the Stege meat products plant, Vultexiber, Faderpa, Hilpaz and others on the highway to the mining town of Oruro. Just down the road in La Paz, the Federation includes the 1,500 employees of the Matex plant (which makes Polo brand clothing for the U.S. market), the workers of the Cervecería Nacional brewery, Vita and Inti pharmaceuticals, and many others.

Yet most of the *alteño* and *paceño* proletariat is not unionized, partly because of the infamous Decree 21060. This law, promulgated twenty years ago when Goni was a minister in the government of the withered nationalist caudillo Víctor Paz Estenssoro, is best known for closing the tin mines nationalized in the 1952 Bolivian Revolution, throwing the miners out of work and "relocating" them to places like El Alto. Decree 21060 also includes provisions (Article 55) giving "private enterprise" a free hand to fire workers for any kind of absenteeism – such as strikes.

Unlike the miners, factory workers had little organized presence in recent mass protests. Yet a revolutionary leadership would seize on the present period of upheaval to organize the unorganized, not only in trade unions (which often neglect the most vulnerable and super-exploited sectors) but in factory committees and workers councils. This cannot be accomplished by left and labor leaders who willfully dissolve the proletariat in the national-populist soup of "the people" in general.

As Lenin and Trotsky often stressed, the working class can win over the masses of impoverished and downtrodden non-proletarian sectors *only* if it puts forward its own class program and revolutionary leadership, providing a clear way out of the catastrophes caused by the capitalist system.

This was shown yet again in the Bolivian context when the Fejuve and COR *blocked* efforts to establish workers control of gas distribution. The proposal came from the Mine Workers Federation (FSTMB, the historic backbone of the Bolivian labor movement), which raised it in the newly formed Asamblea Popular, when the bourgeoisie was pushing hard to isolate El Alto and polarize La Paz residents, including in poor neighborhoods, against the mass protests blocking supplies to the city.

The FSTMB proposed to put miners, striking Senkata gas



workers and neighborhood association representatives on trucks to control gas distribution to poor neighborhoods, hospitals and clinics, while choking off the flow to big companies and the bourgeoisie. This could have shown the power and organizing capacity of the working class acting in the interests of all the oppressed, as opposed to the venal and inept ruling class and government. If the miners' proposal had been put into practice, this would have been a *real* element of dual power.

But it didn't happen. The Fejuve and COR leaders covered their left flank with rhetoric provided especially by Bolivia's supposedly Trotskyist organizations, claiming that the Asamblea was a "counter-government." But at the same time, with their horizons limited to waging a strike and carrying out road blockades when what was needed was a *struggle for working-class power*, they stopped this concrete measure from going through, helping the bourgeoisie get out of the crisis.

Sabotaging the proposal for workers control of gas distribution was but a prelude to the "popular" leaders demobilizing the masses in order to help usher Eduardo Rodríguez into the presidency. Despite his milquetoast demeanor, it is no secret to anyone that this "Harvard Boy" is a sworn enemy of the workers, peasants and Indian peoples of this country, and a friend, lawyer and advisor to those (such as the U.S. embassy and the Goni mining concerns) who have oppressed and exploited them from time immemorial.

## 2. The COR Vows to "Continue the Struggle"

The National and Indigenous People's Assembly was founded by the COB (and chaired by COB head Jaime Solares), the COR and Fejuve of El Alto, the FSTMB miners union, the urban and rural teachers unions of La Paz department (province), the Tupac Katari-Bartolina Sisa Peasant Federation of La Paz department, students and unionists of the La Paz (UMSA) and El Alto (UPEA) universities, health workers, an association of the unemployed, and others. Numerically, it was dominated by the *gremiales* of the Fejuve and COR.

When we warned that the name "People's" Assembly meant *not* proletarian in class character, supporters of ostensibly Marxist organizations here claimed this was a mere quibble over words. The course of events has shown that, far from being a semantic question, this was a political question, a *class* question, just as in the 1971 Asamblea Popular on which this APNO was explicitly modeled, which used "socialist theses" to package deadly illusions in the military populist General J.J. Torres.

Still more dangerous than the class-collaborationist "people's power" rhetoric, as we have noted, Solares and a number of other COB and COR leaders had been using the language of populist nationalism (and anti-Chilean chauvinism) to appeal to military officers to form a "civilian-military gov-



Contingent of Regional Labor Federation (COR) marches in La Paz, May 31. Banner says, "El Alto Always on Its Feet, Never on Its Knees."

ernment" (see box, "COB Leader Solares Sought 'Civilian-Military' Regime," p. 78).

On June 10 the El Alto COR met immediately before the People's Assembly. The COR plenary was held in the small meeting room in the regional labor federation's offices, packed to capacity with men and women *gremiales* as well as representatives of communications, construction and other workers. The meeting voted to "reject" the new president, saying Rodríguez coming to power changed nothing, noting his links to Goni and that he has been an advisor to the U.S. embassy. One worker said, "*Que cambien el presidente a diario, no nos importa*" (Let them switch presidents every day, it doesn't matter to us).

The meeting voted to "declare Evo Morales and the MAS traitors to the workers struggle, who are only looking out for their own posts and to get money from the multinational oil companies." Speakers denounced the "opportunism" of former COR head Roberto de la Cruz, who subsequently made a splash in the rightist daily *La Razón* saying "the people" were harmed by the El Alto protests.

Other COR resolutions called for Carlos Mesa and rightist congressional leaders Hormando Vaca Díez and Mario Cossío to be tried "for the murder of the miner *compañero* Juan Carlos Coro Mayta, a fighter for the nationalization of oil and gas"; denounced El Alto mayor José Luis Paredes – who had excoriated the protests as "savage" – as well as "the non-governmental organization Iniciativas Bolivianas, which uses resources from the U.S. cooperation agency USAID against the mobilizations of the *alteños*." (USAID is a notorious CIA conduit.) Both Paredes and the "NGO" were given a 72-hour deadline to "leave the city of El Alto."

The COR voted to consolidate "people's power" and "support the Asamblea Popular Nacional Originaria, establishing a program, as well as committees of self-defense, supplies, press and a political committee, with the participation of del-



**Edgar Patana, head of the Regional Labor Federation (COR) of El Alto, speaking at People's Assembly meeting in El Alto. On right, Jaime Solares, head of the national Bolivian Workers Federation (COB).**

legates from the ranks of various social, trade-union, civic and patriotic organizations." An amendment was incorporated "to warn that we will not accept as part of the leadership any traitors, opportunists or members of the neo-liberal parties" (such as those that backed Goni).

The very end of the COR meeting was devoted to reading and deliberating on a letter the newly installed President Eduardo Rodríguez sent to the COR, Fejuve and other organizations, asking them to meet with him in the presidential palace to discuss a "truce." The meeting decided to decline the invitation to the palace but instead to invite Rodríguez to come up to El Alto to "see things for himself." This laid the basis for the El Alto leaders to come to terms with the new president.

### **3. The National and Indigenous People's Assembly: "We Are a Government!"**

The "APNO" met in a large hall on the ground floor of the Fejuve building. While a number of left and labor organizations were calling for the APNO to be based on elected and recallable delegates, the reality was that almost all those present were either there *ex officio* as leaders of their various organizations, or were self-appointed, or just showed up. Of the approximately 120-150 people attending the June 10 meeting, about half were peasants. The workers of the Senkata gas plant, who had been on strike and participated in previous APNO sessions, were not present.

The session was opened by Jaime Solares of the COB, who said the main task was to consolidate the People's Assembly. COR leader Edgar Patana reported on his federation's decision to censure Evo Morales and the MAS for abandoning the struggle, and to continue the "intransigent and unbending"

struggle for nationalization of gas and oil. He also reported the COR's decision to accept President Rodríguez's invitation to meet, with the condition that the discussion be held in El Alto.

Fejuve leader Abel Mamani gave the most openly "moderate" speech, saying in a slow and somber tone that the Fejuve had decided to continue the mobilizations, but "there is a lot of *desánimo* (low morale) among many members of neighborhood associations, some of which have lifted the blockades" without consulting the others. Mamani noted that a dangerous division had arisen between the population of La Paz and of El Alto, as the media and government pounded on the theme of hospitals and clinics going without gas; it was necessary to supply gas to hospitals and clinics or this would be used against the protesters. After three weeks of the strike and blockades, the neighborhood association members were "asking for a truce in order to resupply themselves."

A representative of the peasants federation reported that a *cabildo* (open-air meeting of the citizens) earlier that day in the Plaza San Francisco in La Paz had voted not to retreat "even one millimeter" from the struggle for nationalization, that therefore road and highway blockades would not be lifted but strengthened, and the installation of a new president resolved nothing. Finally, he addressed himself to Fejuve leader Mamani, saying that "since we have already constituted this government which we have called the *Asamblea Popular Originaria*, we should begin to govern." Yet despite the ringing proclamations, and the praise of the new "counter-government" from various centrist groups on the left, by the next day virtually all road blockades came down.

Representatives of the miners, La Paz teachers and UPEA talked of the need for concrete action, but they concentrated largely on technical-organizational measures trying to get supply, mobilization and defense and other commissions functioning. FSTMB leader Miguel Zubieta said his union and other affiliates of the COB "are in La Paz, awaiting instructions," as were the departmental labor federations (CODs) that had been participating in blockades. The APNO had to form people's assemblies in all of Bolivia's nine departments or else it would be depicted as a kind of "El Alto autonomy," parallel to the "autonomy" demanded by the Santa Cruz oligarchy, he added.

Zubieta called for commissions to be named on the spot, have people from specific organizations named to organize them, particularly the self-defense committees and a supply committee to deal with "how to distribute gas." A speaker said "this is not just any strike in which we say 'we're going to blockade everywhere'." Instead, "our *Asamblea Popular Nacional Originaria* should be the one distributing the gas, to the *vecinos* here, but it should be distributed by our committee, not by the mayor of La Paz or El Alto." It was seen that this was a key question, yet lacking a Trotskyist revolutionary leadership, in a meeting dominated by labor and neighborhood association bureaucrats, the question was not posed clearly as the need for *workers control of production and distribution*. Instead, calls for concrete measures went unfulfilled, and the issue of gas distribution was used by leaders like Mamani to make a "truce" with the bourgeoisie.



**Peasants at meeting of National and Indigenous People's Assembly in El Alto, June 10.**

The names of the various commissions were read out, and the organizations present called out which commissions they wanted to be part of. (A spokesman for the centrist LOR-CI called out that their "COB Youth Movement" wanted to be part of the Supply Commission.) Solares closed the meeting by raising the issue of how to respond to the letter of President Rodríguez. "We are a government! The letter should be addressed from one government to another," someone shouted from the floor to applause and cheers. Solares said the response should be addressed from the APNO to "Dear President of the Ruling Class," and ended by saying the decision should be that "nobody will go, *nobody will go*" to meet with Rodríguez.

#### 4. The Aftermath

What happened over the next two days was something else entirely. On Saturday morning, the radio announced that a truce had been declared in El Alto for the weekend, and that gas would be distributed to hospitals and emergency centers. Beginning at 5 a.m. a line began forming outside the YPFB (state gas and oil company) distribution center at Senkata. But rather than distribution being carried out by the Senkata workers, miners and the APNO as had been proposed the night before, Fejuve leader Mamani met with a deputy minister in Rodríguez's new government to coordinate distribution. As a result, the right-wing daily *La Razón* (12 June) reported: "A giant operation coordinated by the government, the police, the YPFB, the Superintendency of Hydrocarbons, the Association of Private Gas Distributors, and the mayors of La Paz and El Alto tried to open the way for the distribution of liquid gas and gasoline...." Police and soldiers rode on the trucks as they left the plants. A YPFB spokesman said that 60,000 tanks of liquid gas were filled, more than triple the usual daily amount.

Then on Sunday, the leaders of El Alto organizations met with the new "president of the ruling class" himself. On Monday, La Paz newspapers splashed photos of President Eduardo Rodríguez in El Alto shaking hands with the Fejuve's Abel Mamani, together with

leaders of the El Alto COR, the La Paz Peasants Federation – in other words, three of the four organizations on the platform at the Asamblea Popular on Friday night – as well as the Federation of *Gremiales*. "Rodríguez goes to El Alto and the Strike Dissipates," the La Paz daily *Jornada* wrote in a front-page photo caption; "Rodríguez makes no promises but the *alteños*' pressure ends," it continued inside.

For his part, Mamani "announced the formation of commissions with people from the government and representatives of the El Alto social sectors to initiate a process aimed at having the agenda of the [Bolivian] Congress include the Constituent Assembly, nationalization of hydrocarbons and the call for general elections." The COR's Patana called the meeting purely "informative, with no result," but added that the president plans early elections and that the population of El Alto will wait for him to name his cabinet in the hopes that it will "respond clearly to our demands." As for the peasant federation's vow to maintain blockades throughout the Department of La Paz, this too was a fiction.

So much for "nobody goes," not retreating "one millimeter," and the rest of the ringing promises and declarations made at the Asamblea Popular. The "APNO" served these leaders well to cover their left flank as they prepared yet another *transa* (rotten deal) with yet another Goni successor.

On Tuesday, June 14, the *gremiales* from El Alto marched down to La Paz one more time. "We have formed the Asamblea Popular, like in 1971," a soapboxer shouted through a megaphone on the Plaza San Francisco. "We need to take power, not through parliament or government officials, but through the organization of the workers and peasants, the Assembly of the People, the Popular Assembly like in 1971!" The speaker was part of a sales team hawking *El Marginal*, the El Alto publication of the Partido Obrero Revolucionario (POR), which for decades has claimed to be the sole repository of Trotskyism in Bolivia.

"Like in 1971"? This is indeed an old story, endlessly repeated by centrists who misuse the name of Trotskyism. The People's Assembly paved the way for the bloody tragedy of 1971. As we have repeatedly emphasized, the real lesson of 1971 is that the nationalist, reformist and centrist leaders who came together in the Asamblea Popular used radical rhetoric to cover their actual support to the government of General J.J. Torres. That Assembly did not even meet for weeks before the coup led by rightist general Hugo Banzer in August 1971, after which they formed a "Revolutionary Anti-imperialist Front" (FRA) in exile with Torres et al.

The POR has resuscitated its slogan of the FRA, which again features prominently in its central organ *Masas*. While *Masas* roundly denounces Evo Morales, scolds Fejuve and COR leaders, and the La Paz teachers later demanded Solares' expulsion from the COB, *Masas* (No. 1951, 10 June) deliriously proclaims: "Proletarian Revolution and Dictatorship (Popular Assembly)." The La Paz teachers union issued a bulletin saying the Asamblea Popular "is an organ of the power of the people," "becoming a real revolutionary government in embryo," "a new organ of revolutionary power,"



El Comercio (Lima)



Fejuve leader Abel Mamani shakes hands with President Eduardo Rodríguez in El Alto, June 12. Popular Assembly said "nobody will go" to meet the "president of the ruling class." But sellout leaders went anyway.

and so forth (*Correo Sindical* No. 8, undated).

The call to form a People's Assembly "like in 1971" was repeated innumerable times not only by the POR but by the small centrist LOR-CI as well. On June 6 the LOR-CI issued a leaflet titled "Let's form a bloc for the People's Assembly!" This leaflet said "We believe the People's Assembly could be built soon if the decision to convoke it is made by the COB, the CSUTCB (national peasants federation), the FSTMB, El Alto Fejuve and COR, the urban teachers federations of La Paz and El Alto and the rural teachers and other organizations of the workers, peasants, indigenous peoples and poor people in struggle." For its part, the Movimiento Socialista de los Trabajadores (section of the International Workers League founded by Nahuel Moreno) assiduously tailed the labor bureaucracy, organizing student contingents to sing songs calling for a government of the COB (i.e., Solares).

So the assorted reformist, nationalist and populist misleaders did indeed form a People's Assembly, and look at the result. To the sounds of dynamite blasts, today's opportunists have helped organize what one militant aptly called a "pantomime" by bombastic leaders like Solares, populists like Mamani, COR leader Patana, etc. The POR's *Masas* (No. 1952, 17 June) declared that the Rodríguez government is "stillborn." At this point that is a more accurate description of the Asamblea Popular Nacional Originaria. To be sure, the POR et al. make ritual criticisms of the present misleaders of the masses and complain about the outcome. But what the whole range of opportunist left organizations did was "form a bloc" (as the LOR-CI urged) with these leaders, *providing them left cover at the crucial moment*, just when these leaders prepared to sell out the masses and make their deal with Rodríguez. The result has been yet another betrayal of the heroism and sacrifice of Bolivia's workers and peasants, Indian peoples and urban poor.

Following the formation of the Asamblea Popular Nacional

Originaria, the headline of the next issue of *El Marginal* (No. 13) was "What Is the People's Assembly and What Will It Do?" An article declares that the APNO is "a true organ of power, though in these days nobody knows what they have created." It goes on to say that "a powerful soviet has begun to be born and no one knows what it consists of, what its tasks are and what its scope may be." The LOR-CI was a little less bombastic and more hesitant, but basically had the same line, referring to "an embryonic dual power arising in El Alto-La Paz" ("Un 'gobierno tapón' que no cierra la crisis ni crea ilusiones entre las masas," June 10). Covering their bets, the LOR-CI also referred to the APNO in a June 9 statement as a "First Step Toward a Popular Assembly."

While the various pseudo-Trotskyists prettified the APNO as an "organ of power," an embryonic dual power, a nascent soviet – even though "no one knows what it consists of, what its tasks are and what its scope may be" – the League for the Fourth International forthrightly told the truth. We wrote:

"Yet the incipient Popular Assembly, as presently constituted, is far from being an organ of dual power. It was called into being in a temporary 'vacuum' at the head of the government, while the capitalist state in the form of the army and police is still very much in place. For several leaders of the APNO, its proclamation was a fallback position, as in the case of COB leader Jaime Solares, who at key moments has been angling for a 'civil-military' regime with 'patriotic' military officers, or Fejuve leader Abel Mamani, who is seeking a national dialogue under the aegis of the Catholic church.

## ¡REVOLUCION Y DICTADURA PROLETARIA (asamblea popular)!

LAS MASAS EXPLOTADAS Y OPRIMIDAS HAN GANADO NUEVAMENTE LAS CALLES Y CAMINOS Y LUCHAN CONTRA SUS EXPLOTADORES Y OPRISORES, EL IMPERIALISMO, LAS TRANSNACIONALES, LA BURGUESIA CRIOLLA, VENDEDORA DE PATRIA Y HAMBREADORA, BUSCANDO TRANSFORMAR EN SUS RAICES A LA SOCIEDAD CAPITALISTA. ESTAN LUCHANDO CONTRA LOS OPRISORES PARA RECUPERAR LA SOBERANIA NACIONAL PERDIDA, SOLAMENTE ASI PODREMOS SER LIBRES.

LOS QUE BUSCAN SER LIBRES NO PUEDEN SOMETERSE A LA MANEJO TURBIO DE LOS BURGUESES Y DE SUS LACAYOS (que están son los parlamentarios que se aferran a sus dictos y a su servilismo). LOS VENDEPATRIAS NO PUEDEN ORDENAR A LOS REVOLUCIONARIOS, A LOS LIBERADORES DE LA COLONIA BOLIVIANA QUE HAGAN ESTO Y LO OTRO.

### ASAMBLEA POPULAR (DICTADURA PROLETARIA);

Durante la lucha del pueblo, encabezado por la clase obrera, particularmente por los mineros de Siglo XX, nace la Asamblea Popular frente al gobierno de Torres, no para apuntalar a éste sino para convertirlo y actuar como poder obrero.

No hay otro al mundo actual existiendo como órgano de poder, como gobierno, frente al Poder Ejecutivo burgués militar, elevando la dualidad de poderes, que es el camino abierto hacia la dictadura del proletariado (en la Bolivia capitalista rezagada un verdadero gobierno obrero-campesino). Llegó al mando gracias a la estrategia y la táctica señaladas por el POR. Las masas fueron movilizadas para imponerla.

LAS MASAS REBELDES, particularmente los proletarios, ENCARAN LA INSURGENCIA DE LA PROPIEDAD SOCIAL de los medios de producción CONTRA LA GRAN PROPIEDAD PRIVADA BURGUESA, resistiendo su descomposición, que es la crisis profunda del capitalismo, que apunta hacia la barbarie.

ESTA ES LA ESENCIA DE LA REVOLUCION SOCIAL SIN NOS PERMITIRIA SALVAR A LA SOCIEDAD HUMANA DE LA BARBARIE Y PROYECTARLA.

HACIA A UNA SUPERIOR SIN EXPLOTADOS NI EXPLOTADORES.

ESO GERA EL COMUNISMO Y AHORA LUCHAMOS POR ALCANZARLO. SU INICIO ES LA DICTADURA PROLETARIA.

### CABILDO ABIERTO (SAN FRANCISCO)

Antecedente de clase luchado por las nacionalidades nativas de la clase obrera, de artesanos de la clase media, se concentraron en esta plaza pública, en el cabildo abierto que señalaban grandes líneas ideológicas y estratégicas que debían seguir los explotados y oprimidos para materializar el cumplimiento de la burguesía criolla y el imperialismo, que no son excluyente y excluyente al pueblo boliviano.

En los acuerdos aprobados se señaló que tiene que luchar por estructurar la Asamblea Popular, que vote siempre (más) desde 1971.

Estuvieron presentes o tomaron uso de la palabra políticos ajenos, enarbolando consignas con consignas revolucionarias.

**MASAS**

1951  
10/VI/2005  
Precio: Bs. 1

**P.O.R.**

Revista boliviana del CERC. Programa cultural del grupo de obreros revolucionarios de la ciudad de La Paz con la colaboración de la ICI.

POR's *Masas* trumpets "Proletarian Revolution and Dictatorship (People's Assembly)!" In contrast, League for the Fourth International told the truth about APNO.

## COB Leader Solares Sought "Civilian-Military" Regime

Just before the June 10 meeting of the People's Assembly in El Alto, the COB labor federation had a plenary session of its leadership. The COB meeting passed a series of motions to continue mass mobilizations and the struggle for nationalization of oil and gas, resolutions which by the next day had become a dead letter. Between the sessions, *El Internacio-nalista* interviewed Jaime Solares, general secretary of the COB. Characteristically, as he did in the APNO meeting, Solares sprinkled his responses with rhetoric about "the great ideal of the workers and peasants government," a "planned economy" and even the "dictatorship of the proletariat."

Asked about his calls for a "civilian-military government," Solares said he had never called for a military coup, but "if there were a patriotic military government like that of Colonel Chávez in Venezuela, I would be the first to support it" because "it is a revolutionary government which leans towards socialism together with *compañero* Fidel Castro." More concretely, Solares argued that when "the *golpista* [coup-making] general, *compañero* General Alfredo Ovando Candia, nationalized oil, the revolutionary comrade Marcelo Quiroga Santa Cruz was a minister in [the government of] this *golpista* general, so let's not be naive...."

After coming to power in a coup in September 1969, Ovando nationalized Gulf Oil, which controlled most of the country's petroleum; Quiroga was an aristocratic intellectual who went from the fascistic FSB (Bolivian Socialist Falange) to a left-nationalist position, later founded the Socialist Party and was assassinated by paramilitary forces in the military coup of 1980. But the regime of the "*compañero golpista* general" was no friend of the workers. Ovando was chief of the military under the dictatorship of General René Barrientos, responsible for slaughtering the guerrilla band of Che Guevara in October 1967 and for ordering the massacre at the Siglo XX mine in Catavi on the night of San Juan in June 1967 when at least 87 people were killed, including many women and children.

Under Ovando's rule, the military wiped out the leftist band led by "Chato" Peredo. In July 1970, this group launched a guerrilla struggle near the mining community of Teoponte, a battle that was doomed to failure even more than Guevara's debacle at Nancahuazú. Despite Ovando's personal guarantee, those who surrendered were executed on the spot. The next month, a fascistic band of gunmen paid and armed by Alfredo Candia, local chief of the World Anti-Communist League, brutally assaulted and occupied San Andrés University (UMSA) in La Paz with the tolerance of the army, resulting in a score of casualties.

Solares praises the nationalist unity of "leftists" with the likes of Ovando. "To achieve power," Solares cynically remarked in the interview, "the workers must use all means, as the great thinker Machiavelli said!"

When challenged on his appeals to anti-Chilean chauvinism, Solares responded that "we are not against the Chilean people and workers" – "as Ernesto 'Che' Guevara said, for good men there are no borders" – but what the Chilean workers should do is "fight for the Bolivians' demand for a sea coast, so we can have a port.... The day this happens, then we can talk about a real Latin American unity of the workers." (The demand for return of "Bolivia's outlet to the sea," which it lost to Chile in the War of the Pacific in the late 19th century, has long served as a battle cry for nationalist politicians, whether civilian or military.) In the 2003 Bolivian uprising, there was ample opportunity for real solidarity with Chilean workers, who carried out a general strike only days before.

With regard to the APNO, Solares said the Asamblea Popular "is the government of the people, all that remains is to take power, in order to establish socialism in this country, but a totally Bolivian socialism." A number of left tendencies refer to the COB secretary as "*el loco* Solares." His statements may be erratic, but they are not accidental. They reflect the nationalist-populist political line pushed for decades by the dominant forces in the labor bureaucracy going back to Juan Lechín, the COB founder who, while leading miners militias, joined the bourgeois nationalist government in 1952, co-signed the decree to reestablish the army in 1957, and was up to his neck in the conspiracies with military officers that led to the 1964 Barrientos coup.

Nor were Solares' calls for a "civilian-military government" empty words. The COB chief did his utmost to bring about such a repeat of the nationalist military regimes of Ovando or that other "*compañero golpista* general," Juan José Torres (who took over when Ovando fell in October 1970). Just weeks ago, on June 1, Pedro Cruz, "permanent secretary" of the COB, went so far as to hold a small rally at the entrance to the Estado Mayor (general staff) offices in Miraflores calling for a civilian-military regime. No "patriotic officers" answered the door.

Several days after the June 10 COB and APNO meetings, the La Paz teachers union, whose leaders support the line of the Bolivian POR, demanded that Solares and Cruz be expelled from the COB for "encouraging military coup movements." Yet Solares is the head of the Asamblea Popular, which the POR called on the leaders of the COB, among others, to establish. For the reformist/nationalist leaders, the Assembly was a platform to make radical-sounding speeches, denouncing the "betrayal" of Evo Morales and vowing to hold firm. The real political effect was for Bolivia's left organizations to assist the leaders of the COB, COR and Fejuve to put on a left face while these leaders followed Morales in helping the latest interim president, Eduardo Rodríguez, defuse the crisis. ■

"The current Popular Assembly is essentially a leadership cartel whose future evolution is uncertain. A genuine centralizing organ of dual power, a soviet, would have to grow out of dual power bodies throughout the country, which do not presently exist. Beyond the mass mobilizations, it is necessary to form workers councils of delegates, recallable at any time, as well as peasants councils and councils of rank and file soldiers. They must institute workers control of vital factories, mines, transportation and communications facilities; act as decision-making and executive bodies under proletarian leadership rather than talk-shops for rhetorical hot air; organize self-defense groups (the core of worker and peasant militias) under the authority of the mass organizations of the working people; and undertake the distribution of food and vital supplies to the population."

—"Bolivian Workers Move Against Threatened 'Constitutional Coup'" (9 June)

None of those tasks were carried out by the APNO and its paper committees, and the immediate vital issue of workers control of distribution of gas was actually *sabotaged* by the action of the El Alto leaders. The key lesson to be drawn from the recent round of struggle in Bolivia is, once again, the need for revolutionary leadership. A balance sheet of the experience of Bolivia's "Gas War I" and now "Gas War II" must underscore the urgency of establishing the nucleus of an authentic Trotskyist party in Bolivia. As opposed to the myriad groups who endlessly chase after the latest "new vanguard" or "nationalist in epaulettes," a Bolshevik-Leninist workers party must be built on the program of permanent revolution, in the fight to reforge the Fourth International. With the revolutionary leadership they deserve, as part of the *international* struggle of the working class, the Bolivian workers and oppressed will win. ■

## "Constitutional Coup" ...

*continued from page 69*

the capital, the impact of the El Alto strike and blockade can be *intensified* by carrying out distribution of gas to poor neighborhoods, clinics, etc., under strict control by commissions of the Senkata YPFB plant workers, miners and slum dwellers. Such actions will dramatically underscore the capacity of the workers to rule, in contrast to the corrupt bourgeois authorities. When this begins to happen, the way will be open to ending the present stand-off and advancing to workers revolution.

The calls for a Popular Assembly hark back to the body of that name which briefly existed in mid-1971 and has since become mythologized by various opportunist currents. The "Popular Assembly" of 1971, headed by left-nationalist mine union leader Juan Lechín, in reality (despite sometime leftist declarations) supported the military-populist government of General Juan José Torres, and left the workers politically and physically disarmed in the face of the long-awaited coup of rightist general Hugo Banzer. Its leaders went on to form a "Revolutionary Anti-imperialist Front" with (by then deposed) General Torres and other bourgeois and reformist sectors. In fact, the current calls for a popular assembly in Bolivia are formulated so as to leave the door open to just the kind of class-collaborationist "alliances" that led to bloody

defeats for the Bolivian workers, peasants and Indian peoples in the past.

Far from calling to repeat the debacle of the Popular Assembly, a Trotskyist party in Bolivia would fight *now* for the *formation of workers, peasants and soldiers councils*, like those the Russian Bolsheviks led to power in October 1917, which could be the basis for a *workers, peasants and Indian government*. Genuine soviets would be based on proletarian internationalism, rather than bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalism, extending the hand of solidarity to the Chilean, Peruvian and Argentine working people and to the workers in the imperialist centers as well. This is the only way to defend the working people and oppressed from the threats that grow more dangerous with each passing hour. ■

## Bolivia on the Brink...

*continued from page 71*

limited their aims to (bourgeois) "democratic" demands. Calls for nationalization of gas and oil and a constituent assembly do not go beyond the framework of bourgeois rule, nor does opposition to neoliberalism and multinational capitalist enterprises. Morales could join with them because they were "united" in support of (reformed) capitalism.

Yet capitalism in this epoch of imperialist decay cannot be reformed in the interests of the exploited and oppressed. To rip Bolivia's fabulous mineral resources away from the imperialists, to genuinely enfranchise indigenous peoples and rescue workers from the scourges of unemployment and rampant poverty will require the working class taking power and beginning the socialist revolution that must spread internationally to survive. It also requires telling the truth to the masses: namely, that substituting one capitalist puppet president for another is no victory for the working people of the countryside and the cities. A Trotskyist vanguard party of the proletariat must be built that fights against the bourgeoisie and also against the opportunists who guard its left flank. Otherwise, the betrayal of October 2003 will be followed by the betrayal of June 2005, with more to come.

In La Paz demonstrations, the most radicalized sectors have chanted "Workers to power!" Yet the leaders of the labor and peasant organizations offer truces and "intermissions," first to Mesa and now to Rodríguez. Morales & Co. traffic in poisonous anti-Chilean nationalism, all the while hoping to cut a behind-the-scenes deal with U.S. imperialism. The leader of the MAS seeks support from social-democratic head of government Lula in Brazil, who is trying to play his role as a fireman for Washington in putting out the flames of revolt in the region while the Brazilian state oil company acts as a junior partner of the imperialists in looting Bolivia's gas and oil fields. In contrast, a genuinely Trotskyist party would join with the workers of Chile, Brazil and throughout Latin America, as well as in the imperialist centers, in fighting for socialist revolution to sweep away the parliamentary dens of iniquity and replace them with the revolutionary rule of workers councils.

*For a worker, peasant and Indian government in Bolivia, part of an Andean federation of workers republics and a Socialist United States of Latin America! ■*



**Coup Threats, Rightist Maneuvers  
vs. Calls for “Workers to Power”**

# **Bolivia Explodes in Sharp Class Battle**



Indymedia Bolivia

**Police face off with unionists in Sucre, June 9. Congress left La Paz to install new president, hoping to escape crowds of protesters. Instead, thousands of miners, peasants and workers converged on Bolivia's second capital to block hardline rightist Vaca Díez from taking office.**

**Form Workers, Peasants  
and Soldiers Councils!  
Build the Nucleus of a Genuine  
Trotskyist Bolshevik Party!**

**JUNE 1** – After three weeks of massive mobilizations, tens of thousands of workers and peasants besieged Bolivia's central government plaza yesterday. Throughout the day, miners exploded dynamite and riot cops fired tear gas as the demonstrators fought to break through police lines to seize the center of La Paz and shut down the rightist-dominated Bolivian Con-

gress. Up to 50,000 participated in the largest and fiercest protests since the “gas war” of October 2003. Government spokesmen threatened repression against labor leaders. The class battle is coming to a head, as the choice is posed: advance toward a revolutionary outcome or face defeat at the hands of the bourgeoisie, whether in “democratic” guise or through naked military force.

For the last several days, thousands of slum dwellers poured down into the capital from El Alto, the huge impoverished city on the heights above La Paz. Labor and peasant groups are blocking roads and highways. In addition to the indefinite work

*continued on page 59*