

Main Political Report - The U.S. Economy

FRSO
4th
Congress

The U.S. Economy

Long Term Decline of U.S. Imperialism

After World II, U.S. imperialism was top dog, with growth in the manufacturing sector conditioned by minimal global competition. The massive defense spending of the Cold War period, and the relatively high wages of the U.S. worker, marked the U.S. as the largest industrial economy in the world. At the very moment the rich were crowing about the American Century, it was ending. Competition from Europe and Japan and the existence of a Socialist camp, combined with blows from the national liberation movements, came together to end U.S. global hegemony. 1971 marked the end of the U.S. monetary order established at Breton Woods in 1945. Until then, the value of major currencies was fixed against the dollar.

In response to this decline, monopoly capitalism shifted to a policy of neo-liberalism in the 1980's. Neo-liberalism is characterized by an accelerating concentration of capital into the hands of the monopoly capitalists and the delivery of public funds to private corporations while pushing down employment, wage levels, and reducing social spending. Neo-liberal policy tends to concentrate capital into the three imperialist blocks: Japan, the European Union, and the U.S. and Canada.

This concentration has the effect of shaping not just the global economy but also global politics. The intensification of neo-liberal policies in Latin America has brought popular resistance to those policies to the forefront in Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador and Venezuela. Additionally, Japan has found itself unable to keep up with the United States and the European Union and is falling behind the two other imperialist powers. It has been in an economic crisis since 1997 from which it has yet to recover. The weakening of Japanese capital makes competition between the EU and the U.S. to divide the markets of Asia much more likely.

Under the neo-liberal policies of "free market" globalization, the world capitalist system has come to a point at which the crisis of overproduction and financial collapses, in both the underdeveloped and imperialist countries, interact with each other to cause a contraction of the global market to the detriment of all. A fundamental problem of imperialism is that the monopoly capitalists maximize profits by cutting down employment and incomes of the real producers and ultimately ruining the market for products in the real economy.¹

Bust Follows Boom on a World Scale

1991 – 2000 was characterized by the longest upturn in the business cycle in United States history. The first tidal wave of a building world economic crisis hit Japan, South Korea and Indonesia in 1997 & 1998. This was termed the Asian Economic Crisis. It occurred when the export-oriented economies of Asia suffered a crisis of overproduction. In order to unload goods, these economies were forced to devalue their currency. The trade balances collapsed, which led to panic and capital flight. This early collapse was a signal of the generalized crisis of overproduction on a world scale. The exports of the countries of Asia, Latin America and Africa, and the countries of the former Soviet bloc are mostly raw material products, some semi-manufactures and still fewer manufactured products. All of these have been overproduced and the overproduction has led to production cutbacks, bankruptcies and mass layoffs. The trade deficits of these countries have become too wide and have resulted in a mounting debt burden of more than US \$3 trillion, from which there is no foreseeable relief within the world capitalist system.

The U.S. economy was able to escape the impact of this crisis until the spring of 2001 because of super profits, generated by a technological advantage, and its strong position as a home base for capital inflows. Between 1991 and early 2001, 70% of the global flow of direct investment was concentrated in the United States and 68% of U.S. direct investments were in Japan, the European Union and Canada. Since the beginning of the worldwide crisis of overproduction which struck Asia, the former Soviet Union and Latin America beginning in 1997 and fully emerged in the United States in March of 2001, there have been some subtle but important quantitative shifts in the

outflows of U.S. direct investments. Between 1999 and 2002 there was a decline in the overall level of Direct Investment outflows from the U.S. This downward trend has reversed in the first two quarters of 2003. This decline was a reflection of a lack of capital to invest given the economic downturn. The reversal of this trend for the first two quarters of 2003 may be an indication of easing crisis in the United States. While the EU remains by far the largest recipient of FDI outflows from the U.S., for the first time both Asia and Canada surpassed Latin America as a recipient of capital flows.² This is a reflection of two different factors: first, a persistent economic crisis in Latin America, and secondly, the increasing size and importance of China's economy.

When the worldwide economic crisis began in 1997 there was tremendous capital flight into the U.S. Inflows of capital to the U.S. nearly doubled in a two-year period. When the economic crisis hit the U.S. in early 2001, capital flight out of the U.S. was just as rapid. Current Foreign Direct Investment into the United States is below the level it was at in 1994, though there is a reversal in the trend of capital flight, likely owing to a perceived stabilization of the U.S. economy.³

It should be noted that while there has been a worldwide crisis and no country or economic block has been unaffected, the EU economic block has experienced the crisis on a relatively minor scale up to this point. While Japan has not made a significant economic recovery since 1997 and has fallen behind the two other imperialist powers, the EU has strengthened its position vis-à-vis U.S. imperialism significantly. The introduction of the Euro and its use as a universal currency signals that European imperialism is on a rising tide economically, while at the same time U.S. imperialism and the power of the dollar is in long term economic decline.

Dynamics of the current crisis of overproduction in the United States

Capitalist economy has a cyclical boom/bust character. The history of American capitalism is a history of economic downturns (recessions and depressions). With the exception of the Vietnam War Years, between World War II and 1991 there had been a recession every 4 to 6 years. The boom

period that the U.S. economy was in between 1991 and 2001 was the longest period ever. Nonetheless, "the end of history" predicted by some business pundits could not last.

U.S. stock markets experienced an overvaluation (speculative bubble) from 1996 – 2000, particularly in the "new" or high tech sector. Actual earnings and profits came nowhere near meeting the valuations of stocks. The bubble burst first in the high tech sector, followed a year later by a collapse in stock prices in general.

The economy did not collapse because of an overvaluation in the stock market and mediocre earnings reports. A situation developed in which the production of goods and services could not be continued on a profitable basis. By overproduction, we do not mean that people do not need new cars or other durable goods, just that the capitalists cannot make a profit off of their continued production.

The crisis of overproduction hit the U.S. economy in early 2001. Since the attack on the World Trade Center in September 2001, there has been an attempt to rewrite economic history and blame the recession on those attacks. The fact is, however, that the manufacturing sector had already experienced three consecutive quarters of negative growth by that time. Though manufacturing often leads other sectors, the lead in the current recession was a little larger than normal. Industrial production peaked in October 2000. For 5 months, until March, the economy outside of manufacturing was expanding faster than manufacturing was shrinking, so that total employment continued to grow. In dating the start of the recession back to March, we ignore the media's shorthand definition of a recession: two consecutive quarters of decline in Gross Domestic Product (the broadest single measure of economic output) adjusted for inflation, or real GDP. Both industrial production and real (adjusted for inflation) sales in the manufacturing, wholesale, and retail sectors peaked early in the fall of 2000, and have fallen steadily since then. Once overall employment began to drop after March 2001, as job losses in manufacturing started to outweigh job gains in other sectors of the economy, the downturn was underway. The financial markets had already reacted to serious overcapacity issues in the tech sector, with a crash in the NASDAQ index coming in early 2000. The broader financial markets reacted to the general crisis more slowly, not seeing their first dip until mid to late 2001.

The "official end of the U.S. recession" is marked as November 2001. This is because the capitalist's shorthand definition overlooks several important realities. 1) Consumer spending, encouraged by government monetary policy, can be an engine for growth in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (which is a different figure than has been used historically to measure economic growth, traditionally Gross National Product was used) without solving the crisis of overproduction. The monetary policy of lowering interest rates to their lowest levels in decades spurred many consumers to purchase homes, creating economic growth while not solving the problem of overproduction. 2) Until November of 2003 the manufacturing sector continued to contract nearly every month, indicating an unresolved crisis. 3) Unemployment, which had been at its lowest level in 30 years, rose during the "official recession" and continues to be at its highest level since 1995.

After a year of "recovery" in official terms, GDP growth in the United States slowed markedly from about mid-2002, owing both to rising geopolitical uncertainties in the run-up to the war on Iraq and to the continued aftereffects of the bursting of the stock market bubble outside of the high tech sector. Amid weak demand and continued substantial excess capacity, inflation has fallen considerably, with core (Consumer Price Index) inflation still well below 2 percent.

Structural Changes

The current crisis of overproduction combined with the long-term decline of the U.S. economy has resulted in some major structural changes. There has been a further loss of light manufacturing jobs within the United States. Most job growth has taken place in the service sectors. This trend is likely to continue and indicates continued high unemployment and low wages for the U.S. working class. Given the restructuring of the global economy, it is unlikely that this trend will reverse in the context of the U.S. as an imperialist power.

Relative Stability Likely in Near Future

At the end of 2003, an economic recovery appears to have regained momentum in the U.S. On the one hand, second and third quarter Gross

Domestic Product data proved stronger than expected. This has created consumer and business confidence and caused a jump in spending.

On the other hand, this jump start has been fueled by governmental policies that seek a way out of the economic crisis by a dual policy of giving tax cuts to the monopoly bourgeoisie and its firms (amounting to US \$2.65 trillion over a ten-year period) and military purchases. Defense spending accounted for more of the GDP growth in the second quarter than durable goods manufactured⁴. Additionally, unemployment remains high and significant excess production capacity still exists. It is unlikely that the support to the GDP from consumer housing purchases will continue.

Nevertheless, the fiscal policy of stimulating the economy by placing more money into the hands of the wealthy through tax cuts and increasing military spending while slashing public services has corresponded with the end of the crisis and will likely continue. Stock prices have risen markedly (though possibly are overvalued again); and long-term interest rates, despite a strong rebound since mid-June, are still low by historical standards. With low inflation and relatively few deflationary pressures, signs point to relative stability of the U.S. economy in the short to medium term. It is likely that this stability will be characterized by relatively slow growth in the GDP and little improvement in the unemployment rate, given the minimal job growth that has characterized the last three quarters of 2003. Nonetheless, a recovery from the capitalist perspective seems more likely than a recession.

Medium to long term there are a number of factors that would indicate that another record-long upturn in the business cycle is unlikely. The U.S. carries a record trade deficit that is now matched by an equally large government deficit. Attempts to correct this deficit will put an end to the government stimulus packages that are supporting the weak economic growth and are likely to setback the economy. Despite its depreciation over the last year, the dollar still appears overvalued from a medium-term perspective, and the crisis of overproduction and weakness of demand in the rest of the world continues.

Uneven Character of Polarization

Increasingly, the social character of the United States is polarizing into two distinct economic poles -- wealth and poverty. The gap between the working class and the ruling class continues grow.

The fall in the equity markets and resulting decline in household wealth caused by the recession narrowed the gap between rich and poor slightly in the past two years. The crisis also meant a 1.1 percent real decline in household money income from 2001 to 2002. This marked the end of a very brief rise in real money income for the upper section of the working class, which took place between 1999 and 2001.

The gentrification of the inner cities continues and affordable housing stock is either torn down as community nuisances or modified to suit the rich. It is estimated that about 32% of Americans pay more than 30% of their household incomes for housing.⁵ Homelessness continues to rise. By most estimates, homelessness has doubled in the last 10 years. Between 2.5 and 3.5 million people are homeless every year.

Attacks on the working class continued with the systematic destruction of the social safety net. Lifetime limits on welfare are in effect. The state governments are throwing people off welfare roles at the same time that unemployment is rising. This only increases the polarization between the rich and poor. These gaping holes in the social safety net on the federal level puts our class back into the economic reality of 1928. Ending welfare as an entitlement and replacing it with block grants for the states means that public assistance devolves towards a state level, and ultimately to that of the county.

Nations within the U.S.

Polarization proceeds unevenly and affects oppressed nationalities within the U.S. more than the class as a whole. The U.S. is a country composed of more than one nation. There is a Black Nation, whose territory is in the South, a Chicano nation in the Southwest, numerous native nations, and a number of national minorities including Asian and Pacific Islanders, Puerto Ricans in the U.S., etc.

Most of the states in the South and Southwest have right to work laws. In the South, only 8 percent of the work force is unionized. For example, in South

Carolina 3.6% of workers are unionized. This compares to 17.3% in Pennsylvania. Average income in right to work states is 15% lower than in non-right to work states.

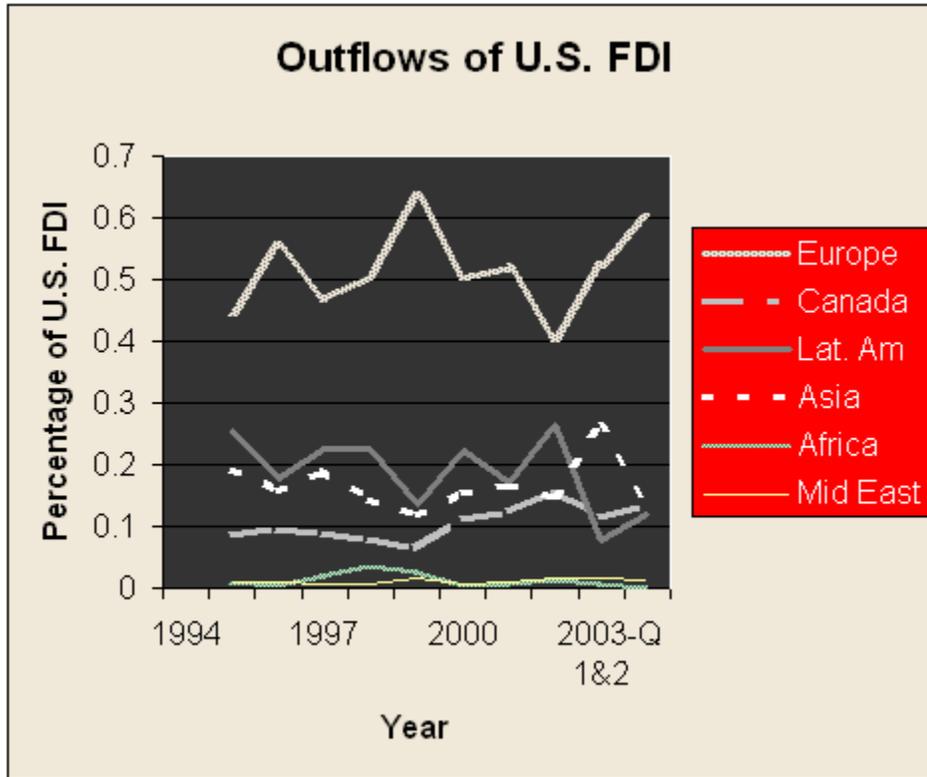
In the last three years the median income for Blacks has fallen at twice the rate it has fallen for whites. The income gap between whites and Blacks is in the \$15,000 dollar range. While Latin@s (*government statistics use the term "Hispanics", a non-Marxist and generally not that helpful category but one used by the government to keep statistics*) have experienced a modest gain in income, the poverty rate for Latin@s is between 19.2 and 24.9%, depending on how it is calculated.

A chart for Latin@ income groups would show all the income groupings clustering around 70-75% of the income of their white counterparts, with less stratification than among African Americans. Incomes of the poorest Latin@s fell sharply relative to whites from the early 1970s through the mid-1980s, as new immigrants from Mexico, Central America, and the Dominican Republic arrived.⁶

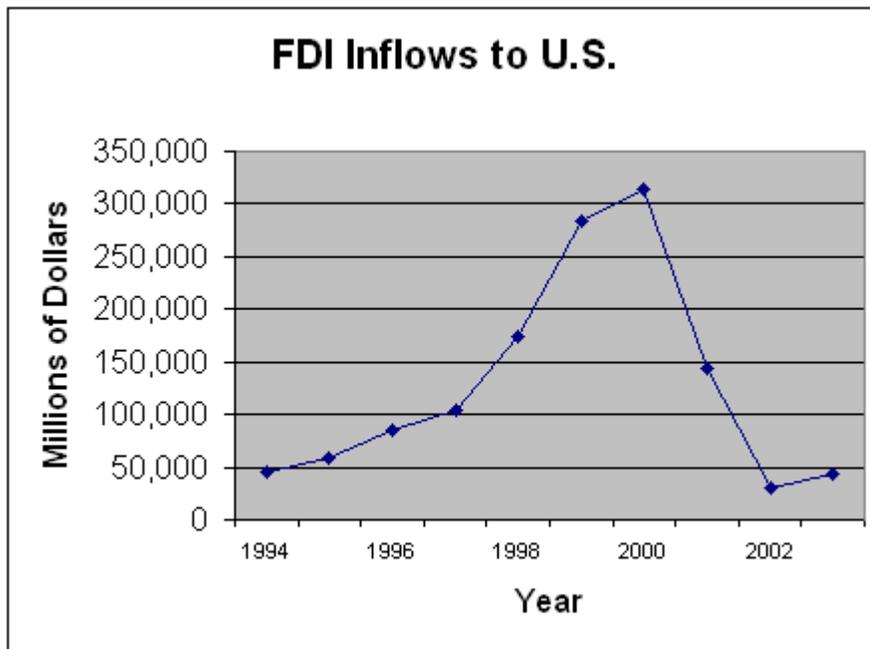
In the final analysis, the problem is that the law of uneven development ⁷ functions in U.S imperialism's relationship to the oppressed nations within its own borders in similar ways to the way it functions in oppressed nations abroad.

Notes:

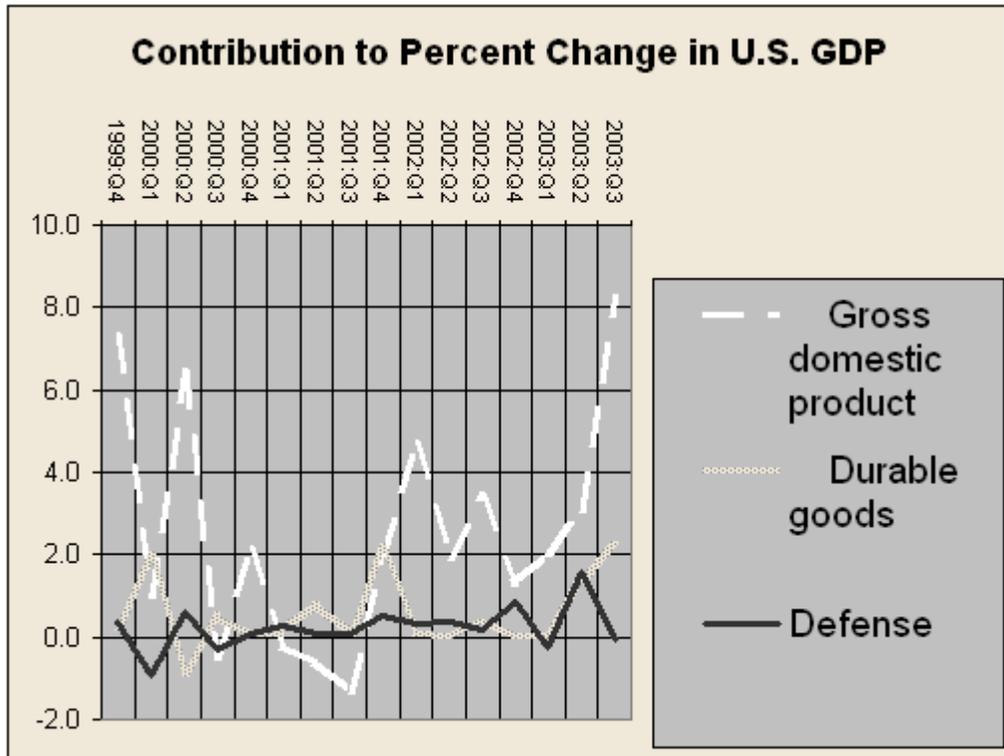
¹ (Paraphrase) BOLDLY ADVANCE THE PHILIPPINE REVOLUTION AMIDST WORSENING GLOBAL AND NATIONAL CRISIS, Message on the 35th Anniversary of the Communist Party of the Philippines. Armando Liwanag Chairman, Central Committee Communist Party of the Philippines December 26, 2003. p.12



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5 Census Bureau – 2001 American community survey.

6 Left Business Observer

7 " ¼Uneven development and a semi-starvation level of existence of the masses are fundamental and inevitable conditions and premises of this mode of production (capitalism). As long as capitalism remains what it is, surplus capital will be utilized not for the purpose of raising the standard of living of the masses in a given country, for this would mean a decline in profits for the capitalists, but for the purpose of increasing profits by exporting capital abroad to the backward countries. In these backward countries, profits are usually high, for capital is scarce, the price of land is relatively low, wages are low, and raw materials are cheap. The necessity for exporting capital arises from the fact that in a few countries, capitalism has become "overripe" and (owing to the backward stage of agriculture and the impoverished state of the masses) capital cannot find a field for "profitable" investment." Imperialism, The highest stage of capitalism. V.I. Lenin pp. 73 & 74

Main Political Report - Domestic Situation

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Introduction

In order to understand the shape of the U.S. political landscape it is most useful to roughly divide the past three years into two periods - before

September 2001 and after September 2001. We do so to categorize stages of political development.

The attacks on the Pentagon and World Trade Center sent a political shockwave through the United States and its impact is still felt. It served as a pretext for an all-out attack on people here and abroad. Looking into the future we can identify several fronts of struggle that are likely to represent the most important political struggles in the coming time period.

Pre 9-11

Bush was placed into office in 2001 in a stolen election. This created a situation where a substantial section of Americans believed that he should not be president. Add to that group a large section of people who believed he was not fairly elected. The election was stolen through the blatant disenfranchisement of African-American voters in the South, through their illegitimate removal from voter roles. He arrived in office facing a crisis of legitimacy that in modern history has only been paralleled by the final years of the Nixon administration. As a result, during the first period of his administration there was a necessity for the Bush Administration to proceed with some caution, and to seek some cover, while planning attacks domestically and internationally.

It is worth noting that from the moment Bush took the presidency, there came into being a substantial section of the working class, oppressed nationalities, youth, and the petty bourgeoisie that opposed the administration and nearly all its actions, and that consistently rejected the entire direction the country was moving in. After 9-11, manifestations of these sentiments included the spontaneous calls from within the anti-war movement to "Impeach Bush."

In general, the Bush administration represented the centrist wing of the Republican Party. Within his administration there are elements that represented both the historically isolationist section of the Republican Party and a section ideologically tied to the notion of a "New American Century." On issues of foreign policy, the unity between these two currents lied in moves to step up the level of rivalry with the other imperialist powers.

However, the New American Century grouping (also known as the neo-conservatives) dreams of an all powerful United States setting unilateral policies to be followed by all other imperialist powers and their lackeys. They aim to achieve this by military means.

From the day he arrived in the White House, Bush has shown himself to be a determined enemy of the working class, oppressed nationalities, and the American people as a whole. The policies under Bush have reflected a continuation of a long-term process of eroding government benefits, increasing privatization, changing the tax structure, and arranging environmental protection and trade rules to the benefit of the capitalist class.

George Bush intensified efforts to restructure the political economy of the United States in order to decrease the amount of the social wages going to the working class. The basics of his program are the dismantling of the social safety net put in place during the popular upsurges of the 1910s, 1930s and 1960s. Bush's push to eliminate the estate tax, privatize social security, weaken Medicare and weaken affirmative action represent the continuation of a project that began under Reagan in the 1980s.

Overtime regulations that have been in place since the 1950s are under attack by Bush. New OSHA regulations on ergonomics that were years in the making have been shelved. The estate tax, first passed in 1916, will be gradually phased out and is slated for elimination in 2010.

In many ways, current policies are a logical continuation of those developed during the Clinton presidency. Beyond the obvious fact that both were political representatives of the capitalist class, let's take two examples: Under Clinton we saw a major dismantling of the welfare system and the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement. By abolishing public assistance as an entitlement, Clinton rolled back one of the greatest victories of the past and set the stage for the absolute impoverishment of millions. NAFTA combined the looting of Mexico with the loss of millions of jobs in the U.S., especially in the manufacturing sector. During a time of relative economic growth in the 1990s, the gap between rich and poor increased under Clinton. Despite occasional pro-worker rhetoric, Clinton was an enemy of the U.S. working class, who set the stage for the assault launched by the Bush Administration.

Post 9-11

The attacks on the Pentagon and on the heart of the U.S. financial district strengthened a turn to the right on the part of the U.S. ruling class. It helped to create objective conditions that made it possible to carry out a set of policy shifts that a section of the ruling class already wanted. We do not believe in a “great man theory” of history. Political figures represent definite classes, and if Gore had been in the White House, there still would have been war in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as repressive measures at home.

This turn to the right was accompanied by a temporary muting of the expression of contradictions amongst the ruling class, and between classes. In other words, immediately following the events of September 2001, all of the contradictions in society, which in general are sharpening, were for a time concealed in their expression.

One form in which this manifested itself was that the repressive and anti-immigrant Patriot Act was passed with the overwhelming support of both major parties. Only one Democrat in the Senate voted against this repressive bill. It took another form when the labor bureaucracy temporarily pulled out of the anti-corporate globalization movement. Still another was evidenced by a lower level of mobilization in some oppressed nationality communities to killings by police (Cincinnati, NYC). Also, unions that were poised to strike during this period either canceled or postponed their strikes for reasons of "national unity."

At this historical juncture, leftist forces in the respective movements refused to remain silent. By constantly opposing plans and policies of the Bush Administration, they played an extremely important role in creating the basis for more favorable conditions in the future.

Attacks on Democratic Rights

The all-out attack on democratic rights serves to illustrate the right-wing shift that has occurred since September 2001. The Patriot Act eliminated restrictions on domestic intelligence and political repression that had been put in place as a result of the social movements of the 1960s, thereby granting

sweeping powers the ruling class had wanted for years. More than 1000 immigrants were taken into custody and disappeared. There is no doubt that at least some were subjected to torture. Military tribunals are being used to try citizens and non-citizens. In every region of the country, immigrants and Islamists have faced well-publicized trials with ridiculous, trumped-up charges. There has been a greatly increased militarization of the border with Mexico, along with mass deportations and arrests of Mexican immigrants in the Southwest.

Every major metropolitan area has set up a so-called Joint Anti-Terrorism Task Force, bringing together federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies. While immigrant communities are the main targets of the Task Forces, they also take aim at the anti-war movement.

A powerful apparatus for repression has been built and consolidated in the form of the Department of Homeland Security. The creation of this department represents the most dramatic shift in matters of "internal security" since the end of the First World War and the creation of the FBI.

Return of Polarization

While the overall political context has shifted to the right, as we move towards our 4th Congress it can be safely said that the period characterized by the muted expression of society's contradictions is over. Political polarization, a concentrated form of polarization in the economic base (including the applicable class and national relations), has reasserted itself with a vengeance.

The anti-war movement, as opposed to contradictions among the enemy, played a critical role in the development of this process - it has served in a decisive manner in carving open progressive political space. Right after the events of 9-11, we noted that the "war on terrorism" was the leading edge of reaction, and that we should go all-out in building a visible and active movement to oppose it. Life has confirmed that our analysis was correct. After the elections, regardless of who wins, the foundation of our work as revolutionaries will be to continue to build the mass struggle.

Polarization is also showing itself in the form of a profound hatred for both Bush and the direction that the country is heading in. It is also manifested in every sphere of the country's political life.

We are not indifferent to the outcome of the upcoming elections. As noted earlier, among the masses of people - specifically among working people, the oppressed nationalities, and in the mass movements - there is deep sentiment that Bush has to be removed from office. There is real anger about the state of the economy, and among a significant section of people there is a great hostility towards the wars that the Bush administration has launched.

As revolutionaries, we ignore these sentiments at our own peril. The masses of people who constitute our political base (or the base that we are trying to give leadership to) want to see Bush out of office. In a real sense, the upcoming election will be seen as a referendum on the policies of the Bush administration - particularly on the war. Furthermore, during elections, the minds of the masses are more on politics and we are given a chance to make advances.

There is no qualitative difference between Kerry and Bush. The contradiction between them is a contradiction within the enemy camp. In the coming period, regardless of which party wins the White House, we can expect continued attacks on the social safety net, weakening of trade protections, and continued privatization of the federal workforce.

That said, we do think it is important that Bush is voted out of office, and we should raise slogans like "Vote Against Bush" and "Dump Bush." While this may entail voting for the nominee of the Democratic Party, at best we should treat this as referendum on specific policies; we will not be running around singing the praises of Kerry.

We believe that this approach will help us harness anti-Bush sentiment and avoid political isolation. It is a good thing that many people hate the Bush Administration and its policies. We should utilize this area of activity to strengthen and systemize that dissatisfaction, while doing so in such a way that will create a more favorable climate for struggle against whoever is elected to office next.

One aspect of the current period is that space for independent political action in the electoral arena has narrowed. Not only is the Nader campaign much smaller and less influential than last time around, it also describes itself as a "second front against Bush."

Prospects

Taken as whole, the current period provides favorable terrain for us to make advances. While there are ebbs and flows, a powerful mass anti-war movement has come into being. In our communities and workplaces, the level of struggle generally lags behind the objective (material) conditions. This means that it is possible for communists to spark and lead major mobilizations and battles, and to win the advanced to Marxism-Leninism in the course of these struggles.

Five Fronts of Struggle

In the period ahead, we can see the broad outlines of struggle that will shape the people's movements and the political terrain of this country. These battle lines, while by no means being the only domestic battle fronts, represent the key links that will propel forward our movement as a whole. It should be noted that the movement against U.S. imperialism has special significance. Because it has both domestic and international dynamics, it is treated in a separate section but nonetheless will remain another key front of struggle.

1. In Defense of Our Standard of Living

There has been a broad-based economic restructuring taking place in the U.S. for the better part of the last decade. This restructuring, shaped and intensified by economic crisis, competition on a world scale, and by Bush's economic policies, means that we are in the midst of a protracted attack on our standard of living, including attacks on wages and working conditions. Key battlegrounds include beating back concessions in the unions and fighting health care and budget cuts, as outlined below.

Health Care Crisis

There is a health care crisis in this country. The profit-driven health care delivery system is irrevocably broken, with no solutions on the table. The unionized workforce, both private and public, remains one of the few sectors with reasonable health care benefits. In the last few years those benefits have been under attack, and have been the primary issue in a number of recent strikes. To stop the tide, it will require a movement much stronger than the one that currently exists, supported by the building of a common movement between the organized and unorganized sections of the working class.

Budget Cuts and Attacks on Poor and Working People

At the state level, we have witnessed some of the most significant attacks on poor and working people. Almost all states experienced budget crises driven by a combination of economic recession and years of tax cuts to the wealthy.

With the wholly predictable economic recession since March 2001, most states have embarked on a wave of cutting social services to the poor and bashing public employees. Across almost all the states, regardless of whether Republicans or Democrats were in the statehouse, the ruling parties have opted for austerity programs and have refused to tax the rich.

In the coming period, we can expect continued attacks on social services to the poor and more demands for concessions from public employees.

2. Against Racist Attacks and National Oppression

Because the U.S. is a white supremacist country, all of the attacks on poor and working people have a greater impact on oppressed nationalities. We can expect a continuation and intensification of racist attacks. These attacks take many forms: police brutality, further attacks on already-gutted affirmative action policies, and the continued policy of incarceration of oppressed nationalities, wrongful imprisonment, and attacks on public and bilingual education. Key battlefronts in this area include the movements against police terror, and for immigrants' rights.

Police Brutality and the Movement Against It

Police brutality is a daily reality in urban America. Racial profiling, shootings by police, and police harassment are daily occurrences. The rich want enforcement of social order; the politicians will deliver it; thus, the cops will create fear in the neighborhoods.

Immediately prior to 9-11, one of the main social questions was the issue of racial profiling, linked to the struggle against police terror. In the aftermath of 9-11, racial profiling has become acceptable. This is a setback to the movement against police brutality. Fight backs will continue to be localized and situational. Nonetheless, this is a key front of the struggle against national oppression.

Prisons and the Death Penalty

The number of prisoners in the U.S. stands at around two million, rising from 500,000 in 1985. The largest percentages are Black and Latino. One out of three prisoners in the world is in the U.S., meaning that a higher percentage of the U.S. population is incarcerated than in any other country. This fact makes the fight to overturn wrongful convictions very important.

Related to this, the death penalty continues to be used in a racist way against Blacks and Latinos. As the struggle against the death penalty gains momentum, there have been victories made in declaring moratoriums against it in some states. At the same time, in other states, record numbers are on death row.

Immigrants' Rights

Immediately after 9-11 there was a wave of attacks on immigrants. This wave, centered at first on Arabs and Muslims, then spread to all immigrant groups, especially Mexicans and Latinos. In the face of these attacks, there was a pullback of some immigrants' rights struggles which were, before that, poised to make gains. This retreat has ended. The fight against anti-immigrant attacks and to expand immigrants' rights will be a key front of struggle against the right wing.

3. Democratic Rights

The new Red Squads operate under the moniker of Joint Terrorism Task Forces. They are active in many cities, with local, state, and federal agents colluding to take away the rights of political activists. Police repression of political groups is more obvious and more sophisticated, particularly with the implementation of the Patriot Act.

The struggle to preserve civil liberties intersects in many places with the struggle to defend immigrants' rights and to fight against national oppression. This fact, combined with the importance of preserving space for open political struggle, will make democratic rights an important front in the coming period.

4. GLBT-Q Rights

The continuing struggle to expand democratic rights for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender (Queer) people will take a prominent role in the coming period. Part of this battleground will be the issue of state and federal constitutional amendments codifying discrimination against Queers into State and Federal law. A victory is not certain, no matter which political party is in power, and will require a more militant movement than currently exists on the ground.

We wholeheartedly support and laud the civil rights struggle currently being manifested in the battle for GLBT/Queer marriage.

We believe that the 1000 plus laws bestowing financial and legal "benefits" upon married heterosexual couples are rights that should be given to all people regardless of relationship or familial status.

The battle for gay marriage unfortunately coincides with a very conservative frame for relationships and family that should be rejected. Historically, the GLBT community has defined relationships and family much more broadly than the vision of the nuclear family: two adults who are the sole lifetime providers of physical, emotional, and financial sustenance to each other; and solely responsible for the couples' biological children. The GLBT community has been at the forefront of celebrating and advocating relationships that openly reject the capitalist, patriarchal and Judeo-Christian

belief system that U.S. law is based upon. We join with our queer comrades who continue to struggle for this alternative vision.

We denounce the efforts by the bourgeoisie, especially the Republican Party, to use the issue of gay marriage as a wedge to polarize the population and divert attention away from the economic and social crises in the U.S. This is merely the current attempt (and there have been many) to use racist, sexist and homophobic fear-mongering to divide the working class.

Finally, we call on revolutionists, including within Freedom Road Socialist Organization, to develop a much deeper Marxist analysis of GLBT issues and the Queer Liberation Movement.

5. Women

There has been a stepped-up attack on women's reproductive freedoms in the last year. The recent passage of the Unborn Victims of Violence Act is the second major attack on women's right to legal abortion. The first was the passage of the misnamed "partial-birth" abortion bill in fall 2003.

While this law exempts abortion specifically, its definition of a fetus as a person is part of the attempt to undermine women's right to choose. Recently there have been other troubling attempts to control women's reproductive lives. In Utah, Melissa Ann Rowland was charged with murder because one of the twins she was carrying died during delivery. Rowland, who is reported to have abused drugs and had mental problems, refused to have a Caesarean section, though her doctor requested it.

Abortion rights and reproductive rights in general have been eroded over the last two decades. The next period will likely see a battle to preserve them.

Anti-Intervention Movement

Introduction

The imperialists planned, plotted and campaigned for a war against Iraq for at least six months before they were able to proceed. During that time, a historic and global anti-war movement came into being. In the U.S., our

mobilizations were the biggest since those at the height of the struggles against the war in Viet Nam. Although high levels of protest activity were not maintained long once the war began, important local- and national-level organizations were developed. Large numbers of people were organized and brought into motion at a level that represents a qualitative leap forward for the U.S. anti-war movement.

Some mistakenly viewed this upsurge as a stand-alone movement around a stand-alone issue. Rather than the Iraq war standing alone as a single foreign policy failure, it is instead the latest imperialist campaign. The movement that rose up to answer it can only be correctly understood as a direct continuation of the struggles around Afghanistan in 2001 and Palestine in 2002. A correct understanding of the development of this movement is key to moving ahead to continue building a strong anti-imperialist movement in the United States.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan is very important because, while the government tried to use the events of September 11, 2001 as a justification for countless war crimes, for many people it served as a wake up call. More so than anytime in the last 30 years, people in the U.S. woke up to the idea that foreign policy can affect us here at home. While protested by relatively few (the largest was the September 29 ANSWER demonstration of about 15,000), the attack on Afghanistan was questioned by many. International ANSWER was the first national network to come together, and remains the strongest. Not In Our Name also mobilized early, and maintained a strong national presence for about one year, issuing several national calls for local days of action.

Local mobilizations continued into November, but didn't last much beyond that. The protests against the war in Afghanistan were incredibly important, at a time when there was a great deal of pressure to support the war as a justified retaliation for the September 11th attacks. The pace of the war slackened, and occupation troops and a puppet government took over Kabul. Almost simultaneously, the Bush Administration turned its eyes towards Iraq, and Ariel Sharon took power in Israel.

These events brought new energy to the U.S. anti-war movement. The racist USA PATRIOT Act and related policies were directly tied to the terror war

abroad. The campaign of fear waged against Muslim and Arab immigrant communities has remained intense since 9-11. Many cities spent scarce budgets to expand local police forces, under the claim of increased security needs. Detentions and deportation proceedings also moved ahead. Racial Justice 9-11 was launched in February 2002 as a national network of organizations working within communities of color to oppose the war on terror - on both foreign and domestic fronts.

Other new formations included the September 11 Families for Peaceful Tomorrows, which was founded in July 2002 to give voice to anti-war sentiment among people who had family members die in the September 11 attacks. United for Peace and Justice came together in October 2002 and is the second largest national anti-war coalition, issuing national calls for local days of action and co-sponsoring national protests.

Palestine

An Israeli terror offensive launched in March culminated with the 11-day siege and massacre at Jenin. Palestinians and their supporters hit the streets of cities across the US, and marched together in Washington on April 20, 2002. 100,000 people amassed for two coordinated demonstrations, both called against threats of war on Iraq, but ANSWER shifted its focus to Palestine. The size of this mobilization was unprecedented in recent years and buoyed a growing national movement against the war on Iraq.

Local work in solidarity with Palestine has been established in cities and on campuses across the country; however, there have been few coordinated national actions or campaigns. The Divest from Israel campaign has not taken off, and no single coalition or network has come forward to give national leadership. That leaves our movement ill-equipped to respond to urgent developments on the ground, such as the recent assassination of Hamas leader, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin.

One promising exception is Al-Awda, the Right of Return Coalition, a national network that has strong committees in a few cities nationwide. Al-Awda plays an important national role because the vast majority of its leadership is progressive and left, and because the demand for the Right of Return for Palestinian refugees is an inherently anti-colonialist, anti-

imperialist demand. The work in Al-Awda marks the first time in over a decade that activists and organizers in the United States are talking about one, secular state in Palestine again.

Work in solidarity with Palestine has caught the attention of many anti-intervention activists, as well as Arab and Muslim immigrant communities, especially since much of the post-9-11 repression of these communities and their institutions has targeted organizations and individuals that support Palestinian rights. There's a great deal more potential.

Iraq

As threats of war on Iraq became more imminent, organization on the ground locally and nationally became decisive.

The anti-war movement began with massive protests as early as October 2002 - hundreds of thousands demonstrated around the U.S. Mostly local actions continued for months, culminating in the January 18, 2003 national demonstration in Washington, D.C., with as many as half a million people. February 15 was another red-letter day, with 11 million hitting the streets of cities and towns on every continent and in most countries of the world. Broad-ranging attacks here at home fueled the anti-war movement. While bombs were falling on Iraq, working class organizations across the U.S. were fighting state budget cuts that slashed the safety net and social programs. The official involvement of local labor unions in anti-war efforts was a positive development without precedent in 30 years. When the war began, so did many local campaigns of civil disobedience. The mobilizations included students, organized labor, Hollywood stars, leaders from communities of color, and activists who hadn't been involved since the Viet Nam war.

The student movement, while it has regained some steam in the last two years, is still weak. Students had difficulty building organization and maintaining momentum. Lack of experienced leadership and an emphasis on educational tactics both held the work back. The gains made are very important, but unlike the community-based anti-war movement, they couldn't be described as representing a lasting and qualitative change.

Disagreements about political line, mostly in the form of slogans, were evident from the beginning. Backwards slogans like "inspections not war" and "win without war" were counter-productive and pro-intervention. Many people opposed them, remembering the failure of the "sanctions not war" campaigns of 1990. The more dominant view called actions around slogans like "stop the war before it starts." This was a correct demand, but left the movement without enough direction once the shooting war began. Liberal forces were able to step in, gain influence, and take over leadership of some sections of the movement.

They insisted that "peace is patriotic" and "support our troops" must be upfront; the correct demand, "US out now," took a back seat at many local and some national mobilizations. Liberal forces frequently denounced the Iraqi government, failed to connect the war in Iraq to a broader imperialist agenda in the Middle East, and didn't explicitly support the struggle for the liberation of Palestine. Organizations that held these views actively worked to divide the movement and failed to give strong leadership once the war was underway.

Once Baghdad fell, protest numbers shrank significantly and media attention dropped off. When President Bush declared victory on May 1st, it was clear that the war wasn't over. Nonetheless, the movement lacked direction, and protesters were not prepared to stay in the streets. Activity continued at a very low level in most cities through summer and fall. Most student organizations didn't renew anti-war campaigns in fall 2003.

On October 25, 2003, the anti-war movement hit the streets again in full force. One hundred thousand marched in the streets of Washington, DC to call for an end to the occupation of Iraq. The demands were clear and directly responded to renewed fighting in Iraq. As more U.S. troops were coming home in body bags, military families began organizing against the war. Iraq is back on the front pages, and that has brought people back to the streets across the U.S. - local demonstrations on March 20, 2004, numbered 2 million across the globe. Recent Iraqi victories in Fallujah inspired emergency protests calling for an immediate withdrawal of U.S. occupation forces.

Latin America and Free Trade

Work in solidarity with Latin America is very important, and remains relatively independent of the larger anti-war movement. Key struggles include solidarity with the socialist revolution in Cuba, with the national democratic movement in Venezuela, and with the armed national liberation movement in Colombia. Each of these has caught the attention of local and national organizations, but there are few coordinated national campaigns. Campaigns to oppose the military aid to Colombia, Free the Miami Five, and Boycott Killer Coke have been taken up by university students and by organizations that have historically supported Latin American revolutionary movements. None of them have developed as broader social questions.

After the Battle in Seattle, and a few subsequent national and international protests, the movement against free trade lost much of its momentum. In recent years, the movement has begun being rebuilt at the local level, characterized by broad coalitions, increasing public awareness, and many disagreements among the bourgeois politicians. In November, thousands mobilized in Miami to protest a meeting of the Free Trade Area of the Americas agreement. On the ground in Miami, local leadership was largely made up of oppressed nationality workers - African Americans from the Miami Workers Center and Mexican migrant workers from the Coalition of Immokalee Workers. Nationally, trade unions, including the Steelworkers and SEIU, brought workers from across the country to the protests. Extreme repression by Miami police, funded by millions of federal dollars, reflected how important the trade agreement is to the Bush Administration. In addition to the protests in Miami, local solidarity actions were organized in cities across the country.

The Bush Administration has failed to push forward much of its international economic agenda. A key example is the opposition to the Central American Free Trade Agreement, which has come from all sides. Even the Democratic Party has lined up against the treaty, seeing it as a way to win support from labor while risking nothing in terms of the upcoming presidential elections. Local organizers in the U.S. have been inspired by strong opposition in Central America. With rising pressure, it is possible that CAFTA may be the first trade agreement to be defeated in a Congressional vote.

These two sections of the anti-intervention movement - that against war in Iraq, and that in solidarity with Latin America - came together in response to

the March 2004 invasion of Haiti and the arrest of democratically-elected President Aristide. Emergency demonstrations were organized across the U.S. to demand that U.S. troops leave Haiti, and that Aristide be restored to power. ANSWER issued a national call for protests by the anti-war movement, while other protests were organized locally by Latin America solidarity activists. It is unlikely that the response would have been as strong from either part of the movement if not for last year's massive anti-war mobilizations.

Conclusion

The U.S. anti-intervention movement is in a new historic period - its strongest in decades. Anti-war sentiments have reached into every sector of society, and hundreds of thousands have taken to the streets. As the people of the world resist U.S. domination - from Fallujah, Iraq, to San Vicente del Caguan, Colombia, from Jenin, Palestine, to Caracas, Venezuela - we will be called on again and again to take to the streets.

This movement has shown incredible potential to rise to the tasks at hand. All we need is strong leadership.

Our movement needs to consolidate the new mass leaders who have come forward since September 2001. We need to continue building national coalitions that can bring large numbers of people into the streets under sharp slogans that are consistently anti-imperialist and pro-self-determination. If we do that, we will stand proudly beside the world's peoples, counting the victories against U.S. imperialism.

Oppressed Nationalities in the United States

Introduction

Since the last Congress, a number of major developments have affected oppressed nationalities in the United States (principally African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, Arab Americans, Native Americans, and Pacific Islanders). The three main developments discussed in this introduction are the

Bush Administration's "War on Terrorism," the recession that began in 2001, and the growth of the Latino population.

After September 2001, the Bush Administration unleashed its "War on Terror" on two fronts. Internationally, the United States installed a puppet regime in Afghanistan and then invaded and occupied Iraq. Domestically, the Bush Administration led an attack on civil liberties in the name of "Homeland Defense." The principal targets in the United States were oppressed nationalities, in particular Arab Americans and Muslim Americans who faced imprisonment, deportation, special registration, loss of jobs, harassment, and murder by the government and racists in the United States. South Asians, in particular Sikhs and Filipinos, were also attacked by racists and through the firing of non-citizen airport screeners.

In March 2001, a recession officially began in the United States. Oppressed nationalities were hardest hit. The official unemployment rate for African Americans, which is twice that of whites, hit double-digits. The loss of jobs also led to the loss of health insurance benefits. At 30%, Latinos have the highest rate of losing health insurance. That is more than three times the rate for whites. Oppressed nationalities were also hardest-hit by the cutbacks in education, health care, welfare, and other social services, both as recipients of the services and as government and nonprofit employees.

Finally, the faster rate of growth of the Latino population owing to immigration led it to surpass the African American population. This highlights the strategic importance of Latinos in general and the Chicano nation in particular, on account of its growing size, importance in the working class, and its ties with growing national liberation struggles in Latin American countries.

Class Forces

The comprador bourgeoisie of the national movements, represented by Secretary of State Colin Powell, have joined the monopoly capitalist class' "war on terrorism" at home and abroad.

The national bourgeoisie has been marginalized by both parties of the monopoly capitalists, with both Democratic and Republican candidates

skipping the NAACP convention. In general, the national bourgeoisie has not stood up to the right. Those who do try to stand up to the right and question the "war on terrorism" are severely punished, as with the defeat of Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney, who angered the ruling class and the Zionists.

The petty bourgeoisie of the national movements, along with much of the national bourgeoisie, rallied to turn back two attacks on affirmative action at the University of Michigan and in California Proposition 54. However, in electoral politics, there is a growing tendency to just promote one's own ethnic group, as seen in situations such as the Los Angeles mayor's race, in which the black national and petty bourgeoisie mainly endorsed a white liberal who promised political appointments instead of forging a black-brown alliance to elect a progressive Chicano. Redistricting has also led to tension among the petty bourgeoisie from Asian American and Latino communities in California, as elected officials try to concentrate their ethnic base while dispersing others. In general the petty bourgeoisie sees using elections and the courts as the main arena of struggle.

The working class masses of the oppressed nationalities, along with the most progressive sectors of the petty bourgeoisie, have struggled against attacks on their communities, but the struggles have mainly been localized and/or limited to a single nationality. Some examples of this were the Latino Economic Boycott in California to oppose the repeal of drivers' licenses, the uprising by the African American community in Benton Harbor, Michigan, the mass involvement of Arab Americans in anti-war protests, and the struggle of Filipino airline screeners for their jobs.

Chicano/Latino Section

Background

The number of Latinos in the U.S. will be over 40 million by 2010. Latinos are reproducing at a faster rate than the white or Black populations, and are, on the average, younger. By 2010 they will be the largest "minority" group in the country. The Chicano/Latino people have a long history of resistance dating back to the fight against Spanish colonization of the indigenous

nations and to the struggles for independence from Spain and the other European colonial powers. In the 1800s, the resistance continued against U.S. domination. The U.S. war of annexation of Mexican national territory gave rise to the development of the Chicano nation in the Southwestern U.S. (Aztlán). Resistance also confronted the U.S. in the Spanish-American war, where the U.S. took political and economic control of Puerto Rico, Cuba and the Philippines. In the current historical period of the decline of imperialism, national oppression has intensified with the continued denial of political and economic power, including land, cultural and language rights, and self-determination for the Chicano nation within the U.S., along with the denial of full equality for all Latino peoples.

Facts and Conditions

The Chicano/Latino community in the U.S. is diverse, with the majority being either Mexican or Chicano. In addition to a high birth rate, the community is also growing very fast due to an increase in immigration. Significant immigration took place from Mexico, the Caribbean, Central and South America since World War II, especially rising since the 1960's. Mass immigration intensified into the 1980's caused by U.S. foreign economic and political intervention, which brought misery, repression and revolutionary wars. The Latino growth has been concentrated in the largest urban areas. New York is over 30 percent Latino with Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Colombians and Central Americans being the largest groups. Los Angeles and Miami are more than 50% Latino. The four most populous states - California, New York, Texas and Florida - contain more than 60 percent of the Latinos in the U.S.

This major demographic transformation of the racial make-up of the U.S. has challenged the narrow European outlook of identity, culture, history and language. It is challenging the power structure and institutions of the U.S., which have responded with repression.

While a small petit bourgeoisie or middle class has emerged, the majority of Chicanos/Latinos continue to suffer an increase in racism and exploitation. The community faces an increased use of hard drugs, police murders and brutality, incarceration of youth, high prison populations, inferior housing and educational conditions, bad working conditions, underemployment, low-

paying non-union jobs, lack of health care and insurance, and over 10 million undocumented immigrants unable to vote or fully participate in society.

The War on Iraq and Conditions after 9-11

The twin tower attacks and the new so-called war on terror has brought an increase in discrimination against Chicanos/Latinos and immigrants in the form of arrests, firings and deportations. Other hits include widespread acceptance of racial profiling, an increase in hate crimes, and more border deaths at the hands of vigilantes.

Latino casualties in Iraq are high, especially from California. Jose Gutierrez, the Marine killed in Iraq, was from Guatemala; he had fled a repressive U.S.-supported regime that massacred over 200,000 people. The U.S. military targets poor Latino youth for recruitment, to be used as cannon fodder on the front lines of imperialist wars.

How War Affects La Raza and Education

School conditions for Chicanos and Latinos are bad. Schools are overcrowded and dirty. Resources for teachers and students are increasingly scarce. Budget cuts at community colleges and public universities have meant decreased access for Chicano and Latino students because of under-funded outreach efforts, increased tuition, and cuts in the quality of education. This has forced Latino youths into high drop-out rates and low-paid jobs. Meanwhile, Armed Services recruiters are targeting Latinos in poor communities. The U.S. Army wants to increase Latino enrollment to 27%. Latinos make up high percentages of dangerous jobs in the military, such as gunnery & infantry: Marines 20%, Army 25%. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 provides the Department of Defense with young people's names for easier recruitment.

Movements on the Rise

Anti-war activism was organized on a larger scale by Latinos than in the past, especially in California. The anti-war efforts were linked to the demands and conditions of Chicanos/Latinos, especially in relation to education and the targeting for military recruitment of young Latinos in the barrios. Major

united front marches, teach-ins and rallies were organized. Latinos also supported the major protests initiated by ANSWER. The Chicano student movement (MECHA) has grown stronger, especially in California. Students continue to fight for education, college admissions, Chicano Studies, for immigrant rights and against racism and war.

Immigrant rights struggles for legalization, equal rights and workers' rights were on the rise, but took a brief downturn after 9-11. In late 2003, the movement refocused and re-emerged as a potent force with the fight for licenses in California and a broad legalization program nationwide. The success of California AB 540 - college tuition for non-residents, and the fight for the federal Dream Act - residency for immigrant students, as well as other progressive immigrant rights legislation, along with immigrant worker struggles, will see an increased activity in this movement.

Struggles for unionization and better wages and health benefits have increased among Chicanos/Mexicans, with more rank-and-file participation in unions. The new generation of Chicano labor leaders is more progressive and pushes organizing and immigrant rights work, along with leading many successful electoral campaigns.

Electoral Work and Legislative Reform

There has been arising a new generation of Latino elected officials who are more activist- and liberal-oriented but still within the Democratic Party. They push for better education and living conditions but sometimes compromise, and are influenced by corporate business interest.

The left trend is represented by various local Chicano organizations with revolutionary views. They do agitation, education, and mobilizations in the Chicano/Mexican barrios, either calling for an independent Chicano nation or reunification with Mexico.

Liberal social service and advocacy organizations have grown and begun to take on local organizing efforts, yet do not challenge U.S. war policy or political and corporate power structures.

Cultural work among youth and women has taken a new and independent form. New collectives of young people and women have developed or expanded on the new arts forms of spoken word and performance art. While not doing direct organizing, they have linked this to support for the struggle in Chiapas, Mexico, and other indigenous struggles.

A political trend that can be characterized as Chicano indigenismo has grown in the last 20 years, primarily among college youth with the reaffirmation of the indigenous history, culture and traditions. They have linked and identified with the Zapatista struggle for self-determination in the primary rural peasant agricultural life, sometimes romanticizing this struggle and trying to apply it to the urban industrial life of the large barrios in the Southwest.

African Americans

For the African American people, life in the United States, 2004 is not about living the 'American dream' - it's about being trapped in an American nightmare. Persistent poverty, exploitative work conditions, high unemployment rates, incarceration, systematic police violence, together with the lack of political power underscores a simple fact - monopoly capitalism blocks the road to full equality and liberation. National oppression - the systematic economic, political and social inequality, pushed upon the African American people is intensifying.

Demographic Information

African Americans today number 36 million people, 13% of the United States' population. Over 50% of African Americans still live in the South, where slavery flourished for most of America's history. Thirty-three percent are under the age of 19, and the likelihood of their being in poverty for at least one year throughout their lives is 91%. The average lifespan for all Americans is 77; for African Americans it is 65. Among African American families, only 29% are headed by traditional two-parent households. These socioeconomic realities directly impact the world view of African Americans and how they regard the United States of America.

African American Labor

In 2002, African American workers were 13.9% of the United States workforce, accounting for 5.9 million people. Women made up 7.6% while men made up 6.3%. There were more African American women working rather than men in the U.S. This fact is startling, considering the fact that among every other national and ethnic group, more men work than women. The causes are several. They include: the high incarceration rate of Black men, an increase in post-high school education enrollment rates for young Black men, employer racism, and the changing nature of the American economy.

The decline of manufacturing jobs particularly disadvantages African American young men. Historically, African Americans have been the "last hired, first fired." This has been borne out in the cyclical economic crises of capitalism. The recent recessions of 1982, 1992 and 2000 statistically show higher rates of unemployment and lower rates of reintegration of African Americans into the workforce. The lack of manufacturing jobs following an economic downturn impacts entry-level positions because there is higher competition for these jobs, which then translates into higher unemployment for Black men, especially teenagers and young adults with fewer skills. Hence, it is understandable that in 2003 less than 52% of working-age Black men in New York City were employed. From 1979 to 2000, the employment rate for African American men aged 16 to 24 decreased 17% nationally.

Service sector employment has grown to be larger than manufacturing employment in the United States, and today represents the largest single category of workers. Unfortunately for African American men, most employers perceive that they do not have the "soft" skills to work in the service sector (1). In addition, service sector occupations such as nursing and hospitality are filled predominantly by women. These occupations have grown in size throughout the 1990s, creating more opportunity for Black women.

The African American family has fewer than 30% of households with both mother and father. As a result many families are headed by single women. In 1996, President Clinton placed lifetime limits on welfare and required women to work in order to qualify for benefits. Black, Chicano/Latino, other oppressed nationality, and POOR white women faced dramatic changes with the enactment of so-called welfare reform. As a result of this attack, many

women were coerced into low-paying jobs in order to stay on public assistance. Consequently, Black women continue to face the triple burden of national oppression, oppression as women, and class exploitation. Many Black men, on the other hand, disproportionately find themselves in the reserve army of labor and are driven to find work outside the regular market economy.

African Americans represent the largest group of people in the prison system (about 43%). This is true despite the fact that they are still a minority of all people in the United States. It should be noted that many African American and other oppressed nationality prisoners are in fact wrongly convicted - having never committed the crimes for which they were convicted. Blacks are not only overrepresented at the local, state, and federal jails - but also on death row. Mumia Abu Jamal, who has spent 17 years on death row, continues to be a powerful voice against the racism of the American injustice system. His case is that of purely political persecution for his involvement in the MOVE organization, a Black Liberation Movement group.

African Americans participated in the drug trade to no greater extent than white Americans. Nonetheless, the "war on drugs" is in fact a war on African Americans. The racist enforcement of prison time by mandatory minimums, such as California's Three Strikes Law, swelled the number of Blacks in prison through the 1990s. This factor also contributes to the lower labor force participation but is usually excluded, despite the fact that people with criminal records are even less likely to be hired. Blacks and others working in the prisons are paid less than minimum wage. Today, slavery exists in America's prisons.

Community Under Siege: National Oppression Impacts Black Families

North and south, the African American community is a community under siege. In the urban areas, police terror by killings and beatings has reached epidemic proportions. This has been met by powerful mobilizations in the Black communities of Cincinnati, Benton Harbor, New York City, and numerous other cities. The housing crisis, which is impacting all poor and working class people, has fallen disproportionately on African Americans.

Among African American families, only 29% are headed by traditional two-parent households. In cities across the country, urban "development strategy" means that mainly white developers, city officials, and banks gentrify or demolish African American residential areas.

Any crisis that one can think of, be it health care, housing or transportation, is hitting the Black community harder.

The same applies in the rural areas - especially those in the South. Over 50% of African Americans still live in the South, where slavery flourished for most of America's history. A related point is the process of Black farmers, who are overwhelmingly concentrated in the South, being systematically and continually disposed of their land, a trend which is accelerated by the discrimination by banks and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Black Culture

Taken as a whole, African American culture has democratic and progressive content, and African Americans historically have played a leading role in American culture. This is most visibly the case in literature, the arts, dance and music. The evolution of jazz, soul, rhythm and blues, and rap into hip hop illustrates the continuing dynamism of Black culture and the leading role it continues to play in American culture.

Today, hip hop reflects what is on the mind of Black youth, but it also has a much broader appeal and influence. Youth of all nationalities in North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe, Asia and Africa have adopted hip hop culture and styles as their own, blending it with their own cultures.

African American newspapers, magazines and websites, radio and television, recording studios and labels, theater groups and cultural institutions, schools and colleges continue to amplify the African American national consciousness and identity.

In recent years, the South has become more of a center for Black culture. This has coincided with a 'reverse migration' of Black people moving back

to the South. It is significant that the South is playing an increasingly important role in African American culture.

The Electoral System

There is no consistent democracy in the U.S. today, and this intersects with the issues of elections and political power. The events surrounding the presidential race in Florida, particularly the widespread disenfranchisement of African American voters, are the tip of the iceberg. From Texas to the Carolinas, there are ongoing court challenges to voting rights, particularly concerning redistricting. In the U.S. in general and the South in particular, electoral districts often dilute the strength of African American voters. In addition, there are a host of practices ranging from voter intimidation to felon disenfranchisement to bureaucratic barriers that further limit the participation of Black voters.

African Americans are the second largest voting group in America, influencing the selection of the Democratic Party's candidate ever since the 1970s. Since President Kennedy was elected in 1960, African Americans have consistently voted and registered Democratic. In recent years, more African Americans have become independents or third party but still vote Democratic.

Republicans routinely write-off the Black electorate and openly use racism in their campaigns to energize their white electoral base. In 1988, George Bush Sr. used Willie Horton against Michael Dukakis. In 1994, Pete Wilson used undocumented immigrants against Kathleen Brown. In 2000, Al Gore received 90% of the Black vote (higher than Bill Clinton who received 86%). Only through the undemocratic Florida suppression of the Black vote did George W. Bush Jr. come into office after the Supreme Court judicial coup selected him.

Black female elected officials have made significant contributions in the last four years. Congresswoman Maxine Waters, a former garment worker representing South Central Los Angeles, is a staunch Democrat representing the basic interests of her constituency, including rallying around President Clinton during his botched impeachment hearings. Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney weathered a firestorm for questioning President Bush's ability to

handle the 9-11 situation. Congresswoman Barbara Lee took a strong stand against the Iraq war. Carol Moseley Braun, former Senator from Illinois, is the first Black woman to run for President.

Among African American male politicians, their impact on the national stage has been waning. Rev. Jesse Jackson faced scandal for adultery and has retreated from public life. Rev. Al Sharpton articulated the Black experience in this year's election campaign, yet moved few to support him as the African American block voted for Senator John Kerry instead. With regard to Kerry, he is someone who could win the White House, but most importantly, he is not Bush. Most African Americans know little about him, however, they do know a lot about Bush.

In 2004, African American artists have become more interested in politics. Russell Simmons of Def Jam Records is pushing a Hip Hop rock-the-vote style message to defeat George Bush. He and other artists are encouraging voter registration and get-out-the-vote mobilizations in order to "fight the powers that be."

Blacks and the Military

Many African Americans have looked at the military as a means to acquire job skills and as a career. Most Blacks see themselves serving for one or two tours of duty and then leaving to pursue civilian life and go on to college. In Iraq today, there are many who would rather be in the United States going to school instead of fighting in the war. However, the lack of other job prospects and the determined recruitment of high school seniors in oppressed nationality communities have brought a "willing," and financially-coerced peacetime soldier.

Since America's defeat in Viet Nam, the military has resisted drafting young men. This view comes from the experience of officers being killed by drafted soldiers, desertions, and psychological casualties that made fighting the Vietnamese more difficult. The military has learned and seeks to maintain a professional army because of these factors.

Less than 50% of African American men graduate high school. Many are presented with military recruitment instead of college as their first real life

experience. Veterans of military service experience many broken promises in terms of their health benefits, retirement income and social standing after service, even though they do the hard dirty work of U.S. imperialism and risk their lives in the process. Many homeless men are former veterans. As such, military service is not a promise to a higher quality of life; it is only an opportunity to serve (blindly) an imperial power content to exploit other nation's resources.

Conclusion

African Americans are an oppressed nation inside the United States with a homeland in the Black Belt South. Under President George W. Bush, Blacks have fared even worse. Discrimination and national oppression is the root cause of African American underemployment, unemployment and low labor force participation. Despite the rapid economic growth under President Clinton's second term, African Americans were left out of the "tech bubble".

Today most African American leaders remain inadequate in organizing the people to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination. As African Americans continue to fill the prisons, leave the schools, and receive less for their labor, we must begin to ask ourselves an important question...

Frederick Douglass once said in a speech July 4, 1852, "What to the American slave is your Fourth of July I answer, a day that reveals to him more than all other days of the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim." Slavery is now only legal in the American prison system today. African Americans still must answer what America means to them, and instead of giving their lives for the benefit of the few, to stand with the people of the world to share in its wealth equally.

(1) An important battle around the service sector of the economy took place in Inglewood, California, when a predominantly African American and Latino community rejected, in 2004, Wal-Mart's attempt to build a superstore the size of 17 football fields in its city center. After failing to pass through the city council, the world's largest corporation gathered signatures to be placed on the ballot. The electoral battle focused on Wal-Mart's desire to enter the second largest economic market in the United States. It attempted to bypass environmental regulations and the bureaucratic barriers. Fortunately, there

was strong organizing and labor/community opposition to a corporation determined to drive out large businesses such as Albertsons and Safeway, which are union, and small businesses as well. The result would be lower wage jobs than those already present and a higher concentration of capital. The African American citizens of Inglewood rejected Wal-mart, realizing that it was detrimental to their community's economic interest.

Asian Americans

Asian Americans are the fastest-growing oppressed nationality in percentage terms, but are still much smaller than Latinos and African Americans (about 12 million Asian Americans vs. more than 36 million Latinos and 36 million African Americans). The two highest concentrations of Asian Americans are in Hawaii and the San Francisco/Oakland/San Jose Bay Area, where Asian Americans are the second largest racial group (after whites) in the five largest counties.

The largest Asian American nationalities are Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Vietnamese, Korean, and Japanese (from largest to smallest), who together make up almost 90% of the Asian American population. While all Asian American nationalities (except for Japanese Americans) are a majority immigrant, with different languages and fairly distinct communities, there is growing interaction as seen in intermarriages and professional organizations.

Because of the selective immigration of many college-educated Asians, Asian Americans have a larger petty bourgeoisie than other oppressed nationalities, and higher average family incomes. At the same time, most Asian Americans are working-class, and there is a higher rate of poverty among Asians than whites.

In addition to the attacks following 9-11 on Asian American Muslims, Sikhs, and Filipinos, the monopoly capitalists are also targeting Chinese Americans as economic tensions with China rise. There is a growing tendency to blame China (and India) for the loss of jobs in the United States, when in fact it is U.S. corporations who are moving jobs to wherever they can find the cheapest labor. Because India and China have also had struggles with Islamic fundamentalists, these economic tensions have been somewhat blunted by

some common ground in the "war on terror." Nonetheless, economic tensions are only likely to worsen as the Chinese and Indian economies grow, and the United States job market continues to stagnate.

Asian Americans are struggling against the impact of the "war on terrorism" by defending the jobs of Filipino immigrant airport screeners and opposing the deportation of Cambodians and other Southeast Asians because of the government's general crackdown on immigrants. Patriotic forces are leading efforts to publicize the need for unification of the Korean peninsula and are supporting the struggles of the Philippine masses against the pro-U.S. government. Progressive Asian Americans have joined the anti-war movement, raising the link to national liberation movements in Asia and the fight to defend immigrants' rights at home.

The Asian American national movements tend to be dominated by the petty bourgeoisie, which has strong nationalist and reformist tendencies. There is a larger business sector than with other oppressed nationalities and a very large professional sector (engineers, lawyers, doctors, nurses, accountants, etc.). Much of the more progressive petty bourgeoisie is based in social service agencies. There is also a very high number of ex-Marxist-Leninist forces among the Chinese, Filipino, and Japanese communities, as well as revolutionary patriotic forces among Indians, Filipinos, and Koreans, who identify with the national liberation and mass struggles in their countries of origin. There are a number of nationality-based workers centers.

Arab Americans

There are approximately 3.5 million Arab Americans in the U.S., although the 2002 census claims only 1.5 million. They live in all 50 states, but two-thirds reside in 10 states; one-third of the total live in California, New York, and Michigan. About 94% live in metropolitan areas. Los Angeles, Detroit, New York/NJ, Chicago and Washington, D.C. are the top five metro areas of Arab American concentration.

Lebanese Americans constitute a greater part of the total number of Arab Americans residing in most states, except New Jersey, where Egyptian Americans are the largest Arab group. Americans of Syrian descent make up

the majority of Arab Americans in Rhode Island, while the largest Palestinian population is in Illinois, and the Iraqi and Assyrian/Chaldean communities are concentrated in Illinois, Michigan, and California.

Arab Americans with at least a high school diploma number 85 percent. More than four out of ten Americans of Arab decent have a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 24% of Americans at large. Seventeen percent of Arab Americans have a post-graduate degree, which is nearly twice the American average (9%).

Similar to the national average, about 64 percent of Arab American adults are in the labor force, with 5 percent unemployed. Seventy-three percent of working Arab Americans are employed in managerial, professional, technical, sales or administrative fields. Nearly half as many Americans of Arab decent are employed in service jobs (12%) in relation to Americans overall (27%). Most Arab Americans work in the private sector (88 %), while 12 percent are government employees.

Median income for Arab American households in 1999 was \$47,000, compared with \$42,000 for all households in the United States. Close to 30% of Americans of Arab heritage have an annual household income of more than \$75,000, while 22% of all Americans reported the same level of income. Mean income measured at 8% higher than that national average of \$56,644.

The high numbers for income and education must be considered in the context of the fact that the Syrians and Lebanese, especially, have been here since the turn of the century. In the more metropolitan and inner city areas, many Arabs are living under the poverty level. More recent immigrants from the Gulf, especially Iraq and Yemen, Palestine, Morocco, Jordan, and Egypt, are predominantly working-class and work either in the service sector or as small-business owners in Arab, Black, and Latino communities. Victims of racism themselves (which makes it difficult to secure bank loans large enough to start businesses in middle-class communities), and competing for markets with other oppressed nationality groups, these Arabs often economically exploit the Black and Latino communities where they establish their businesses, which causes major social tension.

The post 9-11 "War on Terrorism" has greatly affected Arab Americans and Arab immigrants in the U.S. Although the discourse of an increase of Islamic fundamentalism has dominated the "security" concerns of the capitalist class, the repression and criminalization of Arabs and Muslims has mostly targeted mosques, community-based organizations, and humanitarian aid formations that support the rights of Palestinian and Iraqi self-determination. Many individual organizers and activists have been detained, some under "secret evidence" provisions, and deported. Also, both the PATRIOT Act and the policy of "special registration" have caused the detentions and deportations of tens of thousands of Arabs (who were only guilty of minor, technical violations of immigration law), as well as massive restrictions on immigration from Arab countries. To justify its "War on Terrorism," specifically the invasion and occupation of Iraq, and the support of the Israeli occupation of Palestine, the U.S. government needs an "enemy face" to present to the American public. These faces are mostly of Arabs and Muslims, but also of undocumented Filipinos, Mexicans, and others.

In April of 2002, tens of thousands of Arabs, Palestinians, and Muslims marched against U.S. war policy and in support of Palestinian self-determination, in the largest mobilization of these communities in the history of this country. This demonstration became a watershed moment, challenging the rightist, liberal, reformist, and pacifist tendencies of the anti-war movement that refused to acknowledge the connection between the "War on Terrorism" and the Israeli occupation of Palestine. The liberal and pacifist tendencies within the anti-war movement have continued to resist and struggle against the anti-imperialist segments of the anti-war movement on the question of Israeli occupation, owing to confusion, national chauvinism, or ties to the Democratic Party. Segments of the Arab American petit bourgeoisie have failed to speak out about the war on terrorism for fear of repercussions.

The leadership from the Arab American national movements in the anti-war and Palestine solidarity movement comes mostly from the Islamic forces and the left, which have formed alliances in some cities. The bourgeois and petty bourgeois forces have assimilated into mainstream political lobbying formations (such as the ADC, the AAI, and Arab Democratic and Republican

clubs), or nationalist formations. The more progressive petty bourgeois are based in social service or advocacy agencies.

Native Americans, Alaskan Natives

Background

According to the 2000 census, Native Americans make up 1.5% of the U.S. population, with a count of 4.1 million. Forty three percent of Native Americans live in the West. The highest regions of concentration are northern and western Alaska, the 'four corners' region in the Southwest, central and western South Dakota and eastern Oklahoma. Sixty six percent of Native Americans live in urban areas (up from 45% in 1970). The largest tribes, in descending order, are Cherokee, Navajo, Latin American Indian, Choctaw, Sioux, Chippewa, Apache, Blackfeet, Iroquois and Pueblo. An average of 24.5% of Native Americans lived in poverty between 1999 and 2001, compared to about 10% for the U.S. population as a whole.

Throughout the genocide of Native Americans, the Europeans and the U.S. took great pains to wipe out Indian language, culture and economic life. Today, Native Americans are less than 2% of the U.S. population, and that number grows even smaller when you look at individual Indian nations or peoples. These small numbers can have the effect of skewing the influence of various movements and individuals, for better or for worse. Because of the history of extreme repression (genocide) and very sharp resistance, the Native national movement has a political impact beyond the numbers.

Most struggles are local, although some of these local battles have gained national followings. Common areas of contention in the rural areas include hunting and fishing (treaty) rights, land reclamation (for reservations), protecting and preserving sacred sites, stopping murderous reactionaries, fighting against racist mascots and geographical names, mineral rights and gaming rights. There are also pitched battles against (or for) corrupt reservation officials.

Many of the reservation leaderships are in fact tools of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). They sell natural resources at bargain prices (water, minerals,

timber) in exchange for government backing. The BIA has essentially erected a system of neo-colonial regimes.

Current national (and often urban) issues include fighting against racist mascots, preserving certain sacred sites, and gaming. There are battles (by lawyers, native and not) fought in Washington D.C. over the corruption and problems in the BIA. There is also a trend to link struggles of Native Americans in the U.S. with indigenous peoples in Canada and Central/South America.

In the past few decades, almost all of the forces in the Native American movements have been essentially nationalist-led: fighting for sovereignty vis-à-vis the U.S. government. No clear Marxist tendencies have developed. It should be noted that many of the national forces have uneven reputations amongst the people. Charges and counter-charges of corruption and complicity with government agents are widespread, and far more pervasive than the other national movements.

It should also be noted that many Native struggles in the past - and even the recent past - have involved armed uprisings and other organized militant struggles, such as hostage-taking and government building occupations.

There has been a resurgence of celebrating native culture in the past 30 years. This started happening after the militant struggles for sovereignty in the 1970s. Examples include pow-wows, cultural/spiritual-based approaches to social problems, and fixing how indigenous peoples are presented in schools. Most of the conscious forces in the petty bourgeoisie put their energies into the social service sector.

Gaming

Most reservations had almost no economic life before gaming, other than perhaps leasing land to white farmers, ranchers and loggers and selling mineral rights (in the four corners area). Casinos on reservations can provide an economic 'hub' where none existed before. This could be construed as good for cohesion of the people. However, most reservations and peoples benefit little or not at all from gaming, and the people are often shut out of direct economic benefit. Obviously, any big business is crooked (gaming

especially!), and casinos are in bed with sectors of the white bourgeoisie. On the other hand, white reactionaries are dying to take exclusive casinos away from Indians, and this should be resisted.

The Working Class

Attacks on the Working Class

The working class has been under increasing attack in the last period. Unemployment remains high - 9.9 million jobless - and the number of unemployed running out of benefits is at an all-time high. Given high unemployment, capitalists are squeezing workers, continuing "lean production" methods, cutting jobs and driving down wages. Unemployment is already higher and wages lower for Blacks and Latino's. From union workers, who have had the best wages and working conditions, the bosses are demanding cuts in health care plans and pensions. The masters of Detroit, the automobile companies, are bent on de-unionizing the industry that was central to the greatest advance in the class struggle in U.S. history: the industrial unionizing that took place in the 1930's.

The attacks have been felt particularly severe among the lower sectors of the working class. States experienced shortfalls of \$200 billion for the last fiscal year, and going into 2004, 41 states are looking at a total shortfall of \$78.4 billion. State budget crises have resulted in massive attacks on the social safety net and on poor and low income people. At the same time as massive budget cuts and increasing poverty and unemployment, lifetime limits for welfare have hit states across the country, throwing entire families off welfare for the remainder of their lives. In 2002, 43.6 million Americans lacked health insurance, a 2 million increase since 2001. Emergency shelter and food assistance use has increased 13-17%. New York City has more people homeless (over 39,000 a night) than at any time since accurate records started in the late 1970's. Thousands of elderly or disabled refugees and immigrants are set to lose Supplemental Security Income (SSI) in early 2004, due to provisions in the 1996 welfare law.

Of course, in this racist system, the ongoing economic crisis is falling disproportionately on oppressed nationality workers: African Americans,

Chicanos, Mexicanos, Puerto Ricans and other Latinos, Asians and Pacific Islanders. The industrial cities of the "Rust Belt," had been where millions of African Americans and Latinos in past generations had made advances, through unionization and struggles for equality. The industrial areas have been the hardest hit by Bush's economic crisis, and the companies in manufacturing, autos, and high tech equipment are where African Americans and Latinos have been heavily concentrated.

For 40 years, the general crisis of imperialism has driven U.S. imperialism to rely more and more on the South and Southwest of the U.S. The reason for this is that these are the historic homes of the oppressed African American and Chicano nations. Light manufacturing and the high tech industry have transferred to the South and Southwest and are employing Black and Latino labor in low wage non-union jobs. Black and Chicano and Méxicano workers face more repressive laws, have fewer unions, fewer rights, and are paid less than the rest of the U.S.

Because of this set of objective conditions, all workers have to take up the struggle against discrimination as a part of the trade union struggle. This is not the task of oppressed nationality workers alone and is essential to multi-national unity.

Recent Battles of the Working Class

In the recent period, the working class has been on the defensive, engaging in sporadic and limited battles against a sharpened employer onslaught.

The period of capitalist recession, beginning in 2001, has seen a lower level of class struggle than the prior period. In the mid to late 1990s, a tighter labor market and some fighting leadership, especially in Teamsters and local leaders in the UAW, led to a resurgence of strikes against such major companies as Northwest Airlines, General Motors, and United Parcel Service. With the current economic crisis, the number of strikes has been at an all-time low.

Industrial workers have been especially weakened by the 2.3 million jobs they have lost in this recession. The continuing effect of Clinton's North

American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and other trade agreements has seen manufacturing jobs under increased pressure.

In addition, the ruling class is on an offensive against public employees. Private sector unionization is at the lowest point in over a century - only 8.2%, half the number it was in 1982. The public sector has a higher percentage of unionized workers, and corporate America wants to end that. Federal employees are likewise under attack, with moves to privatize 800,000 jobs and to bust the unions for Federal workers.

The airline industry has lost 100,000 jobs and the higher paid sector at the major airlines has been undercut by a fundamental realignment towards low wage airlines, pushed forward by the economic recession and downturn in travel. Billions of dollars have been transferred to management in the form of concessions, and even with the concessions one or more of the higher wage airlines may go under. The race to the bottom in this industry compares to the busting of the manufacturing unions in the 1980s.

A Time of Choices

The labor officials have had a basic choice to make in response to these employer tactics- the main response has been capitulation.

In sector after sector, unions continue to respond to the economic crisis with concessions, including in auto, airlines, and the public sector. They have not even attempted to fight back, or where they do have offered limited fights. Public sector workers have been under intensified attacks in recent years. Despite an often greater ability to fight back due to the political nature of their employment, public employees, with notable exceptions, have responded with a deafening silence. In state after state, rather than fight back against privatization, massive shifts in health care costs, and wage freezes, AFSCME and other unions have chosen to lie low.

In negotiating health care costs, most unions are taking the hit, resulting in workers shouldering thousands of dollar deductibles. This has represented a massive and fundamental shift in the negotiated benefit structures. For the most part, the labor movement has chosen to accept these cost shifts rather than stand up and fight. The grocery workers' strike in California represents a

rare example of a union standing up to a particularly sharp attack on their benefits.

Some unions, notably the UAW, have sold out their members in a big way. The latest UAW contract with the Big 3 enshrines a three tier wage system. Instead of fostering solidarity between workers, tiers of wages mean older workers betrayal of their newer brothers and sisters. In addition, the UAW has made a trade-off with the parts supplier companies. Companies like MetalDyne will allow the UAW to represent workers in their factories, while the union agrees to a contract where those workers will take a \$10 an hour pay cut.

The recession and attacks on the safety net have led to more instability in the urban poor sector, due to losing welfare benefits, child care or health care, increasing evictions, homelessness, and the loss of phones and transportation. But people are very angry and the level of awareness of the attacks is high because so many are affected. The willingness to fight seems to be high as well. Those engaged in the fight become quickly radicalized in the class struggle. However, the level of struggle around welfare has been at a very low level on a national scale or even from state to state, except in the few areas where there are conscious elements leading the work. Where there are conscious forces there can be sharp battles.

Sporadic Fight Backs

Despite the overall trend towards capitulation, there are notable pockets of resistance in the last period. Workers are frustrated, and in some places, important struggles have broken out. The West Coast longshore workers took on the employer's alliance, Wal-Mart, and the Bush administration in fighting a defensive battle to preserve jobs. Transit workers in LA went on strike for several weeks with limited gains, and the reform leadership of the New York transit workers local took on Mayor Bloomberg in a high-profile battle. In Inglewood California, unions and non-unionized oppressed nationality workers took on a campaign against Wal-Mart building a superstore, and won.

Noteworthy also is the explosive struggle of the longshore workers of Charleston, South Carolina. In January 2000, 600 riot police attacked several

hundred picketing members of the International Longshoremen's Association. These workers, mostly Black, were up against the racist, anti-union political system, as well as scab shipping companies. The support movement that unfolded for the Charleston 5 was the key to beating back the state's charges of rioting. Both the militant fight of the workers and the immense support they solicited showed the desire of workers to fight back against the capitalists and against racist national oppression.

In the more recent period, several important struggles took place at universities, in part because these employers were not able, either politically or legally, to use the threat of permanent replacements to quash the idea of a strike. At Yale University, HERE locals, with the backing of the International Union, waged a two year war against Yale University, combining a mixture of community support, intermittent strikes and corporate campaigns to force management to reach an agreement. At the University of Minnesota, militant clerical union leadership took a stand against public employee bashing and health care cuts in striking for several weeks in fall 2003.

A major battle over the future of health care benefits took place in California this past winter. Some 70,000 striking and locked-out grocery store workers were on the picket lines from October to February. They resisted capitalist efforts to greatly increase what they pay for healthcare. Despite the broad appeal of their call, they were unable to stop the functioning of the stores. In the end, while the workers fought heroically, the leadership was inadequate. They didn't have a fighting plan in advance, pulled punches along the way, and sent people back to work calling their defeat a victory. The actual score card found the workers conceding to a two-tier wage and benefit system.

Most of the struggles in the recent period have been limited, with victories counted in slowing or moderating, or even standing up to management's attacks. The agreements reached after most, if not all, of the battles above have been full of compromises, mainly due to the balance of forces and the limited tactics employed by unions.

Class Struggle Unionism

The way forward for the labor movement is to revive class struggle unionism. We need unions to be fighting organizations, not dues collection machines.

Class struggle unionism means broadening the outlook and demands of the unions - a return to solidarity unionism. That means organizing and mobilizing the membership to fight management and support other struggles. Our demands and our slogans should reflect class demands; we draw lines between the workers and the bosses in our work. It means social movement unionism - linking the union movement with other social forces. It means reviving tactics of earlier generations - of the 1910s and the 1930s. During those periods, workers did not content themselves with going on strike and holding up picket signs. They used every tactic in their arsenal, from sit down strikes to shutting down production at the plant gates or to taking the fight industry or class wide. Class struggle unionism also means solidarity unionism, where unionists go all-out in support of key struggles when they break out.

The approach of class struggle unionism differs from other progressive formulations, such as social unionism and democracy unionism. We fight for union democracy in order to have worker-run organizations and to more effectively wage class struggle - not just to have fairer rules for replacing one set of bureaucrats with another. While we support organizing as a task of unions, we reject the program of market density unionism, favored by the New Unity Partnership officials, as discussed below.

Until a section of the advanced embraces these tactics again, victories will be limited to specific industries and partial in scope. Those unions which in the last decade or two have started down this path, however fleetingly - such as the Staley workers, the Detroit newspaper workers in the mid 1990s, the mineworkers at Pittston coal in the early 1990s, and Local P9 at Hormel in the 1980s - have shown us the path to a renewed labor movement. The path of a militant, class-conscious labor movement is the only road forward.

Not only has the labor bureaucracy failed unionized workers, the broader working class gets their attention mainly insofar as they are potential dues payers. With regards to the poor, as the economic crisis continues, it becomes more important to remember that most unions do nothing to support welfare, even though union jobs continue to be privatized and replaced by "welfare to work" workers. We should work to unite labor and lower sector struggles to fight against attacks on the working class as a whole, including attacks on public sector workers, workers' rights, immigrants' rights, health care and the

social safety net, and to raise the level of class struggle. The economic crisis and budget battles are fertile ground for increasing the level of struggle on a class basis that denounces tax breaks for the rich while poor and working people are being cut to the bone.

Assessment of Labor

When John Sweeney's New Voices slate took office in the AFL-CIO, we said that conditions were improved for struggle, and for the work of communists in the class. A look at the ledger sees some advances and some failures of their era. On the one hand, we see continued commitment by some unions to new organizing: to immigrants' rights (the immigrant workers rides this year were an important event), and to coalitions (like the fight against the FTAA). The AFL is more open to working with other social forces, such as in Seattle. There are openings in working with the AFL that did not exist before. They had some successes in pushing the AFL-CIO towards organizing and getting rid of the worst of the old guard; there were some positive efforts internationally, including coming out initially against Bush's war in Iraq.

On the negative side, their organizing program is not working to stop the slide in labor's status. As of March, only 8.2% of the private sector remains unionized, and while the public sector is at 42.6%, that's down as a result of layoffs, privatization, and the Bush administration's attacks on federal workers.

Also on the negative side of the tally sheet, the AFL-CIO was up to their necks in the attempted coup in Venezuela; and once the shooting started, Sweeney turned and embraced - again - Bush's war drive. The relationship with other forces has been mixed and the support of key battles, such as the Staley workers in Decatur, IL, has been mixed.

While the reform program was unfolding, there had also been retrenchment in other places. The motion that led to the founding of the Labor Party has largely died down. Jimmy Hoffa won re-election in November 2001.

At the heart of the Sweeney program was organizing the unorganized, a task that had been largely ignored by the previous leadership of the AFL-CIO. Organizing the unorganized is an important task of the labor movement,

especially where there are large concentrations of Chicano and Black workers who suffer exploitation and national oppression. Particularly, in the Southwest and South, where the Chicano and Black working class face brutal exploitation, racism, anti-labor laws and very low levels of union membership. In these struggles for union recognition we see the importance of fighting against national oppression for union democracy and strong rank and file leadership. However, the New Voices methods of organizing left much to be desired. They often ignored fighting the demands of current workers in their rush to organize new workers. Much of the so-called "new organizing" has consisted of getting agreements with employers, what used to be called "sweetheart" deals.

The staff driven model of organizing favored by the New Voices leadership has failed to turn around labor's decline. True breakthroughs in organizing will only come through class struggle unionism. When workers engage in mass struggles, it inspires other workers to fight back as well.

The limited success of the New Voices program has spurred the development of sections of the labor bureaucracy to intensify the push towards organizing with the development of the New Unity Partnership. This handful of officials includes the leaders of the Carpenters, SEIU, UNITE-HERE, and the Laborers. The New Unity Partnership is an odd grouping of the more liberal elements of the labor bureaucracy and the pro-Bush Carpenter's leadership. What unites them is what they see as a lack of progress of the AFL-CIO in re-orienting itself towards organizing. They favor the restructuring of AFL-CIO programs and resources towards organizing and an agreement among unions to organize in industrial sectors. In pushing for more organizing, they are correct, and the AFL-CIO certainly needs an intensified shake-up.

But the New Unity Partnership lacks a commitment to union democracy and a commitment to class struggle unionism. What the labor movement needs, and the New Unity Partnership cannot offer, is to develop fighting unions - unions that break beyond the bonds of the current ways of doing things and engage in all-out fights against the bosses. Market density, which is the mantra of the New Unity Partnership, will not alone produce class struggle unionism.

Main Political Report - International Situation

FRSO
4th
Congress

The world today is characterized by a struggle of unprecedented proportions. On every continent, the forces of progress are locked in conflict with reaction. The basic contradictions are sharpening. The factors leading to new wars and revolutions are growing.

As communists, we understand that changes in the balance of forces on a world level will have a concrete impact on our efforts to build a revolutionary movement in the United States. Living in the center of a vast empire - that has its political capital in Washington D.C. and financial capital on Wall Street - there is a dialectical relationship involving: the efforts of the peoples of the Third World to achieve national liberation and independence, and inter-imperialist rivalry on the one hand, and the overall political climate in this country on the other.

For example, shortly after the events of September 11, 2001, our organization stated that the so-called "war on terrorism" was the leading edge of reaction. Life has confirmed that analysis. The imprisonment and detention of thousands of immigrants (mainly Arab and Muslims), moves by the Bush administration to curtail democratic rights, attacks on labor (the utilization of "national security" justifications to employ Taft-Hartley against the West Coast dock strike) are a few of the many manifestations of this.

Imperialism - capitalism in its monopoly stage - means war and oppression. Under the false banners of "democracy" and "prosperity" we see that the export of capital amounts to the export of exploitation and poverty. In the regions dominated by imperialism more than a billion people suffer from hunger. Peasants and farmers, who grow food, cannot afford to feed their families. More than 100 million people have been made into refugees or forced to emigrate from their native lands. Death squads are used against workers who are struggling to make ends meet. National freedom and self-determination are trampled upon by imperialist powers, particularly the U.S.

Advances in the forces of production, in the fields of electronics, computerization, the information sciences, etc. - which could conceivably bring a better standard of living to the World's peoples - are used by the monopoly capitalists as a vehicle to spread capitalist relations and prop up semi-feudal property relations in the Third World. The growth of the productive forces at the service of those who care only about getting the highest rate of profit lays the basis for new and greater crisis.

The main instruments of this process of imperialist globalization are the export of capital in the form of direct foreign investments, leveraged control of foreign financial markets, U.S. dominated multi-lateral financial institutions (WTO/IMF/WB) and military means.

At the forefront of the process of imperialist globalization stands the United States, with the blocks of European imperialist powers and Japan trailing behind. In a world where the basic contradictions are intensifying - including the contradiction between socialized production vs. private appropriation, which inevitably leads towards crisis - all of the imperialist powers have found it necessary to attack their domestic social safety nets and workers' rights, while strengthening their respective military machines.

We do not view the process of imperialist globalization as an ongoing integration of competing blocks of capital; rather the contradictions between imperialist blocks are sharpening - particularly between those countries at the core of the European Union (Germany, France) and the United States.

That said, there are two vital points we need to grasp concerning the current period.

The main contradiction on a world scale remains between imperialism on the one hand and the oppressed nations on the other. Given that, the offensive launched by the U.S. since September 11, 2001 represents a major shift in the role played by the U.S. and it would be an over-simplification in this period to simply talk about imperialism in general. The fact is the U.S. is making a dramatic bid for global domination. It is the U.S. that is playing the principal role in the contradictions between itself and its imperialist rivals and also between itself and the Third World. It is these two contradictions that are determining the overall development of the international situation.

The second point is that the analysis put forward by Mao - that U.S. imperialism is a paper tiger - is still correct. The roots of Bush's war on the world do not lie in some sort of newfound strength or vitality. Rather, the offensive is a sign of underlying weakness, an inability to consolidate and expand the empire by economic and political means - which has led to a turn towards other methods, i.e. war and military force.

As the United States is the principal oppressor of the world's peoples, our organization has a special responsibility to uphold proletarian internationalism. On every continent, there are patriotic and progressive movements that want to break out of the orbit of imperialism. As a practical matter, the main criteria we use for assessing any movement, party, or government is whether or not its policies and actions tend to weaken the imperialists.

U.S. Decline and the Hunt for a "New World Order"

Since the early 1970's U.S. imperialism has been in a period of relative decline. The rise of the national liberation movements, the strengthening of other imperialist powers in Japan and Europe, the breakup of the financial arrangements reached at Breton Woods and the defeat in Vietnam represented the early end of what some publicists for the bourgeoisie promised would be the "American Century."

However, the fall of the socialist countries (Soviet Union and Eastern Europe) and the accompanying demoralization and disintegration that hit many of the national liberation movements, not only masked that decline, it created a situation where one actor appeared larger than life because others had left the stage. Practically speaking, since the beginning of the 1990's the absence of much of the socialist camp means the U.S. lacked a counterweight that could effectively challenge it on a world level. At the same time this new context dictated the scramble to create a "new world order."

The creation of this "new world order" proved elusive for the Bush Sr. and Clinton administrations. In the context of growing inter-imperialist rivalry, both administrations sought what was essentially a multi-lateral approach to the problem of imperialist domination. An illustration of this is the

U.S./NATO war to destroy the patriotic government of Yugoslavia. While Germany encouraged and aided reactionaries in Croatia and Slovenia to declare independence, thus triggering the first round of fighting, it fell to the United States operating through NATO to finish the job of destroying the patriotic government headed by Slobodan Milosevic. While each of the imperialist powers were motivated by their own interests (including attempts to make gains at the expense of their partners in crime), they were bound together by an identity of interests - the drive of western powers to seize the resources of the east.

While the imperialist centers colluded and contended throughout the 1990's, the world was changing - the national liberation movements picked up steam, the strength of Europe grew and there was a worldwide crisis of overproduction (beginning in Asia in 1997 and hitting the U.S. in 2001). All this converged to create the perfect storm. After stealing the election of 2000, the Bush administration arrived in Washington with an agenda of increased rivalry with the other imperialist powers and a clique of reactionaries that were committed to reviving the dream of a "New American Century."

Dreams of Global Domination

The events of September 11 served as a pretext for the U.S. to launch what amounts to a world war with the aim of global domination. While one can correctly argue that this has been a central aim of U.S. imperialism since the end of World War II, the current drive exists within the aforementioned context - the search for stability under U.S. hegemony - while locked in a downward spiral of declining power and prestige.

September 11 created the political space for U.S. imperialism to play its hoped-for trump card - its military strength. While it is wrong to overestimate what the U.S. can do with its military power, by any measure it is formidable. Advances in science and technology are quickly applied to new weapons systems. The U.S. has bases that extend across the world. Its troops are numerous, well trained and well armed. And the U.S. has a host of puppet armies (Israel, Colombia, etc) under its command.

We have now entered a period of large scale, continuous warfare on the part of the U.S. Cities in Iraq and Afghanistan are occupied and patriotic national resistance is growing. U.S. policy makers are seriously contemplating a war on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. U.S. troops are fighting in the jungles of Colombia and the Philippines. Military assistance is sent to Nepal to block the advance of the people's war led by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). A coup has been attempted against the progressive government of Venezuela's Hugo Chavez, and the governments of Iran and Syria are threatened. In Palestine, there is no difference of substance between the policies of the Bush administration and those of the war criminal Ariel Sharon.

Standing reality on its head, the war criminals in the White House and the Pentagon are intensifying their campaign to criminalize the national liberation movements. Specifically, they have branded a host of progressive and revolutionary organizations as terrorists, including the Communist Party of the Philippines, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (along with the Islamist resistance organizations in Palestine).

The dramatic wave of military interventions is accompanied by changes in National Security Doctrine, for example the doctrine of "preemptive strikes," and a new openness to the use of nuclear weapons.

The Pentagon wants the capability to bring down the hammer of U.S. military force at any time, anywhere. We are in a period that represents the culmination of a long-term shift in war planning. Before the fall of the USSR, plans for a large-scale war on the plains of Europe were a central feature of U.S. military policy. Clearly, this is not the case today. The main targets of the U.S. are in the third world and military planning has to address that fact.

For the last decade the Pentagon has been working to carry out a "transformation process" of the U.S. armed forces. This process has been accelerated over the past two years. The stated aim of this process is to move from a "threat based" model to a "capabilities based model." The goal is to create military forces that are far more mobile, that utilize more technology (sensors, precision guided munitions, real time battle field information

systems) and greater intelligence capacity with a higher level of troop training.

The overall problem the U.S. faces is that it is attempting to use force to expand and consolidate its empire at a juncture in history when conditions for success are growing less favorable. In the Third World, the U.S. is unable to handle even one Iraq, much less 2, 3 or many. Coupled with the rising inter-imperialist rivalry and growing economic instability on a world scale, Washington will find that those who dream of empire will wake up living a nightmare.

The heroic resistance of the Iraqi people illustrates the critical underlying trend in the world today: that countries want independence, nations want liberation and that people need revolution. When the U.S. occupied Baghdad, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld talked about a "handful of dead enders." As casualties mount and aircraft come down, generals now talk about a well-organized, "sophisticated" resistance and the problem of "classic guerrilla warfare." The Iraqi resistance demonstrates that one does not have to accept the imperial dictum that "there is no alternative." The determination shown by the Iraqi people has locked U.S. policy toward Iraq in a sort of permanent crisis, where the shape and form of the puppet regime are constantly called into question. It has made the other imperial powers hesitate about coming in to share the spoils. It is an inspiration to others, in the Middle East and around the world.

Imperialist Rivals

Talk in Washington of an "old Europe" means that the U.S. is contending with a new Europe. The expanding economic integration of the European Union, particularly in the form of a common monetary policy (the European Central Bank) and a currency union (the Euro) signify a march towards a united states of Europe. While it is not clear at this time how the unitary political institutions of Europe will develop, it is possible to identify several factors that will accelerate or pull back the tendency towards a united Europe, as well as some likely near term developments.

Externally, policies undertaken by the United States will be the principal factor governing European integration. Particularly in the spheres of politics and military policy, it can be said that the more unilateral the actions of the U.S., the greater the push will be for European unity.

Internally, there are the issues that unite the euro rulers, like the rise of a common European currency, which opens the road to there being another world currency with Europe emerging as a greater center of world capital flows. That said, there are conditions that could well undermine European integration, such as economic crisis and the limits the European Union has placed on deficit spending. The main trend is that in the context of the decline of U.S. imperialism as an economic power, European imperialism is rising.

There is also the issue of Anglo imperialism, which essentially has an inside/outside strategy towards the rest of Europe. For the moment, British imperialism has attached itself to the United States, but as a member of the EU it has a say in the political policies of the EU council and a voice in European military affairs.

In terms of practical results to expect in the next period, there will be sharp divisions over foreign policy, especially in regards to Middle East. NATO will be less important - although the U.S. will try to maintain it as a means to, in part, curb the development of independent European military power. And the divisions will sharpen in a host of multilateral institutions, such as the World Trade Organization and the United Nations.

There is another center for imperialism developing in East Asia. Japan is the single largest economy, but has been stagnant for more than 10 years. Politically, Japan has been closely aligned with U.S. since WWII, and is supporting U.S. occupation in Iraq and sending troops. At the same time, East Asia is the fastest growing economic region in the world, and there are some signs of desire for more economic independence from the U.S.

Common Trends in Imperialist Countries

In the imperialist centers, there are a number of common trends. They continue to exploit and oppress Third World countries. Tied to this are attacks on immigrants and immigrants' rights within the imperialist countries

and at the same time neo-fascist political groups and movements have mushroomed to become a menacing force against oppressed nationalities.

Governments are busy slashing their social safety nets, while increasing funding for police and spending exorbitant amounts on the military. Even Japan is building up its small military.

Big business in the imperialist countries is moving away from the policy of purchasing social peace. Corporations are downsizing and laying off workers, relocating to the Third World, imposing impossible conditions on workers and trying to bust unions. None of this is without resistance. The international working class is reawakening and again feeling its strength. Opportunities exist for those willing to grasp them and push struggle to higher levels.

In all of the imperialist centers, the masses of people are in motion. For example, in the period leading up to the U.S. war to occupy Iraq, tens of millions took to the streets. In many of the European countries, this was a powerful factor in limiting the options of the respective governments.

The Former Soviet Union

For the people of the former Soviet Union, the collapse of socialism has been a disaster. Gorbachev opened the door not to "reformed socialism," but to plunder by native gangsters and their foreign sponsors. Mobsters and parasites wield the political and economic power. The collective wealth produced by the Soviet people was stolen in the largest privatization in history. The result: nothing but misery for workers and farmers. Millions of workers go unpaid, lost their pensions and have been robbed of their life savings. Throughout the former Soviet Union the life expectancy is declining.

The destruction of the USSR paved the way for a great scramble among the imperialists - European (particularly German) and the U.S. - to loot the land, labor and resources of one sixth of the globe. Of particular importance are moves to seize energy resources in the Caspian basin and central Asia.

The results of the counter-revolution in the Soviet Union, as well as the socialist countries of Eastern Europe, such as Albania, Poland and Yugoslavia, are vivid examples of a simple truth - capitalism is a failed

system that cannot meet the political, economic or social aspirations of the vast majority of people.

The construction of a Marxist-Leninist movement and of new Communist Parties that fight for the re-establishment of the USSR is an extremely positive development. In the face of heavy repression, they are standing firm in the struggle for socialism. We owe them our support and solidarity.

The Third World

Imperialism means national oppression. Third World countries face famine, poverty, war, epidemics, environmental destruction, restructuring and dismantlement. On a world scale, the main form of national oppression today is neocolonialism. Recognizing this fact, it should be stated that one of the particular features of the current offensive of U.S. imperialism has been the reversion to the earlier form of direct, colonial rule in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Objectively, the countries of the Third World are at the center of the revolutionary process.

Africa

Africa is the poorest continent. It was conquered, divided and stripped of great amounts of natural resources by imperialism. Now Africa faces an AIDS crisis affecting tens of millions, while western drug corporations plot how to make more profits. In past decades, Africans waged many victorious national liberation struggles. Unfortunately, comprador forces allied with neocolonialism seized power, thus reaping the fruit of many of these heroic struggles.

With the aim of grabbing resources, land and labor of the African peoples, the United States is stepping up its ability to intervene through the use of proxies, direct intervention, regional "security" agreements and military assistance programs. About 15% of the oil coming to the U.S. is from sub-Saharan Africa. This amount could well go up another 10% over the next decade, particularly as more fields producing low-sulfur oil are opened up. Africa has huge mineral reserves, including copper, bauxite and uranium. The

U.S. is moving to strengthen its control of key shipping and communications lines - for example those that pass by the Horn of Africa.

Nearly every region of the continent has been ravaged by war. In general, the basis for these conflicts can be found in the legacy of colonialism and the ongoing maneuvers of the western powers, especially the U.S., France and Britain. We are opposed to western military intervention be it in the Ivory Coast, Democratic Republic of the Congo or Liberia, under any guise, including that of "peace keeping."

There are many rays of hope in Africa. Of special importance is the great movement for land reform in Zimbabwe, the determined resistance in the Democratic Republic of Congo to imperialism and struggles led by the communist and anti-imperialist parties.

Asia

Asia is a focal point of the four major contradictions in the world. Thus, of anywhere in the world, Marxism is the most alive in Asia today. There are more communists here than in the rest of the world combined. There are huge mass movements of communists in India and Bangladesh numbering in the tens of millions.

In the Philippines, the CPP holds substantial liberated areas, and is leading the masses of people in a national democratic revolution with a socialist orientation. Locked in a direct confrontation with the U.S. and its puppets, advances in the revolutionary process here are of real importance for Asia as a whole. The Philippines were the first big base of operations for the U.S. Empire in Asia, the point from where the U.S. projected its power. Victories won by the revolutionary movement in the Philippines affect the balance of forces in the region as a whole.

The people's war in Nepal is winning. There are also more socialist countries in Asia than anywhere else. China, Vietnam, Korea all espouse Marxism-Leninism and see themselves on the road to communism. Taken as whole, Asia is a weak link in the chain of imperialism.

Note should be made of U.S. efforts to provoke a second Korean war. While the strength of the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea and the patriotic movements in the south of the peninsula constrain the U.S., ongoing provocations, such as creating a "nuclear crisis," and war preparations (troop redeployments, introducing advanced weapons, agreements with other countries to seize Korean shipping vessels) constitute a serious danger to peace on the Korean Peninsula.

In a similar vein, we understand that when the Pentagon speaks of a "regional competitor" in Asia, it means People's Republic of China. We support the efforts of the Chinese people to achieve reunification with the Taiwan province and oppose U.S. efforts to threaten China with "missile defense," a system of military bases aimed at encirclement and subversion.

Finally, the growing struggle of Afghani people to win national independence is sure to grow in the years ahead.

Latin America and the Caribbean

Latin America and Caribbean have long suffered under the yoke of U.S. imperialism, and there is a dialectical relationship between development of the struggle there and here. Revolutionaries in this country have a special responsibility to support those who are fighting to free themselves from the U.S. Empire.

There is a profound revolutionary process taking place in the northern part of South America, which includes the mass movements and people's war in Peru, the progressive and patriotic government of Hugo Chavez and the powerful movement for land reform in Brazil. The revolution in Colombia is the leading edge of this process.

The war in Colombia is of vital importance. U.S military personnel are already engaged in combat there. A victory for Colombia's national liberation movement will be an incredible blow to U.S. imperialism. As an organization, we must do everything we can to end U.S intervention and support the Colombian revolution.

We also have a special responsibility to support the progressive and revolutionary forces in Mexico. The southwest part of the United States - Aztlan - was formerly Northern Mexico. A distinct, Chicano nation has developed in this region, and there is a relationship between what takes place in Mexico and the developments in the Southwest. One indication of this is the inspiration many Chicano youth take from the uprising in Chiapas. The basic point here is that revolutionary struggle in Mexico weakens U.S. imperialism and will contribute to shaping the Chicano National Movement (and other movements as well).

Finally, we support socialist Cuba - which is a beacon of liberation to people throughout the hemisphere.

Middle East

The peoples of the Middle East are standing up to Imperialism, Zionism and reaction of all kinds. Because of the region's strategic importance to western imperialism, developments here can lead to a shift in the balance of forces on a world scale.

The ongoing efforts of the Iraqi national liberation movement to win freedom from the U.S.-led occupation are of vital importance for the Iraqi people, the people of the Middle East and the world's people.

In addition to securing the world's second largest oil reserve, Washington hoped the occupation of Iraq would strengthen its domination of the entire region and improve its position to contend with the European powers. Instead, events have demonstrated that Washington underestimated the depth and breadth of the Iraqi resistance. Setbacks and defeats in Iraq will be a factor in the political fate of any administration in the White House, Republican or Democrat.

The powerful and determined struggle of the Palestinian people has swept away repeated attempts to impose solutions that come up short of complete liberation. We support the Palestinian people in their fight to regain their homeland and to create a democratic, secular state in all of historic Palestine, with Jerusalem as its capital, including the right of return for all refugees.

We call for an end to all U.S. aid to Israel. Israel is a creation of U.S. and British imperialism - it is a dagger that the U.S. wields against the Arab peoples. Whatever weakens Israel or U.S. support for Israel strengthens the hand of the people of Palestine, the Arab peoples and ultimately the world's peoples.

This second uprising of the Palestinian people and the Iraqi resistance are the front lines of the battle between the peoples of the Middle East and western imperialism.

Over the past decade, there has been a steady radicalization of the masses of Arab peoples. With a few notable exceptions, the vast majority of governments in the Middle East are western-dominated and hated by the people they rule. This protracted uprising in Palestine will further destabilize the puppet governments that are unable and unwilling to confront Israel.

Socialist Countries

Those countries where the proletariat has established power are an important factor in the world revolutionary process. Whatever strengths or weakness the respective socialist countries might have, we count ourselves in the ranks of those who hold that actual existing socialism is a good thing.

A quick compare and contrast demonstrates that socialism has been extremely positive for the Third World. Those countries that overthrew imperialism and its local servants, established New Democracy and transitioned to socialism under the leadership of the working class and its Party have done much better than their suffering neighbors. For example, Cuba's infant mortality rate is equal to that of the U.S. and ranks far above that of Mexico or El Salvador. In Democratic Korea, 100% of people have access to safe drinking water while in Burma only 68% do. On issues of equality, health care, education, culture, housing and food the people of the socialist countries fare better.

In the cases of Korea and Vietnam, the mass destruction of U.S. wars attempted to send those nations "back to the Stone Age." However, due to the victories against U.S. imperialism, they have fared well compared with similar Asian nations.

However, socialist countries also face major contradictions, from external and internal sources, including those stemming from market reforms and the opening of the economies to the world market. In spite of this, the socialist countries have demonstrated in practice the bright future in store for humanity.