

# PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION



Re-Creat  
the Fourth International

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## U.S. Out Now! Iraq Occupation in Disarray

Six months after invading Iraq and staging the toppling of statues of Saddam Hussein, the U.S.'s occupation of Iraq is itself shaking from one stunning blow after another. The dozens of daily attacks on U.S. and allied forces have included the shooting down of helicopters, missile and mortar attacks on various imperialist offices and the suicide bombing of the United Nations' headquarters and other prominent institutions. Hundreds of U.S. soldiers have been killed and thousands injured. While the U.S. tries to claim that these attacks are solely

the work of remnants of Saddam's old dictatorship and foreign terrorists, popular opposition to the occupiers continues to grow. Even Bush's photo-op Thanksgiving visit to troops in Baghdad had to be unannounced and in disguise, so worried were his handlers that the resistance might shoot him down.

The overwhelming majority of Iraqis are fiercely opposed to the occupation and want the imperialists out. Decisive are the Shi'ites, who represent a majority of the population but were long oppressed by Saddam's minority Sunni-based dictatorship.

Their opposition to the U.S. is only exceeded by their hatred of Saddam's Ba'athists. They have become increasingly vocal in their demands for democracy and for resistance to the U.S. They have pushed "moderate" leaders who planned to collaborate with the U.S. – most prominently their supreme religious leader Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Husseini al-Sistani – to take stands against the occupation, while many others, particularly from the poorest section of the working class, have abandoned such "moderates" and rallied in support of the radical anti-U.S. Shi'ite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr.

At home, the Bush Administration has lost the enormous popularity it enjoyed as a result of the September 11 terrorist attacks and the wave of patriotism that followed. Its main justifications for the war – Saddam's supposed threat of "weapons of mass destruction" and Iraq's alleged ties to Al Qaeda – have been exposed as tissues of lies. Its dreams of Iraqis welcoming the invaders

*continued on page 8*



United Nations compound in Baghdad after August suicide bombing that killed 23 people, including the top U.N. official in Iraq.

### Inside

LRP/COFI Report . . . . .	2	Lenin Article on Militarism . . . . .	18
Chicago: Teachers' Union Squelches Fight . . . . .	3	CWI Group Guilty of Ukraine Fraud . . . . .	21
New York: TWU Elections Expose Reformists . . . . .	5	Letter to IBT on Immigrants' Rights . . . . .	25
Anti-war Leaders Divert Struggle . . . . .	14	Bolivia's Unfinished Revolution . . . . .	32

**The Leninist Position on Conscription . . . . .15**

# LRP/COFI Report

## GERMANY

The working class of Germany has been stirred into action by the recently adopted socio-economic “reform” measures of the ruling class, codified as “Agenda 2010” by Chancellor Schröder’s class-collaborationist “Red-Green” regime, composed of the SPD (the Social-Democrats) in coalition with the Green Party.

Earlier this year, demonstrations and isolated strikes were on the rise against the increasingly brutal capitalist attacks on the living standards of the majority of the population. But over the summer, the West German union leaders of the metal workers’ union, IG-Metal, despite calls for solidarity among their ranks, betrayed East German workers from key sectors of the auto industry who were striking for working conditions equivalent to their Western counterparts. Following this both cowardly and scandalously divisive short-circuiting of a budding trend toward an actively united fightback by the working class, the union leaders, who are tied by many material and ideological threads to the SPD, conveniently called for a summer pause. They promised, however, a “hot autumn.”

But the union leaders stalled and collaborated, under the guise of “negotiating.” While many groups around Germany prepared for a nation-wide day of demonstrations centered in Berlin on November 1, the bureaucrats waited until shortly before the day to announce their lack of support for it. Nevertheless, people from all over Germany rose to the occasion. An estimated 100,000 workers, unemployed, retirees, youth, and political activists flooded the streets of Berlin, in one of the country’s biggest demonstration of the post-war period.

Our leaflet (see our website) focused on spreading the idea of an indefinite general strike to forward the interests of the working class against capitalist attacks. Although many workers eagerly took our leaflet, it is evident that the most advanced layers of the German working class have yet to grasp the necessity of the general strike, in the way their brothers and sisters in France, Italy, Bolivia, Nigeria, and other countries already have.

A few other left groups and union dissidents also called for strike measures, usually tied to a laundry list of utopian-reformist demands, but most stuck to a limited one-day general strike. In light of severe defeats for the SPD in recent elections, with many people abstaining from the vote, the demonstration was a clear sign that the German working class is losing its taste for its traditional party, which has for so long betrayed the trust of workers in

the interests of capital. Many groups and individuals at the rally called for a new, working-class party. As our leaflet stressed, this must be an internationalist, revolutionary party – the only way to end capitalist exploitation forever.

Earlier, on the anniversary of the ongoing Palestinian *intifada*, September 27, a KOVI-BRD supporter attended a demonstration of about 400 people in Berlin, part of a worldwide weekend of solidarity with the Iraqi and Palestinian masses against U.S. and Israeli occupation. While drawing many Palestinian and Turkish participants, the demonstration revealed the weakening of the anti-war movement. Although the Stalinist step-child PDS (Party of Democratic Socialism) had played a key role in mobilizing many thousands prior to the war, it seemed not to have mobilized at all for this event. (For more on the PDS’s pacifist-electoralist “socialism,” see *KOVI Dokumente IV* on our website.)

The Iraqi/Palestinian solidarity demo was booed from across the Spree River by approximately 75 pro-Zionist and pro-U.S. reactionaries. Side by side with a few open defenders of imperialism waving Israeli and American flags were the “Anti-Deutsche,” the aggressively pro-Zionist faction of the German “Anti-National” current. This petty-bourgeois trend, which sees itself as above classes and in particular above the “reactionary, chauvinist and anti-Semitic workers,” has perpetrated physical assaults on left groups, like the Spartacists. (Further analysis of the Anti-National tendency is in *KOVI Dokumente VI* on our website). Readers of *PR* know that COFI holds that the Spartacist line ultimately defends Zionism. But since they are under attack for their claim to defend Palestine, we stand by them in a united front against reactionary provocation and attack.

## PUERTO RICO

Our COFI supporter in Puerto Rico has been visiting and aiding the student takeover at the Air Force Reserve Officers Training Corps construction site at the Mayaguez campus of the University of Puerto Rico. The students, mostly of a nationalist background, are organized in an anti-militarization bloc consisting of various Socialist Front youth groups. They have stopped the reconstruction of one of two Air Force ROTC buildings for over a month by occupying it and effectively squatting on the premises. They demand no more public monies for military training and buildings and the ouster of the whole ROTC program from the campus.

*continued on page 27*

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# Chicago: CTU Leadership Squelches Fight

The Chicago Teachers Union, the largest union local in Illinois with 25,000 teachers and over 10,000 other public school workers, voted down its leadership's proposed contract in October and threatened to strike. But despite some tough talk, President Deborah Lynch and her ProActive Chicago Teachers (PACT) caucus, which had won the leadership of the local in 2001, stifled strike preparations and even the idea of a strike. As a result, a new contract was narrowly approved in November.

Teachers occupy a comparatively aristocratic position among workers, but the CTU has a militant history and could have rallied beleaguered municipal unions and the whole Chicago working class in igniting the class struggle. With the exception of the high school teachers, most of its members are Black and Latino. PACT's election had been touted by various pseudo-socialists as a victory for a militant fight against the relentless austerity attacks against the working class nationwide – an advance in the struggle for union militancy, reform and democratic rank-and-file control.

In fact, the PACT leadership never stood for any kind of break with the union's subservience to the Democratic Party. Instead of using its massive resources to build a campaign of mass action to smash the infamous Article 4.5 of the 1995 Amendatory Act, which gave the state and city unilateral control over class size and other conditions, the CTU poured the members' dues into the election war chests of the Democratic Party politicians who were leading the bourgeoisie's efforts to discipline public service workers. (For background, see "CTU Reform Leaders Capitulate" in *Proletarian Revolution* No. 65.)

The sellout by PACT, like that by the New Directions caucus in the New York City transit workers' union TWU Local 100 (see

PR 66), proves once again what the LRP has said for years: reformist leaders inevitably betray the militant workers who have hopes in them. Only a genuine revolutionary leadership can be relied on to stand up against the interests of the capitalists in keeping the working class divided.

## CONTRACT DEAL REJECTED

The history of this contract "struggle" is a textbook lesson in how a reformist leadership can "win" against the workers' interests. After a summer of secretive negotiations between the CTU and the Chicago Public Schools (CPS), the two sides suddenly announced that they had reached a tentative settlement. The union's executive board recommended passage of the agreement by a margin of 11-1.

The deal was rotten. Lynch's publicists presented it as a big payday for CTU members. But it contained health care cost increases that substantially eroded the 4-percent raise, so the contract didn't even begin to keep pace with the rising cost of living. The fact that the deal would last five years especially infuriated the CTU membership.

Lynch's agreement completely abandoned the interests of non-teacher members of the bargaining unit. Her arrogant contempt was transparently displayed in an exchange at the October 1 delegates meeting. One paraprofessional worker asked Lynch point blank: "How can you stand up there and tell me that after 34 years of service, I top out at under \$30,000 a year, and there's nothing you can do for me?" Lynch's smirking response: "So, what's your question?"

The new contract also betrays the students. The CPS still has

## Left Lapdogs for Lynch

In orchestrating this setback, Lynch and her class-collaborationist team were aided by nominally leftist individuals and organizations. A supporter of the Solidarity organization and another independent "socialist" sit on Lynch's executive board and voted for the contract initially. But when the House of Delegates turned on Lynch and voted it down, these windsocks quietly joined in the uprising but never pushed for a mass fight for a decent contract. And they reverted to voting for Lynch's second lousy contract.

The prize for political pretense, however, goes to the International Socialist Organization (ISO). For most of the year, the ISO's *Socialist Worker* ran soft on Lynch, worrying that "if PACT brings a poor contract back to the membership, it would risk losing the election. This would be a tragedy that would set the union back a decade." (June 6.) That is, the ISO was

more concerned about PACT's electoral success than about a rotten contract's effect on the workers!

When the House and membership voted down her first sellout contract, the ISO ostensibly stiffened its spine. An article by delegate Jesse Sharkey declared that "if Lynch doesn't agree to such a mobilization at the special House of Delegates meeting October 29, rank and file activists must be prepared to lead one independently." Among other measures, the ISO stressed the need to fight for a mass rally. (*SW*, Oct. 24.)

But at the November 5 area meetings and at the misnamed "Mobilization Committee," Sharkey introduced no proposal and declined to back the LRP's. Twice confronted with his own words, he could only mumble that "the leadership only wants an informational picket at this time." Thus the "rank-and-file" ISO

meekly followed the leadership in dodging a rank and file struggle.

Cynical pseudo-socialists can have a disproportionate effect in the labor movement. Their "practical" work in support of reformist leaders lends credibility to the latter and sets the mass of workers up for betrayal. On the other hand, our work in the TWU, the CTU and other unions shows that revolutionaries can also have an impact well out of proportion to their numbers. Communist workers can articulate the underlying feelings of their fellow workers who want to fight but are not fully conscious of the capitalist system's anti-worker needs and the role of pro-capitalist leaders. The revolutionary task – to tell the truth to the working class and show the way forward in struggle – is the decisive factor that will enable our class to win whenever masses of workers decide to fight back.

the unilateral right to override the contract's toothless recommendations concerning class size, and it continues its openly racist, anti-working class policy on capital improvements: poor districts get poor schools, "better" districts get better schools. Then there are the glistening magnet schools and "academies," basically a private-school system inside the public schools. Very few working-class Black and Latino students get to go there – and they have to compete for the "privilege" of being bussed. The answer is decent schools in all communities.

When the deal was presented to the House of Delegates on October 1, delegates from the former leadership, the United Progressive Caucus (UPC), raised critical questions, but our supporter was the only delegate to speak against the contract. He berated Lynch for keeping the members completely in the dark during the negotiations and for not preparing the membership for a strike to win a decent contract. When the vote was taken, the delegates rejected the tentative agreement, 402 to 289.

The proposal now went to the union membership, and Lynch did everything in her power to scare the ranks into voting for it. She insisted it was the best deal possible and that she would not go back to the bargaining table: voting the contract down would be tantamount to a strike authorization. But the members did not follow her bidding. When the vote was taken, 61 percent voted against. The clear rejection showed that union members had lost confidence in the leadership.

#### **MILITANT TALK COVERS SELLOUT**

Her authority challenged and her re-election at risk, Lynch immediately began to sing a more militant tune. Knowing she was preparing for another attempt at a sellout, the LRP and a few allied delegates prepared a motion for the October 29 delegates meeting calling for a two-year contract with a 12 percent raise, no health care increases, an additional three thousand dollar immediate raise for non-teaching workers, definitive language on classroom size and no increase in the school day or year. We demanded that the leadership call a mass membership meeting to decide on strike action and a mass citywide rally to prepare for a strike; we also called for the formation of rank-and-file strike committees.

In our bulletin "CTU Must Prepare to Strike," we pointed out that a successful CTU strike could be a beacon for other workers under attack in Chicago. Bus drivers in the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) had been working without a contract for over three years, and Mayor Richard Daley was threatening over 800 layoffs of other city workers. And we argued that a CTU strike could be the trigger for a unified response by all workers in Chicago, a general strike to defeat the ruling class's austerity campaign and turn around the one-sided class war in Chicago. We noted:

**The defense of public education is an issue of both class and race. The student body is overwhelmingly working-class, and the vast majority of CPS students are Black or Latino – doubly oppressed under the racist capitalist system.** (Our bulletin is on our website.)

At the October 29 meeting, Lynch talked militant and called for a strike authorization vote. She said that a negotiating session with Mayor Daley's schools team had gone nowhere: "We need stronger ammunition." Her motion included a plan for a strike referendum vote on November 18 and an informational picket at CPS headquarters on November 19. She ruled, unconstitutionally, that there would be no discussion of the motion and insisted that it be voted up by acclamation. It was, and the meeting was adjourned. The same procedure to squelch membership militancy was followed at the union's area meetings on November 5.

On November 8 there was a "mobilization team" meeting, made up of union delegates and volunteers. The LRP intervened

with a proposal that the "mobilization team" should actually mobilize people and provide the "ammunition" that Lynch had demagogically called for. Our motion resolved:

**(1) The CTU should drop its plan to hold an informational picket line at 10:30 am (essentially a symbolic press conference for CTU officials and invited dignitaries).**

**(2) Instead the CTU should hold a mass protest action on the same date at the same location, but at a rush hour time of 4:30 pm which will allow CTU members and students (and many more scores of other workers) to participate. Let's clog the streets with the tens of thousands of students, parents, teachers and other municipal workers who are fed up with the erosion of public services and the corresponding attacks on public workers' unions.**

**(3) The CTU should use the full weight of its resources and apparatus to build an all-out mobilization of the entire bargaining unit.**

**(4) The CTU should also make a serious effort to mobilize students, parents and other working class people by stressing issues which will resonate in the communities we serve (class size, capital investment, etc.).**

**(5) The CTU should call on other municipal workers' unions and labor bodies to support this action in a meaningful way: We call for a genuine effort to mobilize the ranks of all city unions to protest the budget cuts and austerity measures.**

**(6) In summary: the Mobilization Committee calls for a genuine mobilization of the CTU: All out for November 19th! Buses from the campuses to bring students and teachers to the protest. Full page ads in the newspapers.**

Lynch said she would take the motion under advisement, but "what we're here for today is to make signs for the informational picket." That is, she was squelching the motion for action.

#### **NO FIGHT, NEW CONTRACT**

On November 11, the CPS and the CTU arrived at a new agreement, this time for four years, with the school day lengthened by 15 minutes, not 20, and some minimal changes in health care plans. Instead of a strike referendum vote there would be a contract vote by the membership on November 18.

On November 14 the contract was approved by approximately 55 percent of the delegates.

The membership vote took place on November 18; it too passed with 55 percent for, 15,289 to 12,786. The ratification was hardly an endorsement: many CTU members who opposed the contract declined to vote No on practical grounds: they had little faith that Lynch would wage a serious strike. Lynch had worn the membership down and thereby was able to push through her deal with management and the mayor.

The CTU's contract struggle could have won mass support if the leadership had drawn on the righteous anger of Chicago's working-class population, including students and parents. Instead, the Lynch/PACT leadership betrayed these interests cheaply and quickly, hoping that its pragmatic emphasis on pocket-book issues would be enough to get a settlement. Lynch didn't even threaten a mass mobilization, and the ruling-class pols knew they could call her bluff.●

### ***Letters Welcome***

We invite readers of Proletarian Revolution to send letters to the magazine. Names will be withheld on request. Write us at P.O. 769, Washington Bridge Station, New York, NY 10033, USA.

# TWU Local 100 Elections Exposes Union Reformists

New York City's 36,000 bus and subway workers, members of Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 100, recently voted in local-wide elections. The results have not been announced as we go to press. In the absence of a credible alternative, the local's incumbent President, Roger Toussaint, will likely win re-election handily. But less than a year after "winning" a typical give-back contract with the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA), he faces growing discontent among the ranks.

## TOUSSAINT'S CONTRACT SELLOUT

Toussaint's 2002-2005 contract was thinly sugar-coated by limited improvements in health coverage for some workers and modest improvements in disciplinary and job safety procedures. But on fundamentals it was horrible: a wage freeze the first year and below-inflation "raises" after that, increased health insurance co-payments for most members, unlimited rights for the MTA to farm out work to private contractors and to introduce "new technology" (i.e., automation), and elimination of the no-layoffs clause featured in previous contracts.

Toussaint's sellout of the ranks, sabotage of our big pro-strike movement, fostering of sycophancy and a personality cult around himself and hysterical suppression of political opposition within the Local extinguished the enthusiastic support Toussaint once enjoyed among militant transit workers. Many members felt betrayed by Toussaint's disregard of their unanimous strike vote last December. (See *Proletarian Revolution* No. 67.) But discontent really shot up this July when members received their "bonus" check (a lump-sum payment in lieu of a wage increase). By the time the \$1000 check got past the tax collector, it was just over \$500!

There were also Toussaint's staged "Local-wide Membership Meetings," in which he was the only person with the right to raise and discuss motions. Members also questioned his mass contract rallies that seemed to be aimed more to create platforms for Democratic and some Republican politicians than to further the workers' struggle.

On top of this, Toussaint had alienated and purged many of his own slate-mates from the New Directions caucus which he had ridden to victory in 2000. The ranks mostly viewed this infighting with a cautious detachment, waiting to see where the various sides stood on the questions that mattered most to them.

## "MEMBERS FIRST" OPPOSITION NO ALTERNATIVE

Most of the victims of Toussaint's purges from the old New Directions grouped around a newsletter, *Rank and File Advocate* (*R&FA*), which promoted union democracy and a vague militancy. But they failed the test of the contract struggle, putting up no fight against Toussaint's betrayal of the ranks' strike votes, and refusing to launch a real campaign against the contract. Their preference for a symbolic anti-contract campaign betrayed their hopes that the lousy contract would help them win office in the next election. They put their bureaucratic aspirations ahead of the ranks' real interests, and even worse maneuvers were to come.

When it came to the election, most of *R&FA's* supporters joined with leftovers from the previous bureaucratic regime, the discredited Willie James gang supported by TWU International President Sonny Hall, to form the main opposition slate, "Members First." As they tried to explain in their campaign literature:

**Members First includes officers from both the old and the current regimes. We have come together with each other and with members who were not previously involved in the union's politics. We acknowledge past disagreements and respect the different opinions, experiences, and points of view that our union needs to draw on to meet the challenges confronting it.** ([www.twumembersfirst.com](http://www.twumembersfirst.com).)

In the past, *R&FA* candidates correctly condemned the old regime as corrupt, boss-loving scoundrels who stuck the ranks with one sellout contract after another. Now we're supposed to believe that the union needs to draw on their wealth of experience! The only thing these two groupings really have in common is that they want bureaucratic power. Their election program said little different from Toussaint's: pressure the politicians; maybe strike, maybe not. Their platform's qualification's outnumbered its planks.

While Toussaint's dictatorial rule of the local dirtied his image in the minds of many workers, the *R&FA* supporters' unprincipled alliance with figures from the old guard made him look good in comparison. It enabled him to campaign under the slogan "Maintain the Change," referring to the ranks' overthrow of the far more openly corrupt hacks that preceded him. It also afforded him the opportunity to paint the fights within the bureaucracy as petty power struggles at the ranks' expense. He could then pose as a source of unity and strength, leading to him naming his slate the "Toussaint Unity Team."

## BEHIND THE CRISIS OF LEADERSHIP

Revolutionaries had to oppose any consideration of voting for either Toussaint or his chief opponents. That there was nothing to choose between the two main slates in the elections shows that Local 100 has a crisis of leadership. Workers who were excited to see Toussaint win the last elections and expected him to lead an uncompromising struggle against the bosses have been



*LRP supporter and Local 100 Track Division Vice-Chair Eric Josephson (left) campaigning for strike action during 2002 contract struggle.*

bitterly disappointed. Some see him in his suit and tie, dealing arrogantly with the ranks and rubbing shoulders with the bosses and politicians, betraying the strike votes of last year and cutting his sellout contract deal – and they figure power inevitably corrupts. But this is not the reason for Toussaint’s betrayals, nor for the unprincipled maneuvers of his rivals.

Behind their sellouts is their acceptance of the capitalist system and their privileged position in it. Accepting the limits of capitalism means that when the bosses cry poverty, the bureaucrats see no alternative to forcing workers to sacrifice. They fear unleashing the working class’s power to strike, because that could threaten capitalist interests. Moreover, elevated from the ranks of the workers and enjoying financial and other privileges, the bureaucrats seek to defend their privileged position from the threat of an angry rank and file.

That’s why only revolutionary socialists can be trusted to lead the working class in struggle, especially when times get tough. Because socialists aren’t devoted to the success of the profit system, they won’t hold back in launching the strike struggles workers need to defend and improve their conditions. Because genuine socialists believe in the capacity of the working class to run society, they can be relied on to fight for the maxi-

mum democratic discussion and decision-making in the unions. The ranks won’t have to blindly trust their leaders: they’ll be able to control the direction of the union themselves.

## REVOLUTIONARY CAMPAIGN IN THE ELECTIONS

The one place where workers had a real choice was LRP supporter Eric Josephson’s campaign in the Track Division. Josephson has always openly advocated the LRP’s socialist views in leaflets and in person to his fellow workers, while fighting to unite them around a program of mass struggle against the bosses. He won election as Vice-Chair of the Track Division in 1999 on the basis of his leading role in the strike movement of that year. He has expanded the audience for the LRP’s perspective through the LRP’s regular newsletter *Revolutionary Transit Worker*. (Copies can be found at [www.lrp-cofi.org/TWU100](http://www.lrp-cofi.org/TWU100).)

Immediately following his victory in the last election, Josephson was attacked by the Toussaint bureaucracy, thrown out of union meetings and removed from his “release-time” position that enabled him to travel the transit system representing and mobilizing workers against the bosses. This year he contested the positions of executive board member from the Track Division and chairman of the Division Committee. He did not expect to win

## *The Bankruptcy of Solidarity’s Rank and Filism*

For years the Solidarity organization has claimed to be the only socialist group in the country that understands how to work in the union movement. They are the main force behind the *Labor Notes* newsletter, and the best known promoters of the formation of so-called “rank and file groups” in the unions.

Their “rank and file” strategy has broad currency on the left both here and abroad. It is based on the idea that it is a mistake for socialists to try to organize an alternative leadership to the union bureaucracy on a revolutionary socialist program. Revolutionaries, so the argument goes, should not emphasize supposedly impractical ideas in the working class; these are best reserved for discussion with like-minded individuals. Revolutionaries should instead form “rank and file groups” based on minimal programs of militant union struggle or some other approximation of the views that a broad number of workers are ready to accept.

For genuine revolutionaries, this approach violates the fundamental method, principles and traditions of Marxism. It inevitably retards the development of revolutionary class-consciousness among workers by promoting the idea that reformism can answer their needs. And by advancing a reformist program, it creates a platform for new layers of bureaucrats to ride to power when the old bureaucracies become too exposed to betray the workers any longer. (See our pamphlet *Reformism and “Rank and Filism” – the Communist Alternative.*)

### **SOLIDARITY HITS NEW LOW IN LOCAL 100**

Our warnings have been confirmed by the miserable record of the “rank and file

groups” Solidarity has backed. Most notably, Solidarity was the main force behind the “Teamsters for a Democratic Union” (TDU) caucus in the Teamsters Union, supporting a series of unprincipled maneuvers that led to disaster. With Solidarity’s support, TDU invited the bosses’ courts into the union through court cases against the union bureaucracy. They supported the rise to power of the self-described union democrat and reformist Ron Carey, only to see him hold back and betray struggles. Having secured powers to intervene in the union thanks to the TDU, the courts then ousted Carey, replacing him with a weakened version of the old corrupt Hoffa bureaucracy, leaving the Teamsters and TDU greatly weakened. (See *PR* 41 and 56.)

Solidarity has followed a similar pattern in the Chicago Teachers Union (see page 3) and in Local 100, through the New Directions (ND) “rank and file” group led by Solidarity supporters Tim Schermerhorn and Steve Downs. A massive upsurge of worker militancy, which culminated in the strike movement of 1999, set the scene for New Directions to oust the old-guard bureaucracy.

On the eve of the local’s elections in 2000, ND’s perennial candidate for union president, Schermerhorn, was challenged for leadership by Toussaint. Toussaint gained support within ND as a vocal militant, in contrast to Schermerhorn’s uninspiring passivity. Since Solidarity has never advocated a concrete program of mass struggle (for example, it had never committed ND to organize strike action), let alone a socialist program, it found itself unable to oppose Toussaint programmatically. Thus

Toussaint captured the leadership of ND and subsequently won the local presidency in a landslide, effectively with a blank check to do as he pleased.

The repentant pro-Albanian Stalinist Toussaint had secretly converted to a typical pro-capitalist and pro-Democratic party bureaucrat, who turned around and purged NDers from the union staff and voted ND out of existence in a stacked meeting. Solidarity obstinately refused to learn anything from this, and its surviving supporters attempted to repeat the process again, launching another lowest-common-denominator “rank and file group” around the *R&FA* newsletter.

By the time the Local elections approached, they had failed to build any significant support among workers as an opposition to Toussaint. The majority of *R&FA*ers turned to remnants of the discredited old bureaucracy to form a common slate, as detailed in the accompanying article.

Solidarity couldn’t even make up its mind to oppose this unprincipled bloc; it was divided over the question. Schermerhorn, who held a vice-presidential position in the local, opposed the bloc, while Downs, also an executive board member, supported it. In his typically passive and cowardly style, Schermerhorn agreed not to contest the election, allowing Downs to run for his vice presidency on the rotten-bloc Members First slate.

We do not know whether Solidarity will ever declare itself on the rights or wrongs of Members First. One thing is sure: they will never learn the revolutionary lessons. Meanwhile their “rank and filist” project in Local 100 lies in ruins.

against the numerically stronger Toussaint team. The main aims of his campaign were to win a larger audience for the perspective of building a revolutionary working-class leadership, and to gain support for militant mass struggle against the bosses.

Josephson's campaign emphasized the revolutionary socialist message. It explained that while mass working-class struggle can beat back the capitalists' attacks and even win temporary improvements, ultimately the only alternative to a world of worsening poverty, exploitation and oppression is the overthrow of capitalism and the building of socialism. He concentrated on the need for the most class-conscious workers to join together to build a revolutionary workers' party to lead their class's struggles. His campaign statement summed up:

**Great working class struggles are coming. We are confident that they will show increasing numbers of workers that revolutionary socialism offers the only alternative to increasing misery under capitalism. I hope to convince you. But you don't have to agree with my revolutionary anti-capitalist views to vote for me as Executive Board Member and Division Committee Chairman. We can discuss politics while we unite to fight the bosses and the union bureaucrats who hold us back. If you want a representative who won't back down from the bosses, who's committed to mobilizing workers' power in struggle to beat back their attacks and win our demands, who will stand up to the Local 100 bureaucrats' compromises with management, keep the membership informed of everything that's going on and fight for their rights both on the job and in the union, then I am the candidate you should vote for.**

#### AN ACTION PROGRAM FOR TRANSIT WORKERS

To this end, Josephson's campaign, in addition to demands of particular concern to track workers, advocated four key planks of an action program for transit workers:

##### **1. Prepare to Strike in 2005! No Givebacks!**

Josephson's campaign material argued that the Local must back up fighting words with strike action to win improved wages, benefits and working conditions and to win back transit workers' no-layoff clause. It made clear that he would oppose any attempt to give back any previously won gains.

##### **2. For Real Labor Unity Against the Capitalist Attacks! No Support to the Democrats or Republicans!**

His campaign also made clear that Local 100 must prepare to strike not just for the sake of transit workers. As the city's most potentially powerful union, Local 100 can lead the entire working class in fighting the current wave of layoffs, pay cuts and other attacks. By shutting down profit-making in the city, a transit strike could win the support of the whole working class in the struggle against job losses, pay cuts, budget slashing and racism. And transit workers could smash the Taylor Law that bans strikes by public sector workers. Josephson's campaign explained that this means giving no support to the politicians of the two capitalist parties, the Democrats and Republicans, who stab workers in the back every time. Instead, it means relying on workers' own power to strike and win.

##### **3. No to Imperialist War! No to Racism and Anti-Immigrant Attacks!**

As the economy falls into crisis, the capitalists are whipping up wars abroad as in Iraq to secure U.S. business interests and intensify their exploitation of the masses of the so-called "Third

World." At home, they are escalating racism and particularly anti-immigrant attacks to keep the working class divided and exploited.

Under Toussaint's leadership, the local has officially taken positions against the war on Iraq and in defense of immigrants under attack, but has done little to back up its words with actions. Josephson's campaign promised to fight for the Local to mobilize in mass actions against these and other ruling class attacks.

It drew attention to the fact that the MTA is currently engaged in a racist attack against the riding public and Local 100. They are trying to cut 22 elevator operator jobs at 5 subway stations in the predominantly Dominican neighborhood of Washington Heights. The bosses say there will be no layoffs, but this attack prepares the way for exactly that. Further, eliminating these jobs will bring great inconvenience and insecurity to residents and workers in the area. Toussaint's team and Members First are doing almost nothing to defeat this attack. Josephson vowed to fight for Local 100 to throw its full weight behind such struggles, and challenged Toussaint and Members' First candidates to this end at a number of events during the campaign.

#### **4. Union Democracy**

Finally, Josephson's campaign explained that Toussaint's attacks on union democracy were key to his success in sabotaging workers' demands for a strike during the last contract struggle. So Josephson declared his continued commitment to fight for fully democratic membership meetings with the ranks having the right to raise, debate and vote on motions; that way they can decide on all the big questions facing the union. Further, he condemned the bureaucrats' constant efforts to keep the membership in the dark regarding important issues, especially during contract negotiations, and promised to keep the ranks constantly informed of the union's activities and what the bosses are up to.

#### **THE ROAD OF STRUGGLE AHEAD**

The future struggles of New York City's transit workers have great importance for the class struggle in New York, and for workers across the country and even worldwide. With the potential to shut down the center of world imperialism, a victorious strike by transit workers could have huge effects. The LRP fought hard for a transit strike during the last contract round because it was the best way to advance transit workers' interests, and also because it could have dealt the White House's war drive against Iraq a bigger blow than any anti-war protest. Moreover, with an interracial membership featuring large numbers of Blacks, Latinos and immigrants, Local 100 could in particular show the leading role workers of color will have in the class struggle.

Similarly, through Josephson's campaign, as with his previous work in the union, we hope to provide an example of how socialists can work in the unions without succumbing to the opportunist pressures to discard revolutionary program and principle in pursuit of quick popularity. It also proves that revolutionaries cannot be satisfied by issuing abstract propaganda while playing no role in the real class struggle. We have seen rampant opportunism in the case of *R&FA* and its core "socialist" supporters. (See box.) And we continue to witness the sectarianism of groups like the Spartacists, who refuse to play any real role in the class struggle, sitting out these recent elections just as they did the last contract struggles. (See *PR* 60 and 66.)

The League for the Revolutionary Party, through the pages of *Revolutionary Transit Worker* and we hope with a small but growing number of militant workers, will keep fighting to unleash transit workers' potential from the stifling union bureaucracy. We will seek to convince them of the need to build the revolutionary party leadership our class so desperately needs. ●

## Iraq

*continued from page 1*

have been replaced with the harsh reality of increasing numbers of soldiers returning home in body bags. Behind the increasing disenchantment with Bush are also the worsening conditions for the working class at home, first hit by sharply rising unemployment as economic decline set in, and now still watching jobs disappear even though the capitalists are feasting on tax cuts and boasting of revived profits.

### ABOUT-FACES AND POLICY SHIFTS

By September, the White House was in crisis mode, becoming increasingly desperate to hand the U.N. direct responsibility for the situation in Iraq, along with much of the economic costs, before the presidential elections next year. But it is caught between contradictory forces from which there is no easy escape:

- Guerrilla resistance to the occupation continues to grow, and the U.S. has so far proved unable to effectively identify it, let alone defeat it;
- The Iraqi masses' overwhelming hostility to the U.S. occupation continues to intensify; and
- Rival imperialists like Germany and France are not anxious to ease the U.S.'s difficulties in Iraq, especially while the U.S. insists on keeping control over all the country's wealth for itself and the risks to the occupation troops continue to rise.

Recent months have seen a series of about-faces and policy shifts by the Bush Administration that show its rising anxiety as it searches for a way out. These shifts culminated in the White House's dramatic announcement in mid-November that it had reversed its commitment to occupy and run the country until an Iraqi government had been democratically elected.

Instead, U.S. pro-consul in Iraq Paul Bremer announced in mid-November that he would hand over power to a sovereign Iraqi government by July 2004 following what White House officials privately describe as "partial elections" – where the only people with the right to vote will be political "notables, elders and tribal chieftains" pre-approved by the U.S. So much for bringing democracy to Iraq! Further, U.S. troops will continue to



*Baghdad, October 26: Hotel where U.S. Deputy Defense Secretary was staying was hit by missile.*

occupy the country for years, with over 100,000 committed at least until the end of 2006. But this new plan may also collapse in the face of rising struggles of the Iraqi masses and the developing crisis of world capitalism, which increasingly limit the U.S.'s ability to take decisive action.

### BUSH'S DOOMED "NEW WORLD ORDER"

As we have repeatedly explained in these pages, the Bush Administration's decision to invade Iraq was not simply the result of neo-conservative politicians' dreams of dominating the world. Rather it was an attempt to answer fundamental needs of U.S. capitalism that had the bipartisan support of both Republicans and Democrats and to which bourgeois critics had no alternative. Seeing economic crisis spreading around the world and stagnation setting in domestically, the U.S. ruling class knew it would face increasing struggles of the workers and poor, at first most explosively in the "third world." Imperialist stability demands an all-powerful military threat to keep the masses down and rival states in line. The September 11 terrorist attacks challenged the authority of the U.S., the world's lone superpower, and it had to respond with a massive show of strength that would terrorize the Arab masses in particular, and force the whole world to cower. The invasion of Iraq fit the bill.

Further, the U.S. imperialists knew that as the world economy continues to deteriorate, its competition with rival imperialists will intensify. By seizing Iraq's oil wealth, the U.S. aimed at strengthening its control of world oil supplies, giving it a tremendous advantage over competitors like Germany and Japan, more dependent on Middle Eastern oil. It also gave the U.S. oil leverage over Saudi Arabia, which has become a trouble spot for U.S. imperialism. Understanding that economic strength must be backed by military power, it defied even the imperialists' international law and used its superpower military to brutally enforce its interests in Iraq – necessary preparation for using its huge military advantage elsewhere in the future.

Thus the U.S. had to dispense with the relative cooperation



*Powell, Bush and Rumsfeld faced with contradictions over "democracy" and control in Iraq.*



among the imperialists that marked the post-World War II period of economic boom and Cold War, and increasingly assert its power unilaterally. The Clinton Administration had taken steps in that direction when it bypassed the U.N. a few years ago in going to war against Serbia over Kosovo. By invading Iraq, the Bush Administration boldly advanced this drive toward unilateralism. In Bush's hoped-for "New World Order," the U.S. would be prepared to defy the will of its rivals while retaining the U.N. and invoking international law when useful.

### THE CRISIS OF U.S. UNILATERALISM

For a time, the invasion of Iraq had seemed to work. The U.S.'s quick victory appeared to give its rival imperialists, anxious to secure even a tiny amount of influence in post-Saddam Iraq, no choice but to swallow their earlier objections and approve the occupation. Thus in May, the U.N. Security Council recognized Bremer as the ultimate authority in Iraq. But by late August, with an over-extended military facing unexpectedly effective armed resistance, the administration was already discussing ways to get a U.N.-sanctioned military force into Iraq.

The U.S. was not looking to give up even a share of its command in Iraq – that would undermine all the aims behind its invasion and occupation – but was looking for help: finances, troops, and official approval to give other governments more of a cover under which to provide assistance.

The U.S. met with an embarrassing failure at the U.N. By September, France and Germany knew that the rising problems allowed them to bargain for political and economic concessions, leverage which would continue to grow over time. In response to the U.S. resolution, they raised demands for a greater U.N. role in shaping Iraq's political future and for a significantly faster transition to Iraqi self-rule. U.S. refusal to accept these demands would provide them cover for refusing to send troops and aid to Iraq.

The suicide bombing of the U.N. headquarters in Baghdad that killed top U.N. envoy Sergio Vieira de Mello and scores of others only encouraged the rival imperialists' stalling. By the beginning of October, after Secretary General Kofi Annan added his own voice to the French and German criticisms, U.S. hopes for achieving the resolution it wanted were dead.

The rival imperialists have an interest in restraining the U.S. in order to limit the growth of its military and economic advantage. But even they cannot afford to allow the U.S. to suffer too great a defeat: militarily weak in comparison, they rely on the U.S.'s power to maintain international stability in their own interests. Should the U.S. ever be threatened with a real defeat by the masses in Iraq, rather than the black eyes it is currently suffering, its rivals would rush in to try to stabilize imperialism's overall rule.

In the long term, the underlying drive of the capitalist system toward trade war and ultimately world war will compel the U.S.'s competitors to develop their own military forces. For the time being, however, they are satisfied to see the U.S. bogged down, hoping the rising costs of the occupation will make it back off from its aggressive unilateralism and even offer them a slice of the economic plunder.

### FORCES IN THE ARMED STRUGGLE

The military resistance in the form of guerrilla attacks and suicide bombings has shocked the U.S. with its scale and effectiveness. There is no immediate prospect of the U.S. suffering anything near an outright military defeat. But the resistance could prove so costly that growing opposition and rising class struggle at home in the future could force the U.S. to withdraw, though that too is not an immediate prospect. What scares the

## An Appeal to Readers of *Proletarian Revolution*

The pages of *Proletarian Revolution* testify to the fact that our serious commitment to Marxist theory, program and principles is matched by our commitment to the hard fought, daily struggles of our class against the rapacious, oppressive capitalist system.

We continue to have influence in union struggles in this country far beyond our current modest ranks. In this issues alone we feature articles on our involvement in the important struggles of transit workers in New York and teachers in Chicago.

Our commitment to internationalism also goes well beyond these pages. We have followed through on our extensive coverage of the revolutionary upheavals that have swept Latin America in recent years by sending comrades to key countries in pursuit of discussions with the most radical of would-be revolutionary groups, and must continue such efforts.

In recent months we have seen the U.S. imperialists fall from a position of apparently unchallenged supremacy in Iraq and the world to an unstable and deeply vulnerable power sitting atop a world beyond its control. The massive revolutionary upheavals of the workers of the world which loom in the future will deal it and the entire capitalism system tremendous blows. But the success of those struggles depends on the work of building the revolutionary party to lead them.

The League for the Revolutionary Party has very limited resources. To do our work we rely on the selfless contributions of our overwhelmingly working class supporters. To advance our work further we need to call on such support from you also. Any donation, no matter how small, will help us achieve our goals for improving the quality and frequency of our press, aid us in our ability to participate in the various struggles of workers in this country and enable us to spread our revolutionary message further around the world. So please, send a donation today to:

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occupiers far more is the rising anti-imperialist sentiment of the Iraqi masses and its very real potential to explode into a mass struggle that could threaten its authority in Iraq and spark a firestorm of revolt throughout the region.

The backbone of the resistance in central Iraq is certainly made up of elements from Saddam's former Ba'athist army and security services. And the suicide bombings, which make up a tiny percentage of the total attacks on U.S. forces, have almost

certainly been the work of foreign terrorists. But this does not mean that the armed resistance is coming solely from Saddamists and terrorists.

First, there are numerous anti-Ba'athist armed political groupings, ranging from Islamists through Iraqi and pan-Arab nationalists and pseudo-socialists. These groups draw members from the ranks of the Saddam's military, have announced themselves and claimed responsibility for various attacks.

Second, it is true that most attacks have taken place in the "Sunni Triangle," where most of the occupation forces are concentrated. But approximately 40 percent of attacks have taken place outside of this area, from the predominantly Shi'ite South to Kurdish areas in the North. The guerrillas in these areas clearly rely on at least the loyalty if not active support of the local population for their operations. Recent studies of captured, injured and killed guerrillas have confirmed that the guerrillas come from among not just the Sunnis, but Shi'ites, Christians, Turkomen and Kurds as well. In fact, while the Western media have tried their best not to report it, occupation forces deep in the predominantly Shi'ite South of the country, where there are few Sunni Muslims, face frequent and increasing attack, sustaining deaths and many casualties. Spanish forces around the Shi'ite centers of Najaf and Diwaniyah have even come under artillery attack. In the North, major attacks have been conducted by the guerrillas of the nationalist Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), forcing the U.S. to promise Turkey that it will launch an offensive to "eradicate" the thousands-strong group.



Baghdad, November 10. Iraqi Shi'ites with casket of U.S.-appointed mayor of Sadr City, killed by U.S. sentry.

### RISING ANTI-IMPERIALIST CONSCIOUSNESS

The biggest threat to the imperialists has been the increasing anti-imperialist attitude of the masses of Iraqis, particularly the Shi'ites. Iraqis are well aware of the U.S.'s role in supporting Israel's oppression of the Palestinians and its backing of various Arab regimes' oppression of their own people (including Saddam's past repressions). Accordingly, the most common attitude toward the U.S. is that it aims to seize Iraq's oil wealth, not to free the Iraqi people from oppression. But in the absence of a viable secular alternative to the Islamic religious leaders, all the masses hear is talk of launching a "holy war" against the "infidel" invaders.

As we described in the last edition of *PR*, by far the fastest growing political organization in Iraq since Saddam's downfall has been the militant Islamic organization *Jimaat-i-Sadr-Thani* (JST) led by Muqtada Sadr. While most other opposition groupings were crushed by Saddam or forced into exile, the Sadr

movement won a reputation as courageous opponents of Saddam. As the U.S. began its invasion, the Sadrist armed forces drove Saddam's police and security forces out of the main Shi'ite working-class neighborhoods and slums in Baghdad and elsewhere, seizing key installations including large caches of weapons as well as mosques, schools and hospitals. Baghdad's "Saddam City" area, home to millions of Shi'ites, was renamed "Sadr City," and a Sadrist cleric was established as the predominant religious figure. The JST also confirmed its deeply reactionary character, imposing the forced veiling of women and their murder for various "immoral" offenses.

The JST also went on an offensive against rival Shi'ite leaders and groupings. First, when the U.S.'s favored Shi'ite cleric, Abdul Majid al-Khoei, returned from exile to the Holy City of Najaf and held a meeting with the city's previous Shi'ite leader and collaborator with Saddam, Haidar al-Kilidar, Sadr supporters killed them both. Most provocatively, Sadrists rallied at the home of Iraq's preeminent Shi'ite leader, Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, threatening him with death if he did not leave the country.

Sistani, however, still claims the following of the majority of Shi'ites, and he survived these attempts, forcing Sadr to accept a subordinate role for the moment. To maintain his base of support, Sistani has made increasingly strong condemnations of the U.S. occupation. Having refused to oppose Saddam during the latter's reign, Sistani responded to the U.S. invasion's successes by calling on all Shi'ites to not interfere with the occupying forces. But as anti-U.S. sentiment rose in the following months, pressure mounted. When occupation head Bremer announced the formation of an appointed and essentially powerless Interim Governing Council (IGC), Sistani had no choice but to condemn it in a *fatwa* (religious edict) and call on Shi'ites to work for democratic elections.

Meanwhile, mass pressure grew on Sadr to launch a struggle against the occupation, leading him to announce the formation of an Islamic army and calling for volunteers. But despite his frequent denunciations of America, Britain and Israel as the "great imperialist infidels," he has no intention of leading a real struggle against them. Rather, he hopes that following a U.S. withdrawal he will be able to seize power against the much weakened Sunnis and his Shi'ite rivals. As committed to capitalism as his co-thinkers in the Iranian clerical dictatorship, Sadr does not want to mobilize the masses in a struggle he cannot control.

Sadr has alternated between fiery rhetorical denunciations of the occupation and hints that he would be willing to cooperate with and even participate in a future "democratic" government. Sadr's refusal to follow through on his promises of struggle have cost him support. But in the absence of a genuine proletarian alternative, he still retains the following of the most militant masses of Shi'ite workers and poor.

The U.S. has similarly hesitated to move against the JST. At various points they have threatened to arrest Sadr, only to back off. They are aware that any move against him would likely trigger an uprising of millions. The U.S. would fear such a confrontation under any circumstances, but they know that as long as they fail to win the support of Grand Ayatollah Sistani, they cannot hope to restrain the response of the overwhelming majority of Shi'ites.

### THE NEW U.S. PLAN FOR A PUPPET REGIME

By early November, the U.S. occupation of Iraq was in crisis. Its puppet Governing Council consists of pro-capitalist Iraqi leaders with no significant following among the masses and thus no ability to restrain them. Fears that the Shi'ite masses would eventually join with the ongoing guerrilla struggle rose to a fever pitch, and the White House summoned Bremer to Washington in early November

for emergency meetings of the National Security Council (NSC).

At the first of those meetings, a top secret report on the state of the occupation by the CIA's Station Chief in Baghdad was discussed, the contents of which were later leaked to the media. The report gave a "bleak assessment" that the armed resistance to the occupation "is broad, strong and getting stronger." Junking the White House's line that the insurgency is limited to Saddamists and Al Qaeda terrorists, it explained that "there are thousands in the resistance – not just a core of Ba'athists . . . and growing every day," and "that the coalition's inability to crush the insurgents is convincing growing numbers of Iraqis that the occupation can be defeated, bolstering support for the insurgents."

This assessment echoed a report by British Intelligence based on their experience of occupation in the relatively more stable South. It warned of the danger of a "massive uprising" by Shi'ites, and urged a swift transfer of full governing powers to an Iraqi government to avoid such a fate.

The problem was how to create a government composed of Iraqi leaders who could be trusted not to challenge imperialist interests and yet have a level of popular support that could restrain the masses. One sure threat to such a solution would be to hold democratic elections. As the *New York Times* commented on the debate inside the White House:

**Officials are concerned that a grassroots election held in the current atmosphere of rising antipathy to the U.S. among ordinary Iraqis could produce a result counter to Washington's real interests.** (Nov. 12.)

Within days, through its puppets in the Iraqi Governing Council, the White House announced its "dramatic change of course": by the end of June 2004 it will hand power to an Iraqi government that will *not* be elected but rather selected by regional "caucuses" – whose members, however, will have to be approved, in advance, by the occupying powers. Elections would be postponed indefinitely, and whether they ever take place would be up to the new Iraqi government.

Essential to Washington's hopes was the expectation that it could split the increasingly unified Shi'ite opposition, and in particular isolate the Sadr movement. With Sistani fearing future challenges from Sadr, the U.S. hoped that it could win his support or at least acquiescence for the U.S.'s plans. In return, it would quietly strengthen his position, guaranteeing places in government for leaders of his choosing, and directing "development funds" toward his organizations and allies. Overall, it aimed to forge an alliance between Sistani and the main Shi'ite organizations represented on the IGC, including the Iranian-backed Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) and the al-Da'wa al-Islamiyya (Islamic Call) Party.

While threatening Iran over its nuclear program, the White House at the same time held secret meetings with the Iranian government to secure its support for the plan. The implied pay-off to Iran would be the U.S.'s backing off from threats against it. Anxious for just such a solution, the Iranian government played along, and President Mohammed Khatami took advantage of a visit by IGC Chair Jalal Talabani to announce his support for the U.S. plan.

#### **GROWING SHI'ITE OPPOSITION TO THE U.S.**

While Sistani probably wanted to find a way to accept the plan, demands for an end to the occupation and for democratic



*Baghdad Red Cross offices after bomb blasts killed 35 people in one day.*

elections were becoming louder. That pressure forced him again to come out in opposition to the U.S. plan and demand immediate elections and an end to the U.S. occupation.

The White House was once more thrown into a crisis, caught between confronting the Shi'ites by opposing democratic elections and its fear of elections leading to a hostile Shi'ite government. After several days of equivocating, the White House decided that it would be better to deny democratic rights in advance before the masses became more organized, than to rig elections or overturn an elected government after the fact. So the U.S. got a majority of the IGC to back its plan and announced that it would reject Sistani's demands; it will hand over nominal sovereignty to an essentially unelected government by the end of June.

In order to intimidate Sistani and Sadr, the U.S. made two significant moves. First, it announced the merging of the private militias of various parties of the IGC into a new state paramilitary organization. Thus it guaranteed the permanent influence of these unelected parties in the future Iraqi state and legitimized the armed forces they use to assert their power. Importantly, the new force will include troops not just from the slavishly pro-imperialist parties like the Ahmed Chalabi's Iraqi National Congress and Iyyad Alawi's Iraqi National Accord, as well as Jalal Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and Massoud Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party, but also the Iranian-trained forces of SCIRI's Badr Corps and even those of the Communist Party! Further, this paramilitary group will be directed by the IGC's Interior Ministry, controlled by the ex-Ba'athist Alawi, long trained in the Saddam school of repressing the Shi'ites!

Second, the U.S. sent more direct warnings to Sadr. Immediately after announcing its rejection of elections, the U.S. launched a military operation to arrest one of Sadr's key lieutenants, Amar al-Yasiri, in connection with an October firefight between Sadrists and the U.S. army, which produced US casualties. As we go to press, we are yet to see what Sistani and Sadr's responses will be. Immediately following the U.S. and IGC's announcement, Sistani's key representative, Sheik Abdel Mehdi al-Karbalayi, spoke to the media condemning the decision. "The time has come for us to get our rights," he declared, but immediately qualified his remarks, saying "I'm not saying there will be military action. Maybe it will be civilian. But there will be instability."

Meanwhile, the Sadrists moved to hold a series of relatively small demonstrations in Baghdad and elsewhere demanding

elections as well as the freeing of their arrested supporters. Further, Sadr called for a nationwide general strike to coincide with the anniversary of the assassination by Saddam's security forces of his father, Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr. The anniversary of Sadiq al-Sadr's assassination is marked by Shi'ites well beyond those who directly support his son. Sadr's call for a general strike that day is designed to put pressure on Sistani to back the call himself, as well as further associating resistance to the U.S. with Sadr's movement.

But Sadr's delaying of immediate action against the U.S. also shows his weakness, and there is little reason to think that an immediate call by Sadr for a general strike would be widely followed: his following is stronger among the unemployed than among employed workers, who generally embrace more secular traditions and are weary of Sadr's reactionary fundamentalism.

Overall, while the growing rebelliousness of the Shi'ite masses is forcing Sadr to threaten mass action and Sistani to make threats against the U.S. through his representatives, it is likely that both will try to avoid a real confrontation. Time will tell, however, if they will be able to restrain the masses or will be forced into further protest moves.

### THE FUTURE OF THE U.S. OCCUPATION

The U.S. knows that a showdown with the Shi'ite masses would make a mockery of its claims to have freed them from tyranny, and would likely spark a new firestorm of anti-imperialist struggle throughout the region. It will continue to try to avoid a major confrontation and try to divide the main Shi'ite groups. Meanwhile Sistani and Sadr will similarly seek to avoid a decisive confrontation. If the U.S. fails to find a solution, it will have no choice but to find a pretext for a general military crackdown



*Najaf, August 29. Car bomb killed prominent Shi'ite cleric who collaborated with U.S. occupation forces.*

and the reimposition of effective colonial rule with the flimsiest of Iraqi facades.

While the forms of neo-colonial rule that the U.S. will pursue in the near future are somewhat unpredictable, the longer-term perspective is clearer. Throughout the Middle East, U.S. imperialism has had to recognize the impossibility of stabilizing its grip without reforming its regional junior-partner regimes and making cosmetic "democratic" concessions. But what the imperialists mean by "democracy" is really pluralism. They seek to divide the "Arab street" in each country in order to prevent working-class-wide revolts that could overcome the old and newly-whipped-up ethnic, religious and political differences. They pit the various bourgeois nationalists, clerics and politicians within each sector in a war of all against all, to determine how the small pie allotted by imperialism will be divided.

Imperialist countries, as a result of the super-profits they accumulate from their domination of the entire world, have been able to subsidize a sizeable privileged middle class with a stake in the capitalist system, which forms a stable base for pro-capitalist parties. But the ruling classes of dominated and exploited neo-colonies like Iraq can afford to sustain only a narrow privileged layer and must rely on more or less naked forms of dictatorship to suppress the masses. As long as the U.S. maintains a massive military presence in Iraq, it can afford to allow a more pluralistic political system. But ultimately it will have to reduce its occupation forces for use elsewhere across the globe, and will have to accept the need for a strong-man rule in Iraq akin to the Ba'athist dictatorship they overthrew – to try to maintain the stability imperialism requires.

In Iraq the U.S. tacks and veers, playing off the Kurdish, Sunni and Shi'ite politicians and clerics against each other while at the same time seeking to militarily overawe the masses and guarantee that its promised "democratic" institutions do not result in anything like democratic control by the workers and peasants. As we go to press, the U.S. has stepped up its use of repressive techniques practiced by the barbarous Israeli occupiers of Palestine. Through the use of Special Forces troops it is engaging in collective punishment of families and villages of armed fighters and targeted assassinations of resistance leaders.

### TOWARD MASS STRUGGLE AGAINST IMPERIALISM

As *Proletarian Revolution* has stressed over the years, Leon Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution pointed out the key objective importance of democratic and anti-imperialist tasks,

## THE LIFE AND DEATH OF STALINISM

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— Al Richardson, *Revolutionary History*

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especially in colonial, semi-colonial and neo-colonial countries. It reasoned that no bourgeois force in those countries could go too far in attacking imperialism or to obtain such gains in a lasting fashion, despite mass pressure during popular uprisings to do so. Only the proletarian socialist revolution, fighting against economic exploitation and tyrannical oppression and extending across national borders, could achieve the democratic goals through the creation of a regional federation of workers' states.

In Iraq, only the working class can lead the masses out their present nightmare. The working class has no interest in maintaining capitalist exploitation and imperialist domination. The revolutionary overthrow of imperialist capitalist rule in Iraq and the building of a workers' state committed to socialism is the only way the masses' democratic rights will be secured.

The imperialist invasion and occupation has no doubt thrown the working class into disarray. Mass unemployment has skyrocketed, and many industries are yet to resume work. Yet outbreaks of working-class struggle are on the rise. Protests and riots by unemployed and unpaid workers began soon after the occupation and are becoming more frequent. There have been wildcat strikes by workers in a number of industries, including the crucial oil industry.

Revolutionaries in Iraq must participate in these struggles, helping their fellow workers learn their class interests. But they must not ignore the masses' struggle against imperialism and for their democratic rights – on the contrary, those struggles are crucial. The Shi'ite clerical leaders are mobilizing most of their support – not because of their religious edicts but because of their claims to fight against imperialism and its local enforcers. In turn, the bourgeois Kurdish leaders are encouraging pogromist attacks on Arabs to deflect attention from their betrayal of the Kurds' fundamental demand for an independent state.

These demagogues' support can be undermined by working-class revolutionaries fighting as the most consistent champions of anti-imperialism and democracy, primarily against imperialism but also against religious and nationalist attacks on democratic freedoms. Revolutionaries favor the defeat of the imperialists in every clash with Iraqi forces of all stripes, but would at all points seek to mobilize and arm the working class independently for its own self-defense. Revolutionaries also distinguish between attacks on the imperialist occupiers and those designed to disrupt the lives and livelihoods of the Iraqi masses.

Working-class militants and even genuine democrats would fight for a *revolutionary constituent assembly*, organized against the imperialists and their collaborators, to decide on a constitution and government; authentic communists would explain that the struggle will prove that the only way to secure that demand is through the defeat of imperialism by overthrowing capitalism and establishing working-class rule. They would champion the cause of a united and independent Kurdistan and the democratic rights and freedoms of all ethnic minorities and oppressed groups like the Shi'ites.

We are not aware of any genuinely revolutionary communist organization active in Iraq today. The Communist Party has long collaborated with various bourgeois opposition groups and is now openly on the side of imperialism; it has a member in the Interim Governing Council. The more left-wing Worker-Communist Party of Iraq (WCPI) is playing an active role in workers' struggles and opposing the Islamists and nationalists. But while it opposes the U.S. occupation in words, it has found a unique and cowardly way to capitulate to imperialism none the less.

In the battles between the imperialist occupiers and the armed resistance, it officially takes no side, failing to see that the greatest threat to the masses is imperialism. It condemns the

## *U.S. Suppresses Iraqi Labor*

One democratic right the U.S. occupation is clearly not defending is the right of labor to organize freely. Iraq had a rich tradition of trade-union organization in the years after the fall of the British-backed monarchy in 1958. But Saddam Hussein's dictatorship eliminated all labor rights.

- Despite their supposed hatred of Saddam's repression, the occupation authorities are enforcing his 1987 law denying the right of public sector workers – including the oil industry – to join trade unions.

- Bremer in June issued an edict saying that anyone encouraging strike activity or any kind of disruption in a factory or in any economically important enterprise would be arrested.

- The U.S. rulers refuse to fund unemployment benefits for the estimated over 70 percent of Iraqi workers without jobs.

- In late November, the U.S. arrested two main leaders of the Union of the Unemployed in Iraq, an organization initiated by members of the WCPI that claims tens of thousands of members. This followed arrests over the summer of dozens of UUI members. The UUI has also been attacked by the Islamists.

- In early December, the U.S. attacked and ransacked the offices of the Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions, arresting eight members. The IFTU is linked with the Workers Democratic Trade Union Movement, which was founded by Iraqi Communists over two decades ago and suffered severe repression under Saddam Hussein.

guerrilla resistance as “reactionary,” refusing to offer it military support in the struggle against the greater and more immediate imperialist enemy, and even pays lip-service to the imperialists' current “de-Ba'athification” campaign. But the masses will only be able to do away with their indigenous Saddamist, nationalist and clerical enemies through an uncompromising struggle against the greater power these forces serve: imperialism. Refusing to take sides against imperialism only leaves the masses in the hands of the counterrevolutionaries fighting the imperialists now. Accordingly, the WCPI timidly talks of favoring the “withdrawal” of the occupying forces, not their defeat.

Instead of the U.S. occupation, the WCPI favors interim rule by the imperialist United Nations. This is a grotesque capitulation to imperialism, since it was the U.N. which approved the first bloody Gulf War, starved millions with over a decade of economic sanctions, oversaw the division of the country and regular bombings in the so-called “no-fly zones” and has now endorsed the U.S. as the official governing power of Iraq.

Today the Iraqi masses are increasingly supporting the fighters against the imperialist occupation. They will only be able to break with the counterrevolutionary nationalists and clerics if revolutionaries play a courageous role in the struggle against the occupation, proving in practice that only the working class can lead the struggle to victory. They will find the road to victory only if a genuinely revolutionary communist party leadership of the most class-conscious workers is built to help show the way. As the struggle goes on, the growing mass resistance will inspire workers' and oppressed everywhere to not be “shocked and awed” by imperialism's military might nor bowed down by the poverty and exploitation they enforce.●

# Anti-War Leaders Divert Movement

Revolutionaries stand for the military defeat of the U.S. occupation of Iraq and the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the imperialist U.S. troops and their allies. We in the League for the Revolutionary Party believe that a massive opposition to the Iraq war will arise when large sections of the U.S. working class understand that the class enemy they face at home – the capitalists who fire thousands of workers and fund politicians who slash public services – are the same ruling class that seeks to dominate the world and sends young people to kill and be killed abroad. That eruption would lend real support to the Iraqi masses fight against the criminal occupation.

Anti-war organizing in the U.S. remains divided among two main formations, ANSWER (Act Now to Stop War & End Racism) and UFPJ (United for Peace and Justice). ANSWER, however diverse its nominal coalition, is controlled by the Workers World Party (WWP) and typically decides by itself when and where to protest, then invites others to tag along. UFPJ, although run by nominally anti-imperialist radicals, congenitally accommodates to pro-United Nations and pro-Israel liberals. It has a strong “Anybody but Bush” pro-Democratic Party wing.

From the communist point of view (see our reports in *Proletarian Revolution* Nos. 67 and 68), there is little to choose politically between them. Neither stands for the defeat of imperialism and the defense of Iraq. For all its anti-imperialist rhetoric, ANSWER does not allow anti-imperialist speakers to confront the imperialist Democrats on its platforms. Even Workers World’s own “socialist” speakers keep their mouths shut. UFPJ more openly promulgates pro-imperialist politics in the form of demands that the United Nations take over the occupation from U.S. forces. ANSWER’s chief spokesman, Ramsey Clark, also typically denounces the U.S. for usurping the powers of the imperialist U.N.

## PATRIOTIC SLOGANS

The leading anti-war organizations have adopted the slogan “Bring the Troops Home.” The slogan is U.S.-nationalist, since it asserts that the main victims are the American troops. Many of the troops indeed are victims; they come from the working class, were seduced into the army by economic incentives and don’t share the ruling class’s desire for this war. Nevertheless, the fundamental character of the American troops in Iraq is that of an occupying and victimizing force. Like during the Vietnam War, a number of liberal politicians have adopted “Bring the Troops Home” as a patriotic way of appealing to anti-war sentiment. They propose to continue the occupation of Iraq through the U.N. or other substitutes, with the guiding hand of the U.S. still in place.

Worse, “Bring the Troops Home” also feeds into, and often coexists with, “Support Our Troops,” the pro-war slogan used to justify support for the U.S. military. When used in this sense it is a deliberate lie, designed to blur the anti-war line and confuse supporters. The government is supporting the war, not the troops: it is cutting veterans’ benefits, chiseling soldiers out of health care and breaking all promises about how long they have to stay in Iraq.

Of course, many people who mistakenly favor the slogan are against the war and the occupation. There is a movement of soldiers’ families who are uniting behind “Bring the Troops Home” and express a great deal of hatred for the “playtoy generalissimos”

who are getting their children and spouses killed. But the slogan leaves them tied to patriotic illusions, and it doesn’t serve the interests of working-class soldiers who need to really understand how they are being used by imperialism.

Another slogan commonly pushed by the anti-war coalitions and the far left – notably the WWP and ISO – is “Money for Jobs (or Education), Not for War.” This slogan is meant to expose the government’s willingness to spend lavishly on imperial needs, in contrast to its cutbacks of social programs at home. But it actually creates illusions in what the bourgeois state can or will do. The slogan is liberal pap which feeds the lie that voting for Democrats will result in expanded social programs.

The slogan also implies that a superpower can exist without powerful military forces, thereby dodging the reality that the U.S. capitalists pursue war for inherent imperialist reasons. (On this, see our article on military conscription on page 15.)

We are certainly for fighting for the needs of the working class at home as well as against imperialist wars abroad. But socialists above all should not mask the depth of the social transformation that is needed. That is why we have raised slogans that call for general strikes against the capitalist attacks and denounce both the Democrats and Republicans as parties of war, racism and austerity. When an LRP speaker addressed an anti-war rally in Chicago in April (see *PR* 67), he made the connection between the war abroad and the class war at home:

**We have to . . . do all we can to encourage the fightback against layoffs, budget cuts and increasing racist attacks at home, including fighting the pro-Democratic Party union bureaucrats who hold back those struggles. Growing struggles here will start to make the connection between the ruling class’s attacks on us here, and its military attacks abroad.**

**This war is about capitalist profit-making, from exploiting the Middle East’s oil, to exploiting workers in the U.S. Such growing struggles, if they break free of the grip of the Democratic Party, could really challenge the system and lay the basis for overthrowing it once and for all through a socialist revolution. That’s the way to go from defeating this war, to making sure wars like this never happen again. That’s how we can avoid the trap that stopped the anti-Vietnam war movement from challenging the system and rather let it live to commit more crimes.**

## FOR A WORKING-CLASS ANTI-WAR STRUGGLE

Despite their overt and covert support for the occupation, the Democratic presidential candidates have succeeded in corraling much of the anti-war movement, including those trade unions that opposed the war and the electoralist elements that supported Ralph Nader’s dissident bourgeois candidacy in 2000.

Working-class revolutionaries know that one major successful strike would do more to inhibit the ruling class war drive and ignite the underlying anger of the beleaguered American working class than a hundred middle-class protests. We fight for advanced workers to take the lead of all forces devoted to ending Washington’s incessant wars. We openly fight to make our fellow workers conscious of their power and the need for a general strike in the interests of the working class at home and abroad. We openly fight for the re-creation of the proletarian revolutionary party to overthrow imperialism and its butchery once and for all. ●

# **The Leninist Position on Conscription**

The League for the Revolutionary Party has an absolutely unique position on military conscription in the imperialist countries. We share it with Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, but with no other group we know of on the American left scene. So it is little wonder that when we restated our communist position in the Winter 2003 issue of *Proletarian Revolution* (No. 66), we came under attack for allegedly calling for a revived draft.

The attackers include not only the fake-Trotskyist Spartacist League, for whom lying is habitual, but also the Detroit-based Communist Voice group, which descends from the Stalinist tradition that has its own notorious devotion to fabrication. Last May, Tim Hall wrote on its website that the Conyers-Rangel bill introduced in Congress in January calling for re-instating the draft had “received acceptance from a direction that will surprise many people – from the left, from a Trotskyist organization, the League for a Revolutionary Party.”

Misstating our name is one thing; butchering the truth is another. In fact, the very first sentence Hall quotes from *PR* says exactly the opposite of what he charges: “As revolutionary Marxists, we oppose all bourgeois armies, conscripted or mercenary.” To be specific, we are flat-out opposed to any support whatever to the capitalist military machine, drafted or volunteer, Conyers-Rangel or not. However, for anyone seriously interested in destroying that machine, opposition is only the beginning of the discussion over how to reach that goal.

## **“NO DRAFT” IS NO ANSWER**

We are for a workers’ militia, an army totally independent of and opposed to the capitalist state. Our policy towards the bourgeois military is to seek to split it, to turn its base against the top, to turn imperialist wars into civil class wars, and out of that conflict forge the workers’ red army. We learned that from Lenin and Trotsky.

But it is ABC for Marxists that as long as the working class does not overthrow the bourgeoisie, state power will remain capitalist – and no state can exist without armed power. *There is no way, except in pacifist fantasy, to eliminate the bourgeois military as a whole without overthrowing the bourgeois state itself through revolutionary class struggle.* Within that context, any campaign against the draft represents a demand on the capitalist state to maintain a professional, mercenary army, since that is its *only* alternative. That is why we say “‘No Draft’ Is No Answer.”

A mercenary, “voluntary,” army provides long-term military training to those who choose to be professional soldiers. They are trained as an elite corps of thugs, in many respects effectively a police department that can be used against masses abroad as well as at home. On the other hand, a drafted army is more susceptible to the moods and attitudes of the masses and is more accessible to revolutionary propaganda and agitation. Over time, the class distinctions between the “grunts” and the officer corps in conscripted armies become sharper, and the discontent of the working class ranks accelerates. Further, a drafted army allows all workers to receive essential military training, which is absolutely crucial for the success of socialist revolution.

For these reasons, as long as some kind of bourgeois military is unavoidable, revolutionaries *prefer* a drafted army to a merce-

nary army. So while we in no way support the bourgeois draft and would never vote for one or call for its resumption, we argue *against* campaigns that oppose resumption of the draft. We also argue against those who advocate refusing to enter the draft, should it be resumed. As genuine communists have always done, we go with our fellow workers when they are conscripted. We call on all would-be revolutionaries to join us in the military if they are drafted and work within it to win other recruits to the revolutionary cause.

Hall’s accusation that we support the Conyers/Rangel proposal is thoroughly dishonest. In the *PR* 66 article that Hall attacks, we clearly described the real motivation for the Conyers/Rangel proposal: “In reality, like other ‘anti-war’ Democratic politicians, Rangel wants to carry out imperialist policies with a better cover.” We pointed out that Congressman Rangel tried to out-tough Bush on the need for a strong military; we quoted him as saying, “The administration has yet to address the question of whether our military is of sufficient strength and size to meet present and future commitments.”

We can add that Rangel claimed that those who rule will be more careful about launching wars if their children are to be drafted. That is sheer demagoguery. Bourgeois drafts do not mean universal conscription: they allow millions of exemptions, officer posts and alternate service channels for ruling-class and often middle-class youth. These escapes are not available to young workers, especially those of color. Our propaganda has always exposed this fact. So much for our “acceptance” of Rangel’s call for a draft!

## **LENIN ON MILITARISM: “FULL SPEED AHEAD!”**

Hall has to make a hash of Lenin’s position in order to attack ours. (He thankfully ignores Trotsky, because he does “not consider Trotskyism a revolutionary theory.”) Ignorantly labeling Lenin “a most determinedly anti-militarist revolutionary,” Hall tries to obscure the fact that Lenin time and again warmly welcomed the inevitable militarization of the masses because it advances the capacity of the workers to overthrow capitalism!

In our pamphlet *‘No Draft’ Is No Answer!*, and in the article “Marxism and the Draft” in *Socialist Voice* No. 9, we published extended citations from the major Marxist thinkers on militarism and the draft. For example, Engels wrote:

**The more workers who are trained in the use of weapons, the better. Universal conscription is the necessary and natural extension of universal suffrage; it enables the electorate to carry out its resolutions arms in hand... .**

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

Lenin spelled it out in his article, “The Military Program of the Proletarian Revolution” (in Vol. 23 of his *Collected Works*):

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

“support” it. We fight it. But *how* do we fight? We explain that trusts and the employment of women in industry are progressive. We do not want a return to the handicraft system, domestic drudgery for women. Forward through the trusts, etc., and beyond them to socialism!

With the necessary changes that argument is applicable also to the present militarization of the population. Today the imperialist bourgeoisie militarizes the youth as well as the adults; tomorrow, it may begin militarizing the women. Our attitude should be: All the better! Full speed ahead! For the faster we move, the nearer shall we be to the armed uprising against capitalism.

Further on Lenin says:

The women of an oppressed and really revolutionary class ... will say to their sons: “You will soon be grown up. You will be given a gun. Take it and learn the military art properly. The proletarians need this knowledge not to shoot your brothers, the workers of other countries, as it is being done in the present war, and as the traitors to socialism are telling you to do. They need it to fight the bourgeoisie of their own country, to put an end to exploitation, poverty and war, and not by pious wishes, but by defeating and disarming the bourgeoisie.”

And those quotations are just a sample.

In contrast to all this evidence, Hall tries to show that Lenin was in favor of campaigning against the draft by dredging up one isolated quote from a lecture that Lenin gave in May 1917: “It is difficult to conceive them [the American people] standing for compulsory military service, for the setting up of an army pursuing any aims of conquest.” But Lenin was just commenting here that the American bourgeoisie was aiming to change this mood by entering World War I: “The American capitalists have stepped into this war in order to have an excuse, behind a smokescreen of lofty ideals, for building up a strong standing army.” (“War and Revolution” in *Collected Works*, v. 24, p. 417.)

Lenin’s 1917 lecture was not about tactics and strategy for revolutionaries in relation to the military in general. It was about the character of the imperialist war and the broad nature of the revolutionary situations that would result from the war. It was also a product of a highly specific context. Marx had speculated that the United States in the 19th century, like very few other countries, might not need a violent revolution, in part due to its lack of a standing military machine. That was Lenin’s context. Can anyone seriously claiming to be a revolutionary contend that such a reference applies to the U.S. today?

Hall sucks out of his thumb the notion that this one sentence proves that Lenin was “a staunch opponent of conscription for the reactionary bourgeois military machine.” It doesn’t prove that at all, if Hall means that Lenin ever called for a protest against conscription. What it shows is Lenin’s general opposition to the imperialist military machine, conscripted or otherwise, in the American context. His fundamental outlook was expressed by his “Full speed ahead!” in relation to the bourgeoisie’s wartime militarization of the population; that is incompatible with campaigning against the draft.

In another 1917 speech, in June, Lenin saluted the fraternization that was taking place between “enemy” Russian and German soldiers at the front:

**We must make fraternization conscious, we must see that it is transferred into an exchange of ideas, that it is carried over to the other fronts, that it kindles a revolution on the other side of the trenches.** (*Collected Works*, v. 41, p. 437.)

A newspaper reported that he was asked whether workers should refuse to be drafted and sent to the front. (The Russian



*Red Guards training in Petrograd, 1917. Workers and peasants conscripted into the Czarist army brought their military skills to the aid of the workers’ revolution.*

bourgeois government was drafting Bolshevik workers for that purpose.) Referring to Karl Liebknecht, the German communist leader who had himself been drafted, Lenin said:

**Under the Tsarist power we had to go into the army and work there. Liebknecht put on a uniform to conduct agitation against the war. It is naive to think that the war can be abolished by separate anarchic action.**

Hall just can’t get it that Lenin opposed the draft only in the sense that he opposed the entire bourgeois military. Yet later in his contradictory article, Hall observes that “Lenin said the workers should not recoil in horror at compulsory military service but should utilize it to acquire military training that will help them overthrow the bourgeoisie.” If Hall really understands that Lenin held this view, then why denounce the LRP for saying the same thing? It looks like *CV*’s leftover Stalinism has blinded them to the fact that Trotskyists are not only the authentic revolutionaries but are also dedicated to telling the truth about Lenin.

## THE ANTI-VIETNAM WAR MOVEMENT

The rest of Hall’s argument consists of painting the anti-war movement of the 1960’s and early 1970’s as if the anti-draft actions were the height of the movement’s militancy and most conscious anti-imperialism. He falls into calling the anti-war movement the “anti-draft movement” and glorifies the tendency to focus on middle-class anti-authority issues. And he totally ignores the fact that because of its class leadership it was incapable of mobilizing the industrial working class, the only force in the U.S. that can end all imperialist wars.

Citing the trend towards greater militancy among youthful demonstrators, Hall claims that opposition to the draft was the key. It is true that the movement often focused on the draft as a symbol of the war and that many advocated and practiced draft resistance. But the defining character of the *anti-war* movement remained its opposition to the war itself, not just to the draft. And the increased militancy Hall associates with the anti-draft momentum did not have the revolutionary content Hall imagines. Let us put the anti-war movement in its context. The force that really compelled the U.S. to pull out of the war was the massive struggle of the Vietnamese people against imperialism. At home, the ruling class faced powerful ghetto revolts and, by the 1970’s, a plunging economy and massive industrial wildcat strike wave. In relative isolation from these upheavals, the middle-class-led anti-war movement played a role, but not the decisive one.

Further, by politically limiting its goals to those acceptable to the liberal bourgeois Democratic Party officials, the anti-war



demonstrators allowed the ruling class to get out of a losing and damaging war with the imperialist system left limping but essentially intact. We are paying the price for that today, Hall's retrospective celebration aside.

Tragically, the leading role in policing the anti-war movement was played by various pseudo-revolutionary socialist organizations. These outfits detoured the militants whom they attracted into acting to ensure the liberal flavor of the movement. Hall is a latter day reflection of that disastrous "socialist" course.

### **PACIFISM AND CLASS DIVISIONS**

The pacifist viewpoint stresses the horror of universal military training (which Lenin urged workers not to recoil from, as Hall acknowledges). But for Hall, as for much of the student left in the 1960's, breaking with pacifism simply means adopting macho tactics in the street. Confrontationism doesn't break with the fundamental assumptions of the pacifists, expressed in the demands to end the draft so that "we" won't be tainted with militarism. The militant tactics were merely stronger gestures disguising a fundamentally moralistic outlook not much different from that of the pacifists who insist on civil disobedience. That is why Lenin condemned even the militant social pacifists with as much anger as he condemned the overtly pro-war social patriots.

When the anti-war movement focused on the draft as the main issue, it was weakened politically. Aiming at the draft reinforced the barrier between the middle-class anti-war activists and the workers, who as the war dragged on shed their illusions in the imperialist cause.

Most working-class youth who were drafted saw no other option. In the beginning of the war, patriotism spurred their acceptance. That soon wore off as reality set in, but young workers saw no alternative. The draft protesters were often seen by working-class draftees and their families as incomprehensibly naive or spoiled and cowardly rich brats. Those who concentrated on draft dodging deepened the gap. The anti-draft program pointed to no way out, had no content relevant to workers and was therefore not revolutionary.

As the war went on, working-class opposition to the war became more and more massive. It was greater among Black workers but also grew rapidly among white workers. But it did not translate into significantly greater identification with the anti-war protests for the reasons given.

The growing confrontationism in the anti-war movement did indeed reflect increased radical sentiments. Unfortunately, since there was no decisive *class* schism within the struggle, the greater militancy and confrontations on the street, which Hall regards as pro-revolutionary, were motivated by increasing frustration and desperation. The war went on and on, while the big protest demonstrations, featuring endless empty speeches by liberal politicians, led nowhere. But the street clashes were no threat to imperialism either, even though they were more satisfying than passive parades. Contradictory though it may sound, the anti-draft activists who furiously confronted cops in the streets were fundamentally enraged pacifists caught in another dead end.

### **INDUSTRIAL WORKERS WERE KEY**

What could have shaken the imperialist state would have been massive industrial strikes against the war and a conscious struggle against the war within the army. The latter did occur, as we described in our article, "Vietnam: the 'Working-Class War,'" in *PR* 45. As for industrial action, that too occurred and had an important impact, but it did not match the anti-imperialist potential inherent in the working-class explosion that was being generated at the time.

In addition to their pro-liberal work in the anti-war protests, the phony socialist organizations attracted many students, including some who were sent into the factories to join the working class. These would-be revolutionaries constituted an important force, given the restive climate among workers. They mainly pretended to be mere rank and filists and pushed militant economic demands; thus, under the cover of radical rhetoric, they tailed the efforts of the labor bureaucracy to localize rather than generalize the explosive strikes that broke out at the time.

Many of the strikes were led by Black workers who did see broad social issues as integral to their struggles. But in general the "socialists" did not fight for mass working-class action consciously aimed at stopping imperialism and its war. And, very "practically," they failed to propagandize for socialist revolution as the only real answer to the crimes of capitalism against workers everywhere.

If the "reds" had acted as authentic proletarian reds, they could have fought to convince militant sectors of the working class that the capitalists they were rebelling against were the same rulers who were conducting the war. They could have fought for a general strike against the attack on the workers at home and the imperialist war abroad. Had such a strike broken out, it would not only have accelerated revolutionary consciousness among workers; it would have forced many in the middle-class movements to recognize the power of the working class and the need for it to lead the struggle. It would have given a class definition to the rising anger of the ranks of soldiers. And it would have at least posed the question of revolution – which class should rule.

In counterposition to this strategy, Hall argues that the anti-draft middle-class students should have led the workers in uniform. Hall claims that the growth of the anti-draft movement increasingly affected the troops and that opposition to the draft raised the appeal of anti-war agitation among drafted soldiers. There was some serious work of this type, but Hall poses the class relation backwards. To the extent that workers in uniform looked to the anti-draft proponents, if Hall was really a Leninist and not a middle-class social pacifist himself he would argue that the class relationship should have been turned upside-down.

As for opposition to the war in the military, the resentment expressed by "fragging" – soldiers turning their weapons on their own officers – was of far greater importance. The problem was that while this resentment was working-class based, the soldiers were not conscious of that fact.

Even if Hall's picture were true, what was the aim of the agitation he touts? For the most part the central message was that soldiers should desert. This could not have been seen by working-class soldiers as a realistic option. Only a small minority chose desertion, often with disastrous results individually. It would have been far better for revolutionaries to submit to the draft and carry out work within the military, not to induce individual soldiers to desert but to build a movement in the army to oppose the war and to turn the soldiers' military training against the rulers who drafted them! As the war dragged on, the field became more and more fertile.

### **BLACK SOLDIERS AND THE DRAFT**

Hall also tries to pose the militant draft resisters as a pole of attraction to Black revolutionaries. Referring to the militant confrontations in Oakland during the "Stop the Draft Week" in October 1967, Hall writes, "Actions like these encouraged Black revolutionaries like Malcolm X to see revolutionary forces in white America, undermining the narrow nationalism which justifies itself by claiming the isolation of the Black liberation struggle." More thumb sucking rather than a serious investigation of

the actual relationship: Malcolm X had been assassinated in February 1965.

In fact, some politically militant Black youth were attracted by the anti-draft activists. But far more working-class Black draftees looked with disdain on the white middle-class draft evaders. Of course, the most famous draft resister of all was Muhammad Ali, but he was exceptional in more ways than one.

What about the masses of Black soldiers drafted to Vietnam? Hall refers to Black militants at home and the impression on them that anti-draft activists might have made, but he says nothing about Black men drafted to Vietnam, who totaled well over 100,000. For working-class Blacks, as for most white workers, evading the draft was not a conceivable choice. The social horizons of the middle class and the strings that it can pull are different than those allowed the working class.

### **WARNING: MILITARIZATION AHEAD**

As the world crisis develops, sooner or later there will be a growing movement towards war between the advanced imperialist powers. Already the Pentagon is saying it needs more soldiers and longer tours of duty in Iraq. This points to an inevitable intensification in the militarization of the masses.

Today the American bourgeoisie prefers a makeshift voluntary professional-hybrid army incorporating highly trained specialists employing advanced technology. The core of the army is the professional mercenaries, the “lifers.” However, the increased imperialist ventures abroad have already compelled the state to recruit a broader range of volunteers. It has already had to supplement regular army troops with reservists and national guard forces.

The military recruitment policies were deliberately designed to attract young workers who were looking not to fight abroad but to gain skills and move upward within the civilian work force.

Given the recent high unemployment, this has been temporarily successful. But as Iraq demonstrates, the broadening of the army’s base has already resulted in a significant rise in discontent within the ranks. So there is little interest now in a far broader army that would be obtained through a renewed draft.

But the time will come when the ruling class will be forced to turn to a drafted mass army, because expanded wars, conquest and occupation require massive numbers of troops. This is why these issues are extremely important for workers to consider now, even though there is no draft on the horizon at the moment.

The key to building a working-class anti-war movement is to link opposition to a given war to defense of the working class. Pacifism and draft resistance are strategies that have always been rejected by the working class in practice. Proletarian communists advocate that revolutionary workers go to war with their class brothers and sisters and take the only possible course for defending our class: as Lenin stressed, we must turn the imperialist war into a class war.

To this end, revolutionaries help their fellow soldiers understand the class nature of the army and the imperialist nature of the war. When tactically possible, we raise, for example, the demand that the officers should be chosen by the soldiers themselves, so that workers are not turned into cannon fodder by racist, incompetent and anti-working-class officers. We fight for full political and union rights for soldiers. We oppose class privileges for bourgeois youth: no student deferments, no special officers’ academies, no ROTC. We show that military training and arms are essential tools for building a workers’ militia at home that can defend strikes and working-class communities against cops, scabs, thugs and fascists – and can be turned into a weapon for proletarian revolution and the end to imperialist wars.●

# **Anti-Militarist Propaganda and Young Socialist Workers’ Leagues**

*Almost a hundred years ago, Lenin wrote a short article, little known today, about how working-class revolutionaries should approach working-class soldiers drafted into the great-power armies of the day. Lenin was writing before World War I and had not yet worked out his theory of imperialism. His opposition to the bourgeoisie’s foreign conquests was framed, therefore, not as anti-imperialism but as a revolutionary militarist’s version of anti-militarism.*

*We take the article from Lenin’s Collected Works, Vol. 41. It was originally published in the journal Vperyod (“Forward”) No. 16, October 8, 1907. Spelling and punctuation have been updated and Americanized. The elisions [...] are in the CW volume. For political clarity, Lenin’s term “Social-Democrat” should be interpreted today as “revolutionary communist.”*

It will be recalled that the International Socialist Congress in Stuttgart discussed the question of militarism, and in connection with it, the question of anti-militarist propaganda. The resolution adopted on the point says, in part, that the Congress regards it as a duty of the working classes to “help to have working-class youth brought up in a spirit of international brotherhood and socialism and imbued with class consciousness.” The Congress regards this as an earnest of the army ceasing to be a blind instrument in the

hands of the ruling classes, which they use as they see fit and which they can direct against the people at any time.

It is very hard, sometimes almost impossible, to conduct propaganda among soldiers on active service. Life in the barracks, strict supervision and rare leave make contact with the outer world extremely difficult; military discipline and the absurd spit and polish cow the soldier. Army commanders do everything they can to knock the “nonsense” out of the “brutes,” to purge them of every unconventional thought and every human emotion and to instill in them a sense of blind obedience and an unthinking wild hatred for “internal” and “external” enemies. . . . It is much harder to make an approach to the lone, ignorant and cowed soldier who is isolated from his fellow-men and whose head has been stuffed with the wildest views on every possible subject, than to draft-age young men living with their families and friends and closely bound up with them by common interest. Everywhere anti-militarist propaganda among young workers has yielded excellent results. That is of tremendous importance. The worker who goes into the army a class-conscious Social-Democrat is a poor support for the powers that be.

There are young socialist workers’ leagues in all European countries. In some, for instance, Belgium, Austria and Sweden, these leagues are large-scale organizations carrying on responsi-

ble party work. Of course, the main aim of the youth leagues is self-education and the working out of a distinct and integrated socialist outlook. But the youth leagues also carry on practical work. They struggle for an improvement in the condition of apprentices and try to protect them from unlimited exploitation by their employers. The young socialist workers' leagues devote even more time and attention to anti-militarist propaganda.

For that purpose, they try to establish close ties with young soldiers. This is done in the following way. Before the young worker has joined the army, he is a member of a league and pays membership dues. When he becomes a soldier, the league continues to maintain constant contacts with him, regularly sending him small cash aids ("soldier's sous" as they call them in France), which, however small, are of substantial importance to the soldier. For his part, he undertakes to provide the league with regular information about everything that goes on in his barracks and to write about his impressions. Thus, even after he joins the army, the soldier does not break off his ties with the organization of which he was a member.

An effort is always made to drive the soldier as far away from home as possible for his service. This is done with the intention of preventing the soldier from being tied with the local population by any interest, and to make him feel alien to it. It is then easier to make him carry out orders: to shoot at a crowd. Young workers' leagues try to bridge this alienation between the soldier and the local population. Youth leagues are connected with each other. When he arrives in a new town, the soldier, a former member of a youth league at home, is met by the local league as a welcome visitor, and he is at once brought into the circle of local interests and helped in every possible way. He ceases to be a newcomer and a stranger. He is also aware that if any misfortune befalls him he will receive help and support. This awareness adds to his courage, he gains assurance in his behavior in the barracks, and is bolder in standing up for his rights and his human dignity.

Their close ties with young soldiers enable the youth leagues to carry on extensive anti-militarist propaganda among the soldiers. This is done mainly with the aid of anti-militarist literature, which the youth leagues publish and circulate in great quantities, especially in France, Belgium and also in Switzerland, Sweden, etc. This literature is highly diverse: postcards with anti-militarist

pictures, anti-militarist army songs (many of these songs are very popular among the soldiers), "soldier's catechism" (in France it was circulated in more than 100,000 copies), all sorts of pamphlets, leaflets, appeals; weekly, fortnightly and monthly newspapers and magazines for soldiers, some of them illustrated. Barracks, Recruit, Young Soldier, Pju pju (a pet name for the young recruit), and Forward are very widely circulated. For example, in Belgium the newspapers Recruit and Barracks have a printing of 60,000 copies each. Especially many magazines are published at the time of the draft. Special issues of soldiers' newspapers are mailed to the homes of all recruits. Anti-militarist literature is delivered to soldiers in the barracks and handed out to them in the streets; soldiers find it in coffee-houses and pubs, and everywhere else they go.

Recruits receive special attention. They are given a ceremonial send-off. During the recruitment, processions are staged in the towns. In Austria, for instance, recruits walk through the town dressed in mourning and to the strains of funeral marches. In front of them rolls a decorated red carriage. All the walls are plastered with red posters which say in large letters: "You will not shoot at the people!" Evening parties with ardent anti-militarist speeches are held in honor of the recruits. In short, everything is done to awaken the recruit's consciousness, to ensure him against the evil influence of the ideas and emotions which will be instilled into him in the barracks by fair means and foul.

The work of the socialist youth is not in vain. In Belgium, there are almost 15 soldiers' unions in the army, which are mostly affiliated with the Social-Democratic Labor Party and are closely allied with each other. In some regiments, two-thirds of the soldiers are organized. In France, the anti-militarist mood has become massive. During the strikes at Dünkirchen, Creusot, Loguivi, Monso-le-Min the soldiers ordered against the strikers declared their solidarity with the workers. . . .

As time goes on, there are more and more Social-Democrats in the army and the troops become increasingly less reliable. When the bourgeoisie has to confront the organized working class, whom will the army back? The young socialist workers are working with all the enthusiasm and energy of the young to have the army side with the people.●

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# CWI Group Guilty of Ukraine Fraud

*We reprint below a statement that was issued on our web site on September 4, along with an Open Letter sent to the CWI in October and circulated to other organizations and on the internet. Shamefully, the CWI has not responded to our charges and has not announced any action against Budraitskis. This raises the question of the CWI's complicity of the CWI in the criminal actions which have occurred.*

The international far left and the workers' movement have been the victims of a vicious and underhanded political and financial scam. The League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP U.S.) and the Communist Organization for the Fourth International (COFI), among at least 12 and probably many more (over 20) organizations around the world, have been conned by a criminal conspiracy rooted in Ukraine.

Like the supposed Ukrainian affiliates of these other groups, the Revolutionary Workers Organization of Ukraine (RWO), which was politically and organizationally identified with us, was a complete fabrication. The political agreement it claimed with us was a lie. Money in the form of subsidies was stolen. While not a lot by American standards, in our case the funds nevertheless came from the pockets of workers who are far from wealthy. COFI, after four years of what we had thought of as political dialogue and joint work under the illusion that the "RWO" was real, had welcomed this outfit as a fraternal organization in March of this year. Since the "RWO" has always been a non-existent organization, in truth it never was nor is now a fraternal section of COFI. We have already made this fact public by a statement on our website and by an insert into previously undistributed copies of the latest issue of *Proletarian Revolution* magazine.

We believe that we have an obligation to further expose and detail the operations of elements who have devoted themselves to preying upon the international working class and numbers of far left organizations.

Given the beginning resurgence of the international working class struggle, COFI has experienced a rising interest around the world in the revolutionary communist alternative which we have fought for over the last thirty years. We have been involved in serious and promising discussions with groups and individuals in a growing number of countries. Within this context, achieving an affiliate in Ukraine and the expectation of one in Russia was of outstanding importance to us. The lands which once gave rise to the October Revolution have, of course, a particular significance for Bolshevik-Leninists. So the fact that this "achievement" turned out to be a fraud was a major blow. All authentic communists believe that the socialist revolution (the establishment of workers' states) can only be successful if it is led by the fully conscious proletariat. Therefore, like Trotsky, we must "Say What Is." We have no wish to sugar-coat the fact that we were scammed by a gang of criminals.

The fraud was bizarre. We know of nothing like it in the past. Of course, the Bolsheviks were duped by a Czarist secret police agent, Roman Malinovsky, for many years. He was head of their Duma contingent and was long defended by Lenin after other comrades argued his guilt. The Bolshevik-Leninists during the 1930's mistakenly harbored the Stalinist agent who killed Sedov, Trotsky's son. Trotsky's followers in France during the same pre World War II period were infiltrated by a financial scam artist. However, the present affair was quite different in that one whole group perpetrated this prolonged charade against a large variety of rival organizations.



*CWI scam artists Vernik, Budraitskis and Zvorsky at COFI Warsaw conference, March 2003*

The widespread character of the scam helps us understand the nature of the fraud and to appreciate the fact that it has been a serious blow to the working class of the world and to the name of Marxism. It may have been inspired by financial, governmental and/or political objectives. Whatever its motives, its consequence has been to amplify the massive mistrust that workers in the former Soviet Union and internationally have for revolutionary communism as a result of Stalinism.

We were fooled in large part because of our strength as well as our weakness. We are revolutionary optimists. We know well the depth of cynicism and fatalism that almost universally pervades the international far left today and how they have crippled so many attempts to achieve a Marxist understanding. As a result of bitter lessons, we had learned to be politically very careful. We made absolutely no political concessions. However, because of our optimistic outlook, we wanted to believe in the "RWO" and failed to act appropriately when we were faced with organizational warning signs. The most important lesson we can learn is not to give up on optimism but to temper it with far greater caution in the future. We will return to this question when we detail the operational error we made in dealing with the "RWO."

## **OUR WORK WITH THE "RWO"**

We first encountered the "RWO" in 1999, when they sent us a long perspectives document which came close to matching our own views in many ways. We conducted an extensive and politically detailed correspondence with them on major political questions over several years. We had intricate exchanges with them on immediate tactical situations and the working out of political lines for leaflets and demonstrations concerning the class struggle in Ukraine. In 2000, we issued a joint statement with the "RWO" criticizing Oleg Sheyin, the leftist Russian leader of the Interregional Association of Workers' Unions "Zashchita Truda" (Defense of Labor) and a representative in Russia's State Duma, over his nationalist capitulations to the Russian imperialist war against Chechnya.

In April 2001, two LRP comrades traveled to Kiev to meet with the "RWO" for over a week. Extensive discussions were held in meetings with about a dozen people, including the group's supposed leader, one Viktor Voronov (Oleksandr Zvorsky). At the same time, we met and discussed with other alleged leaders, including one named Yakov. As well, we were introduced at that time to Viktor's friend Zakhar, a purported member of the International Bolshevik Tendency's (IBT) affiliated group. The "comrades" showed us "RWO" documents discussing views very

compatible with our own. Later they produced a sizeable issue of a magazine they published which definitely expressed our political perspective.

In March 2003, three LRP comrades and a German KOVI BRD comrade met for about 10 days at a COFI Conference in Warsaw with Yakov, Viktor and Igor, who was represented as the leader of the “RWO” in Moscow. By the end of the conference, we thought that we knew the individuals and their politics well, and we agreed to be part of the same international tendency. Our statement on this agreement, approved by the “RWO,” was published on our web site and in *Proletarian Revolution* No. 67. It included a denunciation of the opportunism of the Ukrainian section of the Committee for a Workers International (CWI), descendants of the British-based “Militant Tendency” led today by Peter Taafe, for their opportunism over Chechnya.

## HOW WE LEARNED ABOUT THE FRAUD

Beginning several years ago, a few reports circulated on the internet to the effect that the relatively large number of far-left groups in Ukraine were fraudulent and were set up to get money from Western organizations. The one “Trotskyite” group that was said to be real was the CWI section. However, since the sources seemed to be Stalinists and other unsavory elements, we did not accept the allegations. They seemed to be echoes of the old crap about “Trotskyite wreckers.”

However, in late July of this year there began a new wave of exchanges on the internet indicating more concretely and authoritatively that there was a monstrous international scam at work. It was alleged that a large number of groups in the West had been contacted by seemingly like-minded groups in Ukraine who sought affiliation. It was claimed that the purpose was to get money, allegedly to finance the CWI section. The CWI international tendency then publicly acknowledged the seriousness of the charges and suspended its Ukrainian section. They asserted that the suspension would last until they completed a more thorough investigation. Allegations from other sources were also made about the extent of international CWI involvement, suggesting that its representative in the former Soviet countries might have been involved in the fraud. Assertions about the involvement of a Russian CWI leader have also appeared on the internet and have also been sent to us, the IBT and other groups. We have seen no conclusive proof on this score so far, but we regard with suspicion the CWI’s reported claims that only their Kiev group participated in the scam.

Accompanying the material on the internet was a photo of the ringleader of the plot, one Oleg (Oleh) Vernik. Vernik was the acknowledged leader of Workers Resistance, the Ukrainian CWI section, and also the head in Ukraine of the “Zashchita” trade union federation, linked to Sheyin. It was clear to us that the person in the photo was the same man we had met as “Yakov” of the “RWO.”

Additional evidence appeared in a statement by a British left group, the Socialist Party of Great Britain (SPGB), which described a meeting in Kiev of a dozen or so people who acted as if they were in political agreement with the British visitors and held discussions in their presence for a long period. Nevertheless, the SPGB had recently been convinced by reliable sources that the group was fictitious and that the Ukrainian CWI was involved. This report mirrored our own experiences. Because of this report together with the photo of Vernik, by early August we were almost positive that we had been scammed by the whole “RWO.”

On August 13, we wrote a short note to the “RWO,” saying that we had seen the Vernik picture and asking if they had any defense. “Viktor” replied, blaming the affair purely on Vernik. He

said that they hadn’t really known Vernik very well: even though he was a leader of the organization, he hadn’t been a founding member. The letter said that he had mental problems and that it was likely that he was being pressured by government police agents. “Viktor” plaintively declared the group’s innocence and sought to make us feel guilty for our stance. However, there were glaring inconsistencies in the letter. They included the fact that in Warsaw, “Yakov” had mentioned that he was one of the founding members. The letter claimed that Vernik had been absent from the “RWO” for three months, yet it was “Yakov” who had been corresponding with us on e-mail, not “Viktor,” in recent weeks. This letter further convinced us that the scam included the entire “RWO,” not just Vernik.

We were then contacted by Cde. Bill Logan of the International Bolshevik Tendency (IBT), who had also been in contact with Workers Power of Britain (WP), the leading section of the League for the Fifth International (LFI). WP and the IBT knew from photographs that leading members of both their Ukrainian organizations were the same people and therefore that their “sections” were frauds. They also knew that these crooks were in the leadership of the CWI section in Ukraine. We were shown the photos, which proved absolutely that “Viktor” and the other leaders of the “RWO” were also members of the LFI and IBT “affiliates” as well as in the CWI section.

Despite the fact that we have fundamental political differences with the IBT (and all the other scammed groups), we and the IBT established a collaborative relationship to further investigate the fraud. We agreed with the IBT’s proposal to draft a joint statement exposing the scam, to be discussed and signed by as many groups as possible. We both recognized that it was an elementary moral and political duty to contact and warn as many far-left groups as could likely be victims, despite our political hostility to each other and to them. Of course, all the affected groups are free to, and should, issue their own statements as well as the joint statement.

We knew that among the defrauded groups there would likely be a few so mired in cringing organizational sectarianism that they would reject a joint statement warning the working class and radical public and would effectively refuse to cooperate in investigating the scope of the fraud. Yet a number of other groups in addition to the IBT and us have engaged in discussions and cooperative work. News & Letters and the New Unionist Party (NUP) in the U.S. have been among the groups that have been fully cooperative. The proposed joint statement has now been drafted and is being circulated. At this point, in addition to the SPGB, the IBT and ourselves, WP/LFI, Alliance for Workers Liberty of Britain (AWL) and the Internationalist Group (IG) have issued statements, and more are expected.

## PAST SUSPICIONS AND SUSPICIOUS INCIDENTS

Shortly after our initial contact with the “RWO,” we began to wonder why there were so many far left groups in Ukraine – as opposed, say, to Russia. The “RWO” answered that many of the groups originated out of a handful of young comrades who had come across Trotsky’s *The Revolution Betrayed* and were taken with its magnificent insights. They soon diverged in many directions. Nevertheless, the existence of so many groups caused us to have a low level of suspicion about the “RWO.” And even though we had dismissed the Stalinist charges about “Trotskyites” on the internet, these added to our mild suspicion.

Further, over the years there were a few incidents which caused us to momentarily heighten those suspicions. In 2000, we came across a report from an ultra-left Italian group citing a letter from its new friends in Ukraine, a letter which used wording very

similar to one we had months previously received from the “RWO.” Upon questioning, the “RWO” told us that a comrade who had been in charge of communications for them had split and formed the ultra-left group. He had used the same formal words in his letters that he had used in the past. Indeed, “Sergey,” who had been in charge of corresponding with us, had previously disappeared from our view, and the correspondence had mainly been taken over by “Viktor.”

Two years later, we saw reports of activities by Ukrainian supporters in the *News & Letters* newspaper which contained similar language to that which appeared in a report sent to us by “RWO,” in a section devoted to tasks performed at a demonstration and not in political evaluations. This time the “RWO” told us that “Yosif,” a leading comrade, had translated the report for the *News & Letters* person, his close friend, since the friend’s English was very faulty. Yosif used similar verbiage to that which he had used in the report to us.

The answer seemed credible to us. Shortly thereafter, similar but still not the same words were found in the *New Unionist* paper, organ of the NUP, and in the British Healyite *Workers International Press*. The “RWO” replied that those elements must have gotten the words from the *News & Letters* leader. Everybody on the left there knows everybody else, we were told. And most groups had next to no English speakers, so linguistic favors were common.

These incidents should have caused us to take steps beyond questioning the “RWO.” But we failed to act. It was hard to imagine that people who had written a voluminous political perspectives document filled with politics so close to ours would have faked comparatively trivial reports. Our meetings with them showed that they had knowledgeable political agreement with our views. For people alleged to be involved with the CWI, we knew that they had written trenchant polemics, from our “shared” point of view, against the politics of the CWI. And they appeared to be serious and dedicated comrades.

At that time they had never asked for money. We knew how bad things were in Ukraine; \$80 a month was a good working-class wage in most of the country outside of Kiev. Even though “Yakov,” who was a university teacher and “Viktor,” who was involved with computers, seemed quite a bit better off, we assumed that they were financing the “RWO.” It was we who offered financial assistance, primarily to buy a computer and to publish their magazine. When we met them in Warsaw this past March, we paid their travel and our joint lodging expenses. For the first time, we were asked for some money: we were told that “Igor from Moscow” had been robbed by customs officers of some money when departing Russia, so we reimbursed him, with some cash. Without being asked, we agreed to give them a small stipend toward renting a cheap office in Kiev. And we did so for a few months.

### MOTIVATION FOR THE FRAUD

The larger motivation behind the fraud remained mysterious. For what earthly reason could such an elaborate and intricate charade involving multiple groups and at least a dozen crooks be carried out? The amounts of money transmitted were evidently small in Western terms, although greater for impoverished Ukrainians and perhaps adding up to something substantial given the number of international groups involved – but still hardly worth the four years of elaborate work that the scammers had put in to secure it. This August we were able to locate and correspond with a Ukrainian socialist whom we had worked with years ago; he informed us that Vernik was not to be trusted in money matters.

Nevertheless, it is likely that theft was not the only motivation for these criminals. We have received an unverified report from Ukraine which points to a police link. The fact that funds were stolen certainly does not rule out intervention by the Ukrainian police; the Ukrainian state is particularly corrupt at all levels. On the other hand, the operation was carried out by highly intelligent people who, from our experience and all other reports, had great familiarity with the politics and activities of the international groups they were supposedly affiliated to. That is rarely true for agents of governments with far more sophisticated secret police operations. Moreover, it would be highly likely that police agents would try to garner as much information as possible about the work of the various Western groups, in order to trade with Western spy agencies, but the conspirators made little effort to learn of such activities or plans.

All in all, as of now we have no concrete evidence of secret police activity in the scam. However, experience tells us that given the duration and extent of the operation, it is likely that even if the Ukrainian state was not responsible for the affair it would have known about it and at least tolerated it.

The scammers’ knowledge of the international left was so complete that they evidently did not seek ties with groups who had sufficient resources and a penchant for fully controlling affiliates, like the British Cliffite SWP or the Spartacists. Moreover, some international groups were allowed to send representatives to Kiev for extended periods of time. But after our initial visit, we offered to return on several occasions but were told that at those times, secret police crackdowns were particularly intense and that it was too dangerous for us to come to Ukraine.

Certainly the CWI section was involved. We are not in a position to determine by ourselves how far beyond their Ukrainian section that involvement reached. Other groups and individuals who appear to be in a better position to find out this information are beginning to make their conclusions public and we should be able to evaluate them as they surface. In late August the CWI reportedly issued the result of its investigation, denying any involvement by their international or Moscow organizations. It condemned the scam and announced the expulsion of Vernik, Zvorsky, Zakhar and three other members of their Ukraine group.

We do not know whether the scam was launched as a wild but “loyal” attempt to financially and politically benefit the CWI section in Ukraine. Reports indicate that they still claim political loyalty to the CWI. The other possible alternative is that they were just using the CWI as a base of operations and were simply crooks, cops or both. We know from other sources as well as our own discussions that Vernik had conducted serious work on tracing Trotsky’s Ukrainian roots. “Igor” requested a copy of Abram Leon’s book on the Jewish Question from us and was quite evidently interested in the Marxist understanding of the national question. “Yakov,” “Viktor” and “Igor” all provided important and seemingly truthful information to us on the scope of the workers’ upheavals in the USSR during the period of Stalinism’s collapse. As a whole, their political interest and knowledge leads us to think that they were political as well as personal criminals as opposed to simple crooks.

If so, bearing in mind their willingness to attack the CWI in pursuit of the scam, their political and personal beliefs contained nothing in the way of conscience. Some of the lesser participants might have been simply gulled, but not the leadership. That is, we think that there is a good chance that Vernik was a psychopath, along with possibly others of the leaders. If so, he represents a very particular and continuing danger to the workers’ movement in Ukraine and internationally. There is far from enough concrete

information available to form a conclusive opinion on this score, but we would be remiss if we did not point out this added danger to our class.

### LESSONS OF OUR WORK

In all our work with the “RWO,” we made no concessions and committed no errors on the political or programmatic level. But in re-evaluating our work, we have concluded that we made a serious error in not informing News & Letters and other groups of the similar verbiage in the reports described above – especially after the similarity was repeated. As it turns out, we could have discovered the whole scam well before we established fraternal relations with them. We have recently learned from Cde. Peter Hudis of News & Letters that their “friend” in Ukraine had a good knowledge of English. Had we known that, it would have exposed the “RWO”’s lying defense. We did not act upon our suspicions and wrongly accepted the “RWO” statements of defense without additional investigation.

As described above, we found it hard to believe that such a bizarre conspiracy could be at work. Most importantly, we profoundly wanted to believe the “RWO” because of our revolutionary optimism. Our very political existence is rooted in the class struggle and the fight to re-create the international revolutionary party of the proletariat. For authentic Trotskyists, the vanguard party is the party of the most conscious and advanced sections of the working class; those who understand capitalism and the Marxist methods by which it must be overthrown. Marxist consciousness cannot be anything but optimistic. Nevertheless, in light of this experience we will have to adopt a more vigilant outlook in the future. We will have to use much greater caution when faced with hard decisions while still retaining our fundamental optimism.

In thereby helping the “RWO” to scam COFI and the LRP, our strengths became our weaknesses. There is an analogy: Trotsky pointed out the strength of intense party loyalty main-

tained by the Bolshevik ranks. It came from their heroic revolutionary days under Lenin’s leadership. Tragically, that positive quality later became a strong factor in the backing for the Communist Party under Stalin’s leadership, in opposition to the expelled Trotskyists. In a similar way, the Kiev crooks used our optimism and our internationalism against us.

We know that such an unprecedented and filthy charade could only have arisen in the thick atmosphere of cynicism which dominates the reformist-centrist groups around the world today. It is quite likely, that this crew thought that robbery of foreign workers was only a small step beyond the norm in their circles. We also know that as word of the scandal spreads, it will add to that cynicism and fatalism. However, hiding the fraud will only make it worse. We will do everything in our power to tell the truth and fundamentally to rely upon the coming revolutionary upsurge of the world proletariat to sweep away scum like the present conspirators as well as the ordinary cynical reformists and centrists who unconsciously give them sustenance.

There has already been a fair amount of chortling by those whose political lives are spent on the internet, with nothing better to do than to sneer at “Trotskyism” and “sects.” We also note the maniacal glee displayed by the Spartacists’ *Workers Vanguard* (August 29). The fact that the credibility of Trotskyism, to which the Spartacists pay lip service, has been severely damaged is less important to them than the opportunity to drool over the fact that the scam was directed against the IBT, the LRP/COFI and the IG.

“Trotskyism” has been given another black eye, especially but not only in the former Soviet Union. The forces of counter revolution have won a victory. However, of far greater importance is the fact that the massive struggle of the proletariat around the world is now reviving. This inevitable explosion of working-class struggle will lay the basis for the re-creation of the authentic Fourth International and the coming eradication of this utterly corrupt society, including its criminal spawn who infect the workers’ movement today.

## *Open Letter to the CWI*

From: League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP-U.S.) & Communist Organization for the Fourth International (COFI), New York

To: Committee for a Workers’ International (CWI), London  
October 2, 2003

Dear Comrades,

On September 4 we wrote to you regarding the criminal fraud perpetrated by CWI members in the former USSR on several organizations, including our own. We noted that you had issued a statement on August 29 condemning the fraud and announcing the expulsion of several Ukrainian members, notably Oleg Vernik. You have not responded to our letter or to any of the requests and queries in it. We also note that you have not replied to similar requests from other defrauded organizations. This lack of response calls into question your stated willingness to exchange information and cooperate with all those victimized by your former members.

We also note at this point that no statement on the fraud has yet appeared on your website. Yet articles by the charlatan Vernik continue to appear there without comment by you.

Your statement of August 29 indicated that the fraud was limited to Ukrainian CWI members, some of whom you have

expelled, notably Oleg Vernik. One of our queries concerned the fraudulent “Igor” or “Ivan,” who presented himself to us and to others as a resident of Moscow. We asked whether you recognized and could identify this individual from Moscow.

Subsequently, photographs identified as that of your Moscow leader, Ilya Budraitskis, have appeared on the internet and in print (for example, in the [British] *Weekly Worker* of September 4), and he is clearly the same person as “Igor” and “Ivan” who fraudulently misrepresented himself to our and other organizations. Yet as far as we know, you have not acknowledged that Budraitskis was part of the scam, nor taken any action against him, at least in public.

Moreover, we now have in our possession a photograph taken at the October 1999 International Conference in Moscow sponsored by the Committee for the Study of Leon Trotsky’s Legacy, where Budraitskis presented a research paper. This photo shows Budraitskis together with Rob Jones of the CWI. It is certain that Budraitskis is the same person as “Igor” and “Ivan,” and that he is as guilty as the Ukrainian perpetrators of participating in this scam. In the next few days we will place this photo on our website.

Moreover, all the reports of the Ukrainian scam indicate that the Ukrainian “comrades” never directly asked their supposed



Western counterparts for monetary aid. This is not true in the case of “Igor.” When we met him in April 2003, we were specifically asked to reimburse him for money that he claimed had been robbed from him by customs agents when he left Russia. There is no question that “Igor” – that is, Budraitskis – directly participated in robbery as well as in the political side of the criminal activity engaged in by the other perpetrators.

The CWI has had ample time to identify Budraitskis and reply to the charges against him. Your failure to do so raises the question as to whether or not the CWI is engaging in covering up the extent of the fraud directed by Vernik, one of its leading members, but certainly not confined to him and his Ukrainian cohorts. It raises the question as to whether or not more CWI leaders outside of Kiev and Ukraine were aware of or directly involved in

the fraud.

Your former and current comrades have already done enough in this matter to drag the name of Trotskyism through the mud. We demand that you expel Budraitskis and condemn him in at least the same terms that you condemned Vernik and the others. Further, we demand that you do so in public: that you publish your statements of condemnation in your press and on your international website rather than just circulating them privately for others to distribute. If you are not covering for these filthy criminals, or seeking to downplay their acts, why won't you openly do everything possible to warn the workers' movement of the threat that they represent?

With communist greetings,  
Sy Landy, for LRP-U.S. & COFI

## On the slogan “End all Restrictions on Immigrants and Refugees”

*The International Bolshevik Tendency posted an open letter to the LRP on their website and elsewhere in May, reprimanding us for inaccurately reporting their position on immigrant rights in our web report of the debate reprinted in our previous issue. (See their website at [www.bolshevik.org](http://www.bolshevik.org).) We posted a reply on our website, which we reprint here.*

Dear Comrades,

You say in your letter that the International Bolshevik Tendency stands for the rights of *all* immigrants, including “the right of immigrants to enter the imperialist countries.” You provide us with evidence from your British and German publications, which we were unaware of before receiving your letter. We acknowledge that you have defended in practice the rights of immigrants in relation to the imperialist countries in more sweeping terms than has the Spartacist League. Therefore, we now correct our unequivocal statement that you “share the [Spartacist League] line” opposing that right.

But to correct our charge is not to withdraw it, because the rest of your letter proves that your position on the question is confused and ambivalent. In fact, you insist that you do share the SL line. And the SL's line is palpably chauvinist and appalling.

In particular, you quote for our benefit – and defend – the Spartacists' openly chauvinist January 1974 article, which (while calling for full citizenship rights for all immigrants) worries that large-scale immigration could “wipe out the national identity” of the recipient countries and therefore opposes “unlimited immigration” on principle. Since you imply your agreement with this atrocious statement, is it any wonder that we and others assumed you have the same chauvinist line as the SL?

In your letter you say that the SL statement “is simply a truism, as cases like Palestine or Tibet illustrate.” But the Spartacists use examples of immigration into *oppressed* countries only as a cover. In reality they are concerned with immigration into the *imperialist* countries. They spell it out: “If, for example, there were unlimited immigration into Northern Europe, the population influx from the Mediterranean basin would tend to dissolve the national identity of small countries like Holland Belgium.” And since the SL states that the position applies to all imperialist

nations, including the U.S. and not just the small ones, the line is even worse.

You say there is no “big difference” between the SL and the LRP on immigration, but how is that possible if, as you know, we raise and they oppose the eminently Leninist slogan, “End all Restrictions on Immigrants and Refugees”?

Seemingly you reject the SL's position. We have just seen your statement, “A Significant Step,” issued by the IBT's “Third International Conference.” It says, “Marxists must oppose, as a matter of principle, all bourgeois immigration controls, but remain sensitive to the ways in which large-scale population transfers can be used by reactionary demagogues to promote chauvinism and undercut class consciousness.” The first clause seems to be in full agreement with our slogan and seems to contradict your claimed agreement with the SL.

But the second clause qualifies it in an ambiguous way, echoing the Spartacist stance. Being “sensitive” means accommodating to the feelings of the aristocratic, i.e. imperialism-identified, white workers who – you imply – will inevitably get mobilized into chauvinism if there are too many immigrants.

It would clarify your position immensely if you were to unequivocally indicate agreement or disagreement with the slogan “End all Restrictions on Immigrants and Refugees.” The material from the IBT conference which you have cited could seem to indicate agreement with that slogan, despite the ambiguities we noted. If, on the other hand, you really agree with the SL and oppose our slogan then you are indeed still close to that outfit's pro-imperialist and national chauvinist line. The SL, like the overtly pro-bourgeois national chauvinists, buys into the notion that the influx of too many immigrants into an imperialist nation is a real danger rather than some unimportant, abstract, latent, principle as you suggest. For example, they wrote in that 1974 article:

**One of the unexpected by-products of the dissolution of the British Empire was that the Commonwealth population continued to possess British citizenship. This formal right, when combined with the Tory policy of encouraging immigration, led to a significant population inflow from the Caribbean and the Indian subcontinent throughout the**

**1950s. Set against a background of economic stagnation, a widespread anti-immigrant reaction set in, highlighted by the Notting Hill (London) race riot of 1958, and the election of a racist Tory in the traditionally Labour Midlands seat of Smethwick in 1964. Facing a widespread popular ‘backlash,’ the Tories passed the racist-exclusionist Immigration Act of 1962, while the Labour Party equivocated. (WV, January 18, 1974.)**

Thus, according to the SL, a policy of unrestricted immigration of workers inherently creates a chauvinist reaction in the working class of the host country. Since the “background of economic stagnation” is increasingly the norm for capitalism, they are in effect describing the growth of chauvinist reaction as an inevitable law of social relations between nationalities. No wonder they don’t call for an end to all immigration restrictions. Such cynicism puts the blame for racism on the expected tide of oppressed immigrants.

You challenge us to find evidence that the SL has ever failed to “defend resisters and refugees against imperialism.” We know of no such instance with regard to immigrants seeking to enter the U.S. or any of the other major imperialist powers. That is because the SL’s position is so far just generalized propaganda, a dangerous promissory note for openly opposing large-scale immigration in the future when the chips are actually down.

Further economic collapse in the super-exploited countries combined with rising chauvinism in the imperialist countries is a likely scenario in the coming period. Today’s propaganda, whether issued by Pat Buchanan or the SL, paves the way for large-scale acceptance of anti-immigrant agitation and acts in the future.

For the moment, the mainstream of the U.S. ruling class largely accepts immigration, since it provides a layer of readily exploitable workers. But when times shift, the ruling class may move not just to harass immigrants but also to try to bar them, and you can be sure that a good chunk of the union bureaucracy will join in the chauvinist chanting against unlimited immigration. It certainly can be thwarted, but the acceleration of this racist effort is highly likely.

Where will the Spartacist League stand then? They have done the methodological and propagandistic spadework for giving a

Marxist cover to the anti-immigrant racism that capitalism will inevitably try to intensify. “Socialists” have joined the outcry against the “yellow peril,” in the past, why would not such elements echo this crap tomorrow against the “brown peril?”

On a couple of other points raised in your letter:

1. You reject our statement that “Lenin did not recognize the rights of aristocratic nations,” claiming that Trotsky meant something else when he said that Lenin “did not recognize aristocratic nations.” Comrades, this is logic-chopping at its worst. Lenin always recognized the distinction between oppressor and oppressed nations, but he never defended the national rights of the oppressor, imperialist, nations. Self-determination simply means the right of national separation from an oppressor nation.

2. On the grounds that it is a workers’ state, you defend Cuba’s right to restrict immigration “and more importantly emigration of its trained professionals and skilled workers.” We agree that blanket opposition to restrictions on immigration applies only to the imperialist countries; the oppressed countries have every right to exclude agents of imperialism from crossing their borders. This applies to every oppressed country, not just to those that some mistakenly regard as workers’ states.

However, some oppressed countries restrict immigration on racial and chauvinist grounds; we are of course opposed to this. As to emigration of professionals and skilled workers, we note that the USSR in the 1920’s, when Stalinist rule had not been consolidated, did not restrict such emigration. Instead, the Soviets made every effort to make their work productive and welcome. In the 1930’s, on the other hand, Trotsky protested against the prohibition of emigration of members of his family and others persecuted by the Stalinists. Your belief that Cuba is a workers’ state has blinded you to the abuses that Stalinism is capable of in the name of protection against imperialism, so that you take Stalinist practice as the norm for a “workers’ state.”

Finally, you write that “we would like to be able to consider the LRP an exception to [Cannon’s] rule” that “it is very hard to find a conscientious opponent.” We too would like to consider your organization as a “conscientious opponent.” There is no doubt that we are opponents and that the fundamental differences between us are class in character. In terms of simple honesty, we have recognized the difference between you and the utterly cynical SL/IG. But frankly, we do not understand how you fail to see that your strong statements in defense of the right of unrestricted immigration to the imperialist countries are in stark contradiction to the heritage of the SL which you defend.

In a letter concerning the Kurdish struggle addressed to the Spartacist League, dated June 12, 2003, the IBT appends a post-script. It notes that as early as 1978, the Great Leader of the SL, Jim Robertson, referred to the Kurds as “Turds.” You were rightfully indignant at this chauvinist sneer. We know that you are also well aware of the well-documented chauvinist and racist statements that Robertson made against Albanians, Greeks, American Blacks, etc. in a public speech given in early 1977. As well, we note that the IBT, in “The Road to Jimstown” and elsewhere, has exposed the kind of cult-like control that Robertson has exercised over the Spartacist League over the decades. Given his chauvinist predilections, it would be strange indeed if the SL and ICL did not also manifest them programmatically and politically.

Indeed, the SL reflects Robertson; it is a cesspool of chauvinism. This ought to lead the IBT to reexamine the SL’s position on immigration more carefully. In our opinion, if you do not detach yourselves from its chauvinist stance on immigration, your position remains still infected by that virulent disease. We would not be conscientious if we did not make that conclusion of ours clear. ●

## **Marxism, Interracialism and the Black Struggle**

***A Proletarian Revolution* pamphlet**

**by Sy Landy**

An overview of the Marxist understanding of revolutionary proletarian interracialism and the historical course of the U.S. Black struggle.

The pamphlet discusses the idea of Black liberation through socialist revolution as the alternative to integrationism and nationalism, whose failure it analyzes in detail.

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## LRP-COFI

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continued from page 2

### CHICAGO

In addition to political work in the Chicago Teachers Union (see page 3), the Chicago LRP participated in a demonstration on September 5 in defense of war resister Stephen Funk, a gay Filipino-American Marine who attempted to become a conscientious objector because he didn't want to kill other oppressed people and instead was railroaded to a conviction for "desertion." The demonstration was small, but protests in different parts of the country helped Funk get a sentence somewhat lower than expected.

A few weeks later, we joined in the annual rally against gay-bashing, in commemoration of the murdered Matthew Shepard. On September 26, LRP comrades participated in a small rally called by the Workers World Party in defense of Palestine.

LRPers participated in a planning meeting for a demonstration on September 30, when Bush spoke at a fundraising event. We agreed with the main "U.S./U.N. Out of Iraq" slogan but counterposed "End the Occupation Now!" to "Bring the Troops Home Now!" promoted by the International Socialist Organization (ISO) and others. We lost the vote narrowly, and decided that we could not endorse the protest under that slogan. Opposition to a major slogan does not stop us, however, from participating in such anti-war events under our own program and slogans.

On October 14, one of the last of the hundreds of defendants (including an LRP supporter) from the March 20 anti-war protest was brought to trial. (See *PR* 67 and 68.) Many activists were present in solidarity with the accused as the city, forced to put up or shut up, finally dropped the trumped-up charges.

### NEW YORK

Over Labor Day weekend the LRP held an educational weekend on the theory and consequences of Stalinism. The opening talk by Jeff Covington laid out the theoretical basis for understanding the Stalinist system as capitalist. Dave Franklin described China as "the sweatshop of the world," and explained its drives toward privatization of much of the state sector, which had been theoretically predicted by our tendency a quarter-century ago. A presentation by Walter Daum spelled out evidence, some of it revealed since the fall of Stalinist rule, on the imperialist methods and drives of the Soviet Union from the eve of World War II. Articles based on this conference will be published in upcoming issues of *Proletarian Revolution*.

On October 4, the LRP sent a sizable contingent to the culminating rally of the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride in Flushing Meadow Park. The demonstration was built as a festival, not the kind of militant class struggle that will be necessary to win even the mealy-mouth reforms that the AFL-CIO leadership says it is fighting for in defense of immigrant rights. Although the AFL-CIO predicted a turnout of several hundred thousand people, no more than 20-30,000 showed up. And all they got was speeches by various union bureaucrats and Democratic politicians, aiming to sidetrack immigrant workers who wanted to fight back into voting for the Democratic Party.

There were hardly any Middle-Eastern or South Asian immigrants, the people who are facing the brunt of the racist attacks on immigrant rights after Sept. 11; it was clear the AFL-CIO had made no attempt to mobilize these workers. The bulk of the attendees were Latino immigrant workers and their families, whose presence shows they want change. But the bureaucrats only wanted to show they could deliver Latino votes to the Democrats.

Our leaflet for the rally is on our website; it is available to our readers by request.

The LRP joined in the Palestinian Solidarity rally in New Jersey on October 11. This event was part of the Palestine Solidarity Movement's Third National Conference, which had been scheduled to be held at Rutgers, the state university of New Jersey. It ran into a barrage of Zionist hate propaganda, aided by politicians like Governor McGreevey (Democrat). Several New Jersey legislators threatened to cut Rutgers' funding if the conference was held. At first the university administration defended the planned conference on free speech grounds. But then Rutgers pushed the New Jersey conference off campus and handed its space to a Zionist conference. About 200 people showed up for the rally, a small turnout in view of the fact that the conference and rally had been endorsed by 229 organizations. LRP placards included "All Israel is Occupied Territory!", "Arm The Palestinian Masses, Long Live The Intifada!" and "For A Socialist Federation Of The Middle East!"

New York LRPers traveled to Washington DC on October 25 for what was billed as a major rally against the Iraq war. While any action in the center of world imperialism gives encouragement to activists abroad, the turnout was weak, especially in comparison to the many hundreds of thousands who protested the upcoming war last February and March. The anti-war actions have been dominated by bourgeois liberals, whose opposition to the growing quagmire of the occupation is ambivalent. They are unwilling to straightforwardly demand that the U.S. and its allies get out of Iraq. Others want the U.S. to get out but want the imperialist U.N. to replace it.

Secretary of State Colin Powell came to City College, his alma mater, on November 10 to give a foreign policy speech, and the LRP played a central role in organizing a protest demonstration against the war, which drew a few hundred people. The last time Powell had tried to speak at City College, after he masterminded the U.S. invasion of Panama in 1989, a well-planned student protest forced the college to give him his honorary degree off campus. The modest size this time was likely due to the fact that Powell is mistakenly seen as the soft face of the war and is not hated by anti-war liberals as much as Bush, Cheney or Rumsfeld.●



### *Al Richardson, 1941-2003*

We have learned with great sadness of the death of Alec Stuart Richardson, in London in November, at the age of 62. Al was the co-founder and editor of *Revolutionary History* magazine, an indispensable resource in excavating the history of the revolutionary communist movement around the world. We will post an obituary on our website.

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## Bolivia

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*continued from page 32*

to join the uprising. Otherwise they would become victims of popular justice. ... None dares to patrol the streets of El Alto! ... In spite of the tanks, planes and soldiers and helicopters strafing randomly, more than 90 percent of El Alto, entering its fifth day of a civic strike, remains under control of neighborhood associations, market vendors, public university students, and the Regional Workers Central (COR). (Forrest Hylton, "Bolivia: Aymara Rebellion and Democratic Dictatorship," *Bolivia Watch*, Oct. 13.)

For days, workers had already taken the initiative to march through the neighborhoods of El Alto with helmets marked "Workers Police." The miners, brandishing sticks of dynamite, also played a pivotal role in defending the movement in El Alto. They were decisive in confronting the police on the final day of the mass marches to La Paz before Goni resigned.

The struggle united the Aymara working class and peasantry of the Western highlands, the Quechua peasantry of the south and the coca growers of the Eastern lowlands. Decisive roles were played by the miners and by the striking transport and other workers in La Paz. By October 13 there was a magnificent spectacle: the capital was surrounded and shut down. There were calls for "Workers to Power" reported in different cities. An insurrection was in the making. The resignation of President Sánchez de Lozada was clearly inevitable.

With hundreds of thousands of people in the streets in La Paz and throughout the country by October 17, Sánchez de Lozada fled to Miami, in the great tradition of fallen Latin American imperialist lackeys. The danger to the stability of capitalist rule at that moment was enormous. There was no domestic military solution possible to suppress the upsurge. The conscript army was unstable: soldiers were increasingly failing to follow orders against the ever-growing mass rebellion. Even the police, the ruling class's mercenaries, were frightened and could not be fully relied upon to do the job, as El Alto demonstrated.

By the culmination of the October struggle, over 150 fighters

had been killed nation-wide, with countless more injured. Dragging behind the masses, the unions came under pressure to call for workers' defense committees but never actually took responsibility for arming the movement.

### REVOLUTIONARY TALK, REFORMIST TREACHERY

The usual solution for comprador governments in such a situation is to resort to an open or covert U.S. military operation. But that was ruled out with the U.S. pre-occupied in Iraq and Afghanistan. Instead, the reformist worker and peasant leaders saved the day for Bolivian capitalism. They maneuvered to install the vice-president, Carlos Mesa, as president on October 18. These leaders had been forced by the masses to call and spread the general strike and the road blockades that supported it. But at the decisive point they gave a three-month "breathing space" to Mesa's "new" capitalist government.

The main perpetrators of this class betrayal were the leaders of the workers and peasants unions: Evo Morales, head of the coca grower's union (and the MAS political party which came in a close second in the last presidential elections); his political rival Felipe Quispe, head of the umbrella national peasant's union, CSUTCB (Unified Confederation of Campesino Workers of Bolivia); and Jaime Solares, head of the COB (Central Obrera Boliviana), the union central to which peasants' as well as workers' unions are affiliated. Also important was Roberto de la Cruz, the militant leader of the regional union center in El Alto. Each leader backed Mesa in practice while decorating their betrayal with measured doses of class-struggle rhetoric.

This radical flourish was obvious at the COB Expanded National Plenum in La Paz on October 18, surrounded by tens of thousands of demonstrators. The leaders had already pledged to support Mesa, but in front of the masses they only claimed they were making a "tactical retreat" in order to prepare for the next battle ahead.

In this spirit, the assembled called for repeal of the Oil and Gas Law that had allowed the privatization of the industries nationalized in the 1952 revolution. They also demanded repeal of the agrarian reform law allowing communally owned land to be privatized, and the punishment of the officials responsible for the massacres during the conflict. The Expanded COB further demanded the right to review all privatization contracts and leases of petroleum deposits, mines, and state-owned companies. It demanded that the government "publicly reject any request to allow foreign troops to enter Bolivian territory." It determined not to support the new government until it committed itself "not to export gas, via either Chile or Peru, and to withdraw the Oil and Gas Law."

All of this was negated by the fact that the COB shortly afterward called off the general strike – as part of the three months given to Mesa. With the workers demobilized, this known advocate of neo-liberalism quickly re-pledged to sell the gas.

The list of radical-sounding demands for show was not all the leaders had to offer that day. The expanded COB meeting paid homage to the greatness of the masses and to revolutionary goals. According to reports, it drew the conclusion that "the workers, peasants, oppressed nations and impoverished middle classes did not seize power from the



*Bolivian miners celebrate Sánchez de Lozada's resignation October 17, 2003.*



*Evo Morales, leader of Bolivian coca growers, favors electoralism over mass action and delayed active support for the general strike until October 6.*

ruling class because they still have no revolutionary party to rely on.” And COB leader Jaime Solares declared – to thunderous applause – that:

**Those of us who consider ourselves revolutionaries can't lie. No leader and no political party led this popular uprising. ... The Bolivian workers, from below, were the ones who kicked the murderer "Goni" out of power. The enraged masses were those who gave this blow to North American imperialism. Nobody, no individual or party, can claim the leadership of this conflict. Nobody!**

Another union leader asserted that, despite the “breathing space,” they were not actually endorsing Mesa because, after all, he was not from and did not represent the working class. (Econoticiasbolivia.com, Oct. 19.)

Gushing tributes to the masses and to the need for a revolutionary party were necessary concessions to the high level of class-consciousness reached by the fighting workers. That achievement was rooted in the history of the Bolivian class struggle, above all the political heritage of the betrayed proletarian revolution of 1952. (See box on page 39.)

Unfortunately, the reformist leaders have learned lessons from the past as well – on how to betray. And this was not the first time that these leaders have used such speeches to call off a general strike. Some of the radical blather was replayed almost word for word from a similar, if smaller scale, betrayal last February, when a general strike against an IMF-inspired austerity tax plan was called to a halt. The utter hypocrisy of the supposed “revolutionary” insights voiced by these misleaders in mid-October needed to be exposed through a direct challenge to them to fight for the kind of class power they claimed to believe in.

#### REVOLUTIONARY TASKS

At the height of the struggle, the situation had elements of what Marxists call “dual power,” with strong parallels to the situation during the Russian revolution of February 1917. Then the workers and soldiers over-

threw the regime of Tsarism and set up their own councils (“soviets”) that had the power to run society. But they handed the reins of state power to a bourgeois Provisional Government. The bourgeois regime existed and functioned only because the workers were not yet conscious of the need to create their own state.

Real strike committees were needed, which would have been the necessary embryo of workers’ and peasants’ councils (juntas or soviets). In El Alto, a network of neighborhood councils ran the strike and provided for day-to-day needs of the people in conjunction with the unions. In El Alto, La Paz and elsewhere, the union meetings were often run as open mass meetings. Much evidence shows that the masses were well aware of the need to pressure their own leaders to act – and that the leaders were quite aware at important junctures that the cost of not responding would mean losing their influence.

Nevertheless, while the masses exerted pressure on their leadership through their self-activity, which included the neighborhood councils and the open mass meetings, they could not break through all the barriers their leaders presented. For this, an alternative revolutionary leadership would have been necessary. And an alternative form of mass debate and struggle organization, soviets, would have been vital so that the workers and peasants could control their own destiny.

Within such councils revolutionary workers, even an initially small revolutionary group, could have fought for its program and its leadership – and over time have won the most far-seeing elements to the task of building a vanguard party. Democratic and potentially revolutionary formations like soviets were an absolute necessity in the Bolivian upheaval and represent a deadly threat to the entrenched reformist union leaders. In Russia in 1917, at the outset of the revolution the Bolsheviks were a small but determined proletarian vanguard organization. Through steadfast adherence to the principles of working-class independence and leadership, and adroit tactics designed to expose the pseudo-revolutionary socialists, they were able to lead the working class to power in the October revolution. It is indeed a tragedy that there was no Bolshevik Party in Bolivia in 2003.



*September 14, protest in Cochabamba against government plan to sell off natural gas reserves to an imperialist consortium.*



*Miners receive food from residents of El Alto as they pass through. The fervent solidarity demonstrated within the working class – and between workers and peasants – was a tremendous achievement of the struggle.*

## REVOLUTIONARY TACTICS

A primary task of revolutionaries has to be the unmasking of all the misleaders of our class. It is the only way to build the revolutionary party composed of the most advanced class-conscious workers. It means always addressing the advanced workers frankly and clearly with propaganda for the class party, the proletarian revolution and the need to create a workers' state, without any obfuscation. In a revolutionary situation like Bolivia in October, it also meant fighting for these goals by making use of every possible tactic and slogan to convince the masses of the working class and help advance their consciousness through the practical struggle.

In particular, we believe that in Bolivia agitation for a "workers' and peasants' government" was on the order of the day. As we explained in our landmark article "Myth and Reality of the Transitional Program" (see *Socialist Voice* No. 8 or our website), this slogan derives from Trotsky's Transitional Program, which presents a system of action demands which enable revolutionaries to join with fellow workers in a united front struggle based on their mass organizations. In this case, revolutionaries state openly that one major reason that they propose a united struggle for a workers' government is to prove that the working class must lead an alliance of the workers and the peasantry, that revolution is necessary and that the COB leaders will not even carry out their radical promises to build a working-class alternative to Mesa.

The workers' government demand is the most far-reaching demand in the Transitional Program because it approaches the question of state power itself. Demanding that reformist leaders, who claim to represent the working class and talk about workers constituting a government some time in the future, actually fight for it now was exactly what the situation in Bolivia demanded. The workers wanted their class to control the government, not the bourgeois politicians. The overwhelming majority did not yet understand the need to destroy the existing state apparatus; they believed that a decisive change in the government could meet their needs. And that is what the COB leaders claimed to favor despite their "momentary" deal with Mesa. That lie had to be exposed in order to convince the masses that they needed an authentically Bolshevik party, the destruction of the present state and their own workers' state as part of a Latin American confederation of workers' states.

Simply writing propaganda explaining that the misleaders were not really in favor of a workers' state would not expose them in the eyes of the masses, who were clearly caught up in the question of governmental changes, not yet socialist revolution. In the context of unified mass action it was necessary to prove that the leaders were not even for a workers' government – even though the masses had already shown that they could topple the government. Bolsheviks would have addressed their fellow workers along the following lines:

"Since you still feel that these leaders can be pressured to represent our class, let us exert the maximum pressure now to put them to the test; we shall see in practice which of us is right. We revolutionaries believe these leaders are completely dedicated to propping up another capitalist government. We believe there is no better time than now to fight for power if they really want to do it. But we do not believe they have any intention of fighting for a government based on our own institutions. And we believe in fact that what is necessary is not even just a change in government but the overthrow of capitalism, a working-class government in a workers state.

"We will stand with our fellow workers in the fight for a government of our class, while we openly warn that the leaders will betray this fight. Should we succeed in pressuring them to take steps into forming a government, we will continue to point out its limitations as long as reformist leaders remain in charge and a capitalist system is still exploiting us. But let us fight together now, at least for these leaders to form a workers' and peasants' government based on our own institutions. We think the outcome will prove the need for a revolutionary party leadership and the socialist revolution."

## COB LEADERS, TAKE POWER!

Given that an expanded form of the COB had served as the central decision-making body of the revolutionary masses at the height of the struggle, the workers' and peasants' government tactic could have taken the concrete form of demanding "Expanded COB to Power!" This would have been a critical way to point to the leading role of the workers' unions in alliance with the peasants' unions, and to expose the leadership's preparation to prop up yet another bourgeois regime.

Instead, all the leaders and the left supported the slogan "Down with Goni" – without raising any immediate working-class alternative! Given that the mass struggle was verging on insurrection, there was no room for abstention on such questions. Since Sánchez de Lozada's resignation was looming, an alternative to an otherwise inevitable bourgeois substitute regime had to be posed then and there. Had the challenge been put to the workers and peasants union leaders to take power themselves, all their

wailing about the lack of a revolutionary party would have been far better exposed to the masses for the class treason it was. Rather than trying to foster a sense of powerlessness and resignation, which was the real intent of the COB Plenum on October 18, this demand would have paved the way for a huge leap in consciousness, prevented the COB leaders from demobilizing the struggle, undermined Mesa and accelerated the building of the vanguard workers' party.

To a large degree, the masses already knew that they had been the driving force of the struggle throughout. They needed to be shown the way to carry this awareness and fighting spirit forward in order to achieve their goals. Thus it was essential to challenge their leaders, Solares, Morales and Quispe, to take power on behalf of the workers' and peasants' unions, together with our clear warning that they would betray their bases.

In addition, it was crucial that revolutionaries conduct an all-out struggle to continue the general strike; that was the weapon that reflected the power of the workers and peasants. It was also necessary to call for the formation of the soviets, instruments of dual power. Not only would soviets have served as the institutions through which the masses could conduct their struggle as the combined legislative-executive arm of our class; under revolutionary leadership they would become the basis of the new state power that the revolution must achieve.

In fact, some calls for strike committees and self-defense committees were made by leftist groups along the way. But they used the workers' government slogan not as a tactical transitional demand, a challenge designed to expose and defeat the misleaders. Rather, they skirted an immediate class fight for power when that was the unavoidable question at hand. As well, by not putting forward tactics to create a greater cleavage between Morales, Quispe and Solares and the masses, they avoided advancing the fight for leadership. The pseudo-Trotskyist left either used the workers' government slogan as the ultimate goal of the future, avoiding a clear call for a revolutionary workers' state, or else floated abstract calls for a workers' government and workers' state without any comment as to what concrete parties or institutions could wage such a fight.

Propaganda to advanced workers must say what is: it must be crystal clear about the revolutionary goals of a dictatorship of the proletariat. Otherwise it is vacillating, centrist propaganda that reinforces reformist illusions among even the most advanced layers. From the information available to us, this was what was done by the two nominally Trotskyist groups in Bolivia, the Partido Obrero Revolucionario (POR) and the Liga Obrera Revolucionaria (LOR) a group which split from the POR in 1989 and is affiliated with the Trotskyist Fraction international headed by the Argentinean PTS (See our article on this group in *PR* 68 or on our website.) Both groups, and various other pseudo-Trotskyists around the world, talked about a workers' government as a distant goal rather than a way to challenge the leaders in the midst of the mass struggle.

## **PERMANENT REVOLUTION**

Nothing short of the fight for leadership, the building of the revolutionary party to smash capitalism in Bolivia, can truly respond to the needs of the masses and solve the deepening crisis in Bolivia. Nor, as authentic Trotskyists have always understood, can the problems of the national revolution be resolved with anything less than an openly internationalist strategy. That is the strategy of permanent revolution. Latin America is beset by the rule of the imperialists' International Monetary Fund; not a single country is stable today. Yet throughout the Bolivian struggle, the reformist leaders stoked the fires of anti-Chilean nationalism, and

the centrist left itself failed to focus its voice on the need for a concerted attack on imperialism by oppressed workers and peasants across the borders.

Bolivian workers could appeal for international working-class aid by repudiating the state debt to the imperialist bankers and calling on workers and their organizations in debt-ridden countries like Argentina and Brazil to do likewise. Neighboring Peru likewise has been shaken by mass unrest against the government's "state of emergency" for much of this year. "Workers to Power" and "Civil War" were battle cries in the Bolivian struggle. It was also necessary to add the slogan "Repudiate the Imperialist Debt!" – an expression of a conscious internationalist strategy that could ignite the working class struggle in every Latin American country beleaguered by U.S. imperialism.

Like the original Bolsheviks and the original Fourth International, we say that what is needed in Bolivia and everywhere today is a party that makes no concessions to bourgeois and imperialist rule because it represents only the international interests of the workers and toilers of the world. The struggle in Bolivia is re-opening. Latin America is a powder keg, and what happens next in Bolivia could detonate the continent.●

*November 28, 2003*

***Arms to the Bolivian Masses! General Strike to Oust Mesa!  
Workers to Power! Build the Revolutionary Party!***

***Latin America: Repudiate the Imperialist Debts!  
U.S.: Hands Off Bolivia!***

***For Proletarian Socialist Revolution!  
Re-Crete the Fourth International!***

## **Lessons of the Bolivian Revolution**

The uprising in Bolivia was a long-brewing event, preceded by previous struggles in response to wave after wave of privatization attacks on industry, basic services and natural resources. The period opened with the denationalization of the mines, which led to the closure of three quarters of the mines in 1985. The most recent battles included the "water war" in 2000 in Cochabamba, where a collective rebellion defeated a privatization plan. And there had been widespread protests earlier this year.

On a longer historic scale, a revolutionary workers' movement had culminated in a popular front government in 1952. The miners disarmed the pro-imperialist regime's military but their misleaders allowed the bourgeois nationalist National Revolutionary Movement (MNR) to take state power. Union representatives joined the government, with the supposedly Trotskyist Partido Obrero Revolucionario (POR) supporting the bourgeois regime. This betrayal signaled a definitive class capitulation on the part of the Fourth International, which applauded the POR's strategy. The revolution was crushed by a military coup backed by the U.S., and twenty years of military dictatorship followed.

Only a small minority in the U.S. Socialist Workers Party, the Vern-Ryan Tendency, stood out against the International's disastrous strategy. Its historic documents have been reproduced by the LRP in the pamphlet *Bolivia: the Revolution the "Fourth International" Betrayed*. We urge all revolutionary-minded readers to obtain it. It is available for \$1.00 from SV Publishing, P.O. Box 769, Washington Bridge Station, New York, NY 10033.

## **Bolivia's Unfinished Revolution**



*La Paz, October 16: Workers and peasants poured into the capital in support of the general strike.*

by Evelyn Kaye

A working-class-led uprising ousted President Gonzalo ("Goni") Sánchez de Lozada of Bolivia on October 17 and halted the plan of the Bolivian government and their imperialist masters to sell off Bolivia's natural gas reserves. The struggle was sparked by peasant road blockades in September, and the decisive action came with an indefinite general strike in October which grew to historic proportions. The worker and peasant unity that developed in action constituted no less than a political earthquake in Bolivia.

Over the course of a few weeks the Bolivian masses showed the capacity for heroic and audacious action which has marked their history. In Bolivia, the population as a whole is majority indigenous, mainly Aymara and Quechua Indians, workers as well as peasants. The tendency of the indigenous population to seek unity against the entrenched racist oppression of the system was a factor of enormous weight. Another powerful unifying factor was the growing opposition to economic devastation under neo-liberalism, among both the working class and the peasantry. Both classes have been thoroughly immiserated by wave after wave of attacks.

The actions and demands of the masses went well beyond what their official leaders wanted. Yet the worker and peasant leaders manipulated the scene to save the day for the capitalist ruling class. The powerful upsurge of the masses, in contrast to the pathetic betrayal of the reformist leaders, points to the fact that

only revolutionary working-class leadership of a workers' and peasants' alliance can resolve the plight of the Bolivian people.

### **FROM EL ALTO TO LA PAZ**

A key turning point took place in El Alto, an industrial city near the capital of La Paz, where the working class forged a solid general strike that paralyzed the city by October 8. The people of El Alto in turn played a pivotal role in the successful spreading of this general strike to La Paz – as well as to Cochabamba and other important urban centers.

In El Alto the masses raised the question of taking on the police. The Army launched a deadly attack on the movement when a miners' contingent arrived from Huanuni in the mining district of Oruro on October 9. That was a turning point, whose spirit was captured in this description:

**Throughout the afternoon of October 10, at the wake of the 22 year-old Aymara bricklayer, Ramiro Vargas, ... the mourners chanted, Now for sure! Civil war! Now for sure! Civil war! Police shot Vargas on October 9 for no reason other than that 500 miners had arrived from Huanuni to join the civic strike in El Alto. ... Following the killing of Ramiro Vargas, neighborhood committees in El Alto gave the police 24 hours to leave their houses and called on them**

*continued on page 28*