

The

Summer 2004

No. 19

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# Internationalist



## USA PATRIOT Act, Police State Measures

# AMERICAN GESTAPO



Photo: Brandon Constant, brandonconstant.com

### Break with All the Capitalist Parties, *For a Revolutionary Workers Party!*

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Front page photo: Militarized police prepare to attack demonstrators at Democratic convention in Boston, July 29.

Subscription blank graphic based on a poster by V.A. Rodchenko, *Books* (1925).

### Post-Soviet SL/ICL: New Zigzags on the Centrist Road

War in Iraq, escalating police-state measures, imperial elections offering a "choice" between rabid enemies of the working people: the topics addressed in this issue of *The Internationalist* highlight the central task of building a new revolutionary leadership of the workers and oppressed. Yet while capitalist triumphalism has proved short-lived in the post-Soviet world, disorientation and confusionism have characterized the bulk of the ostensibly revolutionary left.

Eight years ago, the organization which for several decades represented the program of Trotskyism, the Spartacist League and its International Communist League (SL/ICL), underwent a convulsive political crisis, expelling long-time cadres who went on to found the Internationalist Group. Today the SL/ICL has proclaimed a new and dramatic zigzag, declaring that much of what it held since 1996 against the IG must be "corrected." The SL's crisis poses fundamental issues such as the very nature of the counterrevolutions that destroyed the Soviet bloc, the future of the Chinese deformed workers state, and what it means to build a revolutionary leadership.

Beginning on page 13 we present an in-depth analysis of this development and its lessons for genuine Marxists.

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## The Internationalist



A Journal of Revolutionary Marxism  
for the Reforging of the Fourth International

Publication of the Internationalist Group,  
section of the League for the Fourth International

EDITORIAL BOARD: Jan Norden (editor), Mark Lazarus, Abram Negrete, Marjorie Salzburg, Socorro Valero.

The Internationalist (ISSN 1091-2843) is published bimonthly, skipping July-August, by Mundial Publications, P.O. Box 3321, Church Street Station, New York, NY 10008, U.S.A. Telephone: (212) 460-0983 Fax: (212) 614-8711 E-mail: [internationalistgroup@msn.com](mailto:internationalistgroup@msn.com) Subscriptions: US\$10 for five issues.

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# USA PATRIOT Act, Police-State Measures

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“The largest armada of land, air and maritime forces ever assembled to provide security at a national political gathering are being deployed in New York for the Republican convention,” reports the *New York Times* (25 August). A “security zone” has been established in midtown Manhattan, where anyone entering will be required to show identification and may be subject to random searches by security forces. The New York Police Department (NYPD), with 37,000 cops and a budget that would make it the 20th largest standing army in the world, is being supplemented by thousands of federal agents. National Guardsmen patrol the subways. The president’s praetorian guard, the U.S. Secret Service, is in charge of overall security.

Meanwhile, demonstrations against the Republican National Convention, which are expected to exceed a quarter million protesters, are denied permits to rally in Central Park. Instead, they are to be pushed onto the West Side Highway, to be confined in what amounts to a giant police pen. The authorities’ plan will inevitably provoke chaos. Mayor Michael Bloomberg warns demonstrators that if they are not “reasonable” and “abuse our privileges,” then they “will lose them.” Thus the rights of free speech and assembly are turned into “privileges” that can be revoked by the government. But the crackdown is not limited to New York City. Nationally, the FBI is going around “knocking on doors” – and using its authority to carry out “sneak and peek” break-ins – looking for “troublemakers.” The USA PATRIOT Act<sup>1</sup> is being used to the hilt.

Since the 11 September 2001 (“9/11”) attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, there has been a wholesale assault on democratic rights in the United States and around the world. Draconian internal security laws have been imposed in countries ranging from the U.S. and Britain to Mexico and India. The population is being regimented for the open-ended “war on terror” proclaimed by President George W. Bush. Lib-

<sup>1</sup> This title of this police-state measure is an acronym standing for “Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism.”



Massachusetts state police mobilize against demonstrators near Democratic convention site on July 25.

Bob Bukaty/AP

erals wring their hands out of concern over the threat to civil liberties in this repressive climate. They worry about “overreaction” to 9/11 and about the political motives of the Bush regime. But the vast expansion of police-state measures in the U.S. is not an act of retaliation, or partisan “dirty tricks” – it is the result of *bipartisan* plans by the ruling class that considerably predate the terror attacks of 2001.

A century of imperialist war has led to an increasing *institutional bonapartism*, in which the executive power is increasingly independent of any restraints. Since the counterrevolutionary wave of 1989-92 that destroyed the bureaucratically degenerated/deformed workers states of the Soviet Union and East Europe, this trend toward regimentation and militarization has sharply accelerated throughout the capitalist world. No longer constrained by the fear of a “communist threat,” independent of whether Democrats or Republicans are in office in the U.S., or social democrats or bourgeois right-wingers in Europe, the social programs of the so-called “welfare state” have been relentlessly shredded – and along with them the pretense of “democracy.” Economic counterrevolution and political repression are intimately linked.

Now this is all coming to a head. The government’s attempts to whip up a terror scare are only the pretext, which is not to exclude the possibility of another attack, or “foiled” plot – this would very much serve the interests of the present ruling clique. Instead, *like the lockdown of Wall Street and Lower Manhattan following 9/11, the present “securing” of the cen-*



tral area of the financial capital of the world is a practice run for martial law – or more accurately, for “martial rule,” since as the architects of these plans state, no new laws are required to impose military control. The state of national emergency decreed by President Bush on 14 September 2001 remains in effect, and all of the government’s huge arsenal of previously existing repressive measures is available.

As the national terror index goes from Code Yellow to Orange, and possibly to Code Red, the NYPD is going beyond its previous “Operation Atlas” measures. Atlas was implemented after 9/11 and again at the time of the U.S. invasion of Iraq. It included COBRA (chemical, biological or radiological actions) team deployments; HERCULES team sharpshooters posted on high buildings and at key locations; ARCHANGEL teams of Emergency Services personnel and bomb experts at staging spots around the city; HAMMER teams of police and fire department experts in hazardous materials on call; CAT cars of heavily armed counter-assault teams roaming in unmarked armored vehicles; and SAMPSON team deployments. “Surges” have been practiced in which scores of police cars swarm onto a block.

If New York City is beginning to look like some Latin American capital after a coup, South Africa under apartheid rule or occupied Europe under the Nazis, this is no accident. *Ausweiss zeigen!* (Show your pass) is translated into English and delivered at checkpoints by officials of myriad known and unknown security agencies with the arrogance that the German Gestapo (Geheime Staatspolizei, or Secret Police) was famous for. No, America isn’t going fascist right now. But the U.S. is moving sharply toward police-state repression. It isn’t a conspiracy, or preparation for a terror attack, but a *concerted drive by the capitalist rulers to batten down their rule in anticipation of a storm of mass unrest* as profits soar, wages fall, unemployment spreads and the casualties of “war without end” continue to mount.

The Internationalist Group, section of the League for the Fourth International, says that to defeat this ruling-class onslaught, it is necessary to mobilize the working class at the head of the poor, oppressed minorities, immigrants and all those who would defend fundamental democratic rights, and to lead them in a revolutionary struggle for power. The intensified repression is a reaction of capitalism in its death agony, when the alternative is “socialism or barbarism.” And the key to stopping the forced march toward barbarism is to forge a revolutionary workers party.

### **USA PATRIOT Act, TIPS, TIA, MATRIX: The Feds’ “Anti-Terrorist” Arsenal to Terrorize the Population**

The USA PATRIOT Act is a huge piece of legislation, with a whole compendium of “anti-terrorist” measures. Yet it was rammed through Congress, without committee hearings and only one dissenting vote in the Senate, barely a month after the 9/11 attacks. How could it have been prepared so quickly? Answer: it wasn’t. It was put together from a whole series of repressive devices which the police and other security agencies have been trying to get for years, but were often

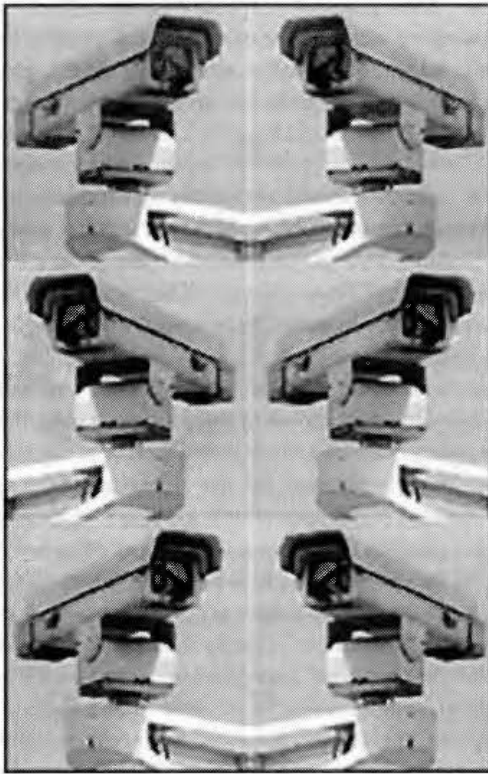
rejected by elected legislatures. The same is true of state “anti-terrorism” laws, such as those enacted by NY governor George Pataki less than a week after the attack on the World Trade Center. All these laws build on the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 enacted by the Democratic Clinton administration.

The USA PATRIOT Act ominously defines “terrorism” as any action that is “dangerous to human life” and violates any state or U.S. criminal law if the act is intended to “intimidate or coerce a civilian population” or “influence the policy of a government.” This elastic definition could include anything from civil disobedience over Navy bombing of Vieques to protesting the World Trade Organization to defending strike picket lines. It authorizes warrantless searches, indefinite detention without trial of immigrants, seizure of library and bookstore records, “trap and trace” devices for computers and e-mail, and prosecution of lawyers for aiding their clients, as well as many other things. At the same time, the administration declared anyone it picked up in Afghanistan to be an “enemy combatant” without rights as a prisoner of war, and set up a system of military tribunals which can be used against citizens as well.

This was complemented by the TIPS (Terrorism Information and Prevention) program, to encourage people to spy on their neighbors and turn in anyone deemed “suspicious.” In 2002 came the Homeland Security Act, first put forward by the Democrats. In addition, the TIA (Total Information Awareness) program was set up in the Pentagon, headed by Contragate criminal John Poindexter, to “mine” data bases to come up with personal data on *everyone* in the name of a global hunt for terrorists. Although this was supposedly shot down, it was simply subcontracted to the Florida state government of George Bush’s brother Jeb, who hired private companies to do the same thing under the name MATRIX (for Multistate Anti-Terrorism Information Exchange). The companies came up with a list of 120,000 individuals with “High Terrorist Factor scores.” [Note to readers: chances are that if you are reading this article, your name is on the list.]

If acronyms could defeat “terrorism,” the government would already have won its phony “war on terror.” But the *real purpose of these measures is to terrorize the population.* And the acronymic jungle is a tip-off as how they plan to do it: through a massive bureaucracy of repression. It won’t be so much through arrests on the street and pre-dawn raids, although thousands of immigrants have been picked up in just that way, but by the sheer massiveness of the government’s surveillance and information resources.

Already, undocumented immigrants cannot travel between cities by plane, train or bus without risk of arrest. Soon this will be extended to everyone. Meanwhile, Attorney General John Ashcroft has been working on a USA PATRIOT Act II (formally the Domestic Security Enhancement Act), with provisions to beef up spying on political dissidents and protest groups, obtain credit card information on purchases, eliminate the presumption of innocence on “terrorism” charges (thus preventing release on bail) and other goodies that would make



any Gestapo or SS man smack his lips in anticipation. While Ashcroft's secret PATRIOT II plan ran into flak when it was leaked to the Center for Public Integrity and published, it was soon replaced by the VICTORY (Vital Interdiction of Criminal Terrorist Organizations) Bill.

The government's "anti-terrorist" arsenal of terror is so threatening that even groups not known as fire-breathing radicals have gone to war against this expansion of police-state powers. The American Library Association has risen up in arms and against PATRIOT Act snooping. The stereotype of meek little "Marian the Librarian" hardly fits as librarians stayed at work late shredding borrowing records so the feds couldn't get their hands on them. Three states (Hawaii, Alaska and Vermont) and 112 cities, towns and counties have passed resolutions condemning the USA PATRIOT Act as unconstitutional, most of them barring use of government resources under the law. These resolutions are expressions of opinion which won't slow down in the slightest a government hell-bent on beefing up its police powers. More significant are the numerous motions by unions and city, county and state labor federations against the USA PATRIOT Act, in spite of the liberal politics they express.

An example is the resolution passed by the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor on 27 January 2003. The resolution directly links the Patriot Act and Homeland Security Act with anti-labor actions by the government ("the Bush Administration has spearheaded a renewed assault on organized labor which includes use of Taft-Hartley against dockworkers") and the war on Iraq ("the war is a pretext for attacks on labor, civil, immigrant and human rights" as well as "a cover and distraction for the sinking economy, ongoing corporate corruption and layoffs"), saying these laws would "undermine labor's right to organize and fight anti-immigrant attacks." Yet the whole basis of the resolution is "social-patriotic," concerned only about the effects on U.S. workers of a war that has slaughtered thousands of Iraqis. And it is toothless.

Yet labor does have the power to fight back against such police-state laws. In Germany even as Cold War McCarthyism held sway, unions played a key role in unleashing protests against the emergency laws (*Notstandsgesetze*) pushed by the Grand Coalition of the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats that took office in 1967. This then fed the growth of New Left student "extra-parliamentary opposition." But to seriously combat the attacks on democratic rights requires above all a political program that goes beyond the myths of bourgeois democracy to challenge the fundamentals of capitalist rule. The "terrorism" hysteria in the U.S. today will not be defeated by appeals to the Constitution, although Marxists certainly defend the Bill of Rights against attempts to do away with the rights supposedly enshrined in these amendments.

Democrats and liberals share the premises of the USA PATRIOT Act and other "anti-terrorist" legislation, and indeed the Clinton administration initiated many of the police measures contained in it under the guise of fighting "espionage." And while they may think the Bush administration "goes too far," the fact is that the whole raft of repressive laws is the product of an imperialist bourgeoisie anxious to shore up its rule "at home" so that it can continue to dominate the world. As Internationalist Group signs at antiwar demonstrations declare, "Imperialist War Abroad Means Police-State Repression 'At Home'." The fight against the war and cop terror must be part of a fight against the capitalist-imperialist system that spawns them, or it will be doomed to defeat.

For even as it proclaims the supposed "death of communism," the ruling class is preparing for internal war.

### From "Garden Plot" ...

"The future of warfare lies in the streets, sewers, high-rise buildings, industrial parks, and the sprawl of houses, shacks, and shelters that form the broken cities of our world...."

"Once the gatherers of wealth, then the processors of wealth, cities and their satellite communities have become the ultimate creators of wealth. They concentrate people and power, communications and control, knowledge and capability, rendering all else peripheral. They are also the post-modern equivalent of jungles and mountains – citadels of the disposed and irreconcilable. A military unprepared for urban operations across a broad spectrum is unprepared for tomorrow...."

"The likeliest 'battlefields' are cityscapes where human waste goes undisposed, the air is appalling, and mankind is rotting."

–Ralph Peters, "Our Soldiers, Their Cities," *Parameters* (U.S. Army War College Quarterly), Spring 1996

Peters, a leading U.S. military "theorist," wasn't just talking about Mogadishu, Beirut, Panama City or Baghdad today. He's also explicitly talking about American military operations in Mexico City and Los Angeles. He worries that, "Confronted with an armed and hostile population in such an environment, the US Army as presently structured would find it difficult to muster the dismount strength necessary to control a single center as simultaneously dense and sprawling as Mexico City."

His article, infused with hatred of the impoverished urban masses, was a key influence in the U.S. military's new attention to Military Operations on Urban Terrain (MOU). This has pushed aside earlier doctrines on Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW): the army isn't just planning for "peace-keeping" during "civil disturbances" in places like Los Angeles, they're planning for war.

There has been concern among liberals and even some conservatives over the increasing weight of paramilitary units in U.S. police forces. The right-wing libertarian CATO Institute published a Briefing Paper in 1999 by Diane Cecilia Weber titled "Warrior Cops: The Ominous Growth of Paramilitarism in American Police Departments." In the 1980s and '90s, she notes, there was a huge growth in the number of such units. No longer the SWAT teams of riot cops as in the '60s and '70s, they are military squads equipped with automatic rifles, armored personnel carriers and even tanks. They train with Army Rangers and Navy SEALs. More than 90 percent of all cities over 50,000 have such police units. Now they are integrated into "homeland defense" under the Pentagon and "anti-terror" czar Tom Ridge. But their target is not Osama bin Laden.

Moreover, the regular military has increasingly become active in domestic policing operations. For many years this was considered off-limits because of the 1876 Posse Comitatus Act, which at the time it was passed was a reactionary law ending the occupation of the South by the Union army following the Civil War and spelling the death knell for Black Reconstruction. As Union troops pulled out the Ku Klux Klan was soon riding and Jim Crow segregation was instituted to keep millions of freed black former slaves "in their place." For decades thereafter, this law was held to prevent domestic military operations by the army, although that didn't stop Clinton from using the Army to incinerate a religious group at Waco, Texas in 1993.

But the ghetto upheavals of the late 1960s changed that. While the bourgeoisie just dismissed them as riots (while New Leftists idealized them as "uprisings"), the sight of the police and army fleeing Washington, D.C. as large parts of the U.S. capital burned following the 1968 assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. sent shivers down the collective spine of the ruling class. They pushed poverty programs to buy off some black politicians and spread a few crumbs to defuse the discontent. But they also revamped the military and police apparatus to prepare for intervention in U.S. cities against the angry minority population. The resulting master plan was known as "Garden Plot" and it has been regularly updated since the 1960s.

Under Operation Garden Plot, when student unrest broke out on U.S. campuses in response to the 1970 invasion of Cambodia, the Air Force lifted "civil disturbance control forces" from Fort Bragg, the headquarters of the Special Forces, to locations throughout the East. While provisions of the plans are classified, one branch of the military (the Air Force), released its Plan 55-1 under a Freedom of Information Request in 1984. Its targets were listed as "disruptive elements, extremists or dissidents perpetrating civil disorder."

Army Field Manual 19-15 on "Civil Disturbances" states that "the president can employ armed federal troops to sup-

press insurrection, domestic violence, unlawful assemblies" – a pretty broad category – and in this case "authorities must be prepared to detain large numbers of people." If necessary, temporary detention facilities are to be set up on military bases. FM 19-15 also touches on martial law: "If the need for martial law arises," it notes, "it may be advisable to prevent people from assembling.... Prohibitions on assembly may forbid gatherings at any place and time...making hostile or inflammatory speeches," etc. (Frank Morales, "'Homeland Defense' and the Militarization of America," *Project Censored*, September 2003).

In 1984, Ronald Reagan issued Presidential Directive 54, authorizing the Federal Emergency Management Administration to carry out a simulation of a "state of domestic national emergency." According to a report in the *Miami Herald*, the REX-84 group (supervised by Oliver North's crew at the National Security Council) planned for the detention of up to 400,000 undocumented immigrants at military bases. "One aim of the Rex 84 exercise was to determine what types of national emergency would be severe enough to persuade the majority of Americans to accept even a temporary suspension of normal Constitutional government" (Harry Helms, *Inside the Shadow Government: National Emergencies and the Cult of Secrecy* [2003]).

But the big spur to plans for domestic military operations was the Los Angeles upheaval of April 1992 that followed the acquittal by an all-white suburban jury of the cops who brutally beat black L.A. motorist Rodney King. As South Central and other black and Latino areas of the city exploded in anger, the police pulled out. The rage was sometimes misdirected at individual white drivers who were caught in the area, and also led to widespread looting and the torching of over 1,000 small shops, particularly "mom and pop" convenience stores and liquor stores owned by Korean immigrants. Proletarian revolutionaries denounced the racist verdict while saying that protest should be directed at the state and the capitalist order it defends and protects rather than against small merchants and hapless drivers.

The Los Angeles city and California state governments called on the federal government to send in the Army and National Guard. While George Bush I was president at the time, the recommendation came from Democrat Warren Christopher who was part of an advisory commission to the LAPD. The military forces moved in, arresting more than 13,000 people, killing some dozens and injuring hundreds. Hundreds of immigrants who were seized were then deported. L.A. continued under military occupation for weeks, although the courageous (and largely immigrant) janitors of SEIU Local 399 braved the repression to carry out a protest march in the middle of the unrest.

In the aftermath, the military has exhaustively studied the L.A. example. One study, by the Foreign Military Studies Office of the U.S. Army, concluded: "Many misunderstood the LA Riot of 1992 as a predominantly race riot. As witnessed by the California National Guard Field Commander, the riots were seen as a case study in urban warfare." In fact, the upheaval was not "racial," but an outpouring of anger by both impoverished blacks and Latinos. But the fact that the military classi-

fied it as a “case study” of “urban warfare” is significant. The same study compared the U.S. military action to that of the Brazilian army occupation of slums of Rio de Janeiro in 1995, and found the latter more effective: “During Operation Rio, the efforts of the Armed Forces restored confidence and trust in public authorities” (William Mendel, “Combat in Cities: The LA Riots and Operation Rio,” FMSO Study, July 1996).

In fact, what is praised as “restoring confidence” in the authorities in Rio was a death squad operation by the Brazilian military. But it’s not the only focus of U.S. military studies in MOUT. A book-length study published by the Institute of Strategic Studies of the U.S. Army War College in October 2001, titled *Soldiers in Cities: Military Operations on Urban Terrain*, includes reviews of the 1968 battles of Hue and Saigon in Vietnam, the 1994-96 war that leveled the Chechen capital of Grosny, Israel’s 1982 occupation (and destruction) of Beirut, and the World War II battles of Stalingrad and Berlin (investigating the tactical errors of the Wehrmacht), as well the Los Angeles “riots” of 1992. Conclusion: the U.S. military is seriously preparing for the occupation of America’s “inner cities.”

### ...to the Fatherland Security Agency

Previously the excuse for militarizing the policing of U.S. ghettos and barrios was the phony “war on drugs,” which was really a war on oppressed minorities. Now they are ratcheting up their operations under the guise of “homeland security” and an equally phony “war on terror,” which is actually an attempt to terrorize and regiment the population. The Bush administration is pushing this for all it is worth, but the designing of much of the new apparatus for domestic repression comes from Democrats. Not only did Connecticut senator Lieberman first put forward a bill for the Homeland Security Agency (HSA), over objections from the Bush White House, but plans for this agency were drawn up by the U.S. Commission on National Security/21st Century presided over by the former senators liberal Democrat Gary Hart and moderate Republican Warren Rudman.

The Hart-Rudman report, *Road Map for National Security: Imperative for Change* (February 2001), laid out in detail the structure of the HSA, prefiguring a national police/military/intelligence agency that parallels the Nazi Gestapo. Their argument was that a “direct attack on American citizens on American soil is likely” – written months before the 9/11 attacks. More recently, *The 9/11 Commission Report* (July 2004) of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States has called for setting up a national intelligence director to run a greatly expanded domestic spy agency. (Corresponding to this is the establishment for the first time of a Continental Command of the Pentagon for operations in the United States.) Democrat John Kerry has challenged Bush to implement the Commission’s report to the letter, thus positioning himself as the leading “hawk” for internal police repression. This is what his talk of being a “better commander” for the war on terror means.

The Hart-Rudman report, while using the pretext of an impending terrorist attack (which was then realized only a few

months later, while by its own account the Bush government was well aware that something was in the offing), underscores the economic factors that are behind their calls for tightened domestic “security.” Future scientific-technological developments and “globalization” mean some people will be “marginal,” they write: “This means more polarization between those with wealth and power and those without – both among and within societies.” The increasing economic polarization in the U.S. is well documented, reflecting intensified exploitation as CEOs earn over a billion dollars a year while wages are falling generally and low-wage jobs with no benefits are replacing union jobs at a rapid pace.

We have written before that as the economic and social structure of the U.S. increasingly tends toward the Latin American model of a huge impoverished mass at the bottom with a tiny super-rich elite and a hollowed-out “middle class,” the domestic “security” forces in this country will increasingly resemble those of Latin America, whose primary mission is internal war against the working people and poor. Liberals will decry the loss of civil liberties and look to the reactionary courts – in vain, because the judicial system is part of the machinery of the capitalist state and its vaunted “independence” a myth. The conservative-dominated Supreme Court, which legalized Bush’s power grab in the 2000 elections on the basis of no law or legal precedent, will facilitate whatever police-state measures the bourgeoisie deems it needs to protect its class rule.

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## League for the Fourth International

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# Letters to the Editor

## What's Wrong with "Bring the Troops Home Now"?

Los Angeles, 17 July 2004

To the editor:

Recently I had the opportunity to see your publication for the first time and I was impressed with the thoroughness of the articles. The article regarding the torture in Iraq put these outrageous activities in the context of previous U.S. actions, such as in Vietnam. This is important because most often the mainstream media reports events in a very episodic way. This makes it difficult for Americans to understand the "big picture." So, the more holistic approach seen in your publication is very helpful.

I do, however, have a concern with several comments relating to the approach that should be followed by American progressives at this time. For example [in "Torture American-Style," *The Internationalist* No. 18, May-June 2004], the slogan "Bring the troops home" is criticized and it is suggested that this slogan is a mere "quibble." I do not understand why this slogan is characterized in this way.

I think back to the late '60s and early '70s. I was attending college at that time and, of course, the main issue on the agenda was the Vietnam War. There were some well-intentioned folks who wanted the anti-war movement to put forth the demand, "Set the Date." In other words, set the date for the withdrawal of U.S. military forces from Vietnam and the rest of Southeast Asia. The problem with that slogan was that it conceded the right of the U.S. to be in Vietnam for some longer period. In contrast, the Student Mobilization Committee adopted the slogan "Out Now," as did many other anti-war groups. The point was that the United States had no business being in Vietnam and that it must proceed immediately to withdraw from there.

I felt at the time that this was the correct position, the principled position and I was pleased that much of the anti-war movement lined up behind this stance. I certainly agree that it is necessary to guard against opportunism and a weak approach which fails to get to the heart of the issue. But, if calling for immediate withdrawal was the right approach in the late '60s and early '70s, then why isn't it the right approach now? We have the same situation: an intervention which is illegitimate, illegal and immoral. Surely it is more than a mere "quibble" to insist that it end.

The ranks of progressives in the U.S. include people with a variety of perspectives and I think that that is something that must be accepted as a fact of life. What I hope that all could agree on is that the movement opposing U.S. intervention in Iraq should be broad-based. That being said, I think that the slogan "Bring the troops home now" could be instrumental in building that movement.

With best wishes,

D.B.D.

*The Internationalist responds: We not only welcome but encourage letters from readers. Often diverging from our own views in full or in part, they contribute to clarifying debate on crucial political issues.*

*The writer raises an issue that goes back to World War I, namely the policy of Marxists toward reactionary wars in general and imperialist wars in particular. Lenin insisted then that it was necessary to go beyond the masses' sentiment for peace to pose a program for workers revolution, because only in that way was it possible to get rid of the causes of the war – the capitalist system. He pointed to the examples of the 1871 Paris Commune, when French defeat in the war with Germany led the working class to seize power, and of Russia's defeat in the 1904 war with Japan, which set the stage for the 1905 Revolution.*

*Against "social-pacifists" like Kautsky, Lenin called for "turning the imperialist war into civil war," and emphasized that "a revolutionary class cannot but wish for the defeat of its government in a reactionary war, and cannot fail to see that the latter's military reverses must facilitate its overthrow" (Socialism and War, September 1915). In this vein, the Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International today stand for "Class War Against the Imperialist War," calling to defeat U.S. imperialism and defend Iraq. Making this concrete, we agitate for workers to refuse to move war cargo, and for workers strikes against the war.*

*Concerning the imperialist invasion and occupation of Iraq, our previous issue noted: "Liberals and reformists quibble over U.S. foreign policy, calling at most to 'bring the troops home.' Their proposals amount to cleaning up Washington's act to make it more democratic." Rather than challenging imperialism as a system, their demands seek to make a political bloc with a section of the imperialist bourgeoisie that wants to cut its losses. The writer questions our assertion and points to the example of the Vietnam-era antiwar movement.*

*In the early stages of the Vietnam War, when U.S. rulers still thought they could win, the demand for immediate, unconditional withdrawal of U.S. troops cut against liberal "peace" groups who called for "negotiations." But as the Pentagon got bogged down in Indochina, significant sections of the American bourgeoisie decided it was better to get out. By then, the differences between calling to "set the date" for U.S. withdrawal and for "troops out now" amounted to squabbles within the imperialist ruling class. Neither was a revolutionary class program against capitalism.*

*When left organizations construct "anti-war movements" on a program acceptable to liberal sections of the ruling class, they end up reinforcing the ideological weaponry of imperialism. In refusing to take a side against "their own" ruling class, they foster the outlook Lenin called "social-patriotism." Thus they appeal to bring "our" troops "home" rather than imbuing the workers and oppressed – including those the ruling class seeks to con into enlisting – with the*



understanding that their real interests are diametrically opposed to those of "our" ruling class and inseparable from those of the peoples oppressed by the imperialists.

During the Vietnam War, the once Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party built antiwar alliances like the Student Mobilization Committee and National Peace Action Coalition on the "Out Now" slogan explicitly tailored to liberal imperialist politicians, like Vance Hartke, who sat on the board of NPAC. Similarly today, antiwar coalitions like A.N.S.W.E.R. include dissident bourgeois politicians like former U.S. attorney general Ramsey Clark. These are popular fronts, which tie the oppressed to a section of the oppressors, in order to block revolutionary struggle.

Far from permitting an effective struggle against the war, the SWP/NPAC/SMC policy ensured that when Nixon withdrew ground troops – while escalating aerial bombing – the antiwar movement simply melted away, even though the war continued for another two years. This was only logical, since it had been built on a social-patriotic basis and its main demand had apparently been realized. Mobilization of the class power of American workers, particularly labor strikes against the war, could only be hindered by the alliance with Democratic doves who wanted to get out of Vietnam in order to defend the interests of American capitalism. The last thing they wanted was independent action by the working class in solidarity with the Vietnamese.

Today, after barely a year of the U.S. occupation of Iraq, a sizeable portion of the American ruling class wants to get out. They just can't figure out how to do it without it looking like a loss. Left groups who call for "troops out" while avoiding (or repudiating) a forthright stand for the defeat of the imperialists in Iraq in effect want to help them out. Seeking to win support from liberals and union bureaucrats, the opportunists cut their program to the measure of this section of the U.S. rulers while ducking the obligation of providing solidarity with the targets of imperialist aggression.

In the tradition of Lenin and Trotsky, we fight to get the U.S. out of Iraq in a way that inflicts a stinging setback on the imperialists and points toward international socialist revolution to smash imperialism. Thus we call for the Iraqi masses and the world working class to drive out the colonial occupiers and defeat these enemies of the world's working people.

The letter printed below, which has been edited for space, takes up a number of these issues.

### **"Reflecting Social Chauvinism"**

New York, 19 April 2004

To the editor:

In its treatment of the Iraq events ("Imperialists Carry Out Massacre in Fallujah," 16 April 2004), *Workers Vanguard* (WV), newspaper of the Spartacist League (SL), reveals a perspective which at best reflects the chauvinism of the labor aristocracy of the world's dominant oppressor nation. Since the SL's ties even to the privileged sectors of the American working class toward which it is oriented are increasingly attenuated, however, it may be more accurate and simpler to say that WV's

political perspective is liberal. That is, WV's articles on Iraq have of late been little more than warmed-over reports from the *New York Times*, colored with the opinions of mildly dissenting Democrats, such as Naomi Klein of the *Nation*, with an added dash of Marxist-sounding language.

"U.S. Out Now!" says WV today, like the reformist, Democratic Party-allied Socialist Workers Party (SWP) said during the Vietnam War. Up through the early 1990s, when WV did advance Marxist views, it called for the defeat of U.S. imperialism. Today, WV is quick to point out, echoing Bush loyalists, that "Iraq is not Vietnam..." Yet just now even sections of the U.S. bourgeoisie fear that Iraq is Vietnam – that is, a conflict in which the U.S. imperialists might be defeated by massive armed resistance on the part of the very peoples it seeks to subdue militarily and enslave. Of course the struggles of the workers and peasants of Vietnam not only militarily defeated, in their turn, Japanese, French, and U.S. colonial occupation, they also accomplished an anti-capitalist social revolution – albeit with the bureaucratic deformations characteristic of Stalinist misleadership. The Spartacist League, however, pretends that Marxists require that a social revolution be clearly posed before they call for the defeat of the imperialists. This is absolutely false. Marxists support the intended slaves in wars between the imperialists and the peoples of the lands they seek to colonize.

The comfortably ensconced editorial writers of WV announce that they do not approve of Iraqi masses. To be recognized as legitimate by WV, the would-be colonial victims of imperialism must meet the following conditions: they must qualify as proletarians according to WV's standards, and they must be fighting for a social revolution. No such conditions were ever imposed beforehand on the anti-colonial struggles of the past by Marx, Engels, Lenin, or Trotsky. The fact that the slaves were struggling against the slavemasters was enough for true Marxists to urge the workers in the oppressor nations to side against their own ruling class and with the slaves. WV's conditions are, in other words, no part of the Marxist heritage. WV nonetheless spews out a lot of pseudo-Marxist verbiage to explain its refusal genuinely to side with the oppressed against the imperialists:

WV says: "But the imperialists will not give up their domination of the region until they are forced to by working-class struggle, both at home in the imperialist centers and in the Near East. Bush & Co. have no plan... to militarily vacate Iraq." The first sentence is mere bluster. WV is declaring ahead of time, echoing the arrogance of Bush and Blair, that the imperialists will win, and that no such struggle to defeat them exists. The second sentence could have been copied down, with little alteration, from the pronouncements of Bush's dictator of Iraq, Paul Bremer. It seems hardly necessary to point out that in their wars of conquest, the imperialists do not generally invade with pre-publicized plans to retreat. These are revealed after the would-be conquerors meet sustained resistance from their intended slaves. Historically, this resistance is the principal cause for imperialist defeats in their colonies, as the cases of Algeria and Vietnam have proved. That is, whatever plans

*continued on page 12*

## Iraqis Resist Colonial Occupation Military Recruiters Try to Snare Students

By Aubeen Lopez

The following article is reprinted from *The Communicator* (11 March 2004), the student newspaper of Bronx Community College, City University of New York.

As the United States of Capitalist Oppression continues its colonial occupation of Iraq, it is met with fierce resistance. The colonial enslavers have slaughtered more than 10,000 Iraqis with their bombing and repression, but the heroic resistance of the Iraqi people continues. Over 500 U.S. and “allied” troops have been killed; more helicopters are shot down every week. For the exploited and oppressed around the world, continued Iraqi resistance is a very good thing. Our enemy is U.S. imperialism, which must be driven out of Iraq, and defeated by the world’s working people.

In the face of continued struggle against the colonial occupiers, dozens of U.S. soldiers have gone AWOL (absent without leave). At bases in the U.S., officers have fled from meetings with angry relatives of soldiers.

The U.S. finds itself in need of more recruits. As a result, the U.S. has ordered a “temporary” increase in the size of the Army, and stepped up military recruiting on college campuses and high schools throughout the U.S. The cynically named Leave No Child Behind Act demands that colleges and high schools hand over student information to military recruiters, who are calling students at home, using information supplied by school administrations. They recruit on the basis of sweet promises, promising “a better future” to thousands of minority, working-class students, who are being driven out of schools because of tuition hikes and, now, TAP cuts. They try to con and pressure students to sign on to “see the world” through the riflescopes of the imperialist army, pointed pointblank against our class brothers and sisters around the world.

“Undocumented” students are also feeling the brunt of this economic conscription to the military. They are herded off the schools and towards the battalions of capital. In 2001, while the U.S. was waging an imperialist war in Afghanistan, the rulers heightened their war against workers and minorities “at home.” CUNY more than doubled tuition for “undocumented students,” which meant purging thousands and pushing them towards birds of prey like the military recruiters. This January, 19-year-old Luis Moreno, an undocumented student from the Dominican Republic living in the Bronx, was recruited to the military immediately after graduating high school. Moreno had hoped to gain U.S. citizenship to live the “American Dream.” What he got was a body bag and an early burial.



Internationalist photo

The Revolutionary Reconstruction Club and IG are campaigning to drive military recruiters off campus.

Mayor Bloomberg and other ruling-class politicians used Moreno’s death as an opportunity for patriotic hot air, and citizenship was granted to his dead body. His mother told CNN that her “son was used as cannon fodder.” In the Bronx, many students now think about the fate of Luis Moreno when they hear the military recruiters’ phony promises.

In the fall of 2003, at Bronx Community College the Revolutionary Reconstruction Club received heightened support from students for our efforts to drive military and police recruiters off campus, after an incident in the cafeteria where recruiters insulted students who were having a discussion on the real reasons why the recruiters are here. The incident showed students the contempt military recruiters have towards those of us who expose the truth behind their sweet lies. This February in Puerto Rico, as a result of mounting opposition to the imperialist occupation of Iraq, students took over the Army Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) building at the University of Puerto Rico (UPR) Mayagüez campus and painted anti-war and anti-ROTC murals on two of the outside walls.

Most recently, our struggle to drive military and cop recruiters off the BCC campus has received extensive coverage in the Italian daily *Il Manifesto*. In accord with the Trotskyist program put forward in *The Internationalist*, *El Internacionalista* and *Revolution*, we struggle for the defeat of U.S. imperialism, the defense of Iraq and an international socialist revolution to put an end to imperialist oppression once and for all. ■

**War on Iraq****il manifesto****Military Recruiters in U.S. Schools**

14 February 2004

[translation]

By Patricia Lombroso

New York

Every day they show up in plain clothes on the campuses of the public universities. They spread out lurking in front of classes or station themselves at the cafeteria where students congregate. They mingle freely among Latino/Hispanic, African-American and immigrant students. They make a friendly approach, with a calling card inscribed: "Marines." The inscription in red along with the sergeant's name includes this motto: "honor, courage, valor and national pride." They are "recruiters" who work for the Pentagon, and whose job it is to convince the poorest students, guaranteeing them that once they join up with the army, they will be able to pay for their tuition which rose this year by another \$1,000 a year, and they can see the world – even Iraq!

Undisturbed by university teachers and administrators, they distribute colorful, illustrated pamphlets, which suggest an adventuresome tourist trip: "Are you ready to become the pride of the nation? We will guarantee you that a career in the military will allow you to pay for your studies and achieve your lifelong dreams. Through the U.S. Army you will be eligible for scholarships of \$20,000 and even \$50,000. Travel the whole world." For every student the recruiter enlists, he receives \$1,000, in addition to his salary.

The Pentagon's recruiting operation at public colleges has intensified lately. The Pentagon has decided to use its "emergency powers" to call up 30,000 soldiers from the ranks of the National Guard and the reserves, sending them off to Iraq for a four-year tour of duty. Discontent is spreading among U.S. military families who have seen the numbers of dead rising. The official number of suicides among enlisted soldiers has risen to over 20. Despite the guarantee of work, even those who, reluctantly, chose to sign up for the National Guard are refusing certain death in Iraq. African-American, Latino and immigrant students are the last resort. At Bronx Community College (BCC) of the City University of New York (CUNY), 95 percent of the students aged 17 to 24 are Puerto Rican, Dominican, African-American and new immigrants.

The public university receives 60 percent of its aid from the federal government, 40 percent from the state and city of New York. It is here that a protest and mobilization has begun: "All military recruiters off campus." A student newspaper headlines: "Bloody Conquest of Iraq; Racist Attack on CUNY."<sup>1</sup> "At heavily minority CUNY campuses like BCC, military recruiters have been calling students up at home ... trying to sucker them into the army with promises of education aid. We demand to know what

information the CUNY demonstrators are giving to these blood-suckers .... Nor is it in our interest to be sent to kill our class brothers and sisters anywhere around the world."

When we asked the dean [of students] of Bronx Community College, Bernard Gant, why the campus looks more like a military base than a university, and why this interference has been accepted, this is what he told *Il Manifesto*: "We are formally required to supply the Recruiting Center the entire list of students enrolled in classes every semester. It is a requirement for receiving federal aid. According to the Solomon Amendment, passed by Congress in 1996, university administrations are obliged ... to aid the Army in recruiting an adequate number of students to satisfy the request."

And what about the promises of scholarships in exchange for going to war in Iraq? We listened carefully. "Well now," he answered, "the pressure from the Bush administration is increasing. You must understand that I represent the institution. It is up to the students to organize a protest in all the universities." And now there is the risk that refusing recruitment campaigns will become impossible, even though, formally, the draft is no longer obligatory: "Would you believe," Chancellor Gant answered, "that now recruiters can even call the homes of students under 17, the minimum age to be eligible for recruitment? Since the 'No Child Left Behind Act,' which Bush reaffirmed in his State of the Union speech, it's now required for high school principals to recruit students who are about to graduate. So recruiters can enter classrooms whenever they want."

**Interview****"Off Campus!"**

**Bronx Community College students say: "Drive out the recruiters"**

**Patricia Lombroso**

Aubeen Lopez is a 22-year-old Puerto Rican student studying science and engineering at Bronx Community College. He writes for *The Communicator*, the university newspaper, and is politically active in the Revolutionary Reconstruction Club, a Marxist-Leninist group founded by another student, Moises Delgado, a 24-year-old [Puerto Rican]. They were insulted in the campus cafeteria by a military recruiter, and after the verbal exchange, they organized the mobilization with unionized campus workers to drive the Pentagon recruiters from the university.

**How did the argument with the military recruiter come about?**

We were discussing with a group of students in the cafeteria the reasons why these military recruiters in uniform or plainclothes move around freely all over the campus. They raised the tuition by \$980 per semester this year. Many of us can't afford this. It is financially impossible for us to finish our coursework. Many in the Bronx think about the promise of aid

<sup>1</sup> The newspaper is *Revolution*, put out by the Revolutionary Reconstruction Club of Bronx Community College and the Hunter Internationalist Club, in accord with the Internationalist Group.



from the army. When the recruiter came to our table I asked him if this college guarantee wasn't connected to the war in Iraq. His answer was, "You won't have to worry about anything except a little work. Leave it to us to pay for college."

#### What did the recruiter mean by "a little work"?

That we should enlist and end up being sent to the war in Iraq. But he said the war in Iraq didn't have anything to do with the military's promise of college money. I know what it's all about. But some believe them, because the sergeants who want to recruit poor students from the Bronx don't tell them the real story.

#### What happened next?

I turned directly to the sergeant and said clearly, "Are we supposed to sign up in order end up in the war in Iraq?"

#### And what was the reaction of the recruiter?

He was furious. "We wouldn't recruit you, because you're fat. We don't want overweight students in the military." So I turned to the student sitting next to me and she began to laugh. She replied that she knew a lot of fat people in the military. The recruiter got very upset and said to her, "we wouldn't accept you in the military either, because you're wearing braces." We were beside ourselves.

#### Did you complain to the university administration?

We went to the administration office to demand an end to the continual harassment by these recruiters all over campus. These military aren't here to offer us a free education, they're here to recruit and send us to war in Iraq.

#### What was their reaction?

They wanted to treat this as an isolated incident, an occasional episode caused by a sergeant who got out of line. In reality, even if they categorically denied having given the lists of students so that they can be approached even at home, we know that they just turn a blind eye to what's happening.

#### If the university administration claims that they can't do anything to stop it, what do you intend to do?

We're organizing to drive them off campus. Through a mobilization of students and the working class at the university. Here and elsewhere. We're against the war in Iraq. They're using us to continue the colonial occupation. ■

## Letters...

*continued from page 9*

Bush may have or be lacking, the imperialists are not the only ones who decide the future fate of humanity.

"Iraq is not a nation," *WV* further intones, "but an artificial state created by the British imperialists, its boundaries drawn up on a piece of paper in the aftermath of World War I." Another pseudo-Marxist, pseudo-scientific "reason" not to take a side for defeat of imperialism, worthy of devious sociologists. Are they saying that only a geographically and ethnographically homogeneous people can legitimately struggle against their own enslavement by imperialists? Are they declaring a new theory of "anti-imperialism in one nation," akin to Stalin's "socialism in one country"? Perhaps, but perhaps

not. In truth those who put forward such positions care as little for theory, Marxist or otherwise, as Stalin did. In arguing here that Iraq is not a nation *WV* is mainly declaring to the U.S. ruling class that it does not recognize the resistance of the Iraqi masses against imperialism. The colonial masses are not responsible for the geographic limitations forcibly imposed on them throughout history by the imperialists, and the existence of these restrictions in no way cancels the legitimacy of the struggle of the oppressed against their oppressors.

*WV* goes on to declare that the only forces left in Iraqi society are "discredited Third World nationalism and reactionary Islamic fundamentalism." Like the U.S. imperialists, *WV* condemns the Iraqi resisters as religious fanatics, tribalists, hostage-takers. They equate the resistance of the oppressed to the violence of their oppressors, accusing the resisters of adopting the "mindset of the American imperialist rulers who collectively punish the peoples of Iraq." Why? Supposedly because some Iraqi resisters captured three Japanese, who were later released unharmed and are now back in Japan. For *WV* this equates with the brutal U.S. imperialist invasion of Iraq and the intended subjugation of its 24 million people—thousands of whom have been murdered by the imperialists and tens of thousands thrown into their concentration camps. Yet the reference to the Japanese is a mere allegory, so *WV* can announce to the U.S. imperialists that it does not in reality side with the oppressed in Iraq. The resisters, according to *WV*, are not proletarians and even if they are, they are not resisting according to *WV*-approved methods, so *WV* repudiates them. In other words: "Dear U.S. rulers, please look beyond our occasional Marxist-sounding rhetoric and understand that in our essence we oppose the Iraqi resistance. Those people are nothing but a bunch of reactionary religious fanatics and discredited nationalists. Sincerely, *Workers Vanguard*."

These arguments opposing the call for defeating U.S. imperialism are not simply false or based on misunderstandings of Marxist theory. The writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky are crystal clear on the question of mass resistance to colonial occupation and enslavement and not open to honest misinterpretation.

The elementary duty of Marxists in colonial wars is to call for the defeat of the colonizers. That is about as non-controversial a statement of Marxist doctrine as can be made. Furthermore, the defeat of U.S. imperialism in Iraq would be a great boon to the oppressed all over the world, not least — of course! — to the oppressed masses of Iraq. With every difficulty the U.S. encounters in Iraq, with every setback it suffers at the hands of the resistance, the world's oppressed masses breathe a little easier. The tragedy of course is that the Iraqis pay heavily in blood for their defiance, as the U.S. imperialist occupiers, much like the Zionists or the Nazis, take their reprisals against unarmed civilians. The U.S. imperialists admit to killing hundreds of women and children in Fallujah, for example. Nonetheless, the Iraqis continue to resist enslavement, and their struggle has already benefited all future intended victims of U.S. imperialism.

Marxists in oppressor countries have a special responsibility to express true solidarity with the exploited and enslaved colonial masses.

R. Titta

## Creeping Shachtmanism, Budding Social-Patriotism

# Post-Soviet SL/ICL: New Zigzags on the Centrist Road

### “False Fights” and Real Revisionism

#### ICL Flipflops on Stalinism & Revolutionary Leadership ... But Says It Was Right Anyway

Lo these past eight years, since January 1996 to be exact, it has been the official story of the Spartacist League and its International Communist League that the Stalinists “led the counterrevolution” in East Germany (the DDR). This view was then extended to the USSR, and then to China, where the ICL argued that the Communist Party was attempting a “cold restoration of capitalism from above.” As we have repeatedly stressed, this flatly contradicts Leon Trotsky’s analysis of the Stalinist bureaucracy, and the ICL’s own prior program. Now a lengthy account of the ICL’s fourth international conference (*Spartacist* No. 58, Spring 2004) puts a retrospective “not” over these claims. What was the gold standard for the ICL up until yesterday turns out to be fool’s gold today.

Mind you, these were no offhand remarks but a whole view of the nature of Stalinism which was vociferously argued by the ICL. It was first raised at the culminating point of a year-long internal fight inside the ICL over Germany, a dispute which was then expanded to Mexico and Brazil, leading in short order to the expulsion of several leading Spartacist cadres, who went on to found the Internationalist Group and joined in forming the League for the Fourth International. In our July 1996 bulletin on the expulsions, *From a Drift Toward Abstentionism to Desertion from the Class Struggle*, we attacked this “revisionist contraband” which denied the contradictory, parasitical character of the Stalinist bureaucracy, making a false “equation between the role of the Stalinist bureaucracy and that of the direct representatives of the bourgeoisie.” The SL/ICL had always fought against such views in the past, but suddenly switched sides. The third international conference of the ICL in 1998, in a statement directed against the IG, put on the official imprimatur, declaring: “The Kremlin abetted by the East German Stalinists led the counterrevolution in the DDR” (*Spartacist* No. 54, Spring 1998).

In the Germany fight, long-time *Workers Vanguard* editor and ICL International Secretariat (I.S.) member Jan Norden had written that “it is our Trotskyist understanding of the Stalinist bureaucracy that it is a contradictory caste, which will fracture under the impact of revolutionary class struggle”; for this he

was accused of failing to “grasp” that “the SED in 1989-90 was leading the counterrevolution.” At the same time he was denounced for having declared in a January 1995 speech at Humboldt University in East Berlin, “What was lacking [in the DDR] was above all the genuinely communist leadership, which could have turned the real existing possibilities of a socialist development into reality.”

This restatement of the key thesis of Trotsky’s Transitional Program (that “the historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of revolutionary leadership”) was deemed “a liquidationist view which denied the ICL’s role as the conscious revolutionary vanguard,” as the SL article on the expulsions put it (*WV* 648, 5 July 1996). Norden’s statement that “we were fighting to build the revolutionary leadership, but that time was too short to overcome the damage to proletarian consciousness that decades of Stalinism had wrought,” was claimed by Spartacist League West Coast leader Al Nelson to mean that “we were not the revolutionary leadership.” Nelson said it (that “we were the revolutionary leadership” in East Germany), we all read it, over and over in the SL/ICL press.

And now we read that it was all wrong . . . but the ICL was right anyway. The recent *Spartacist* article on the ICL’s fourth conference portrays a crisis in the organization, with a “sharp internal polarization” that had been deflected into a “false fight” seeking to “find a fundamental deviation in the party on the nature of Stalinism.” Only with “considerable effort” was it established that there were “no fundamental programmatic differences on this score.” As part of this effort, the article reports that “Conference delegates also reviewed some wrong or one-sided formulations that have occurred in internal debates and articles about our intervention in the DDR.” While repeating the lie that “Norden denigrated and denied the ICL’s role as the conscious revolutionary vanguard, repeatedly intoning that ‘the key element was missing, the revolutionary leadership,’” the *Spartacist* account went on:

“In reply to Norden, one leading comrade [Nelson] countered that ‘we were the revolutionary leadership’ and that the SED-PDS, far from being paralyzed, ‘led the counterrevolution’ by doing all within its power to prevent a proletarian political revolution.

“These assertions of our revolutionary purpose contained an important kernel of truth against Norden’s rush to aban-

**On Counterrevolution and Imperialist War:  
Cringing Before “Their Own” Bourgeoisie**



don Trotskyism and the ICL. At the same time, they were polemical excesses in the heat of battle. As one comrade [ICL leader James Robertson] noted at the time, a more dialectical way to express our intervention was that 'we were the revolutionary leadership in the struggle to become.' Nonetheless, formulations such as 'the PDS led the counterrevolution' and 'we were the revolutionary leadership' were wrongly reasserted in our polemics against the IG and in subsequent internal disputes. A dogmatic insistence by the I.S. on these formulations in debates in and with our German section damaged our work, and serve to foreclose critical evaluation of our 1989-90 intervention."

"After considerable discussion," an amendment to the ICL's conference document was "unanimously accepted," stating:

"It is not correct to say 'the PDS led the counterrevolution in the DDR' and 'we were the revolutionary leadership' in the incipient political revolution in the DDR in 1989-90. These formulations are better: 'We were the only contender for revolutionary leadership of the working class in the revolutionary situation in the DDR in 1989-90. We can be proud of our fight for revolutionary leadership.' And 'When the Kremlin sold out the DDR to West German capitalism, the SED-PDS tops adapted to the betrayal and became the PDS'."

"These formulations are better" – as if they have a sliding scale of formulations, just a matter of a few words on paper – when what's at issue here is *revolution and counterrevolution!*

But this is only the beginning, read on. It turns out that on China, the ICL's "1994 formulation was wrong in implying that a restoration of capitalism could take place while the Stalinist regime remained intact." Speakers at the conference "noted earlier difficulties in writing propaganda about China" with that line, notably in polemics against us. They now say about their earlier article ("IG on China: Looking for a Few Good Stalinist Bureaucrats," *WV* No. 715, 11 June 1999) that "we [the ICL] bent the stick too far and argued that 'the CCP bureaucracy is intent on restoring capitalism' and 'the main force leading the drive for capitalist restoration today is the Stalinist regime itself,' implying that the Beijing bureaucracy was no longer subject to the constraints of its parasitic position atop the collectivized property forms and had taken on attributes of a ruling class." Instead, the ICL's new conference document states:

"The Stalinist bureaucracy is incapable of a cold, gradual restoration of capitalism from above. A capitalist counterrevolution in China would be accompanied by the collapse of Stalinist bonapartism and the political fracturing of the ruling Communist Party."


After claiming that they had "effectively corrected" their earlier line in a second article against us on China ("IG: Still Looking for a Few Good Stalinist Bureaucrats," *WV* No. 746, 17 November 2000), they admit that:

"*WV* never made clear, as it should have, that we were correcting the earlier polemic. And it would have been better to have stated that the Beijing bureaucracy is 'promoting and greatly strengthening the forces of capitalist restoration,' rather than 'leading the drive for capitalist restoration.'"

Of course, *WV* didn't say this because that is exactly what *The Internationalist* had said in our first article on China taking the ICL to task for their anti-Trotskyist line.

## Crisis in the ICL

SPARTACIST



NUMBER 58
ENGLISH EDITION
SPRING 2004

Fourth ICL International Conference, Autumn 2003


The Fight for Revolutionary  
Continuity in the Post-Soviet World

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Forty Years of Spartacist

ism." Accompanying this was an increasingly abstract and sterile approach to politics, and a pattern of breaches of our Leninist organizational norms by central cadre in the I.S.

By the eve of the conference, a sharp internal polarization had developed. However, it became clear that the frustrations and antagonisms which had developed toward those responsible for such organizational breaches and for the broader political drift that had led to the excision of the P.S. had been deflected into a *false* fight: an attempt to find a fundamental deviation in the party on the nature of Stalinism. It took considerable effort to establish that there were no fundamental programmatic differences on this score, and to put the conference back on track to deal



San Francisco, J.  
Internationalist Contingent

So how about that? For eight years, SL/ICL members could dutifully repeat or loudly argue, depending on their proclivities, that the Stalinists *led* the counterrevolution in the DDR and USSR, that they were *leading* it in China, that the ICL *was* the revolutionary leadership in East Germany – and now all this is dismissed as a "polemical excess" or "bending the stick too far" in the heat of a fight. Nothing but a slight "clarification," say SLers today when confronted about their stunning flip-flop. Yet didn't the SL earlier claim that the IG's objections to their line constituted "an outright revision of the Trotskyist understanding of the Stalinist bureaucracy" (*WV* No. 651, 13 September 1996)? This was the basis on which they declared us to be "Pabloists of the Second Mobilization." By those lights, the ICL today would be "Pabloists of the Third Mobilization"! In reality, we have consistently fought against the tendency of Michel Pablo and his heirs, who replaced the struggle for an independent Trotskyist vanguard with chasing after various non-revolutionary and non-proletarian forces (Kremlin-line Stalinists, Castroite guerrillas, Maoist Red Guards, etc.). Indeed, Norden wrote the ICL's definitive bulletin on Pabloism ("Yugoslavia, East Europe and the Fourth International: The Evolution of Pabloist Liquidationism," *Prometheus Research Series* No. 4, March 1993).

But what is most notable about the SL/ICL's recent gyrations is that all this concerns its first crop of revisions of fundamental tenets of Trotskyism, which have since been surpassed by its further evolution to the right. Its concentration on the issues that led up to the 1996 expulsions and their aftermath underscores that the ICL continues to be haunted by the Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth Inter-



national. It's striking how backward-looking the whole *Spartacist* article on their latest conference is. In its rendition, the ICL almost appears to be living on a different planet than the present world, marked since 11 September 2001 above all by U.S. imperialism's "war on terror" (touched on in one paragraph of a 12-page article) and its invasion/occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq (a couple of mentions each in one half-paragraph), following the U.S./NATO war on Yugoslavia (not a word, although it occurred since their last conference). While the conference document admits to an opportunist "political flinch in the face of the wave of American patriotism following the September 11 attacks" (for not distinguishing between the attack on the Pentagon military command and that on the World Trade Center where tens of thousands of working people were targeted), *it doesn't mention the biggest "flinch": the ICL dropped the call for defeat of "their own" imperialist rulers in the imperialist war.*

### Where the ICL Went Wrong on Counterrevolution, And Why

So what is behind the SL/ICL's recent political gyrations and ongoing organizational crisis? The *Spartacist* article on the ICL's latest conference strikes a posture of self-criticism, quoting Lenin's remark:

"Frankly acknowledging a mistake, ascertaining the reasons for it, analyzing the conditions that have led up to it, and thrashing out the means of its rectification – that is the hallmark of a serious party; that is how it should perform its duties, and how it should educate and train its class, and then the masses."

–V.I. Lenin, *Left-Wing Communism – An Infantile Disorder* (1920)

Yet this is precisely what the SL/ICL does *not* do. As we have documented, they started backing off from the line that the Stalinists led the counterrevolution *three years ago*, but by their own admission they did not forthrightly correct it at the time. As recently as the beginning of their conference last fall, one section of the ICL leadership was accusing the other of having a fundamental difference over this issue (which is why they finally felt compelled to correct it). Even now, after admitting they were wrong on two key issues raised in the fight over Germany, one of which (concerning the nature of Stalinism) was then repeated in polemics about China, they pretend that it doesn't matter anyway, because... well, just because.

*Spartacist* tries to hide from their readers that *the position the ICL now considers correct was what we argued at the time. No matter how cynical they have grown after years of programmatic flipflops, every long-time Spartacist cadre knows this. The positions they are vacating served as the "theoretical" linchpin justifying the expulsions. To admit that we were right and they were wrong, even by their own lights, would be so enormous as to be unthinkable.* Thus the SL/ICL's explanation of their latest line change is a cynical cover-up.

To be sure, the *Spartacist* article states that it all goes back to the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union, and that "the weight of this world-historic defeat has affected us as well, serving to erode the understanding of our

revolutionary purpose in the fight for new October Revolutions." The ICL conference document "soberly" states: "An inability to deal with the world created by the fall of the USSR, and the consequent retrogression in consciousness, lies at the root of the ICL's current crisis." We certainly agree that an "inability to deal with the world created by the fall of the USSR" is a key component of the crisis of the latter-day Spartacist tendency. But if the impact of that world-historic defeat "eroded" the ICL's understanding of its once-revolutionary purpose, which it definitely has done, how did this lead to the particular revisionist thesis it adopted? *Spartacist* gives no explanation for what, exactly, was wrong with the ICL's previous position, just that it would have been "better" if formulated otherwise. But *why* would it have been better, what were the implications of their eight-year line? *Spartacist* maintains a discreet silence, failing to educate the ICL's own members, let alone the working class and the oppressed masses.

*What the ICL doesn't dare say is that the position it defended for eight years guts the Trotskyist analysis of Stalinism. In our very first bulletin, we wrote:*

"For the Stalinist bureaucracy to head up the counter-revolution would imply a different theoretical understanding of that contradictory and brittle social formation. The fact that the bureaucracy was not irrevocably committed to defense of the workers state and its economy, from which it obtained its privileges, that large sectors of it would go over to the capitalists, was foreseen by Trotsky and corresponds to his analysis of this parasitic caste. But the line that the bureaucracy as a whole could lead the counterrevolution, without fracturing, would mean that the class nature of this social formation was different from that analyzed by Trotsky, who always emphasized the *dual nature* of the Stalinist bureaucracy."

– *From a Drift Toward Abstentionism to Desertion from the Class Struggle* (July 1996)

The SL/ICL in effect took up the line that "Stalinism is counter-revolutionary through and through" which it had fought against tooth and nail in the past. This was the logic of the Stalinophobic "Bolshevik Tendency," who held that the "main danger" in East Germany was the SED regime, thereby whitewashing the actual counterrevolutionary threat of the West German bourgeoisie and its social-democratic lieutenants, and on that grounds accused the SL/ICL of having a "Stalinophilic tendency." It was the logic of various pseudo-Trotskyists (among them sections of Ernest Mandel's "United Secretariat of the Fourth International," as well as David North's Workers League/Socialist Equality Party/World Socialist Web Site, and Latin American centrists like Jorge Altamira's Partido Obrero) to justify their open or tacit support for Yeltsin's counterrevolutionary power grab in August 1991. (on the grounds that the rump Stalinists were "leading the counterrevolution"). It was the self-same argument raised by the Workers Power group in Britain as it prepared to junk its paper "defense" of the Chinese deformed workers state, which it has since declared to be capitalist.

*The ICL's "Stalinism led the counterrevolution" position is the back door through which countless revisionists have passed as they abandon the last pretense of defending*

*the Stalinist-ruled deformed workers states.*

This line also negated the ICL's intervention in East Germany and Soviet Union. As we repeatedly challenged, if the Kremlin led the counterrevolution, why did the ICL (in contrast to various pseudo-Trotskyists) refuse to call for withdrawal of Soviet troops from East Germany? And if the SED/PDS (the Stalinist Socialist Unity Party, now transformed into the social-democratic Party for Democratic Socialism) was leading the counterrevolution, we said, what the hell was the ICL doing on a platform with SED/PDS leader Gregor Gysi at the Soviet War Memorial in Treptow Park on 3 January 1990 at the quarter-million strong mobilization against the fascist defacing of the tombs of Red Army soldiers who fell liberating Berlin? The ICL initiated that mobilization, and from the platform, Spartakist speakers exposed the bankruptcy of the Stalinists' chimera of building "socialism in one country" (half a country, in the case of the DDR), over a chorus of boos from SED hardliners, while declaring, "The means for selling out the DDR is the Social Democracy – that had better be known to us all!" Yet this was apparently forgotten by the ICL for eight years. Treptow was a genuine united front, but a "united front" with those who were leading the drive for capitalist restoration, notably the Social Democrats, aptly described as the "Trojan horse of counterrevolution" – that would have been a betrayal.

### Shades of Shachtman

While *Spartacist* cynically bandies about the spectre of Pabloism to smear the Internationalist Group/League for the Fourth International, the ICL's own, now-repudiated line that the Stalinists led the counterrevolution in East Europe and are leading it in China comes straight from the heritage of another renegade from Trotskyism, Max Shachtman, who abandoned the Fourth International on the eve of World War II, refusing to defend the Soviet Union. Soon Shachtman was justifying this betrayal by referring to a "Stalinist counterrevolution" consisting of "the seizure of power by a counter-revolutionary bureaucracy" ("Is Russia a Workers' State?" in *The Bureaucratic Revolution: The Rise of the Stalinist State* [1962]). The affinity of the ICL's eight-year line with Shachtmanism is unmistakable, yet *Spartacist* says not a word about this. The article also fails to mention that the ICL wrote "Stalinists led the counterrevolution" into its "Statement of Principles and Some Elements of Program." An uninitiated reader would think that an ICL leader just made a "dim" remark that was then mindlessly repeated, which is far from the case. The SL/ICL's explanation of their latest line change is not just mealy-mouthed and partial, it is fundamentally dishonest.

In a number of polemics, we dissected the ICL's revision of Trotsky's analysis of Stalinism and showed how in order to defend this they resorted to outright falsification. In particular, see:

- "WV's Smear Job: How They Defend the Indefensible," *The Internationalist* No. 2, April-May 1997
- "Stay Tuned – New ICL Line Change Coming: Stalinists Led the Counterrevolution? ICL Between Shachtman and Trotsky," *The Internationalist* No. 9, January-February 2001
- "ICL Still Caught Between Shachtman and Trotsky," *The Internationalist* No. 11, Summer 2001



Tarniment Library/NYU

Max Shachtman

We demonstrated how the ICL brazenly invented positions for the Internationalist Group, setting up straw men in order to knock them down. To defend their indefensible anti-Trotskyist line, the ICL claimed that "*the IG denies the very purpose of political revolution: to overthrow the Stalinist 'treacherous misleaders'*"; that "the IG implies that the danger of counterrevolution comes solely from outside the bureaucracy"; that "the IG maintains that the Stalinist regimes are committed to the defense of proletarian property forms," etc. One by one, we exposed these shameless lies, citing where we repeatedly wrote the exact opposite of what WV claimed. Unlike the ICL, we did not need to distort their politics or falsely ascribe to them views they didn't hold. We noted how they had contradictory lines on China, sometimes in the same article. We wrote that "under heaps of lies, inventions and distortions, of dead dogs and red herrings, we read that in the end the Stalinists do and don't, will and won't lead the counterrevolution.... One is tempted to remark that *insofar as* the ICL is talking out of both sides of its mouth, *in that sense* its weasel words add up to a crock of centrist confusionism" (see "ICL Still Caught Between Shachtman and Trotsky," *The Internationalist* No. 11).

But beyond unmasking the fraudulent character of the ICL's polemics and explaining where its "Stalinism led the counterrevolution" line leads to, it is also necessary to show where it comes from. And where it comes from is straight from the mouthpieces of the imperialist bourgeoisies and their social-democratic henchmen.

In our article, "Where Is China Going? Workers Political Revolution vs. Capitalist Counterrevolution," *The Internationalist* No. 6 (November-December 1998), we quoted an article from *Workers Vanguard* (No. 675, 3 October 1997), "China at the Brink," which declared, "Chinese CP Plans Liquidation of State Economy." The article highlighted, "*If implemented, this proposal would mean the liquidation of what remains of the planned, collectivized economy and the restoration of capitalism in China.*" This

was, we wrote, “the anti-Marxist perspective of a *cold counter-revolution by decree*: the CP votes a resolution, and if carried out, that’s it, capitalism has been restored.” We also showed that this line came right out of the *New York Times* (12 September 1997), which on the eve of the Chinese CP conference published a front-page story “In Major Shift, China Will Sell State Industries.” The *Times* article said that “changing such a critical system of ownership ... seems destined to move China’s economy toward an even more capitalist and free market system....” The *Wall Street Journal* (16 September 1997) was even more categorical, headlining, “Investors See a ‘Gold Rush’ in China’s Reform Plans,” and reporting: “The verdict from investors is in: China has taken a major step toward becoming the world’s largest free market economy.”

Similarly, another article in *WV* (No. 725, 10 December 1999) wrote that China joining the World Trade Organization would be tantamount to counterrevolution: “China’s entry into the WTO would mean eliminating what remains of the state monopoly of foreign trade, a key component of the collectivized economy created by the 1949 Chinese Revolution.” This, too, could have been taken straight out of the *New York Times* (18 November 1999) business section, where an article was headlined, “U.S. Investors Salivate Over Chinese Stocks in Pact’s Wake.” While the Chinese Stalinists have treacherously undermined the collectivized economy and are bringing in massive foreign private investment, the wholesale liquidation of the socialized economy has not (yet) happened, nor could such a counterrevolution be accomplished by bureaucratic fiat. Once again, *the ICL was repeating the wishful thinking of sections of the bourgeoisie*. We commented on the *WV* article: “China’s joining the WTO would greatly escalate pressures for restoration of capitalism. But it would sharply *pose the fight*, not end it. The ICL’s fantasy of Stalinist-led counterrevolution is the classic posture of those preparing to abandon defense of the deformed workers state before the final battle. This is not Trotskyism but proto-Shachtmanism.” –“Stalinists Led the Counterrevolution? ICL Between Shachtman and Trotsky” *The Internationalist* No. 9, January-February 2001

What does it add up to? As Trotsky noted in his polemic against Shachtman, “From a Scratch – to the Danger of Gangrene” (January 1940), “for a Marxist, analysis is impossible without a class characterization of the phenomenon under consideration” (*In Defense of Marxism*). And from Shachtman on the eve of World War II to the ICL and others in the aftermath of capitalist restoration in the USSR and East Europe, *the line that Stalinism led or is leading the counterrevolution is a capitulation to and serves the interests of the imperialist rulers*, by masking the real forces spearheading capitalist restoration. Shachtman’s talk of a “Stalinist counterrevolution” led him to become a rabid anti-Soviet Cold Warrior, preparing U.S. government leaflets to be airdropped over North Korea during the Korean War. For various contemporary Stalinophobes, the line that Stalinists were leading the counterrevolution led them to alibi (and often join with) open counterrevolutionary forces, from Lech Walesa’s Solidarnosc to Willy Brandt’s Social Democracy to George Bush I’s man in Moscow, Boris Yeltsin. In

the case of the ICL, spinning erratically in left centrism land, a shift to the right may be followed by a partial lurch to the left, especially when their organization is about to implode; but it is all part of a downward course zigzagging toward reformism.

### ICL Revises Trotskyism: Bowling to Bourgeois Pressure

Beginning with the line that “the Stalinists led the counterrevolution” in the DDR, USSR and all of East Europe, the ICL has prepared a veritable smorgasbord of revisionism. But these unappetizing dishes, most of which were first cooked up in attacks on the Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International, have common ingredients:

- Symptomatic that the SL’s revisionism is that it began over the “Russian question,” a touchstone of Trotskyism. After revising Trotsky’s analysis of Stalinism, the ICL declared that the central thesis of the founding document of the Fourth International – that the historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of revolutionary leadership – is outdated because of a qualitative retrogression in working-class consciousness. This was written into the ICL’s 1998 Declaration of Principles explicitly to attack the IG (see “ICL vs. Trotsky on the Crisis of Leadership: In Defense of the Transitional Program,” *The Internationalist* No. 5, April-May 1998).
- Various of the ICL’s “innovations” caricatured the economic and political backwardness of “Third World” countries. Thus it revised Trotsky’s concept of permanent revolution to insist on the existence of “semi-feudalism” in 20th century Mexico – a position it abandoned a year later when it couldn’t defend this anti-Marxist nonsense in the heat of a factional struggle in its French section (see “For Permanent Revolution in Mexico,” *The Internationalist* No. 4, January-February 1998; “Once Again on the Permanent Revolution” and “Letter to the Comrades of the International” by the Permanent Revolution Faction, in *The Internationalist* No. 5, April-May 1998).
- Repeatedly, the ICL’s revisions were direct responses to bourgeois pressure. The ICL deserted a sharp class struggle (to oust cops from the unions) that it helped initiate in Brazil, alleging that threats by the capitalist rulers posed “unacceptable risks to the vanguard” (see “The ICL Leaders’ Cover Story: Smokescreen for a Betrayal,” *The Internationalist* No. 1, January-February 1997). The ICL then generalized this flight from struggle in semi-colonial countries by abandoning its “*Iskra* perspective” of building a North African section in exile (see Permanent Revolution Faction, “Declaration of International Faction” in *The Internationalist* No. 5).
- In other cases, the ICL’s capitulations were opportunistic. In Mexico, after a decade of denouncing the popular front around the bourgeois nationalist figure of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, on the eve of the 1997 election of Cárdenas’ party to the government of Mexico City it suddenly discovered there was no *cardenista* popular front, and thus no need for or possibility of breaking the workers from it (see “Mexico Elections: Cárdenas Popular Front Chains Workers to Capitalism” and “To Fight the Popular Front You Have to Recognize That It Exists” in *The Internationalist* No. 3,



## Look Who Accuses the Internationalist Group of "Anti-Americanism"

**WORKERS VANGUARD**

No. 767, 26 October 2001

### Playing the Counterfeit Card of Anti-Americanism

In its 27 September statement, the IG writes of the Spartacist League: "Thus the SL put out a statement dated September 12 with the innocuous title, 'The World Trade Center Attack.' While a superhead called to 'Oppose Domestic Repression, Imperialist Retaliation,' the beginning of the statement focuses on denouncing the terrorists, as does most of the end of the statement. Nowhere does the SL statement call to *defend* the countries (notably Afghanistan and Iraq) which were already targeted by Washington in the first hours after the WTC/Pentagon attack"

But the IG's purpose is otherwise; it is playing to a different audience, one of "Third World" nationalists for whom the "only good American is a dead American." One can search their two state-

**NATIONAL  
REVIEW**

13 March 2003

### How Strange

**Some antiwar protesters show the movement's true colors.**

By Daniel J. Flynn

"We would be for the defeat of the U.S. in this war," explained Abram Negrete, the leader of a small group that trekked from the Big Apple to the Washington Monument for this weekend's antiwar protests. "We are for the defense of Iraq. It is in the interests of working people in the United States that the same government which is trying to intimidate and silence them be defeated in this war."

According to Negrete, America's plans are much more ambitious than merely deposing Saddam Hussein: "The current plan is to launch a war which is with the explicit intention of the United States seizing Iraq and determining what government will be there, and using this to assert their dominance over the entire planet."

While millions oppose the war, only 40,000 or so showed up for Saturday's demonstration on the Mall and the subsequent march to the White House. The anti-Americanism of Abram Negrete, and so many other demonstrators like him, is the primary reason why the

September-October 1997). Contrary to Trotsky's writings in the 1930s – the ICL decreed that popular fronts haughtily can't exist in Asian, African and Latin American countries where nationalism is strong and a mass workers party is lacking.

- In the United States, the SL increasingly bowed before "its own" imperialist bourgeoisie. In response to a militant Puerto Rican telephone workers strike and general strike where the Internationalist Group had actively intervened, in 1998 the SL/U.S. issued a "correction" declaring that "we do not currently *advocate* independence for Puerto Rico." In abandoning the call to free the world's largest colony from the yoke of Yankee imperialism, the SL/ICL violated one of the key "21 conditions" for admission to the Communist International, which demanded that every Communist party in an imperialist country must "demand the expulsion of its compatriot imperialists from the colonies" (see "ICL Renounces Fight for Puerto Rican Independence," *The Internationalist* No. 6, November-December 1998). The fact that the SL/U.S. refuses to call for unconditional independence for the U.S.' largest remaining colony defines them as colonialist "socialists."

- Around the same time, while Washington and Hollywood were whipping up a frenzied chorus of "Free Tibet" propaganda against China, as U.S. president Clinton visited Beijing and the Western media lionized the Dalai Lama (the Tibetan Buddhist leader and CIA toady), the ICL chimed in with a call for a independent "Soviet Tibet." As in the case of its infatuation

with Mexican "semi-feudalism," the ICL abandoned this slogan a year later, as the imperialist chorus died down (see "ICL's Short-Lived 'Soviet Tibet,'" *The Internationalist* No. 6). So during this period, the ICL was for ("soviet") independence for Tibet from the Chinese deformed workers state, and no independence for Puerto Rico from U.S. imperialism!

- *What is key in determining the ICL's revisions of the revolutionary program is pressure from imperialism.* Thus the SL/ICL's most far-reaching capitulation came in response to the 11 September 2001 attacks on the Pentagon and World Trade Center. As U.S. rulers imposed military occupation on New York and immediately began war preparations, the SL issued a statement that focused on condemning "terrorism" rather than the U.S. war drive, and called neither to *defend* the countries targeted by Washington nor to *defeat* the impending U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. Shortly after, they formally dropped the call for *defeat of U.S. imperialism* in its war on Afghanistan (and later Iraq). This is a fundamental rejection of the Leninist position on revolutionary struggle against imperialist war, and directly contradicts the position of the ICL in the first Persian Gulf War and up through 1999, when it repeatedly ran headlines "Defeat U.S. Imperialism, Defend Iraq."

- It is instructive to compare the initial statements of the SL/U.S. on the 9/11 attacks, "The World Trade Center Attack" (*WV* No. 764, 14 September 2001), and that of the Internationalist Group, "U.S. Whips Up Imperialist War Frenzy, Drives Toward Police

## **WORKERS VANGUARD** Against Itself on “Hot-Carguing”

WV No. 824, 16 April 2004

rulers. Marxists seek to mobilize the oppressed masses behind the power of the *proletariat* in struggle against colonial occupations, using workers mobilizations (strikes, hot-carguing of military goods and troop transports) in the service of a revolutionary perspective against both the imperialist occupying forces and the domestic bourgeoisie. We

Today, the SL claims (left) they are for “hot-carguing of military goods and troop transports.” But when the issue was posed directly on West Coast U.S. docks (right) they begged off.

WV No. 797, 14 April 2003

Today the IG chicken-baits us for not *agitating* that the ILWU engage in a similar program of fightback in a confrontation with a conglomeration of shipping magnates and the U.S. imperialist state. No we didn't, for the elementary reason that what one advocates as a course of struggle cannot be separated from the instrumentality to carry it out. In other

State” (14 September 2001, in *The Internationalist* No. 12, Fall 2001)<sup>1</sup>. As it joined the popular-front “antiwar” movement in hailing black Democrats Barbara Lee and Jesse Jackson Jr., covering up for weeks Lee's vote for the \$40 billion war budget, the SL accused the IG/LFI of “Playing the Counterfeit Card of Anti-Americanism” and playing to “‘Third World’ nationalists for whom the ‘only good American is a dead American,’” because of our call for defeat of U.S. imperialism (WV No. 767, 26 October 2001). Accusing Trotskyists of “anti-Americanism” in wartime is disgusting social-patriotism, a desperate attempt to get out of the bourgeoisie's line of fire, or worse (see “SL/ICL Flinches on Afghanistan War” and “ICL Refuses to Call for Defeat of U.S. Imperialism, ‘Anti-American’ Baites the Internationalist Group,” *The Internationalist* No. 12).

- Over the Iraq war, the SL pretended that it was enough to call to defend Iraq and for “class struggle at home.” Continuing the class struggle is hardly the same as calling for the defeat of “one's own” imperialism. But just to make sure U.S. rulers were clear on this, the SL followed up by dropping the call for transport workers to “hot-cargo” war materiel just as the U.S. was shipping thousands of tons of military equipment to the Persian Gulf in preparation for the invasion of Iraq. As the government obtained a back-to-work injunction claiming that a West Coast dock lockout threatened military shipping, the SL also dropped its call on labor to strike against the Taft-Hartley slave labor law. WV didn't even call to vote against the ILWU's giveback contract, and indeed *alibied voting for it* (see “IG at Bay Area Labor Conference: Strike Against Taft-Hartley! Hot Cargo War Materiel!” and “SL: Hard to Starboard,” *The Internationalist* No. 13, January-February 2003).

As the ICL zigzags along its centrist course, it seems that the revisions dearest to it are the ones it holds onto for more than a year. If after all these switches, it may occasionally make a quarter-turn to the left, this does not alter its fundamental direction, which is a descending curve in the direction of a left social-democratic variant of reformism. While the pace may be uneven, the numerous programmatic revisions by the latter-day Spartacist League and International Communist League clearly add up to

*political capitulation to the bourgeoisie and a loss of confidence in the revolutionary capacity of the proletariat.*

### “Left” Buys the Bourgeois Lie of the “Death of Communism”

The October 1917 Russian Revolution led by V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky was the seminal event of the 20th century, leading to the formation of the first workers state in history. This roused the undying hatred of the imperialists, captured in the declaration by Winston Churchill, then British war minister, justifying military intervention against the Soviets, “We must strangle the Bolshevik baby in its cradle.” Over the next 75 years, the imperialist bourgeoisies ceaselessly sought to overthrow the Soviet Union, whether by invasion (by 14 capitalist armies during the 1918-21 Civil War and again by Hitler in World War II), encirclement by a “cordon sanitaire” of anti-Soviet bourgeois states, diplomatic isolation and economic quarantine, or through the short-lived WWII “anti-fascist alliance” and four decades of “Cold War” and “détente.” When the USSR was finally destroyed by counterrevolution in 1989-92, the imperialist rulers jubilantly declared the “death of communism.” As he launched the Persian Gulf war in 1990-91, U.S. president George Bush I proclaimed a “new world order.” Triumphant court ideologues of American imperialism went so far as to hail the “end of history.” A dozen years later, history has not ended, the U.S. empire is bogged down in the aftermath of its second war on Iraq, and the class struggle continues unabated.

But the “death of communism” rhetoric and ideological offensive of the bourgeoisie have taken a toll on the ostensibly socialist left. Already by 1924, a conservative nationalist bureaucracy usurped political power in the Kremlin after Lenin's death and replaced the Bolshevik program of international socialist revolution with the anti-Marxist dogma of “socialism in one country.” Denouncing this betrayal of the revolution, Trotsky insisted that genuine communists must continue to defend the bureaucratically degenerated Soviet workers state while fighting to oust its bureaucratic misleaders. The Stalinist bureaucracy, he wrote, was a contradictory petty-bourgeois layer, whose privileges derived from the proletarian state on which it was a parasitical excrescence. The USSR survived for a number of decades due to the strength of the Soviet working class and the achievements of its collectivized economy in

<sup>1</sup> Both are available on the Internet.

For the IG, see: <http://www.internationalist.org/wardrive0901.html>

For the SL, see: <http://www.icl-fi.org/ENGLISH/wtc.htm>

transforming what under the tsars was a largely peasant country into an industrial and military superpower. However, the Stalinist bureaucracy with its fatal illusions in “peaceful coexistence” paved the way for the ultimate triumph of counter-revolution in 1989-92 under relentless pressure from the economically and militarily more powerful imperialists. This world-historical defeat for the proletariat threw put many would-be communists and socialists into an existential crisis.

This crisis took various forms. Numerous pro-Moscow Communist parties, after decades of falsely equating Lenin and Stalin, responded to the proven bankruptcy of Stalinism by abandoning fundamental Leninist concepts such as the dictatorship of the proletariat. Many of their worker members dropped out, retreating into simple trade-unionism; academic fellow-travelers went to ground, wrapping themselves in the obfuscating cloak of “post-modernism.” Among those who claimed to be to the left of the official CPs, many had long ago abandoned any defense of the Soviet Union and ended up embracing counterrevolution. After a decade of denouncing Soviet intervention against CIA-backed *mujahedin* (holy warriors) in Afghanistan and proclaiming their “solidarity with Solidarnosc,” the anti-Soviet Polish nationalist outfit financed by the CIA and the Vatican Bank, disciples of Tony Cliff and Nahuel Moreno hailed Yeltsin’s seizure of power as a new Russian “revolution,” while ostensible Trotskyists from the late Ernest Mandel’s United Secretariat to the British Workers Power group clambered onto Yeltsin’s barricades. Groups which once claimed to be Fourth Internationalist now sought to resuscitate an all-inclusive First International or conjure up a nebulous Fifth – while actually trying to recreate the social-democratic Second – in the guise of building an amorphous “post-Trotskyist” International.

The case of the International Communist League and its leading section, the Spartacist League in the U.S., is a particular and somewhat peculiar variant of this general evolution. For more than three decades, the SL upheld the banner of revolutionary Trotskyism against Pabloist revisionists who abandoned the fight for an independent revolutionary vanguard and instead, along with other opportunists, tailed after a host of non-revolutionary forces. In the 1960s, those who founded the Spartacist League defended the Cuban Revolution against imperialism, while refusing to capitulate to Castroite Stalinism and Guevarist peasant guerrillaism. In the ’70s, the international Spartacist tendency refused to vote for any parties of class-collaborationist “popular fronts,” while pseudo-Trotskyists hailed Salvador Allende’s Chilean Unidad Popular, chanting “The people united will never be defeated” as they marched toward the bloody Pinochet coup. In Europe, these fake-Trotskyists helped divert the revolutionary potential of May 1968 in France and April 1975 in Portugal into the dead-end of popular-frontism and NATO social democracy. In the ’80s, the SL/ICL swam against the stream, proclaiming “Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!” and “Stop Solidarnosc Counterrevolution!” in Poland, while the bulk of the left climbed onto the anti-Soviet bandwagon of the second Cold War. And as the collapse of Stalinism came to a head in East Europe and the Soviet Union in 1989-92, the ICL threw itself into battle for political revolution to oust the Stalinists and thwart counterrevolution.

In the aftermath of the defeat for the world proletariat represented by capitalist reunification of Germany, the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union and the restoration of bourgeois rule throughout East Europe, the response of the ICL was distinct from those of other tendencies which had long since abandoned revolutionary Trotskyism. Like “state-capitalist” currents such as the Cliffites, pseudo-Trotskyists like the Mandelites saw the collapse of the Soviet bloc as a great opportunity, in which the “historic divisions” of the workers movement would be overcome. At bottom, these currents are all social-democratic reformists, who at most seek a kind of “capitalism with a human face,” while throwing in some militant-sounding verbiage about “resistance.” They all clambered onto the “anti-globalization” bandwagon, adding a leftist veneer of “anti-capitalism.” But as soon as the imperialists had destroyed Soviet-line Stalinism, they began systematically dismantling the “welfare state” that was built up as a bulwark against the “Communist threat.”

The SL/ICL did not rejoice in the destruction of the degenerated/deformed workers states, but instead, *out of this defeat it drew defeatist lessons*. Unlike Mandelites and others, it did not immediately throw overboard key programmatic points such as the dictatorship of the proletariat. Instead, it at first formally maintained the program but turned it into an icon, to be periodically polished and placed on the mantelpiece as they waited for “better times.” In a January 1996 memorandum of its International Executive Committee, the ICL leadership bemoaned that “for the first time since the Paris Commune, the masses of workers in struggle do not identify their immediate felt needs with the ideals of socialism or program of socialist revolution.” This resolution was published by the ICL in an *International Bulletin* (No. 38, June 1996) on “Norden’s ‘Group’: Shamefaced Defectors from Trotskyism.” The point was underscored in a letter (2 April 1996) to Norden by ICL theoretician Joseph Seymour, printed in the bulletin, which argued:

“I believe you do not accept that, beginning in the late 1970s, there has occurred a *historic retrogression* in the political consciousness of the working class and left internationally. This development both conditioned the counterrevolution and has been reinforced by it.”

(Actually, as the recent *Spartacist* article makes clear, the ICL’s own consciousness suffered a historic regression, “eroded,” as they now admit, under the impact of counterrevolution.) In response to this one-sided characterization and the ICL’s view of the present period as one of defeat, we responded in our July 1996 bulletin that:

“we are living in a *period that was the result of a world-historic defeat for the working class*, namely the destruction of the Stalinist-ruled, bureaucratically degenerated and deformed workers states of the Soviet bloc; one which is currently marked by a *bourgeois offensive against the working class*, but is also a *period of turbulent proletarian struggles that can pass from the defensive to the offensive*. The key, as always, is the fight to forge a revolutionary leadership.”

—see “The Post-Soviet Period: Bourgeois Offensive and Sharp Class Battles,” reprinted in *The Internationalist* No. 1, January-February 1997



Seymour's argument was generalized to a more basic level by ICL leader James Robertson, who in an internal letter (2 October 1996) took the Internationalist Group to task for our founding statement (31 August 1996, printed in the first issue of *The Internationalist*), in which we cited the founding program of the Fourth International, "The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership," saying that this thesis "fully retains its validity today." Robertson called the IG statement "insufficient," writing: "Today, the crisis is not limited to the crisis of revolutionary leadership of the working class. The working classes across the world are qualitatively politically more disoriented and organizationally dispersed." This view was reflected in the call to the ICL's third international conference (1998), which set it in the context of a supposed "historical retrogression in the political consciousness of the workers movement and left internationally." And it was then codified in the ICL's revised Declaration of Principles, which in particular revised this key concept, stating:

"Trotsky's assertion in the 1938 Transitional Program that 'The world political situation as a whole is chiefly characterized by a historical crisis of the leadership of the proletariat' predates the present deep regression of proletarian consciousness."

Thus for the ICL, the central thesis which justified the founding of the Fourth International is *outdated*, for it is not just the leadership but at bottom the backward consciousness of the working class itself which is responsible for the defeats.

As we noted in our article, "The Post-Soviet Period: Bourgeois Offensive and Sharp Class Battles," the ICL's undialectical characterization of the present period ignores the contradictions which run through it like seismic fault lines. The Fourth International, after all, was founded in a period of defeats, notably Hitler's takeover of power in 1933, of which Trotsky wrote that "history has recorded no parallel catastrophe." This was followed by the defeats of the 1934 workers uprisings in Asturias and Austria and in the 1936-39 Spanish Civil War. That was precisely the context in which Trotsky wrote his thesis which every revisionist seems driven to renounce. Moreover, the impact on working-class consciousness is quite uneven. In West Europe, workers in the large Communist parties and CP-led unions had reformist consciousness before the demise of the Soviet Union, and by and large they still do today. American workers generally support the capitalist Democratic Party – what would a qualitative step backwards in their consciousness mean. In much of the semi-colonial world, on the other hand, many workers still "haven't got the news" of the supposed "death of communism." From South Africa to India, millions still follow reformist-electoralist CPs. Who has been most deeply affected is the reformist/centrist left, which has overwhelmingly bought this bourgeois lie.

Even in the case of the Soviet Union, to blame the success of the counterrevolution centrally on the regression in workers' consciousness, as the ICL does today, is an overstatement. Certainly, the ravages of decades of Stalinist perversions of Leninism have taken their toll. But it may be recalled that in the summer of 1989, just before wave of counterrevolu-

tion began in East Europe, hundreds of thousands of Soviet miners launched a massive strike that surged through the coal basins, from the Donbass to the Kuzbass, where strikers took over the principal cities and set up soviet-like local workers councils. This strike came on the heels of a proletarian uprising in China, an incipient political revolution, which the Stalinist bureaucracy could only overcome through a bloodbath that hit the workers far harder than the students in Tiananmen Square. In Latin America, working-class discontent has often been expressed in chaotic outbursts such as hunger riots and uprisings – including the Ecuadorian worker-Indian revolt in January 2000, the Argentine upheaval which brought down five presidents in two weeks in December 2001, and the workers and plebeian uprising in Bolivia last September-October. It's not that revolutionary opportunities don't arise any more. In all of these cases, the workers were *mised* into nationalism, popular-frontism, syndicalism and other dead-ends.

In the declaration of the Internationalist Group criticized by Robertson, we wrote: "The counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union was a major defeat for the world proletariat. Yet the *defeatist* conclusions the ICL leadership has drawn from this are an echo of the bourgeoisie's 'death of communism' campaign. These erroneous conclusions are in line with the tendency of the 'new I.S.' [the ICL's International Secretariat] to retreat from the class struggle and adopt a policy of passive propagandism." Robertson in effect confirmed our charge, accusing the IG in his October 1996 letter of "insensitivity" to a "qualitative change which had occurred and which is part of a larger change which has been trumpeted around by the ruling classes as the 'death of communism'." As we noted in our article, "ICL vs. Trotsky on the Crisis of Leadership: In Defense of the Transitional Program" (*The Internationalist* No. 5, April-May 1998), "This *accepts* the validity of the bourgeoisie's claim, only quibbling about the name they assign to it." Our article cited example after example of how other pseudo-Trotskyist currents, from Mandel's United Secretariat (1992) to the Workers Power group (1987) to Shachtman's International Socialist League (1949) had rejected that same basic thesis of Trotsky, in strikingly similar terms, in order to justify their departure from Trotskyism. If Pabloism was Cold War impressionism, we wrote, this is a sort of *New World Order impressionism*.

### Germany: ICL Under Pressure from Fourth Reich Social Democracy

Concrete fights led up to the Spartacist League's multiple revisions concerning some of the most fundamental tenets of Leninism. For if the motto of the latter-day SL/ICL is "stop the class struggle, I want to get off" (or more simply, "run away, run away," the watchword of the Knights of Camelot in the satirical movie *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*), the class struggle has refused to stop. In the previous period, the ICL had become involved in some sharp battles from which it was not so easy to extract itself. As the Stalinist regimes were collapsing under imperialist pressure during 1989-92, various pseudo-Trotskyists climbed aboard the train of counterrevolution, which the then-revolutionary International Communist League did its utmost to

# Das Parlament

11/18 November 1995



Stalin und Hitler — zwei Seiten einer Medaille.

**“Stalin and Hitler, two sides of the same coin,” from the official paper of the German parliament. The pressure of the Fourth Reich was brought into the ICL’s German section via “left” social democracy, which repeated Stalin = Hitler equation and expelled those who denied it.**

oppose. Over a third of its membership worldwide traveled to Germany to fight against capitalist reunification, mostly at their own expense. But with the restoration of capitalism, a defeatist mood spread through the organization, beginning in the section which had most directly been at the battlefield, the Spartakist Workers Party of Germany (SpAD).

During 1989-90, the ICL did unheard-of things in East Germany, in which founders of the IG/LFI played a leading role: putting out a daily news sheet in the DDR after the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, selling 10,000 to 50,000 copies an issue; audaciously taking Russian-language Trotskyist literature onto Soviet army bases there and addressing hundreds of officers and soldiers under the red flag of the Fourth International; building factory fractions in key industrial plants, running candidates in the March 1990 DDR elections, and sparking the 3 January 1990 mass mobilization of a quarter million workers and socialists at the Treptow War Memorial in East Berlin over the fascist desecration of Red Army graves. Subsequently, after the demise of the DDR and the capitalist reunification of Germany, the ICL set up a station in Moscow and sought to fight against counterrevolution there. It distributed tens of thousands of copies of a leaflet, “Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolution!” in the wake of the August 1991 power grab by Yeltsin. In 1992, a leading Spartacist cadre, Martha Phillips, was murdered there under suspicious circumstances which the authorities dragged their feet on investigating. In the end, the forces of counterrevolution swept through the Soviet bloc, but the tiny nuclei of Trotskyists stood our ground and fought.

As the imperialists and their henchmen precipitated restoration of capitalist rule, the space of a few months was too short a time for the Trotskyists to become the revolutionary leadership of the working class. However, it was a revolutionary intervention which the IG and LFI proudly uphold. But as often happens

to revolutionary organizations in the aftermath of defeat, a reaction set in within the ranks of the SL/ICL. Initially, around the Second International Conference of the ICL in late 1992, there was an attempt by some demoralized elements in the leadership to stage a “who lost the DDR?” debate, exaggerating some errors in the ICL’s work and inventing others in order to put part of the blame for the defeat on the shoulders of a section of the leadership. This rather frenzied effort was turned aside in discussions at the conference. However, in succeeding months a social-democratic bulge developed in the German section, the Spartakist Workers Party (SpAD), particularly centered on a layer of older comrades in the West who only reluctantly participated in the work in East Germany in 1989-90 and had repeatedly undercut the SpAD’s work since then, unwilling to be shaken out of their comfortable *Wessi* torpor.

This was the case with internal resistance to the SpAD’s 1991 election campaign and efforts to reinforce the party local in the East German industrial city of Halle in 1992, becoming Foot-dragging escalated into conscious sabotage in the form of an underground opposition to the SpAD’s defense of an immigrant workers hostel in East Berlin against Nazi nightriders in January 1993. In late 1994 and early 1995, an effort was undertaken to recruit out of the Kommunistische Plattform amid a witch hunt by the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS, the remnants of the former East German Stalinist bureaucratic party transmogrified into a regional social-democratic party). Suddenly it was claimed that comrades from the former DDR were infected with *Ostalgie* (nostalgia for the East) and Stalinophilia. Simultaneously, it was charged that an article in *Spartakist* “glorified Stalin” for noting the simple fact that he was commander in chief of the Soviet army which liberated Auschwitz in refuting the “Stalin = Hitler” equation being spewed out in the West German press on the 50th anniversary of that event.

Some in the German section of the ICL were reflecting the strong social pressures emanating from the rulers of the Fourth Reich through their lieutenants in the Social Democratic Party (SPD). After several months of heated exchanges and cliquist maneuvering in the SpAD, West Coast SL leader Al Nelson declared from the U.S. West Coast that the source of all evil in the German section was Jan Norden in New York, who as a member of the International Secretariat had been responsible since the 1970s for overseeing work in Germany. Hot on the trail of the devil, he “discovered” that a January 1995 speech by Norden in East Berlin’s Humboldt University supposedly didn’t mention political revolution (it did, seven times) and allegedly denied the ICL’s role as the revolutionary vanguard in East Germany. This grotesquely false charge (the title of the speech was “Who Defended the DDR, Who Fought Against Capitalist Reunification: The Spartakists on the Collapse of Stalinist Rule in East Europe”) was the start signal for a purge. A majority of the SpAD central committee initially objected, but they were told in no uncertain terms that if they defended Norden they would be out of the organization in weeks, whereupon they recanted.

In a two-part document, “For a Trotskyist Fighting Propaganda Group in Germany” (12 May/3 July 1995), Norden spelled out how some comrades in the SpAD were responding to pres-



**Demonstration of municipal workers (SFPMVR) in Volta Redonda, Brazil, 4 July 1996, demands "Bosses' Courts and Cops Out of the SFPMVR." Capitalist courts intervened to remove Geraldo Ribeiro (right), supporter of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil (LQB), as union president over campaign to disaffiliate police from the union. The Brazilian Trotskyists were hit with nine separate court suits, including demand to seize their leaflets and search their office. ICL criminally tried to sabotage their defense, calling LQB "dangerous hustlers" and denouncing their defense campaign as a "cynical fraud" (in *WV* No. 681, 2 January 1998).**

sures from the left-wing Social Democrats who were spearheading the anti-communist witch hunt. Earlier, in a 11 April 1995 meeting of the ICL's International Secretariat, Norden stated:

"When there's a witchhunt atmosphere in the re-united Fourth Reich, and when this gets translated/transferred into the party. When the main charge against us is that we are soft on Stalinism...then it must be said that this is reflecting ultimately the pressure of the bourgeoisie."

By the late 1990s, as a result of this pressure and the vicious internal fight it fed, almost all the initial East German recruits had left the SpAD. Gone were the former workers, soldiers and army officers, left were a couple of scions of the upper levels of the DDR bureaucracy.

### **Brazil: ICL Tries to Cover Up Its Desertion from a Key Class Battle**

The fight over Germany culminated in January 1996 in back-to-back meetings of the International Executive Committee of the ICL, at which Norden was overwhelmingly voted down and purged from the IEC, and of the SpAD, with similar results. The fight then expanded to Grupo Espartaquista de México, where the ICL leadership launched a purge against the "regime" of Abram Negrete, who had led the GEM since its inception. The leadership was removed on trumped-up charges so absurd that only after threats of disaffiliating the section, as in Germany, was the ICL leadership able to get a pro forma approval. By the next fall, two young party members came out in favor of the Internationalist Group, exposing in detail the dirty operation carried by the I.S. and its devastating impact on the Mexican group. By now, all but one of the GEM members at the time have quit.

Meanwhile, events were heating up in Brazil, where fraternal comrades of a group of largely black steel workers, Luta Metalúrgica, had won control of the municipal workers union in the city of Volta Redonda. Their program had labeled the police the "armed fist of the bourgeoisie" and said that any "alliance" with the cops is incompatible with class independence, "since they bring men armed and trained by the bourgeois state into the unions." LM undertook, with the ICL's encouragement, to disaffiliate members of the municipal police (*guardas*) from the union. Pro-cop elements reacted by bringing in shotgun-wielding military police to break up a union meeting, whereupon the elected union leadership put out a special issue of their newspaper with an article by Mumia Abu-Jamal, "Police: Part of, or Enemies of, Labor?" As reaction by city officials escalated, the ICL leadership got nervous. They began to circulate slanders against LM, picking up lying statements by the pro-police elements in the bourgeois press. When Norden objected to giving credence to these smears without checking, he was accused of "cop-baiting" the ICL. In short order, the comrades who would later found the Internationalist Group were expelled.

The I.S. then dispatched a delegation to Brazil, demanding that the Brazilian comrades, who had meanwhile become the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil, line up with the ICL leadership without showing them the documents of the fight. The ICL further called on the LQB to drop the campaign to remove cops from the union, publicly dissociate itself from the union, and leave town! A 5 June 1996 I.S. motion declared that "given the sinister provocations and threats of state repression" (as a result of the LQB's struggle to disaffiliate the

*continued on page 42*



# Populist Immigrant Basher

## Nader and His "Left" Cheerleaders

Both in 2000 and again today, a number of liberals and rad-libs (Noam Chomsky, Howard Zinn, Alexander Cockburn) and some fake socialists have called for support to the candidacy of Ralph Nader, in order to "Break from the Two-Party System" (statement of Socialist Alternative, 25 February). But whether he is running as the candidate of the eco-liberal Green Party (in 2000) or on the line of (and with the endorsement of) the right-wing populist Reform Party (in 2004), Nader is a *bourgeois* candidate. Moreover, in both cases his real role is to pressure the Democratic Party in a more populist direction. The United States is about the only major capitalist country to have a two-party political system. But it should be obvious that for Marxists, the answer is not to add more bourgeois parties. The opportunists who support Nader claim that he is breaking illusions in the Democrats, yet they are only promoting illusions in a minor bourgeois candidate. This is an obstacle to building a *workers party*, and in fact, when significant capitalist third parties have arisen in the United States, such as Robert LaFollette in the 1920s and Henry Wallace in 1948, they served to undercut growing sentiment in the working class to form their own party.



HBO

Film maker Michael Moore and TV talk show host Bill Maher (right) beg their former guru Ralph Nader not to to run for president in 2004.

Speaking in 1948 of the Wallace movement which formed the Progressive Party, American Trotskyist leader James P. Cannon pointed out:

"The Wallace party must be opposed and denounced by every class criterion. In the first place it is programatically completely bourgeois.... Its differences with the Republican and Democratic parties are purely tactical. There is not a trace of a principled difference anywhere. And by a principled difference I mean a class difference."

—Cannon, "Election Policy in 1948"

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## The Internationalist

Annual subscription US\$10 for five issues



A Journal of Revolutionary Marxism for the  
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**“Chickenhawk” warmonger Bush speaking at Lima, Ohio plant that produces M1A2 Abrams tanks during invasion of Iraq, 24 April 2003**

of a Navy Swift boat in the Mekong Delta; coming across the Boston Harbor in a landing craft with some of his “band of brothers” from Vietnam as if he were crossing the Delaware; putting a cast of a dozen retired generals and admirals on stage to endorse Kerry as a steady hand at the helm. “America, hear this soldier,” intoned Gen. Wesley Clark, the “butcher of Belgrade” who deliberately bombed maternity hospitals and refugee trains during the 1999 war on Yugoslavia. Kerry declared that he “defended this country as a young man,” thus endorsing the Vietnam War he once upon a time called a “mistake” as a leader of Vietnam Veterans Against the War.

The ruling class figures they have opponents of the war locked in a box with no way out. With the aid of the reformist left, the attack on Iraq has been labeled “Bush’s war,” although it was approved by a bipartisan majority in Congress. The attacks on civil liberties have been identified exclusively with Bush’s top cop, John Ashcroft, and terror meister Tom Ridge even though all but one Democratic senator voted for the USA PATRIOT Act. Liberal opponents of the war have been terrified into voting for “*anybody but Bush*” (ABB), which translates into “*nobody but Kerry*.” The convention didn’t even throw a bone to antiwar Democratic voters. The platform declared, “People of good will disagree about whether America should have gone to war in Iraq.” Since the convention, Kerry has said flatly he would vote for war again, even knowing Saddam Hussein had no “WMDs” as the Bush administration had claimed (as did the “free but responsible” bourgeois media, the pliant United Nations, etc.). “Antiwar” primary candidate Dennis Kucinich ordered his delegates to drop their fight over Iraq, and the one-time frontrunner was given a few minutes at the podium to declare, “I’m Howard Dean, and I’m voting for John Kerry.” The Democratic “doves” did their job of attracting antiwar youth to this capitalist war

party, and now their duty was to keep them there.

Meanwhile, Kerry wraps himself in the star-spangled banner and promises to *out-Bush Bush* on everything from military spending to tax cuts, while posing as the most resolute champion of beefing up the arsenal of war and repression (double the Special Forces, 40,000 more troops to Iraq, etc.). The Democratic nominee agreed to the Bush administration’s definition of a “global war on terror,” vowing that he would “fight a more effective war” than Bush. Convention delegates chanted “U.S.A., U.S.A.” to scenes of their candidate in Vietnam. When Kerry talks of “multilateralism,” he cites Prince von Metternich in the 19th century and Henry Kissinger in the 20th as masters of the “machinations of alliance politics” – that is, the notorious architects of *counterrevolutionary alliances* – and the policies of George Bush I

(*New Yorker*, 26 July). Former Reagan speechwriter Peggy Noonan wrote in the *Wall Street Journal* (22 July), “There’s no difference between Bush and Kerry on the war except people know Mr. Bush means it and assume Mr. Kerry doesn’t.” But in fact, Kerry “means it.” In an interview with the *Journal*, Kerry told this mouthpiece of finance capital that he aimed only to “reduce” the number of U.S. troops “significantly” by the end of his term. A vote for Kerry is *a vote for continued U.S. occupation and mass murder in Afghanistan and Iraq, for four more years and on into the future.*

A vote for the Democrats is also *a vote for intensified police-state measures to regiment the U.S. population for continual war.* As the bourgeois candidates squabble over the issue of “security,” each portraying the other as a wimp, the Democrats point out that Connecticut senator Lieberman first proposed a Department of Homeland Security (the 2002 Lieberman bill), over initial opposition from Bush. They claim (rightly) that the Clinton administration’s Federal Death Penalty Act (1994), Executive Order 12949 (1995) authorizing searches without warrants, Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (1996), and Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (1996) prefigure the draconian USA PATRIOT Act. New York senator Schumer in particular pushed for the Maritime Transportation Security Act (2002), which goes after port workers in the name of fighting “risks to security” on the waterfront. Liberal darling NY senator Hillary Clinton, in turn, has adopted the posture of an extreme war hawk on Afghanistan and Iraq, bragging that she has voted for every military appropriations bill since taking office, and calling for doubling federal money for police security against protesters at the Republican convention in New York this month. Ex-prosecutor Kerry and his fellow Democratic senators proclaim they are true capitalist repressors, and they’re right.

## Labor Fakers Tie Workers to Bosses' Democratic Party

To be sure, the Democratic Party still postures as "friends of labor" but the pretense is wearing thinner all the time. At the Democratic National Convention in Boston at the end of July, barely a quarter of the delegates were union members, the lowest percentage since 1988. (Moreover, only 18 percent of the delegates were black, compared to 28 percent of Democratic voters.) Just about the only "pro-labor" plank in the party platform, largely meaningless in any case, is a call for a law against "permanent replacement of legal strikers" ("temporary" scabs are okay by them) and a vague call to "protect the rights of workers" to organize unions. But no "anti-scab" law is going to stop union-busting bosses from hiring strikebreakers, nor will the labor bureaucrats' dream of a "card check" law make a "level playing field" for unionization. These questions are decided on the picket lines, the battle lines of the class struggle. Meanwhile, Kerry has viciously attacked teachers' unions, calling to "end teacher tenure as we know it" (recalling Clinton's pledge to "end welfare as we know it," which resulted in the welfare "reform" law, hailed by the 2004 Democratic convention, that cut off funds to millions of mothers and children) and to "to make every public school in this country essentially a charter school" ("Schoolyard Tussle," *The New Republic*, 14 December 1998).

Service Employees International Union (SEIU) chief Andrew Stern caused a stir at the convention when he complained that the Democrats were doing nothing about the "Wal-Mart" economy of low wages and no benefits, and said of the effort to build new union organizations, "I don't know if it would survive with a Democratic president," because "labor leaders would become partners of the new establishment" (*Washington Post*, 27 July). Over a century ago, the American socialist Daniel De Leon accurately described union bureaucrats as the "labor lieutenants of the capitalist class," and Stern is no different. While he may bellyache about Kerry (Stern backed Howard Dean in the primaries), he still committed the union to spend \$65 million this year to elect the capitalist Democrats. The SEIU, the largest union in the AFL-CIO, has initiated a "New Unity Partnership" with the recently merged UNITE-HERE, the Carpenters union and Laborers (LIUNA). But for all the rhetoric of revitalizing the hidebound union movement, this is just maneuvering among the labor fakers over the retirement of federation president John Sweeney, who talked the talk of massive organizing drives before settling into the easy chair at AFL-CIO headquarters. At bottom, *all* the union bureaucrats – in or out of office – play by the bosses' rules, because *they all support capitalism*.

In supporting the Democratic Party, the union tops are tying the workers to the *class enemy*. Republicans are widely recognized as union-busters – although this didn't stop several NYC unions (United Federation of Teachers, SEIU Local 1199 and UNITE) from backing Republican governor Pataki in 2002. Ronald Reagan's firing of 14,000 federal air traffic controllers in the 1981 PATCO strike is notorious as the opening

act of a decade of relentless strikebreaking (in which the AFL-CIO tops participated, stabbing PATCO in the back by refusing to shut down the airports). Less well known is the fact that the plans for full-scale union-busting were drawn up by the Democratic administration of Jimmy Carter. In the 1985-86 Hormel strike, another milepost in the anti-union offensive, the Democratic Farmer-Labor governor of Minnesota sent in the National Guard to herd scabs through the picket lines. Recently, Boston mayor Thomas Merino's feud with the local cops received wide publicity as the police "union" threatened to picket the Democratic convention. Police, however, are not part of the working class but professional anti-labor thugs for the bosses. Seldom reported was the fact that Merino has forced Boston school bus drivers to work without a contract for more than a year, as he tries to roll back school integration in the name of a "return to neighborhood schools."

## Republicrat Money Men

While stiffing labor, the Democrats are playing for the Wall Street vote. Billionaire Kerry has recruited a number of top financiers to his team of economic advisors, including Warren Buffet (net worth estimated by *Forbes* magazine at \$43 billion), George Soros (net worth \$7 billion), Steve Jobs of Apple Computer (net worth \$2.1 billion), Clinton's former Treasury secretary Richard Rubin, investment banker Roger Altman and other top money men. (Incidentally, the F. for the middle name of the latest Democratic JFK is for Forbes, another branch of the same Boston Brahmin family that publishes the magazine that calls itself the "Capitalist Tool.") Kerry told *Business Week Online* (23 July) that despite all his vituperation against "Benedict Arnold CEOs" in the primaries, "I am going to be better for business" than George Bush. If elected, Kerry would be the richest president in history, and indicative a growing trend among Democratic senators. The U.S. Senate has been a notorious "millionaires' club" for well over a century, but lately the Democrats have been electing multimillionaire capitalists by the bushel including Wall Streeter John Corzine of New Jersey, department store mogul Mark Dayton of Minnesota, and former supermarket and department store CEO Herb Kohl of Wisconsin. In fact, according to CNN (13 June 2003), ten of the dozen richest senators are Democrats.

In "The Buying of the President, 2004," money talks – oodles of it. Between them, the Democratic and Republican partner parties of American capitalism and their supporters will spend upwards of a billion dollars to select the commander in chief of U.S. imperialism. Washington extols the virtues of American-style "democracy" as it bombs, murders and tortures Iraqis, although the myth of the population electing its political leaders is increasingly transparent. The *Wall Street Journal* (22 July) comments in an article titled "Money Men":

"All four candidates on the major-party tickets for 2004 – Bush, Cheney, Kerry and Edwards – are millionaires and many analysts say the richest group of men to run for office in recent memory. 'The Bush-Cheney ticket has to be the wealthiest Republican ticket in the last 50 years. The Democratic ticket would be the wealthiest period,

## Burritoville Workers Fight for a Union

Photos: Sue Kellogg



Workers at the Burritoville restaurant chain in New York picket outside the Labor Department, June 30, protesting bosses' violation of labor rights and NLRB connivance.

says Kevin Phillips, author of several books, including *Wealth and Democracy*."

Populists like Phillips (a former aide to Nixon's attorney general John Mitchell) complain that today is a new "gilded age," Mark Twain's term for the late 1800s dominated by the Robber Barons who bought and sold presidents, senators and congressmen with abandon. They inveigh against a new "guardian class," seeing today's U.S. as a "plutocracy" as they yearn for a golden age of "grassroots democracy" (Jeffersonian Republicans or Jacksonian Democrats) and suggest reforms like term limits, holding national referendums and the like. The last time around they enacted an "election finance reform" which led to the current deluge of dollars.

### Republican Convention: Bush Stages "Scary Movie 3" at Madison Square Garden

While the actual policy differences between the candidates dwindle to inconsequential, both Democrats and Republicans are using the elections to terrorize the population. Using a playbook inherited from Richard Nixon, they are stoking hysteria about new attacks on the "homeland," U.S.-occupied Iraq turning into a "seedbed for terrorism," and the need for "strong leadership" to meet the "threat." The result is a situation in which Republican pundits argue that Kerry needs more dead American soldiers returning from Iraq in caskets in order to win, while Democratic commentators say that Bush depends on a terrorist incident – imagined or real, thwarted or realized – to stay in the White House. Since the powers behind Bush are determined to keep on milking the U.S. government (as well as looting Iraq), everybody is waiting for the administration's "October surprise." The day after the Democratic convention, Homeland Security czar Tom Ridge raised the terror level to Code Orange (high risk), citing "alarming" evidence of a plot aimed at financial targets in NY and D.C., while declaring that his information was "the result of the president's leadership in the war against terror." When it turned

**CUNY students and other unionists joined Burritoville workers in protest. Picketers chanted, "Labor Department, Bosses Tool!"**



out that the "surveillance" reports on the Citicorp Center, World Bank, etc. were years old, it was widely concluded that the "plot" was an election ploy.

Meanwhile, the Bush administration was actively considering "postponing" (i.e., canceling) the November elections. *Newsweek* (19 July) reported: "Ridge's department last week asked the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel to analyze what legal steps would be needed to permit the postponement of the election were an attack to take place. Justice was specifically asked to review a recent letter to Ridge from DeForest B. Soaries Jr., chairman of the newly created U.S. Election Assistance Commission." The Office of Legal Counsel is the same outfit that in 2003 okayed U.S. torture of prison-



ers in Guantánamo and Iraq, and which more recently (April 2004) approved heavy-duty police tactics to intimidate “extremist” political protest, on the grounds that “any possible ‘chilling’ effect” would be “outweighed by the public interest in maintaining safety and order during large-scale demonstrations.” On this basis, U.S. agents around the country have been questioning activists about “possible indicators of protest activity.” In particular, a Federal Bureau of Investigation spokesman said they targeted “people that we identified that could reasonably be expected to have knowledge of such plans and plots if they existed,” about the upcoming Republican convention (“F.B.I. Goes Knocking for Political Troublemakers,” *New York Times*, 16 August).

Scheduling the Republican National Convention in New York was an attempt to whip up anti-terrorist fears and patriotic fervor using the imagery of the 9-11 World Trade Center attacks. But to hold the RNC in NYC, where registered Democrats outnumber Republicans five-to-one and 92 percent voted for Democrat Bill Clinton in 1996, was also a deliberate provocation. Local opinion on George W. Bush (72 percent negative, according to the polls) is divided between a majority that considers him the devil incarnate, and Bush-Cheney-Rumsfeld-Ashcroft-Ridge to be the true “axis of evil,” and a minority that thinks that while the president may not be Satan, he is a madman capable of and most likely determined to blow up the world in order to realize his “born-again” messianic Christian vision of Rapture, Tribulation and Armageddon. (“God told me to strike at al Qaeda and I struck them, and then he instructed me to strike at Saddam [Hussein], which I did, and now I am determined to solve the problem in the Middle East,” Bush told former Palestinian prime minister Mahmoud Abbas in June 2003.) Posters are plastered around town saying “The Republicans Are Coming” with ex-mayor Ed Koch encouraging New Yorkers to “make nice” to the aliens. Other posters, with the same headline, show an apocalyptic scene with Apache helicopters and a face from Edvard Munch’s painting *The Scream*.

For months, Republican mayor Michael Bloomberg and his New York Police Department commissioner Raymond Kelly have been bandying about the “threat” of anti-RNC demos while barring them from congregating in central locations. The NYPD has ordered that demonstrators marching on August 29 be pushed onto the West Side Highway, far from the convention site at Madison Square Garden. This would turn the highway into a giant police pen, with the expected hundreds of thousands of protesters backed up for miles, unable to hear speakers, in a location without shade, water or convenient access (or exit). This recipe for disaster is exactly what city and federal authorities want. Republican spin meisters would love to broadcast images of cops attacking demonstrators (while claiming that they are “extremist” protesters attacking cops). The reformist/liberal organizers of the August 29 march, United for Peace and Justice, buckled under to city pressure and accepted the West Side Highway site, but widespread reports that protesters would not enter this police trap and would head to Central Park, with a permit or not, forced UPJ leaders to backtrack. With the stage set for confrontation, everyone re-

calls the 15 February 2003 antiwar march when cops planned to lock up 50,000 demonstrators behind metal barricades, but instead 500,000 showed up and effectively shut down the entire East Side of Midtown for hours.

The August 29 UPJ march under the slogan “The World Says No to Bush” and several other RNC-related events are billed as antiwar protests, but in effect they are pro-Democratic Party rallies. Democratic spokesmen have encouraged people to join the marches, and the organizers use “fight the right” rhetoric that they recall from the 1960s, when Students for a Democratic Society called to go “part of the way with LBJ,” supporting Democrat Lyndon Johnson against Republican right-winger Barry Goldwater; while the Communist Party ran Gus Hall and Angela Davis as president and vice-president, but CPers actually encouraged votes for the Democrats. The result: “four more years” of the Vietnam War. Today the CPUSA calls to “Build Unity! Defeat Bush and the Ultra Right!” in an election platform that doesn’t mention Kerry or the Democrats, while its offshoot, the Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism (CoC), publishes a “Peace and Justice Agenda” with a list of almost identical demands which “urgently requires the defeat of George W. Bush in 2004” – i.e., “anybody but Bush,” a vote for the Democrats. (CoC co-chairperson Leslie Gagan is the spokesperson for the UPJ.)

*In contrast, genuine communists oppose the trap of bourgeois “lesser-evilism,” fighting to defeat all the capitalist parties and to build a revolutionary workers party.*

### The Left and the 2004 Elections

In the midst of the on-going imperialist war that is devastating Iraq and Afghanistan, while millions of working people, minorities and immigrants in the United States face rising unemployment, falling wages and racist cop terror, the real answer must be sharpening the class struggle in the fight for *international socialist revolution*. While liberals, rad-libs and reformists attack “globalization,” we Trotskyists say the enemy is *imperialism*. While they oppose the “Bush agenda” and say “another world is possible,” we say that the exploited and oppressed must fight to sweep away *capitalism* and replace the rule of the bourgeoisie with the rule of the proletariat (a workers government) as the only road to building *socialist society*. While anarchists oppose participating in capitalist elections, Leninists may under certain conditions make use of the electoral platform in order to expose the shell game of bourgeois parliamentarism. But as Marxists have always insisted, workers political action must be on a *class* basis, not acting as the tail of a capitalist party. As Engels wrote to Karl Kautsky (September 1892): “In our tactics one thing is thoroughly established for all modern countries and times: to bring the workers to the point of forming their own party, independent and opposed to all bourgeois parties.”

While some dissident liberals, a smattering of rad-libs and social-democratic left groups are supporting Ralph Nader in the November elections (see “Nader and His ‘Left’ Cheerleaders,” page 24), a couple of left organizations are presenting candidates this year. The Workers World Party (WWP), followers of the late

Sam Marcy, is running John Parker for president and Teresa Gutierrez for vice president. The main slogans of the WWP campaign are "Bring the troops home now. Money for jobs not for war." This is a standard reformist/social-patriotic refrain that the WWP has pushed for years as it built one popular-front outfit after another, including the International Action Center (IAC), a lash-up with former U.S. attorney general Ramsey Clark, and A.N.S.W.E.R., its "antiwar coalition." This year, however, the Marcyites underwent a split, as most of their San Francisco and West Coast supporters broke off to form the Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL), led by Brian Becker (the main spokesman for the IAC and A.N.S.W.E.R.) and Gloria La Riva (the WWP's vice presidential candidate in 1996 and 2000). So this year the WWP is posing slightly to the left, talking of "People's needs before profits: for socialism, against capitalism."

But this is no real move to the left for the WWP, which is always and ever seeking to cuddle up to Democratic Party liberals. Like the ISO, their complaint about Kerry is that he is a soft-core version of Bush rather than a liberal. Thus while *Workers World* (15 July) says "No to Bush lite," the ISO's *Socialist Worker* (6 August) asks: "Bush vs. Bush Lite – Where's the choice?" In reality, Kerry is running not as a watered-down version of Bush but as a more "effective," "stronger" war president. *Workers World* (5 August) commiserates with antiwar liberals, wringing its hands about "Democrats saddled with support for Bush's war." In the same issue they hail the victory of liberal Cynthia McKinney in the Georgia Democratic primary. The WWP longs for the "good old days" when they were demo organizers for Democratic primary candidate Jesse Jackson. Most expressively, *Workers World* (15 July) plaintively appealed to Jackson to revive his "populist challenges" of 1984 and 1988: "Reverend Jackson, we have a proposal for you: Come and campaign with us, the candidates who embrace this legacy and are really fighting for jobs, peace and social justice!" The legacy that the WWP embraces is of Jackson's effort to bring disenchanted black and labor voters back into the Democratic fold.

The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) is also presenting a ticket of Roger Calero for president and Arrin Hawkins for vice president. Calero, an immigrant from Nicaragua, was threatened with deportation after returning from a trip to Cuba in December 2002; the Internationalist Group defended him (see *The Internationalist* No. 15, January-February 2003). The SWP abandoned Trotskyism in the early 1960s to tail after Fidel Castro; in 1982, SWP *fidelista* honcho Jack Barnes dismissed Trotsky's perspective of permanent revolution as "ultraleft" as he hailed Nelson Mandela's African National Congress. The SWP candidates today call for immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq, Afghanistan, Yugoslavia and elsewhere, talk of a labor party based on the unions and criticize the campaigns of Nader and the Greens as "pro-capitalist third parties that are not independent from the ruling class." Yet they, too, try to be a "left" appendage of the anti-Bush, pro-Democratic "movement." Their article on the marches against the RNC starts out:

"Thousands of young people, unionists, and others will be taking to the streets of New York before and during the

Republican National Convention to say 'Defeat Bush!' "We wholeheartedly agree and join with them. And we say, 'Defeat Kerry too!' The Republicans and Democrats are twin parties of imperialist war, economic depression, and racist oppression."

—*Militant*, 31 August

Proclaiming wholehearted support for pro-Democratic Party demonstrations is the operational part of this statement, for it is utterly counterposed to an independent class policy against the twin capitalist parties. The SWP proclamation has the virtue of making explicit, albeit in somewhat more leftist language, the opportunist methodology of the reformist left, for whom talking out of both sides of their mouths has become second nature.

*Today's SWP has its peculiar quirks – calling for "cheap credit for working farmers" and "price supports to cover production costs," as if small capitalist farmers in the U.S. today are the equivalent of impoverished landless peasants. But at bottom their electoralist reformism is a continuation of the SWP's "bring our boys home" social-patriotism of the Vietnam War era – an appeal to the bourgeoisie to cut its losses in a losing colonial war, rather than to fight for the defeat of imperialism. Revolutionaries have no interest in backing this kind of two-bit reformist campaign. Interestingly, however, the once-Trotskyist Spartacist League (SL) gave support to the SWP candidate for governor of California in a recall election last fall (see "California Recall Follies and the Bankruptcy of U.S. Bourgeois Politics," *The Internationalist* No. 16, October-November 2003). Since the present reformist SWP ticket is running on a platform no different from that campaign, there is little reason for the SL not to support Calero/Hawkins as it zigzags to the right.*

As today's "progressives" lament the lack of "democratic" foreign policy, the corrupting influence of money on the political process and so on (a staple of liberal Bush opponents such as the "Democracy Now" program on Pacifica Radio), they obscure the fundamental fact that bourgeois "democracy" is a façade for capitalist rule. The reformist "socialist" campaigns do not present a revolutionary challenge to bourgeois parliamentarism, but use electoralist politics to gain respectability. As Leninists and Trotskyists, we fight for an entirely different objective: to build a workers party that can lead the way to socialist revolution. Marx and Engels wrote in the *Communist Manifesto* (1848), "the executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie." The government being the executive committee of the ruling class, it is necessary to forge such a revolutionary workers party through intervention in the class struggle, fighting to oust the present pro-capitalist misleaders and to place the workers movement at the forefront of struggles to liberate all of the oppressed.

Today, the fight to defeat the imperialists' colonial occupation of Iraq, Afghanistan and Yugoslavia, to defend the Chinese, North Korean, Vietnamese and Cuban deformed workers states against imperialist attack, to defeat the drive toward a police state and the capitalists' war on working people, minorities and immigrants requires a vigorous exposure of the bourgeois electoral fraud and the parties that are part and parcel of it. ■

## Nader's "Left" Cheerleaders...

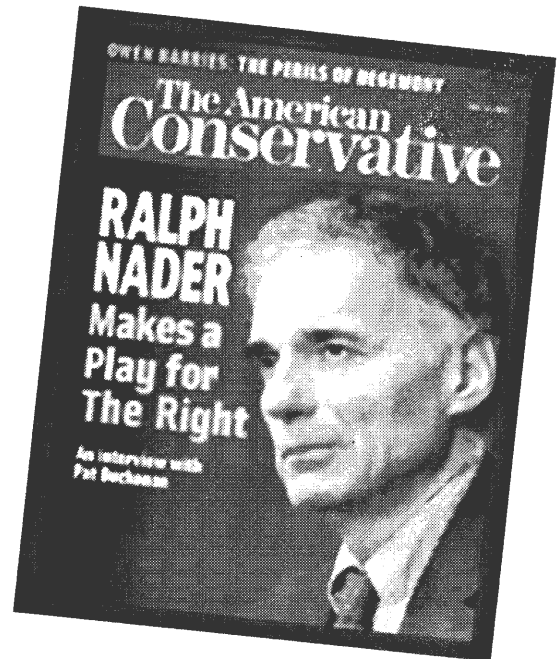
*continued from page 24*

"When we speak of developing the independent political action of the workers," Cannon insisted, "our fundamental aim is to build the revolutionary party of the workers because that alone correctly and truly expresses working class independence." That is the policy of the Internationalist Group as well.

In contrast, these pseudo-socialists try to prettify their capitalist candidate by trying to pretend that he is something he is not. Socialist Alternative (SoAl), which is so addicted to bourgeois pressure politics that it begged Nader to run for president even before he declared, claims that his "insurgent campaign" against the Democrats and Republicans "registers a protest and strikes a blow against the establishment and their two parties." SoAl enthusiastically boosts "Nader's Anti-War Challenge," talking of his "hard-hitting critique of corporate power" and his "independent anti-war, pro-worker campaign," saying "Nader has increasingly brought to the fore his anti-war stance and calls for a full withdrawal of U.S. troops and corporations from Iraq" (*Justice*, July-August 2004). Even these starry-eyed social democrats admit that "Nader regularly makes comments that suggest he is trying to pressure the Democrats to move to the left." Yet Socialist Alternative itself engages in the same kind of pressuring the Democrats by politically supporting the anti-Bush marches in New York, headlining: "Protest the RNC in NYC, Stop Bush and the War Machine." As if the Democrats aren't part of the war machine! As a fig leaf, SoAl tacks on a paragraph calling to "Protest the War at the Democratic National Convention" and "tell them to bring the troops home now!"

The International Socialist Organization (ISO), a considerably larger social-democratic outfit, is somewhat more embarrassed about its support for Nader, hesitating for some time in endorsing him after running into some unease among youth at its "Socialism 2004" conference in Chicago in June. The ISO spends considerable effort in a vain effort to debunk charges against Nader. Against accusations that the man they claim is a "genuine alternative" to Bush-Kerry has accepted "tens of thousands of dollars" from pro-Bush donors, they retort that "Republicans have contributed only about \$50,000 out of the total \$1 million that Nader has raised," i.e., "a drop in the bucket" (*Socialist Worker*, 6 August). While averring that "Nader can be criticized for seeking the endorsement of the right-wing Reform Party," the ISO claims that he "didn't shift his overwhelmingly left-wing platform in doing so" (*Socialist Worker*, 23 July). But let's take a look at that "overwhelmingly left-wing platform" (ISO) and "anti-war, pro-worker campaign" (SoAl). Would that be his attack on "unpatriotic corporations"? Or his dismissal of talk of a threat to abortion rights as just a Democratic "scare tactic"? How about his charge that Bush is "presiding over and encouraging the shipment of industries and jobs to the despotic Communist regime in China" (NBC News, *Meet the Press*, 22 February)?

On Iraq, Nader doesn't even call for immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops, only that Washington should pull out its military, contractors and corporations "within six months" (*Wash-*



**American Conservative**, magazine of fascistic ultra-rightist Pat Buchanan, Nader's predecessor as presidential candidate of the populist Reform Party in the 2000 elections, publishes friendly interview.

*ington Post*, 2 May). This six-month delay is for a purpose: in an interview with Pat Buchanan, the fascistic ultra-rightist who was the Reform Party presidential candidate in 2000, Nader said: "Under my proposal there would be an international peace-keeping force, and the withdrawal would be a smart withdrawal during which there are internationally supervised elections" (*The American Conservative*, 21 June). The Buchanan interview is quite revealing. Nader's "hard-hitting critique of corporate power" is a *defense of capitalism*: "Concentrated corporate power violates many principles of capitalism," he says, complaining that under multinational corporations there is no shareholder control, lambasting corporate crime, and lamenting that small businesses aren't really on a "level playing field" with McDonald's or Microsoft. Most insidious are Nader's views on immigration, which are to the right even of the Democrats. Asked about Democratic proposals for an "amnesty" for "illegal aliens" who have been in the U.S. for five years or more, Nader responded:

"This is very difficult because you are giving a green light to cross the border illegally. I don't like the idea of legalization because then the question is how do you prevent the next wave and the next?..."

"We have to control our immigration. We have to limit the number of people who come into this country illegally."

The Chambers of Commerce and National Association of Manufacturers support the present U.S. stance on immigration because it is "a wage-depressing policy," Nader says, while "the AFL-CIO has no objection to it because they think they can organize the illegal workers."

Nader calls the North American Free Trade Agreement

(NAFTA) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) "sovereignty shredding," pretending that U.S. courts and legislatures are bypassed by "Geneva." Nader's view of the corporations, immigration, free trade is that of the enraged petty bourgeoisie and small capitalists, who as the German Nazis showed can be won to fascism. Trotskyists oppose NAFTA and the WTO not because they supposedly usurp power from the U.S., but because they are mechanisms of imperialist domination that oppress the workers and semi-colonial peoples. We demand full citizenship rights for all immigrants, rejecting the very concept of "illegal aliens." Our political opposition to the Stalinist bureaucracy in Beijing is due to its undermining of the remaining gains of the Chinese Revolution, and is based on our unconditional defense of the Chinese deformed workers state against imperialist attack and economic blackmail which threaten the still predominantly collectivized economy. Proletarian revolutionaries denounce the China-bashing that has regularly occurred at "anti-globalization" demos, such as in Seattle in November 1999, when USWA demonstrators symbolically dumped a dummy Chinese steel bar into Puget Sound.

Of course, much of the opposition to Nader's candidacy comes from liberals and reformists who fear a repeat of the 2000 election, in which they claim Nader made Bush's electoral/judicial coup possible. The Green Party nominated another candidate this year (David Cobb), who promised to run only in "safe states" where a vote for their ticket would not endanger Kerry's majority. (On the other hand, liberals like Chomsky and Zinn say they will vote for Nader precisely because Massachusetts is "safe" and they won't be taking electoral votes away from the Democrats.) We oppose undemocratic election laws designed to keep minor parties and candidates like Nader off the ballot. But *Ralph Nader's anti-immigrant, China-bashing, populist campaign should disgust any class-conscious worker.* The fake socialists who are pushing it are selling fool's gold to the left – including their own members. In the 2000 elections, the Internationalist Group declared, "Ralph Nader's Red-White-and-Blue Greens: Pressure Group on the Democrats," and called to "Break with All the Capitalist Parties – Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!" (*The Internationalist* No. 9, January-February 2001). That appeal is no less urgent today. ■

## Popular Front Left Buzzes Around the Democrats

BOSTON – The holding of the Democratic National Convention in John Kerry's city sparked a flurry of activity on the left, but little outright opposition to this capitalist party of war and racism. The various gatherings were mainly intended by their organizers to pressure the Democrats to the left, and to reconcile disappointed liberals and reformists to voting for Kerry & Co. while holding their noses, all in order to "Stop Bush." On Sunday, July 25, a thousand or so protesters gathered at Boston Commons to hold an antiwar march on the DNC site, a day before the convention actually opened. Simultaneously, across town at the University of Massachusetts campus, a three-day confab was held featuring assorted left liberals, who wanted to push their agenda on the Democratic Party.

The Internationalist Group sent a team to Boston to intervene at the July 25 march on the DNC sponsored by the International Action Center (IAC), a creation of the Workers World Party (WWP) of the late Sam Marcy, and A.N.S.W.E.R., the WWP/IAC's "antiwar coalition." Our red flags and banner ("No to Bush Kerry, Nader! Democrats, Republicans – War Makers, Strikebreakers, Build a Revolutionary Workers Party") stood out in the march for explicitly attacking both capitalist parties, and appear prominently in several wire service photos. Univisión, the Spanish-language TV network, broadcast excerpted interviews with two members of the Revolutionary Reconstruction Club at Bronx Community College on the evening news.

In the week leading up to the demo, the papers were full of reports of a menacing effort to stir up a massive security hysteria surrounding the convention. In an "anti-terror" training film for the DNC, Boston mass transit (MBTA) workers were shown clips instructing them to identify "terrorists," in which they were given photos of IAC/A.N.S.W.E.R. organizers, and told not to allow protesters with signs onto buses or subways. The police announced they would carry out random bag checks

on MBTA subway and commuter railway trains. Security for the convention was formally taken over by the Secret Service, and the word was spread that downtown would be blanketed by surveillance cameras.

The city refused to let the July 25 demonstration march past the FleetCenter convention site, on the grounds that it would obstruct convention delegates, although the convention wouldn't begin until the next day. Boston police announced that all demonstrators would have to jam into a tiny "free speech zone," entered by ducking under 5'9" high steel girders of an unused elevated railway line, surrounded by an eight-foot high cyclone fence topped by razor wire, covered by a black mesh netting, all well out of sight or sound of the convention hall. A judge visited the site and said that calling it an "internment camp" was an "understatement," but declared there was "no alternative." (A worker setting up the protest pen was quoted by the press saying, "Does it look like a concentration camp? I'm Jewish. It looks like a concentration camp.") Nevertheless, the judge ruled the Sunday march could go to the convention center.

Shortly after taking off, the march went past the Massachusetts State House where there were sharpshooters posted on the roof and a solid phalanx of black-uniformed riot cops with signs on their body armor saying "State Police." Someone pointed out that if they simply reversed the words it would be an accurate description. The crowd started chanting (with a chant from the Seattle "anti-globalization" protests), "This is what a police state looks like!" The AP got a photo of a counterculture demonstrator calling himself Vermin Supreme, who held up a bumper sticker in front of the line of cops which ironically said, "The Police Are Your Friends."

Downtown Boston was turned into an armed camp, with hundreds of state police decked out in riot-gear armor, sharpshooters brandishing rifles on the rooftops, plainclothes agents



Laura Rauch/AP



**Heavily armed riot police outside Democratic National Convention in Boston keeping demonstrators at bay. IG banner is on other side of fence.**

loitering about, etc. The march was followed by scores of police SUVs, prison wagons and school buses ready for mass arrests, while helicopters and jet fighters patrolled overhead and Coast Guard and police gunboats cruised the harbor. The FleetCenter itself was surrounded by a massive 7-foot high black grid steel fence, with squads of National Guardsmen in camouflage uniforms inside.

Sunday's IAC/A.N.S.W.E.R. event was billed as an "anti-war" march, and as a "March on the Democratic Convention" rather than as a protest *against* the Democrats. This was no accident. The lead banner didn't mention the Democrats, calling only to "Bring the Troops Home Now!" One of the secondary slogans for the rally was even more explicit: "Protest the Pro-War Stance of the Democrats." (And if they weren't openly pro-war, if Dean or Kucinich were the candidate?) Meanwhile, in New York, the IAC is calling a "war crimes trial" of the Bush regime on the eve of the protests against the Republican National Convention. As usual, they are trying to cozy up to anti-Bush liberals and pressure the Democrats.

The International Socialist Organization, Socialist Workers Party, Communist Party and Revolutionary Communist Party only showed up to sell hours later. These groups were at the Boston Social Forum (BSF) at the UMass Boston campus under the slogan "Another World Is Possible." This is theme of the popular-front World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil, on which it was modeled. The point of the BSF was to hold an event that would not be against the Democrats but would give left liberals a "meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas," and "speaking truth to power." (John Kerry himself took up this slogan a couple of days later.) Featured speakers included Angela Davis, Michael Lerner, Manning Marable, Walden Bello and Democrats Robert Reich and Jim Hightower. The BSF events were spread over three days and reportedly drew several thou-

sand people. The ISO gave a workshop titled: "Peter Miguel Camejo & Ralph Nader: Shifting the Power – Rebuilding Democracy."

Also absent from the Sunday march was any "black bloc" contingent – the anarchists joined with local liberal ecology activists to form the B1(A)ck Tea Society, which applied for a demonstration permit (!) to hold a civil disobedience march Monday, which a posting on Boston Indymedia reported drew 300 people. This dwindled to 20 when the cops just let them sit in the street and the anarcho-liberals had no alternative plan in the absence of mass arrests. On Tuesday, the same outfit held a "Really, Really Democratic Bazaar" (endorsed by Noam Chomsky as a "really, really good idea") featuring a car running on waste vegetable oil, Buddhist medi-

tation, a quilting party, and an anti-communist exclusion of the Spartacist League. Well, as the "anti-globalization" protests chant, this is what (bourgeois) democracy looks like. The SL rightly complained, but was more generous toward the BSF, where they were permitted a workshop along with the popular-front left they are sidling up to these days.

On the march, the Progressive Labor Party had a contingent of about 30 behind a banner proclaiming, "It's Not Just Bush, But Capitalism." The PLP leaflet was titled, "Kerry vs. Bush: Fascist A or Fascist B," which they chanted, adding, "Tweedledum or Tweedledee." The IG was right behind PL in the line of march, and chanted some of their slogans, and added our own: "1, 2, 3, 4 – Defeat U.S. imperialist war; 5, 6, 7, 8 – Forward to a workers state!" "Smash imperialism through socialist revolution!" "Washington, Wall Street, the enemy's at home!" and "Workers strikes against the war!" Not surprisingly, the PLP, which does not take sides in the war between the imperialist U.S. and semi-colonial Iraq, did not chant with us.

Although the authorities had prepared for thousands of arrests, clearing court dockets, freeing up cells by sending immigrants held for deportation to other jails, canceling family visits, etc., by the end of the week, including an incident on the last day of the convention, the total number of arrests was three. Remarking on this, the *Boston Globe* (29 July) ran an article, "Activists appear to save anger for NYC," pointing out that the paucity of arrests was because by and large the left was not protesting the Democrats.

"Clearly, what this represents is that folks on the left have decided it would be counterproductive to protest the DNC," said Jason Pramas, a labor organizer from Cambridge who helped create the Boston Social Forum, which attracted 5,000 people last weekend for several days of lectures, discussions, and performances.

“At this moment you could call it a truce’ with the Democrats, he added.

Indeed, one of the more ludicrous moments at the BSF came when Eric Mann, one-time leader of Weatherman supporters in Boston, called for a “united front with Kerry against imperialism” (!) while attacking Nader from the right. The *Globe* article continued.

“This attitude is a sharp change from 2000, when many in the booming antiglobalization movement saw both parties as equally distasteful. One group’s name lampooned the candidates’ interchangeability: ‘Billionaires for Bush (or Gore).’

## Boston: Disruption by Anti-Abortion Provocateur Squelched

At the Boston Common assembly site for the July 25 march on the Democratic National Convention organized by the Workers World Party/International Action Center/A.N.S.W.E.R., a potentially threatening right-wing provocation was dealt with by vigilance and a vigorous common defense that overcame hesitations by the popular-front demo organizers. A local anti-abortion and gay-hating fanatic, Leonard Gendron, tried to set up a stand, in a clear attempt to disrupt the demonstration. Gendron, who calls himself a pastor of the Church of the Secret Place in Lawrence, Massachusetts, has been prominent recently whipping up vicious bigotry against gay marriage. On the Common, he took up position near the Spartacist League table with two huge signs, one showing a fetus and another calling homosexuality a sin.

When SLers approached the Internationalist Group table to inform us about this and ask if we would join in protesting this ominous intrusion, we quickly agreed. After a few minutes a crowd gathered. The SL began chanting with a megaphone, “Free abortion on demand!” and “Full democratic rights for gays!” As the circle tightened around the provocateur, several IGers, a supporter of the International Bolshevik Tendency, a couple of SLers were in the front line. When the largest placard was knocked from his hand, Gendron threw himself down on his signs and refused to move. The anti-abortion, anti-gay bigot frothed at a woman from the Party for Socialism and Liberation, calling her a “daughter of the devil.” At one point he shoved a black demo staff member.

By this time there was a crush of news (and presumably other) photographers crowding in on the scene. For about ten minutes the situation was fluid, as some IAC/A.N.S.W.E.R. demo marshals tried to get us to leave, but the crowd wouldn’t budge and kept up vigorous chanting. A liberal woman kept yelling that the man had a “right to demonstrate.” We replied that he was a provocateur and these anti-abortion bigots were killers. The demo staff was split: while some (concerned not to offend the sensitivities of the bourgeois liberals they appeal to) kept trying to get the crowd to go away, others saw the need to remove the intruder and squelch the disruption. Eventually, with some prodding and seeing that the crowd would not disperse, the WWP marshals got it together and moved the disrupter out. At that point, we saw to it that his filthy signs were quickly disposed of. The disrupter kept trying to come back for another 10 minutes or so,

“But this time, with an administration that many on the left blame for getting the country into a needless war, many progressives, radicals, and Greens are saving their protests for the Republican National Convention in New York.”

While the “truce” of the reformist left with the Kerry’s party is particularly notable in this election year, the fact is that the popular front of “progressives, radicals and Greens” has *always* sought an alliance with the Democrats. Rather than protesting the “*pro-war stance*” of this historic war party of American capitalism, authentic communists must fight against *all* the bourgeois parties to build a revolutionary workers party that attacks the imperialist *system* at its roots.

until the police arrived and spirited him off in a squad car.

The provocateur Gendron originally had a confederate with him, who quickly left. However, some skinheads kept loitering around the area, eyeing and at one point provocatively photographing the SL table. Alerted by the SL, we kept an eye on the fascists and photographed them. Following the altercation, a couple of media (Boston CBS-TV News and the Knight-Ridder newspapers) came over to speak with us about it. A reporter asked about the bigot having “a right to protest.” Our comrade Alberto replied that you could tell from his signs that this guy was no isolated individual but part of an organized group. Another supporter noted the ominous presence of the skinheads.

Rightists and various bourgeois media have made a half-hearted attempt to make hay out of this disruption, mouthing homilies about freedom of speech, but this has fallen flat. As an IG spokeswoman told the CBS TV reporter, it wasn’t a matter of protest, of discussing different political views, but that these bigots have web sites that advocate killing of abortion providers, and they do it, including in the Boston area. On 30 December 1994, another anti-abortion fanatic, John Salvi, killed staff members Sharon Lowney and Leanne Nichols at two abortion clinics in Brookline. We were prepared to defend our right to protest the Democrats and the imperialist war on Iraq, and would not let such provocateurs disrupt this demonstration. ■



Attempt by provocateur to disrupt march on Democratic convention in Boston was stopped.

## IG and Others Spike Ban at "Life After Capitalism" Confab "Anti-Authoritarian" Reformists Call Cops on Reds

NEW YORK, August 21 – It might sound like a contradiction in terms: self-described anti-authoritarians calling the cops to enforce censorship against reds. But that's just what organizers of the "Life After Capitalism" conference did today against the Internationalist Group, when we led opposition to their ban on "sectarian left groupings" having literature tables or "try[ing] to sell papers or other forms of literature without the consensus of the organizing body." Moments after the "anti-sectarian" honchos threatened to have "unauthorized" materials removed, uniformed City University of New York (CUNY) police made a bee line for the IG's literature table, saying "The conference organizers say you are not invited." The campus cops threatened to call Mayor Bloomberg's NYPD to arrest our spokesman for criminal trespass.

As we pointed out to conference participants, the armed authority the organizers asked to enforce their ban is the CUNY police force that has become synonymous with repression of working-class and minority students' most basic rights. This crackdown is exemplified by the arrest and years-long prosecution of student leader Miguel Malo – for holding up a protest sign when they banned such "unauthorized" expression at Hostos Community College.

Conference honchos' bluster turned to consternation when many people picked up the chant "Let them stay," started by the News and Letters and anarchist May Day Books groups. Joining in the chanting were members of the Spartacist League, League for the Revolutionary Party, International Bolshevik Tendency and others. The campus cops withdrew (one later came up to say their intervention had been the organizers' idea, not theirs) – and the would-be censors backed down.

It *sounds* like a contradiction, but it isn't: the Life After (?) Capitalism crew's anarcho/anti-authoritarian verbiage boiled down to plain old liberalism. True, you had to wade through torrents of "consensus" lingo, *parecon* ("participatory economics") and smarmy self-congratulation. But the bottom line was already explicit at the event's opening rally: Democrat Kerry was scored as just as rabid an imperialist warmonger as Bush – and half the keynote speakers openly called for voting for him anyway.

This not-so-hidden agenda is the common denominator of the protests against the Republican National Convention the conference was gearing up for. Actually, the organizers' visceral anti-communism led them to imitate NYC mayor Mike Bloomberg, who promised happy meal discounts for "good" protesters who toe the line, and police repression against "bad" ones who "break the rules" aimed at censoring and suppressing anything that even remotely smacks of radicalism.

The Internationalist Group was initially notified of the ban by a spokeswoman of the Spartacist League, whose youth group put out a leaflet against the exclusionary rule. In today's confrontation with the would-be authoritarian censors, SLers – after long minutes of silent passivity – found themselves

following our lead. As part of a recurring pattern, when they wanted to be defended against exclusion they approached the very same IG comrade, Abram Negrete, whom their paper has vilely smeared as a "provocateur."

After the ban was defeated, we were approached by a spokesman of the Socialist Workers Party, who said he had heard about the confrontation and asked whether we thought the SWP would now be able to display its literature. A representative of the Maoist Revolutionary Communist Party later came up to condemn the exclusion attempt as well. In fact the imposition of elementary norms of workers democracy benefited a range of groups branded as beyond the pale by the pale pink reformists running the conference.

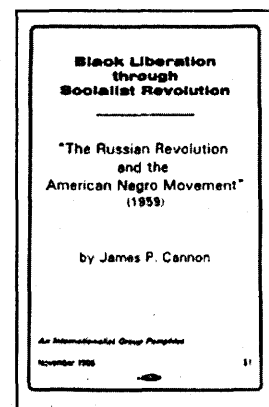
The would-be chief enforcer was one Max Uhlenbeck, who describes himself on CampusActivism.org as "an anti-authoritarian organizer" who's into "challenging old lefty ideologues who often ruin meetings/entire coalitions." Max has become something of a media fave over the last couple of years, getting quoted in the Village Voice and elsewhere as a student organizer for the United for Peace and Justice coalition. Associated with Left Turn, a loose grouping founded by former long-time adherents of British anti-Soviet "socialist" Tony Cliff, he was a featured speaker at last February's "Life After Bush" conference sponsored by...the youth section of the Democratic (Party) Socialists of America. All this is illustrative of the nexus between some "young anti-authoritarians" and the most hard-core of the old fogey commie-haters of Cold War "State Department socialism."

While speakers at the conference railed against a "new coordinator class" supposedly inherent in Leninism, conference coordinators sought to squelch serious political discussion. Yet there was some comic relief, like that provided by the frustrated censor who kept repeating "You know, I am not a bureaucrat," and the self-proclaimed anarchist who declared: "Since we called the conference, we get to *dictate* who can sell there." Wrong on both counts. ■

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## From Cancún to Guadalajara: Summits and Riot Clubs

# Repression in Fox's Mexico: Kidnapping, Torture and Political Murder

- **Police-State in Workers Suburb of Mexico City**
- **Activist Tortured and Murdered Outside Capital**
- **Thug Violence at the National University**

The following two articles are translated from a supplement to *El Internacionalista*, published by our comrades of the *Grupo Internacionalista/México* for demonstrations held on the anniversary of the 10 June 1971 "Corpus Christi Massacre."

JUNE 10 – Over the last several weeks the climate of repression has intensified around the country. The murder of Oaxaca Indian leader Manuel Posada Chévez by paramilitaries on April 11 was followed by the kidnapping, torture and assassination of Pável González, a student at the National University (UNAM), on the eve of the fourth anniversary of the invasion of Ciudad Universitaria (the main UNAM campus in Mexico City) by the Federal Preventive Police (PFP) to break the 1999-2000 student strike. Three years ago, Pável had traveled to Cancún to participate in mobilizations against "globalization." More recently he had received death threats for being a Zapatista activist. His body was found in Ajusco, a mountain town just south of Mexico City, showing clear signs of torture.

It was precisely in Cancún in March 2001 that Fox unleashed his praetorian guard against "anti-globalization" demonstrators. Today, a new summit was held in the city of Guadalajara, once again behind a ring of police clubs and shields to keep the thousands of demonstrators at bay. Of the arrested "altermundistas" (another worlders, name used by anti-globalization activists<sup>1</sup>), 44 are still behind bars in Puente Grande prison in the state of Jalisco, facing charges of rioting, which could bring them several years in jail. The PAN<sup>2</sup> governor of Jalisco, Francisco Ramírez Acuña, announced beforehand: "We will deal with the detainees with a heavy hand." And so it was: while inside the summit meeting their excellencies rejected the

<sup>1</sup> From the slogan "Another World Is Possible" of the World Social Forum, the annual summit of the "anti-globalization" movement.

<sup>2</sup> National Action Party, the Catholic right-wing party of Mexican president Vicente Fox Quesada.

**For Workers Mobilization Against the Crackdown by the Bosses' Government!**



Rodrigo Abt/AP

**Scores of demonstrators were beaten and arrested by cops during protest outside Latin America/Europe summit in Guadalajara, May 28.**

proposal of Cuban foreign minister Felipe Pérez Roque to condemn the torture by soldiers of the occupation armies in Iraq, on the outside, police were carrying out frightening torture and abuse of the arrested protesters.

While all this was happening, the PAN mayor of the town of Tlalnepantla, an industrial suburb of Mexico City, has decreed a "curfew" in the working-class neighborhoods under which everyone has to "justify" their presence in the streets between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. to avoid being sent to the city lock-up. This is supposed to be a measure against "crime" and the wave of kidnappings in the ring of suburbs in the state of Mexico around the capital, in an effort by the mayor to portray

<sup>3</sup> Institutional Revolutionary Party, which governed Mexico under a one-party corporatist regime for seven decades until the election of Fox in 2000.

<sup>4</sup> One of the main clans in the PRI. Since the early 1980s, the party leadership has been roughly divided into *dinosaurios* (old-line party bosses, generally associated with "populist" economic policies and heavy-handed repression) and *tecnócratas* (the technocratic "modernizers" associated with "neo-liberal" free market measures and heavy-handed repression). The Atlacomulco Group based in the state of Mexico was headed by Carlos Hank González, accused by the U.S. of ties to drug trafficking.



himself as a "hardliner" by imposing police-state measures. And although the PRI's state governor, Arturo Montiel, a "dinosaur" of the Atlacomulco Group<sup>4</sup>, criticized the PAN mayor, he himself has used even worse measures against the residents of San Salvador Atenco<sup>5</sup>. Notorious for his campaign slogan, "human rights are for humans, not for rats," the *jefe* of the PRI in Mexico state is toying with introducing the death penalty for criminals.

At the UNAM, the administration continues to expel students who participated in the student strike four years ago. The same people who sent death threats to Pável before murdering him (and who identified themselves in e-mails with the ultra-rightist group, El Yunque<sup>6</sup>) have also harassed students and leftist collectives in the Faculty of Philosophy and Literature. The attacks are intensifying while bourgeois politicians of the PRI, the PAN and the PRD<sup>7</sup> hold talks with the heads of outfits like the Porra 3 de Marzo<sup>8</sup>. It is increasingly clear that the *porro* gangs are targeting leftist activists, such as at CCH-Sur and Prepa 8), with the obvious intent of undoing any student response against the drastic exclusionary measures in higher education.

Assassinations, mass repression, torture, imposing police-state measures: this is the bloody face of "democratic" capitalism in Mexico. It should not be forgotten that the present government of Vicente Fox was elected with the votes of the petty-bourgeois "civil society" fed up with seven decades of PRI one-party rule. Today is the 33rd anniversary of the 10 June 1971 Corpus Christi massacre. At that time, the paramilitary group Los Halcones (the Falcons), set up by the PRI regime in order to drown the leftist radicalization which was spreading through the public universities and later into sections of the workers movement, murdered dozens of students who were demonstrating in Mexico City. The *halconazo* (Falcon attack), the second chapter of the massacre of 2 October 1968<sup>9</sup>, was in turn the initial act of the "dirty war" in which the PRI governments fought leftist guerrilla insurrections in the countryside and cities.

Coming four years after the PRI's electoral defeat and the formation of the Fox government, it is clear that the Mexican

<sup>5</sup> San Salvador Atenco was where townspeople and peasants rose up in 2002 against plans to build a new airport for Mexico City. The state government responded by placing the town under siege.

<sup>6</sup> El Yunque, the anvil, an ultra-rightist Catholic nationalist organization based in the central Mexico state of Guanajuato, where Fox was governor before being elected president of Mexico.

<sup>7</sup> Party of the Democratic Revolution, a bourgeois-nationalist party combining former PRI leaders and ex-leftists.

<sup>8</sup> March 3 Gang, *porras* are bands of soccer fans. Under the PRI regime, and continuing today, the government used paid and armed thugs, known as *porros*, to terrorize leftists and maintain tenuous control in the universities.

<sup>9</sup> In the Tlatelolco Massacre of 2 October 1968, Mexican army and police forces slaughtered hundreds of students protesting against the government of Gustavo Díaz Ordaz. This past July, Díaz Ordaz' interior minister (later president) Luis Echeverría was indicted by a special prosecutor on charges of genocide for the 10 July 1971 killings. However, the charges were thrown out by the judge the same day.

bourgeoisie and its imperialist masters need an iron fist to keep their murderous rule afloat. From Cancún to Guadalajara, and passing through the UNAM and Tlalnepantla, today we are suffering from "democratic" beatings by police truncheons and torture in the name of "human rights."

Without the powerful apparatus of corporatist control with which the PRI regimented the population during the decades its rule lasted (vestiges of which have still been preserved in order to be ready for any eventuality), the PAN regime has no alternative but to resort to open repression to keep intact the rule of the bourgeoisie. Vicente Fox's promises to throw light onto the dark recesses of the "dirty war" can be seen today in their true dimensions. Those who seek to fight against the announced privatization of electrical energy, education and health care, as well as against the pension reforms, have been given a lesson: they will face police clubs and tear gas from the antiriot squads, and if that is insufficient, then there are always the old standbys of torture and "disappearances."

The trademark for these procedures doesn't belong to the PRI, but rather is the heritage of a class: the Mexican bourgeoisie and its imperialist overlords. In order to smash the broadside of the bosses what's needed is to mobilize the working class, the only force capable of confronting the capitalist state and the hired thugs of the employers. From Guadalajara to Mexico City, it is necessary that key sectors of the proletariat enter into action to put a stop to this wave of repression, which ultimately foreshadows the imposition of drastic anti-working-class economic measures.

### Tlalnepantla and Guadalajara: Mexico on the Road to a Police State

GUADALAJARA, May 28 – It's getting dark as the column of demonstrators advances. There is a feeling of threat everywhere. We are in the cradle of the Tecos, one of the most important fascist groups in the country, in territory that has been a stronghold of openly fascist movements such as the Sinarquistas<sup>10</sup> and *camisas doradas* (golden shirts). During the Cristero War of the 1920s, the state of Jalisco [of which Guadalajara is the capital] was the home of the Cristero hordes so beloved by Vicente Fox.

In a part of the city that has been turned into a virtual fortress, the "chiefs of state" are holding the Third Summit of the Governments of Latin America, the Caribbean and the European Union. The wary silence which prevails in the discussion halls of the Cabañas Hospice contrasts with the tumult in Vallarte Street. Following the contingents of the SME (Mexican Electrical Workers Union), the FAT (Authentic Workers Front) and Euzkadi rubber workers come the youth. Further on, provocateurs who arrive in shiny white vans (like those used by the city to transport the repressive forces) infiltrate the demonstration and begin to attack the "robocops" of the United Police (a jerry-built force

<sup>10</sup> The National Sinarquista Union was a fascist peasant-based movement which arose in the late 1930s in the Bajío region around Guanajuato in central Mexico; the *camisas doradas* ("golden shirts") were the Sinarquista paramilitary units, modeled on Mussolini's "Black Shirts" in Italy and Francoist "Blue Shirts" in Spain.



Rodrigo Abt/AP

### “Anti-globalization” demonstrators confront “robocops” in Guadalajara.

made up of the PFP and State Police).

After some skirmishes, one of the chiefs of the riot squads gives the order: “Charge!” Marching in close formation for protection behind their enormous shields, they brandish their truncheons and rhythmically clack their heels in an obviously threatening manner. Later, images of the repression go around the world: youth thrown to the ground surrounded by four or five cops kicking them in unison; bloodied faces accompanied by police in body armor; yellow clouds of tear gas that burn the skin. And then there is the sound of the sirens echoing across the city. No, they aren’t ambulances: they are Unified Police vans carrying out raids around town. The toll as reported by the bourgeois press: at least 20 injured, almost a hundred demonstrators jailed.

Later, the televised images of the brutal repression are followed by the hell for which there is no visual testimony: an interminable carousel begins of abuse and torture of the detainees. For at least two days, the 44 prisoners in the offices of the Jalisco State Judicial Police, located on Avenida Independencia, are systematically beaten. But that is not all: 48 hours later, it is reported that “they haven’t eaten or drunk liquids, some are showing signs of dehydration, they have not been allowed to get some sleep (anyone who dozes off is awakened by kicks), they have not exercised their right to name a lawyer (a court-appointed defender was imposed on everyone), and all of them, without exception, were required to sign under torture a statement incriminating them for the crimes of riot, causing injury and property damage” (article by Jaime Avilés in *La Jornada*, 31 May).

Many of the arrested were removed by force from the Red Cross hospital where they were being treated for injuries inflicted on them shortly before by the police. The student Liliana Galaviz has a skull injury, but even so she was subjected to the same treatment as the rest of the women comrades with whom she was detained: not only did she not receive medical attention, she was not given anything to eat. But then it gets worse: the women are stripped nude and they are “bathed” with cold

water in the presence of judicial police who constantly threaten to rape them. When the male prisoners ask for something to drink they are forced to drink dirty water from the toilets. This is followed by systematic beatings, threats and humiliations. In the streets of Guadalajara on Saturday and Sunday you had the feeling of being under a state of siege. The sales team of *El Internacionalista* was searched twice by municipal police and constantly required to present identification. Police harassment was ever-present.

As some of the prisoners were released, word spread of the practices that the PAN governor ordered for the detainees. The state attorney general justified the repression: “that’s what they came looking for”

(telephone interview in the news program of W Radio, 3 June). A few days later, a formal arrest warrant is filed for 44 of those detained. There has already been a protest in front of the Guadalajara state offices in the Federal District, in which the Grupo Internacionalista participated, demanding that the prisoners be freed, but that is not enough. It’s necessary to mobilize workers power in the capital and the industrial belt of Guadalajara. Money is also needed to pay bail for the prisoners. The central bank account to which donations are being sent is: Martha Cecilia García Juárez, account 1299949054, of the BBV-Bancomer bank (please send an e-mail notice to: [biblioteca@libertad.org.mx](mailto:biblioteca@libertad.org.mx)).

### No to Capitalist “Anti-Globalization,” Yes to Proletarian Internationalism!

Even though many want to lend the label “anti-capitalist” to the “another world” (anti-globalization) mobilizations, the fact is that these are based on the bourgeois program of class conciliation. The objective they are actually pursuing is the reformist utopia of a bunch of autarkically sealed national capitalisms. In Mexico what this amounts to is a return to the “golden age” of General Lázaro Cárdenas. In this way, the tremendous discontent among thousands of youth and workers who participate in the mobilizations is diverted, one way or another, into the channels of bourgeois politicking and utopian nationalism. The Mexican “experts” of the “another world” movement, such as Héctor de la Cueva, don’t hide their intentions: they want to bring about a change of “government” without touching the capitalist social structures. Clearly, this can only mean support to this or that capitalist politician (such as Cárdenas son or grandson<sup>11</sup>, López Obrador or whoever is

<sup>11</sup> PRD leader and three-time presidential candidate Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, who as a member of the PRI was governor of the state of Michoacán, is the son of General Lázaro Cárdenas, Mexico’s president from 1934 to 1940. Lázaro Cárdenas Batel, the current governor of Michoacán, is General Cárdenas’ grandson.

named as the bourgeois PRD's presidential candidate).

Although the political program of the "anti-globalizers" points to class-collaboration as its main component (and increasingly to anti-Chinese chauvinism, in Mexico as well) and explicitly promises to respect the capitalist framework (in which there will be "fair trade" and the sweatshops will give "decent" pay to the wage slaves who toil in them), it is obvious that the bourgeoisie wants to give a lesson to anyone who dares to question the prevailing system of exploitation, oppression and starvation. Those who dare to protest can expect the heavy hand and increasingly open imposition of police-state measures.

This is what the curfew decreed by the mayor of Tlalnepantla, Ulises Ramírez Núñez aims at. Beginning June 4, the PAN municipal president ordered a curfew under which several hundred people have been detained. Tlalnepantla is one of the most important industrial districts in the Valley of Mexico and clearly, the armored police transports cruise through the working-class neighborhoods seeking to create the feeling of a police state which the PAN rightists are so enamored of. That this is an anti-working-class measure couldn't be clearer.

On several occasions, the close ties between PAN governments at the city, state and federal level and extreme right organizations has been noted. And while it is certain that long-time members of anti-Communist and anti-Semitic outfits and apologists for fascism occupy important posts in the PAN administrations, the fact is that the repressive fury and the implementation of police-state measures can't be explained in a simplistic way by the presence of the Mexican ultra-rightists in the various government bodies. Social stability in Mexico has of vital concern to U.S. imperialism for the last century. As a result, the governments of its junior partners, the Mexican national bourgeoisie, have had to resort systematically to the most blatant repression against anyone who might become a danger. The party-state regime of the PRI-government, initially bonapartist and later semi-bonapartist, has only been slightly prettified by adding a thin veneer of bourgeois democracy.

Today the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie is carried out by attempting to apply methods of social control that are cheaper than the weighty corporatist apparatus of the past. Without daring to dismantle the "charro" organizations<sup>12</sup> which for decades served as straitjackets for the proletariat and peasantry in Mexico, the Fox regime has to show not only that it is capable of using the iron fist of repression, but also that it will bring it into play at the slightest opportunity. At the same time, the bourgeois PRD keeps offering the main dish on its

<sup>12</sup> After World War II, the Mexican government (urged on by the U.S. State Department) carried out a "red purge" of the unions (as well as peasant organizations). Thousands of workers were thrown out of their jobs and the unions were turned into direct instruments of the corporatist PRI-government for policing the workers. Union leaders linked to the Mexican Communist Party (PCM) and former PCM fellow-traveler Lombardo Toledano were replaced with government agents, the first being Jesús Díaz de León, known as *El Charro* (cowboy) because of his fondness for Mexican cowboy outfits, in the railroad union. Ever since, the PRI "unions" were derisively known as *charro* organizations by rebellious workers.

menu: a little more "carrot" to control social discontent, but ultimately (as demonstrated by the actions of Cárdenas and his successor Robles as heads of the Federal District government, who launched the capital police against UNAM strikers, neighborhood organizations and unions in struggle), enough "stick" to keep capitalist business in good running order.

Many today protest against the repression in Jalisco, the torture and murder of activists. They call for prompt clarification of the murder of Pável González, which has quite rightly provoked deep indignation. However, the petitions have been directed to the same bourgeois agencies charged with coordinating and carrying out the repression against those who are protesting. Thus, for example, the federal attorney general's office is being asked to identify and punish the murderers of Pável, although his family accuses the police itself of having killed him. Similarly, they are calling for impeachment of Jalisco governor Francisco Ramírez Acuña. But who would vote for this impeachment? The PRI? It should be obvious that the capitalist courts and the police agencies of the regime will not provide justice for the victims of repression.

The struggle against repression is closely tied to the fight against capitalism itself. The bosses and their parties (principally the PRI, PAN and PRD) have at most tactical differences when it comes to repression. But they are united on the fundamentals: defense of bourgeois property and the capitalist system of exploitation. To put a stop to this bosses' offensive requires the mobilization of the tremendous power of the industrial proletariat. Only by installing a workers and peasants government in this country through socialist revolution, extending it to the south and north into the belly of the imperialist beast, can we put an end, once and for all, to bourgeois terror and its white guards, both in and out of uniform. Carrying out a task of this scope requires the building of revolutionary workers parties as sections of the world party of socialist revolution, a reformed Fourth International. ■

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## U.S. Helped PRI Form Paramilitary Groups That Murdered Students

# The Corpus Christi Massacre

After the massacre of hundreds of students in the Plaza de las Tres Culturas in Tlatelolco [a district in downtown Mexico City] on 2 October 1968 and the systematic repression against the left and the workers movement, for three years the PRI was able to enjoy a "peace of the graveyard." On 10 June 1971, the first big student demonstration since 1968 took place. Mexico's new president, Luis Echeverría, ordered that the demonstration was to be broken up whatever the cost.

As it approached the Superior Normal School (ENA, Mexico's highest teacher training institute), the demonstration was set upon by a group of paramilitaries with athletic builds. Some were carrying firearms; most had kendo poles. At the same time, marksmen fired from the upper stories. Without warning, they began to attack. In the newspapers, the name of the group they belonged to was reported for the first time: *Los Halcones* (the Falcons). Soon the pavement was tinged with blood: at least 40 students killed were reported (some accounts at the time indicated up to 75 dead) and more than 300 wounded.

Thirty-three years after the *Corpus Christi Massacre*, documents are continuing to come out from the U.S. intelligence agencies where have been slowly declassified, as well as from the Mexican political police. Although the Echeverría government claimed over and over to have nothing to do with the Halcones, today there is documentary evidence which



Archivo Paco Ignacio Taibo II

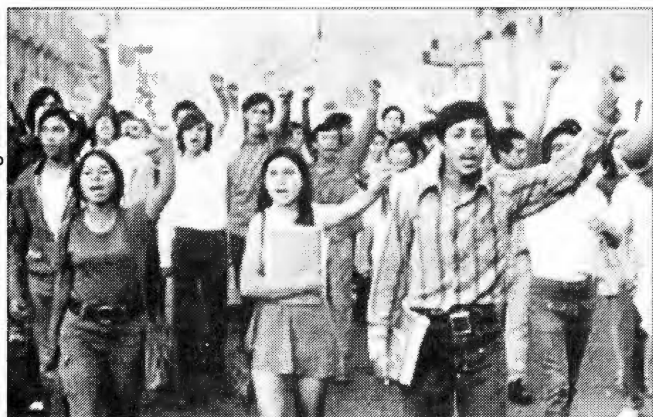
**Members of paramilitary gang called the Halcones (Falcons) formed by PRI government on the orders of President Luis Echeverría with aid of U.S. that murdered dozens of students on 10 June 1971 in the infamous "Corpus Christi massacre." On July 24, a Special Prosecutor for Political and Social Movements of the Past submitted an indictment of Echeverría for the crime of genocide. However, within hours a judge threw out the charges. Impunity still reigns in Fox's Mexico. The photos here are from the archive of celebrated Mexican writer Paco Ignacio Taibo II, who preserved them from destruction for decades.**

overwhelmingly proves what was said for years: that the PRI regime, in close collaboration with the U.S. State Department, formed paramilitary groups with the express purpose of destroying the leftist organizations which were formed in the turbulence of the 1968 student movement and the wave of youth radicalization following the Cuban Revolution. The formation of these paramilitary groups set the stage for the so-called "dirty war," by which the Mexican bourgeoisie, through its government, smashed the urban and rural guerrilla groups which had gained momentum at the time.

A document written barely a week after the massacre by Jack B. Kubisch, deputy chief of mission of the United States Embassy in Mexico, which was recently published by the National Security Archive (an autonomous organization specializing in digging up and "declassifying" U.S. government documents) in collaboration with the Mexican magazine *Proceso* gives a clear idea of the Mexican government's double-dealing and the assistance it received from Washington:

"It is well established that the Halcones are an officially financed, organized, trained and armed repressive group, the main purpose of which since its founding in September 1968 has been the control of leftist and anti-government students. Its existence and function were well-known to all top GOM [Government of Mexico] law-enforcement and political officials."

—J. Kubisch, secret telegram "US Training of Mexico Police



Archivo Paco Ignacio Taibo II

**Students marching down San Cosme street before the shooting began, 10 July 1971.**



as Related to Student Disturbances" (17 June 1971)

In her book, *Fuerte es el silencio* (Strong Is the Silence) (Ediciones Era, 1980), the writer Elena Poniatowska quotes the statements of Echeverría on this: "June 10 was an attack on the government, basically; anyone who doesn't understand that doesn't understand what is happening in Mexico. We were struggling precisely for respect of university autonomy what that occurred." Despite the crude cover-up operation, the declassified documents make it perfectly clear that far from being a "victim" of paramilitary intervention, the Echeverría government ordered the massacre. Shortly afterwards, the U.S. State Department Bureau of Intelligence and Research prepared a report which determined the following:

"Who are the *Halcones*? The government has been asserting that there is no connection between the *Halcones* and any government agency and that they are simply a manifestation of right-wing dissent and equally as repugnant as the leftist student 'struggle groups.' A clandestine report, however, indicates that the *Halcones* membership is recruited from university age students who are sons of people friendly with PRI officials enjoying the personal confidence of President Echeverría. The recruits are given a free university education plus some pay and the assurance of a bright future in the PRI. They are trained by army personnel and have been supplied with close to \$200,000 worth of weapons and equipment, including 100 M-1 carbines."

The documents can be found at the following Internet address: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB91/>

Today, the regime in Mexico is not that of the calcified PRI. Nevertheless, the bloody face of capitalism keeps poking out in the repression unleashed by the PAN, PRD and PRI governments who control the country. What is needed is a socialist revolution which does away with this insufferable scourge forever. ■

## American Gestapo...

*continued from page 7*

The dramatic increase in repressive powers does not mean that the United States is presently on the verge of a coup, nor is a full-fledged police state imminent. But the U.S. is moving in the direction of an increasingly bonapartist "strong state." The military is aware of this. Significantly, the winner of the 1992 "Strategic Essay Competition" sponsored by the Joint Chiefs of Staff was an essay by Colonel Charles Dunlap, then studying at the National War College, titled "The Origins of the American Military Coup of 2012." Dunlap's paper decries the fictional coup, but his account presents this as a logical result of developments already under way.

As Leon Trotsky wrote in his "A Program for Action for France" (June 1934), recognizing the existence of a bonapartist danger does not at all suggest a reformist, bourgeois-democratic program. On the contrary, such a program cannot defeat the threat. Trotsky insisted:

"The bourgeoisie is trying to concentrate the executive power in the hands of a few men who impose their decisions by means of an administrative, military and police apparatus, which is brutal, uncontrolled, costly.

"The bourgeois plan of the 'authoritative state,' directed against the exploited, must be ruthlessly attacked by the toiling masses.

"Only the laboring masses, taking their future into their own hands, in one powerful revolutionary thrust, can energetically and with iron will create the necessary great power to save society from the capitalist oligarchy that corrupts it and leads it to ruin....

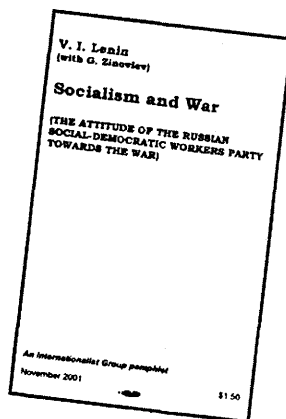
"The task is to replace the capitalist state, which functions for the profit of the big exploiters, by the workers' and peasants' proletarian state. The task is to establish in this country the rule of the working people. To all we declare that it is not a matter of secondary 'modification,' but rather that the domination of the small minority of the bourgeois class must be replaced by the leadership and power of the immense majority of the laboring people."

To fight against the increasing militarization of the U.S. and other capitalist countries around the world, what is required is a fight against the capitalist system and the imperialist wars that are behind the drive toward police-state conditions. Workers must be prepared to defend their strike picket lines against scabs and official repression, pointing to the formation of workers militias. Unions must use their muscle to defeat strikebreaking "slave labor" laws like Taft-Hartley. The tremendous potential power of the labor movement must be mobilized against the imperialist war, through actions such as "hot-cargoing" (refusing to handle) military cargo and striking against the occupation of Iraq. Above all, this requires a fight to oust the present pro-capitalist misleaders who have kept workers, blacks and other minorities chained to the capitalist parties who together are preparing the new crackdown. To lead this struggle a revolutionary vanguard party of the proletariat must be built as part of a reformed Fourth International. ■

### Lenin on Imperialist War

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## Post-Soviet ICL...

*continued from page 23*

police from the union), continued association with the LQB's union work "presents unacceptable risks to the vanguard." At a 16 June 1996 meeting with the LQB, ICL envoys argued that the Brazilian group "cannot, at this time, stand up to this whole offensive of bourgeois reaction, which is trying to destroy the union and which is trying to wait for the best moment to destroy our organization in Brazil." Saying that the bourgeois state and pro-cop elements had set out a bucket of boiling water, the ICL envoys said: "we are telling you: let's pull our hands out of that boiling water and dedicate our attention to building a revolutionary party." When the Brazilian comrades refused to accept this shameful course, the ICL envoys handed them a message breaking fraternal relations with the LQB.

The very next day, a union meeting was held to disaffiliate the police from the municipal workers union. Pro-cop elements obtained a court order to dissolve the meeting and brought in police to shut it down. The central charge against union leader and LQB member Geraldo Ribeiro was precisely that the purpose of the meeting was to exclude the police from the union. Ribeiro was later removed as president by the capitalist courts but still a union assembly voted to disaffiliate the police. In all, the LQB has been the object of no less than *nine* court cases as a result of its courageous stand, including demands to seize its leaflets, shut its offices and get a list of its members. Even though these comrades, uniquely in Latin America, fought tenaciously to remove the police from the unions – something the SL calls for in the pages of *WV* but has *never* fought for in several unions where it has supporters – and even though the ICL abandoned them when the going got tough, *WV* cynically denounces the LQB as "trade-union opportunists"! Rather than defending the Trotskyist workers, who have won support of unions from the U.S. to El Salvador and South Africa, against repression by a popular-front city government, the ICL actively tried to sabotage their defense, smearing as a "cynical fraud," labeling them "dangerous hustlers" and spreading lies about them from the friends of the police. This includes the bogus charge that the LQB "dragged the union into the bourgeois courts" when *the exact opposite is the case* – LQB comrades were the elected union leaders, and they were dragged into court by the pro-cop elements whose lies have been broadcast internationally by the ICL.

Thus the ICL picked up themes and accusations from the bourgeoisie, specifically from an anti-communist witch hunt instigated by Fourth Reich Social Democrats in Germany and anti-Trotskyist popular-front repression in Brazil, and used them to carry out a purge of the leadership and to cut off fraternal comrades – who, unlike the ICL, really were at risk – to get rid of those who would not buckle under pressure. The ICL's *desertion* under fire from the class battle in Brazil was a gross *betrayal*. Later, a second "cleansing" was necessary in the ICL's Mexican group to expel youth cadres who didn't buy the leadership's fabrications. A little over a year later, the Permanent Revolution Faction in the French section got the chop, first running afoul of the ICL leadership for opposing cancella-

tion of the "Iskra perspective" toward North Africa, and then objecting to the failure to put out propaganda for a truckers' strike against the popular-front government. The leadership's tactics were so crude, blatantly violating their own statutes, and their explanations were such unbelievable fabrications, that the SL/U.S. had to go around "re-registering" its sympathizers. Members in the West Coast Bay Area who didn't agree "100 percent" with the expulsions were told to get out. And in Mexico, where members of the GEM greeted (shaking hands and even embracing!) members of the dread IG, the membership was required to stand up and chant three times, "Our international, love it or leave it!" (see "Crisis in the ICL," in *The Internationalist* No. 5, April-May 1998).

It is noteworthy that in carrying out the purge of long-time central cadres, the SL not only had to violate its own statutes, it also felt obliged to renounce part of its own history. Thus over Brazil, it not only broke relations with the LQB and fled from the struggle over ousting the cops from the union at the key point in the struggle, in *WV* No. 648 (5 July 1996) it repudiated *ex post facto* the declaration of fraternal relations between the ICL and Luta Metalúrgica, going so far as to claim that, "Indicative of the flawed character of the Declaration of Fraternal Relations was its failure to even mention *permanent revolution*." This is demonstrably false, as any serious reader can see for themselves by consulting the declaration in *Spartacist* No. 52 (Autumn 1995). On Germany, the same issue of *WV* also renounced long after the fact the SpAD's successful defense of an immigrant workers hostel on 30 January 1993, the 60th anniversary of Hitler's seizure of power, claiming it was "an entirely tokenistic defense," in which "no damage was done to the fascists and out of which no youth was recruited." Each of these statements is a flat lie, as spelled in the article by Marjorie Stamberg, "The Truth About the 1993 Berlin Hostel Defense" (in *From a Drift...*, July 1996).

### Wading Ever Deeper into the Opportunist Swamp

In our July 1996 bulletin, we wrote:

"While over the years many centrist pseudo-Trotskyists have falsely accused the SL of being 'ultraleft sectarians,' what is happening now is the opposite: the developing tendency to abstentionism is a *rightist* policy that means betraying the ICL's own historic program and liquidating the party as an active factor in the class struggle."

The fact that the ICL has been evolving *to the right* has been amply borne out by subsequent developments. Following the 11 September 2001 attacks, the SL was practically frothing at the mouth in accusing the IG of pandering to anti-Americanism, sneering at "the IG's r-r-revolutionary phrasemongering" (*WV* No. 768) and our "oh-so-revolutionary calls for the defeat of U.S. imperialism" (*WV* No. 795), not to mention our "oh-so-militant sloganeering" (*WV* No. 797) for insisting on calling for U.S. longshoremen to "hot-cargo" war cargo and on Bay Area labor to strike against the Taft-Hartley "slave labor" injunction imposed on the ILWU dock union, while the SL dropped these demands just when they were posed pointblank on the docks.

We noted that that back in 1971, the Spartacist League called for the ILWU to strike against Taft-Hartley, adding: "That was then, this is now, we can already hear the SL say." The SL's response? "OK, we'll say it: That was then, this is now." Isn't that just oh-so-c-c-centrist of them?

In our 1996 bulletin, we also noted that, "In fact, over the course of the recent fights, whether for simple factional animus or reflecting a deeper shift in the party, the ICL has now not only revised its own Leninist organizational norms and parts of its recent history, it has begun to adopt revisionist positions at the formal programmatic level." The SL/ICL's revisionism quickly mushroomed, as we have noted, directly reflecting the pressure of the bourgeoisie on the left. After their first embarrassing turnaround over "semi-feudalism" in Mexico, they argued that this was just an "analytical" difference. Did Stalinists lead the counterrevolution? Was there a popular front in Mexico, or in the U.S. "antiwar" movement? Such "analytical" differences have profound political and programmatic repercussions for anyone who takes them seriously. Stalin and Bukharin, after all, began by denouncing Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution and his analysis of the class forces in the Russian Revolution, but soon they ended up in the arms of Chiang Kai-shek.

What is true is that these initial revisions were only a foretaste of what was to come. We argued then that the ICL was capitulating before the bourgeoisie, and in particular "their own" imperialist bourgeoisie. This was already made evident at the time of war moves against Iraq by the Clinton administration in February 1997. The IG put out a leaflet, "Defend Iraq Against U.S. Imperialist Attack!" (reprinted in *The Internationalist* No. 5) that called for workers action against the war, and appended a resolution by the LQB's Class Struggle Caucus (CLC) in Brazil calling on Argentine workers to carry out a "labor boycott against the scandalous material support by the Menem government to imperialist aggression," as well as urging "our brothers and sisters, the workers of the United States, to use their class power against imperialist aggression." While throwing up a fake-left smokescreen over calling Menem's action scandalous, it turned out the SL did *not* call for "hot-cargoing" of military goods or any workers action against the U.S.' Iraq attack. SL spokesmen even argued that it would have been wrong to call early on for labor strikes against the Vietnam War in 1965, because it would have had little "resonance" among the workers (see "SL Rejects Calls for Labor Strikes Against Imperialist War Moves," *The Internationalist* No. 5).

This wasn't just about far-off Brazil. Five years later, on the eve of the war on Iraq by the Bush administration, the SL scandalously dropped its call on West Coast longshoremen to boycott war materiel, not because of lack of "resonance" among the workers, but because they feared the government's response. The government's response came when an antiwar picket was held on 7 April 2003 at the Port of Oakland outside the gates of shipping and stevedoring companies involved in the U.S. invasion of Iraq: police fired on the crowd, seriously wounding several with so-called "less-than-lethal" munitions (see "Oakland Cops Shoot at Longshore Workers and Antiwar Protesters," *The Internationalist* No. 16, May-June 2003). When

train drivers in Scotland refused to move an ammunition train to a NATO base a couple of months earlier, and when Italian railroad workers joined with pacifists in blocking rail shipments of tanks and heavy weapons bound for Iraq, the ICL applauded their actions after the fact. But *nowhere* did it call for or try to spark workers action against the war. The Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International, in contrast, repeatedly intervened among Bay Area dock workers calling to "hot cargo" war shipments and organized a demonstration of largely immigrant workers at the Rotterdam docks calling on port and rail unions to refuse to move NATO shipments.

So when the SL deepens its post-9/11 "flinch" before the imperialist bourgeoisie and justifies this by pointing to its slogan for "class struggle at home," this does *not* mean calling for workers action against the war. Rather, it's just the "same old, same old," keep on truckin', keep up the fight. Long-time Spartacist cadre know how sharply counterposed this is to the policy of the SL during the Vietnam War or even the 1990-91 Persian Gulf War. But this dispute goes back much further. During World War I, Lenin insisted in his 1915 pamphlet *Socialism and War* (reissued by the Internationalist Group) that "A revolutionary class cannot but wish for the defeat of its government in a reactionary war, and cannot fail to see that the latter's military reverses must facilitate its overthrow." The Transitional Program of the Fourth International declared: "The defeat of *every* imperialist government in the struggle with the workers' state or with a colonial country is the lesser evil."

Rosa Luxemburg, leader of the German Spartakus Group, responded to the call for *Burgfrieden* ("peace in the castle") by the majority Social Democrats by calling for the continuation of class struggle during the war. "The socialist proletariat cannot give up either class struggle or international solidarity during peace or during war without committing suicide," she wrote, in theses published together with her 1915 pamphlet, *The Crisis of Social Democracy*, written under the pseudonym Junius. Lenin, in his article on "The Junius Pamphlet" (July 1916), argued that calling for the continuation of class struggle was "*too general, and therefore inadequate*" in the context of the imperialist war. "Civil war against the bourgeoisie is *also* a form of class struggle, and only this form of class struggle would have saved Europe...." Today the IG/LFI counterposes to bourgeois pacifism the revolutionary policy: "Defeat U.S. Imperialism! Defend Iraq! For Class War Against the Imperialist War!" (*The Internationalist* No. 15, January-February 2003). The SL/ICL, in contrast, joins with the pacifists and reformist leftists in calling for "U.S. Troops Out of Iraq Now!" and not for defeat of U.S. imperialism. Their call is directed at the bourgeoisie, not a program for proletarian struggle against imperialist war, and on a demand which bourgeois elements could support.

In our leaflet distributed at a May 2003 debate between the Spartacist League and the neo-Shachtmanite League for the Revolutionary Party, "Revolutionaries and the Test of War" (reprinted in *The Internationalist* No. 16, May-June 2003), we called attention to: "Spectre of Shachtman as SL/LRP Centrists Debate." We noted that in refusing to call forthrightly for defeat of U.S. imperialism – instead weaseling around the is-



sue, occasionally muttering a half-phrase *sotto voce*, buried somewhere in the middle of a lengthy turgid article, about how a defeat might be nice – the SL had taken over arguments against the Leninist position from Shachtman's longtime sidekick, Hal Draper. In a three-part article on "The Myth of Lenin's Defeatism" published in the Shachtmanite journal, *New Internationalist*, between September 1953 and February 1954, Draper argued that Lenin's call for defeatism was a sometime thing, a conjunctural slogan not applicable today. In this vein, an SL spokesman intoned at a January 2003 forum that revolutionary defeatism toward the imperialists and revolutionary defensism of semi-colonial countries under imperialist attack "are generalities that help to guide Marxists, but they are not dogmas." Our leaflet also noted how a number of the SL's new-found positions were lifted from Draper and Shachtman, including its opposition to calling for independence for Puerto Rico.

In the veritable cornucopia of centrist revisions that the "post-Soviet" SL/ICL has produced since 1995, there are quite a few that we haven't mentioned. For example, their declaration that the parties of Austrian fascist Jörg Haider and French fascist Jean-Marie Le Pen are not fascist but purely "electoral machines," positions that they partially backtracked from after we pointed to the skinhead gangs and anti-immigrant attacks unleashed by Haider's "Freedom Party" and the heavily armed private army of strikebreaking thugs linked to Le Pen's "National Front" (see "How ICL Turns French Fascists Into Ballot-Box Rightists," in *The Internationalist* No. 13, May-June 2002). Then there is the ICL's dropping of the slogan for an Arab-Hebrew workers state in Palestine, and its "laughing" dismissal of our comment that if the Palestinians drove the fascistic ultra-Zionist settlers from the Occupied Territories, this could even win considerable support from Hebrew-speaking working people (*WV* No. 783, 14 June 2002).

SLers also laughed at our headline "Bush's Blitzkrieg Runs into Iraqi Resistance" (*Internationalist* special issue, 28 March 2003), finding the idea that this semi-colonial country could resist the overwhelming military power of the Pentagon absurd. "Where's your Iraqi resistance now?" they snickered in May and June of last year, but their dismissive chortling soon stuck in their throats. Now, since Iraqi resistance to the colonial occupation can hardly be denied, they dismiss it all as nothing but a bunch of Islamic fundamentalists and "discredited" nationalists, who don't count since Iraq is not a nation according to the ICL's ethnic criteria. A reader of *Workers Vanguard* would never guess that Iraq has a working class with at least five ostensibly communist parties.

And let's not forget the SL's joining the imperialist hue and cry over Cuba's execution of several counterrevolutionary hijackers, who in the middle of the U.S. invasion of Iraq sought to provoke a wave of hysterical "rafters" (*balseros*) heading out into the Caribbean in the hopes that the Coast Guard would rescue them. For the SL/ICL, this was supposedly not a measure of military defense as Cuba is not under military attack! Tell that to the Cuban people who have endured 44 years of U.S. economic strangulation and invasion. The ICL's line had to be rammed down the throat of its Mexican section, which initially supported

the executions of these counterrevolutionaries.

There are also a number of issues on which the ICL made internal "rectifications" at its conference that are only mentioned gingerly, or not at all, in the *Spartacist* account. We have commented before that the latter-day ICL has an uncanny knack for accusing others of sins it is itself guilty of. They may have a shaky grasp of the world, but they do know themselves, at least to the extent that they project their own failings onto others. Thus they have repeatedly and falsely accused the IG of having pursuing opportunist "get-rich-quick" schemes, yet the SL leadership thought that after the labor/black mobilization against KKKers in NYC initiated by the Partisan Defense Committee there would be a "qualitative leap in proletarian class consciousness" and a "unique opportunity for mass recruitment of young black workers." In the ICL conference document, the recruitment drive was described as "demented," which was replaced by "disorienting" in the *Spartacist* account. No doubt it was, both.

The *Spartacist* article refers to "a pattern of breaches of our Leninist organizational norms by central cadre in the I.S." In the ICL conference document, this is put more bluntly. The respective regimes of Nelson (West Coast) and Parks (I.S. center in New York) are accused of "bullying" any opposition to their line, and characterized as "bureaucratism." Nelson is lambasted, among other things, for having accused Robertson of conciliating Norden!

There is no mention in the *Spartacist* article of the April 1999 West Coast-wide ten-hour port shutdown demanding freedom for black radical death row prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, which the SL dismissed at the time. Internally, it is now admitted that their polemics against the IG over the work stoppage were "unconvincing." That is to say, they couldn't even convince their own members, who had trouble arguing it was just a glorified lunch break, even though this was the first sizeable working-class action in the U.S. in defense of Mumia. This is something the SL had called for in its press for years but never pushed for in the unions where it has supporters. Recent accounts in *WV* have, however, judiciously changed their tone, saying the ILWU walk-out was a potential beginning for the kind of action that is needed. Of course, nowhere has the ICL seen fit to even mention the very first work stoppage anywhere demanding freedom for Jamal, carried out by the teachers union throughout the state of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil at the initiative of our comrades of the LQB on 23 April 1999, the day before the West Coast port shutdown and in coordination with it.

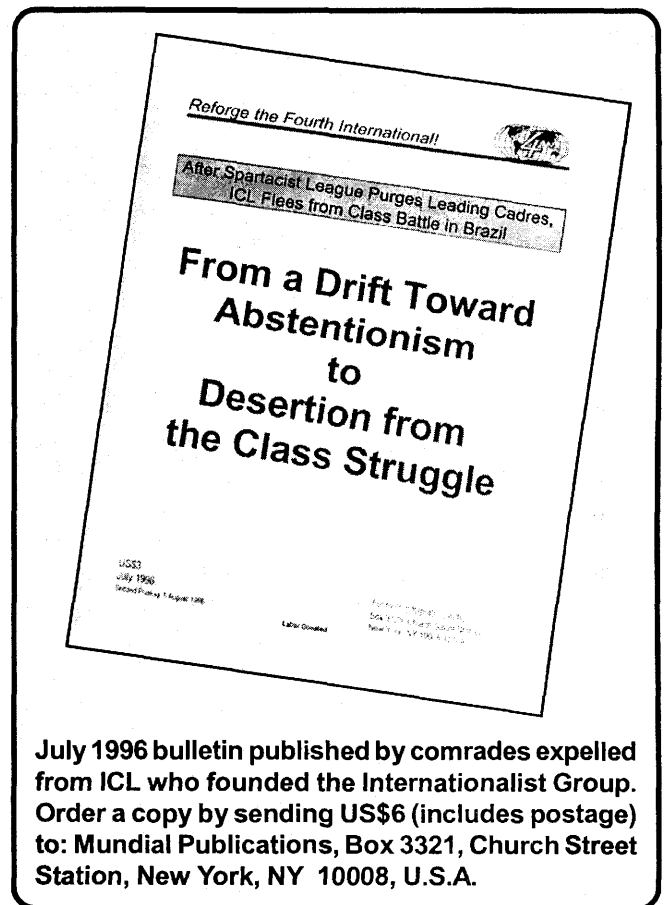
From the outset, we said that the ICL was turning toward abstract propagandism and abstention from the class struggle. The *Spartacist* account of its fourth conference admits to having had an "abstentionist" position over the Seattle anti-globalization protests – indeed, absurdly so, which we and others pointed out at the time. But this can't hold a candle to their dysfunctional Mexican group. During the ten-month-long strike at the National University (UNAM), the Grupo Espartaquista de México occasionally dropped by strike general committee meetings to read a pronouncement and left. (In the first few days they were active, but then were criticized from New York for mindless activism and sank into passivity.) Even though this struggle involved tens of

thousands of students occupying the campus and up to 100,000 participating in demos, the GEM was a cipher. Our comrades of the Grupo Internacionalista, in contrast, actively sought to link the student strike with workers action and were able to spark the formation of worker-student defense guards. For a number of weeks beginning in July 1999, several hundred electrical and university workers joined strikers in round-the-clock guards in case of an attack by the police or army.

After our several denunciations, the GEM's passivity was finally noticed in New York. This produced the following delicious scene: on the last night of the strike, as hundreds of students were in the Che Guevara auditorium on the UNAM campus, aware that the federal police were about to invade, the GEM entirely missed the final act of the strike because they were reportedly in their office listening to tapes from the I.S. taking them to task for their passivity! In fact, the ICL was the only left tendency in Mexico that did not have a single member arrested – quite a feat of “pulling their hands out of the boiling water” of the class struggle!

While the claim of a qualitative regression in workers' consciousness is qualitatively overstated, it is largely true of the petty-bourgeois left, which is who the ICL is really interested in. And what's interesting is the extent to which the SL has shifted its line to the right in order to get a hearing in these sectors. For quite a while the SL has had an orientation to the International Socialist Organization, a purely social-democratic organization which specializes in appealing to liberals. (“Should We Invade Iraq?” queried a flyer for an 2002 ISO meeting at Hunter College in New York. Hmm.) Lately, the ICL has gone off on a new tack, giving “critical support” to candidates from a host of different fake-Trotskyist outfits, including the Socialist Workers Party in the U.S., Lutte Ouvrière and the affiliates of Peter Taaffe's Committee for a Workers International in France (Gauche Révolutionnaire) and Germany (SAV). There is no basis for authentic Trotskyists to give support to any of these candidates, who are different varieties of reformist social democrats in Trotskyoid garb.

Earlier, in 1996, the Spartacist League/Britain gave critical support to Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party just after it broke from “New Labour.” This was a correct tactic, for it posed the possibility of broader splits by the working-class base of the Labour Party, repudiating the Blair leadership that would like to transform it into a purely bourgeois party on the lines of the U.S. Democrats. In contrast, the LO, GR and SAV candidacies were hardly to the left of other ostensible socialists running in the election, and the ICL's “critical support” gambit is an opportunist maneuver. Certainly, it wouldn't have called for votes to any of these outfits in the previous three decades. This is the ICL's way of maintaining the fiction of a revolutionary program while getting in on the electoralist action through the back door. But most striking is the fact that *all of these outfits support police strikes and police unions*. Yet when the authentic Trotskyists of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil, section of the League for the Fourth International, carry out a campaign to remove the cops from the unions and uniquely on the Latin American left refuse to support cop strikes, warning that the police are the



**July 1996 bulletin published by comrades expelled from ICL who founded the Internationalist Group. Order a copy by sending US\$6 (includes postage) to: Mundial Publications, Box 3321, Church Street Station, New York, NY 10008, U.S.A.**

armed fist of the bourgeoisie, when they are hauled into court by a popular-front government and repeatedly victimized by the bourgeois justice system for this, the ICL calls them “dangerous hustlers” and tries to sabotage their defense!

For the latter-day SL/ICL, the last line of defense, when all else fails, is to engage in dirty smears, slanders, cheap insults and sinister baiting, frequently personal. Already inside the SL, as the fights came to a head, Norden was accused of “cop-baiting” the ICL for objecting to the International Secretary taking as good coin and circulating slanders about the LQB that came from the main pro-police element in Brazil. Since then, from the very first article in the “new *WV*” on the Internationalist Group, they have regularly included sinister charges that the IG is “for sale,” would “be ready to serve as braintrusters for some pretty unsavory types,” etc. This reached a new low in 2002 after we wrote a letter to *WV* objecting to a revolting article they published retailing lies and stereotypes of immigrant workers from the bosses. This “reflects the outlook of labor aristocrats, who accuse immigrants of undermining the pay and conditions of U.S.-born workers,” we wrote. *WV*'s response was to call our letter a “provocation” and to label the author, comrade Abram Negrete, a “strutting demagogue and provocateur.” This is far worse than their usual slimy *ad hominem* attack; baseless accusations of being an *agent provocateur* – i.e., of being an agent of the class enemy who provokes violence – are impermissible in the workers movement, and the *WV* attack brought a sharp rebuke from Trotsky's

grandson, Esteban Volkov. As we wrote:

“ ‘Provocateur’-baiting, cop-baiting – these are the filthy techniques of opportunists who want to hide their capitulation to the bourgeoisie by character assassination of those who uphold revolutionary principle. *Any Trotskyist will immediately recognize the technique, for ‘provocateur’ is exactly the accusation that was leveled at Trotsky and his followers in the 1930s by Stalin and the Stalinists.*” –Poisonous ‘Provocateur’ Baiting from the SL,” in *The Internationalist* No. 16, May-June 2003

### Leninist Party vs. the Law of Zigzags

Beyond the ICL’s smears, falsifications and cover-ups, underlying its wholesale revisions of key Trotskyist positions, at bottom the ICL has broken from Leninism over the nature of the revolutionary party and its relation to the working class. For eight years the SL/ICL proclaimed that with only a handful of members, “we were the revolutionary leadership” in East Germany, and while it now says it would be “better” to formulate it differently, the method remains. The IG/LFI, on the other hand, argues, as we wrote in our July 1996 bulletin: “The revolutionary vanguard must *become the revolutionary leadership of the class by defeating the present misleaders in struggle.* You can’t simply proclaim this and be done with it.” Or as Lenin put it in *What Is To Be Done?* (1902), “it is not enough to call ourselves the ‘vanguard,’ the advanced contingent; we must act in such a way that *all* the other contingents recognize and are obliged to admit that we are marching in the vanguard.” For Leninists, while insisting that revolutionary consciousness comes from outside the purely economic struggle, the vanguard party must seek to win the most politically advanced sectors of the class; for the latter-day Spartacist tendency, however, the party stands outside the class altogether, and can intervene in its struggles, or not, as suits it. Having long called for building “fighting propaganda groups,” under the blows of bourgeois reaction it now builds “flinching propaganda groups” engaged in abstract propagandism.

Rather than seeing a dialectical relationship between the party and the class, the ICL proceeds in quasi-religious fashion, spreading the glad tidings that the lord has come, the revolutionary leadership is here. Admitting that it dropped the call on ILWU longshoremen to “hot-cargo” war materiel, didn’t call to vote down a sellout ILWU contract and didn’t call for a strike in NYC transit until after the union tops authorized it, *Workers Vanguard* wrote: “That’s right. Our business is not phony agitation but fighting to arm the workers with a political program from which class-struggle tactics and strategy derive” (“IG on ILWU and NYC Transit: Worthless Pilots in Stormy Weather,” *WV*No. 797, 14 February 2003). In a number of articles, the SL similarly argued that “through the instrumentality of a revolutionary party that patiently educates the working class in the understanding not only of its social power but of its historic interests, the workers will become conscious of themselves as a class fighting for itself and all the oppressed” (*WV*No. 801, 11 April 2003).

As comrade Norden remarked, speaking for the Internationalist Group in the SL-LRP debate, “On the Leninist party, they [the SL] revised the concept of the Leninist party, talking end-

lessly about patiently explaining, and not about organizing the working class in struggle. That is Luxemburgism, not Leninism” (see “The Latter-Day Spartacist League: Creeping Social Patriotism,” in *The Internationalist* No. 17, October-November 2003). Lenin argued for a centralized party of the proletarian vanguard, a party of professional revolutionaries integrating declassed intellectuals and worker-revolutionaries who can “turn a spontaneous demonstration into a political one, broaden its political character, etc.,” who are “capable of lending energy, stability and continuity to the political struggle.” Such a party would fight against opportunism, and spontaneism, for “the *spontaneous* development of the labor movement leads to its becoming subordinated to bourgeois ideology,” producing at most “trade-union consciousness.” In contrast, the vanguard party brings to the workers revolutionary consciousness based on the interrelations between all classes, the history of past struggles and the philosophical, historical and economic knowledge. This conception, elaborated in *What Is To Be Done?* and developed by the struggle of the Bolsheviks is a hallmark of Leninism.

The Spartacist League and International Communist League today have broken from revolutionary Trotskyism, whose banners they upheld for several decades. Their erratic pattern is characteristic of a tendency adrift, that has lost its Marxist moorings. The fact that the ICL today engages in some self-criticism is not necessarily revolutionary: Mao-Stalinists used to do this so often that it became ritualized, and jaded Maoists referred to “crit and self-crit” sessions. And let’s not forget Stalin’s unforgettable 1930 article, “Dizzy with Success,” about the mistakes of “some comrades.” To be sure, being a Marxist is no guarantee against making mistakes. Moreover, Lenin and Trotsky emphasized that Marxist materialism arrives at knowledge through a process of successive approximations. But the SL/ICL’s revisions and re-revisions, its half-hearted “corrections” over the question of Stalinism and the revolutionary leadership are not anything like successive approximation. These are wild oscillations, going back and forth on the same issue, abandoning a correct position only to later “correct” the incorrect verdict in a chaotic process that deepens confusion and cynicism rather than leading to greater understanding.

Supporters of the SL/ICL should ask themselves how it could be that for eight years they could argue a position on the central question – for Trotskyists and for the working class as a whole – of the nature of Stalinism and counterrevolution, and similarly on the vital issue – for Leninists and all class-conscious workers – of the relationship of the party and class; how for four of those years they waffled on those same “formulations”; and then suddenly one day it is decided that this was plain wrong – yet the ICL pretends it was right anyway against those who defended the positions it now claims to uphold! The ICL’s earlier assertions, writes *Spartacist*, “contained an important kernel of truth against Norden.” And what might that kernel be? Against our assertion that the parasitic Stalinist bureaucracy prepared the way for, opened the door for, sold out to, but didn’t *lead* the counterrevolution, which only the bourgeoisie and its direct agents could do? Against our statement that the ICL sought to become the leadership of



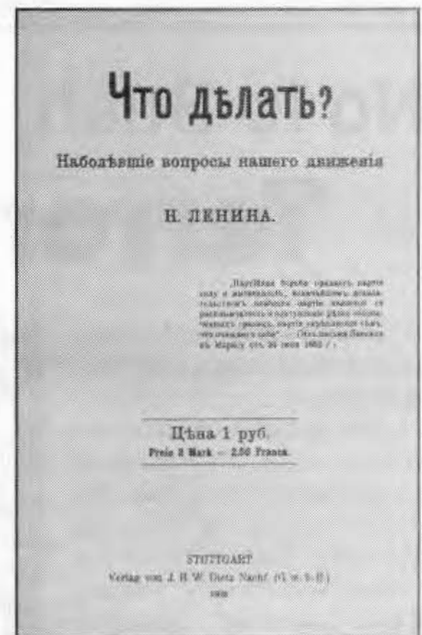


Lenin and Trotsky in 1920. In *What Is To Be Done?* (front cover at right), Lenin insisted: “It is not enough to call ourselves the ‘vanguard,’ the advanced contingent; we must act in such a way that all the other contingents recognize and are obliged to admit that we are marching in the vanguard.”

the working class, but time was too short? *Spartacist* argues that its assertions were “raised appropriately, albeit in exaggerated form, in the struggle against Norden’s liquidationism,” but that *later* they became a “sectarian formula ripped out of any context” and a “one-sided and incorrect formulation” that “sterilized” political struggle in Germany.

These were just “polemical excesses in the heat of battle,” don’t you see. Clearly, in the overriding interests of self-preservation, when the organization seemed on the verge of ripping itself apart, clearer heads decided it was better to be done with a line they had wielded as a factional hammer but which was indefensible for ostensible Trotskyists. This brings to mind a letter from Jim Robertson (7 June 1996) to the SL/ICL central office in which he cautions against “the false syllogism that, if you expel miscreants and that is a good thing and it is bureaucratic, then being bureaucratic is good.” The argument is essentially that “in the heat of battle” anything goes – false political positions, bureaucratic expulsions – but don’t make a virtue of it. One problem with this cynical reasoning is that it ultimately rebounds against the authors. In this case, “dogmatic insistence” on these wrong positions “in debates in and with our German section damaged our work, and served to foreclose critical evaluation of our 1989-90 intervention,” *dixit Spartacist*, in addition to laying the ground for a “false fight” in the international leadership itself. So the ICL pulls back, but the “law of zigzags remains in force,” as Trotsky remarked about Stalin’s deceptive “left turn” in 1928. If the law of gravity determines, shall we say, that what goes up must come down, this law holds that for centrists, a lurch to the left will, sooner rather than later, be followed by another, deeper, lurch to the right. Count on it.

As the ICL zigzags on its descending curve, its central revisions are those which ascribe the present “period of defeat” to the backward consciousness of the working class, a line which serves as the “theoretical” underpinning for their policy of abstention, retreat and even flight from the class struggle. In case after case, as we have shown, the ICL’s aban-



donment of long-held positions was a direct capitulation to pressure from the bourgeoisie, most egregiously following the 11 September 2001 attacks which led it to abandon the Leninist policy of revolutionary defeatism toward imperialist war. In his “Declaration to the Sixth Comintern Congress” (July 1928), Trotsky warned against “so-called Leninists who deceive the party, try to use diplomacy on the class struggle, play hide-and-seek with history, pretend to admit their errors while secretly claiming to have been right.”

As Trotsky wrote against Shachtman, the question is posed: “Will objective historical necessity in the long run cut a path for itself in the consciousness of the vanguard of the working class; that is, in the process of this war and those profound shocks which it must engender, will a genuine revolutionary leadership be formed capable of leading the proletariat to the conquest of power?”

“The Fourth International has replied in the affirmative to this question, not only through the text of its program, but also through the very fact of its existence. All the various types of disillusioned and frightened representatives of pseudo-Marxism proceed *on the contrary* from the assumption that the bankruptcy of the leadership only ‘reflects’ the incapacity of the proletariat to fulfill its revolutionary mission.”

–“The USSR in War,” *In Defense of Marxism*

Obsessed with clinging onto its claim to revolutionary continuity, which has become for it a matter of prestige, the ICL has abandoned the fight for the revolutionary program. Essential theses are treated as mere “formulations,” to be adopted or discarded, “exaggerated” or “corrected,” according to the needs of the moment. But while these centrists play hide-and-seek with history, trying to “pull their hands out of the boiling water” as they water down their program, the class struggle goes on. We reaffirm once again that the crisis of proletarian leadership is the key to the crisis of humanity, and the collapse of Stalinism followed by the crisis of social democracy underscore that only the fight to reforge an authentically Trotskyist Fourth International can provide the revolutionary answer to this crisis. ■



## No to Bush, Kerry, Nader!

# Terror War Elections

Seldom has the fraud of bourgeois electoral “democracy” been so blatant.

The United States carries out an unprovoked imperialist attack on a semi-colonial country, Iraq, after already invading and occupying Afghanistan. The pretext for the war – alleged Iraqi stocks of “weapons of mass destruction” – goes up in smoke. The supposed liberators are revealed as torturers and murderers. Thousands of Iraqis are slaughtered in Nazi-like “collective punishment.” A puppet regime installed by the U.S. in Baghdad decrees martial law. As Iraqi resistance to the colonial occupation mounts and the body bags of hundreds of dead U.S. soldiers come back, a majority of the American population turns against the war. Yet their opposition will not be expressed at the polls. *Both* the partner parties of U.S. capitalism are war parties: Democrat John Kerry as well as Republican George Bush vow to “stay the course” (continue the murderous occupation). *None* of the capitalist candidates, including Ralph Nader and the Greens, are for immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops. And *all* of them would regiment the U.S. in the name of “security.”

Once again, the wheels of the capitalist election system grind remorselessly against the poor, oppressed and working people. Almost 40 million people without any health insurance; over 2 million people (overwhelmingly blacks and Latinos) incarcerated in the world’s largest prison system, with thousands subjected to the racist death penalty inherited from slavery; tens of thousands of students being driven out of college by skyrocketing tuition, pushing them to become cannon fodder for the imperialist military; of more than 25 percent of the black male population without a job; perhaps ten million undocumented immigrants lacking any legal rights – none of these outrages will be ad-

## Democrats, Republicans War Makers, Strikebreakers



Internationalist photo

**Internationalist Group at Boston March on Democratic convention, July 25.**

dressed. Meanwhile, harking back to the slave owners’ Constitution written by the Founding Fathers, the exclusion of black voters has begun. Florida voter rolls were to be purged of thousands of former convicts, overwhelmingly black. Now, as journalist Bob Herbert recounts in a column titled, “Voting While Black” (*New York Times*, 20 August), Governor Jeb Bush is sending armed state police to terrorize black voters in Orlando, barging into their homes to question them about “election fraud.”

It’s not just about a rigged vote in November, in which big bucks and dirty tricks (and perhaps an unelected Supreme Court again) determine the outcome. A quarter million protesters, possibly more, are expected to protest outside the Republican National Convention (RNC) in New York City in late August. But a

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**For a Revolutionary Workers Party!**