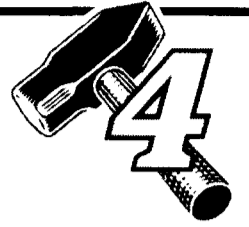


Australasian SPARTACIST



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Free, Quality Health Care For All! Full Access to RU486 Now!

Free Abortion on Demand!

In February, federal parliament voted to remove veto power over the abortion drug, RU486, from the reactionary Catholic federal health minister, Tony Abbott, transferring control to the state-appointed Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA). This overturns a 1996 deal, brokered between the Howard government and anti-abortion campaigner and former senator, Brian Harradine, whereby access to RU486 required direct written permission from the health minister, effectively a ban on the drug.

It is a good thing that control over RU486 no longer rests in the hands of the anti-abortion bigot Abbott. Australian women now at least have the

For Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

possibility of accessing a drug that two million users in more than 30 different countries have found to be safe and effective for more than a decade. The RU486 "abortion pill" can be administered much earlier than invasive surgical abortion and only requires supervision by a trained GP. It thus has the potential to be a much more private procedure and to give women, particularly those in remote areas, more equitable access to

terminations. However, while the TGA is expected to approve the drug within the year, access is likely to be severely restricted, as is the case in New Zealand, and there is also no guarantee that it will be affordable for working and poor women. Of course, the TGA could bury RU486 for years. *For access to RU486, free of charge, now!*

The push to overturn the 1996 deal gained ground last year when leading

obstetricians called for access to medical abortion. With Harradine's retirement from parliament, "pro-choice" politicians took the opportunity to put the issue back on the table. Australian Democrats senator, Natasha Stott Despoja, reflected a widespread sentiment, not just within her liberal and petty-bourgeois constituency, when she demanded, "it is time...our country caught up" ("RU486," Australian Democrats website, 16 November 2005). Some women have flown to New Zealand and even Britain in order to obtain access to a non-surgical abortion.

The demand by bourgeois women for
continued on page 2

For Class Struggle Against Capitalist Rulers at Home!

U.S./Australian Imperialists Out of Iraq, Afghanistan Now!

Three years into the U.S./British/Australian imperialist occupation of Iraq that country has become a hellhole of all-sided bloodshed, with scores killed daily by the occupation forces, government death squads and communal militias. Over 100,000 Iraqis have died in the war and occupation, on top of tens of thousands in the 1991 Gulf War slaughter and in excess



Destruction of the Shi'ite Golden Mosque in Samarra on 22 February touched off explosions of fury in Sadr City, Baghdad (above), and elsewhere.

of 1.5 million as a result of United Nations sanctions. As we warned from the beginning of the war in 2003, the occupation has unleashed a maelstrom of ethnic and religious violence, pitting Shi'ite and Sunni Arabs and Kurds against each other, posing the real possibility of a communally-based civil war.

Meanwhile hundreds of Australian SAS killers in alliance with tens of thousands of U.S. and NATO forces continue the murderous occupation of Afghanistan carried out after the 11 September 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. This occupation has meant imperialist bombardment and devastation of whole communities leaving thousands dead, torture, brutal oppression of women and ongoing warfare amongst tribal warlords.

It is in the interests of the international working class to fight against the imperialist subjugation of Iraq and Afghanistan. Like our comrades in the U.S. the Spartacist League/Australia stood for the military defence of Afghanistan and Iraq against imperialist attack without giving any political support to the reactionary woman-hating Taliban cutthroats or the capitalist dictatorship of Saddam Hussein. Today setbacks to the U.S./Australian military occupiers objectively serve the interests of the workers and oppressed internationally. Insofar as the forces on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan aim their blows against the imperialist military we call for their military defence against the imperialists. However we give no political support to the insurgents and stand vehemently opposed to religious reaction and



Iraqis being loaded into helicopters en route to detention/torture centres run by imperialist occupiers and their puppets. Australian army personnel were intimately involved in drafting torture policy for the U.S.-led occupation forces and their prisons.

deadly communal violence.

We call for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all U.S./Australian imperialist military from Iraq and Afghanistan. As part of our struggle for *proletarian revolution* to rip industry out of the hands of the Australian capitalist exploiters we fight for working-class actions against the capitalist rulers at home and their racist murderous military adventures abroad. *Not one person, not one cent for the Australian imperialist military!*

In contrast, reformist groups such as Socialist Alliance (SA) and the cross-class Sydney Stop the War Coalition frequently

demand "Bring the Troops Home" and an "end to Australia's involvement." These demands are essentially appeals to the imperialist rulers to pursue a different "foreign policy." As Russian revolutionary leader V. I. Lenin explained, imperialism is not a policy but a system. It is capitalism at its highest stage of development, in which the rulers of the richest capitalist countries are compelled through their thirst for always greater profits to seek out cheaper sources of labour and plunder the natural resources of oppressed neo-colonial countries. In this they compete with rival imperialist powers and defend
continued on page 5

On the IWW and Capitalist Exploitation

28 January

To the editor,

I am writing to note a couple of inaccuracies I believe have appeared in the newspaper. In the last couple of issues you have referred to the old I.W.W. as the "International Workers of the World," instead of what the rest of the world recognises them to have been: the Industrial Workers of the World. Over the years I have come across bourgeois history books that use the first name but I have always considered them to be mistaken, and somewhat ignorant. Lenin referred to "the Industrial Workers of the World in the U.S.A. and Australia" as "a profoundly proletarian and mass movement, which in all essentials actually stands by the basic principles of the Communist International" (Theses on the Fundamental Tasks of the Second Congress of the Communist International, July 4, 1920).

In your current issue you speak of "the workers, a percentage of whose labour power is stolen every hour by the bosses for profit." Since the capitalists have paid for the labour power at more or less its full value they can hardly steal it, let alone every hour. Lenin refers to the doctrine of surplus-value as "the corner stone of Marx's economic theory":

"man's labour-power becomes a commodity. The wage-worker sells his labour-power to the owner of land, factories and instruments of labour. The worker spends one part of the day covering the cost of maintaining himself and his family (wages), while the other part of the day he works without remuneration, creating for the capitalist *surplus-value*, the source of profit, the source of

the wealth of the capitalist class."

—*The Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism*, March 1913

On the other hand, you are dead right when you say that some multi-racial union contingents down at Cronulla would teach those fascist creeps a lesson and ensure that anyone can enjoy the beach. I am enclosing a small donation for the newspaper. Keep up the good work!

Comradely greetings,
A Reader

ASp replies:

Our reader correctly points out our misnaming of the IWW as well as the more substantive error on the source of profit under capitalism. For more on Marx's economic theory we refer readers to the box on this page.

As we stated in our Program of the Spartacist League *For a Workers Republic of Australia, Part of a Socialist Asia!*, "...we stand with the Industrial Workers of the World for their intransigent anti-racism and internationalist spirit which embraced workers of all races and nationalities." The IWW wrote an heroic chapter in the history of the workers movement of several countries prior to and during the interimperialist First World War.

Trotskyist leader James P. Cannon wrote of the IWW in the U.S., "The founders of the IWW regarded the organization of industrial unions as a means to an end; and the end they had in view was the overthrow of capitalism and its replacement by a new social order" ("The IWW: The Great Anticipation," *The First Ten Years*

of American Communism [1962]). The IWW's conception was to organise workers into "One Big Union" that would serve as the instrument to seize the means of production from the capitalist class. That syndicalist perspective confused the role of the unions, which seek to embrace the mass of the workers, and a programmatically based revolutionary party.

Cannon, like many of the founding figures of American Communism, had served his apprenticeship with the revolutionary-syndicalist IWW but later recognised, as did others, the need for a Leninist vanguard party to lead the masses of workers in overturning the bourgeois order. This lesson was drawn from the experience of the 1917 October Revolution in Russia.

By 1913, chartered locals of the IWW

were established in Australia. With the outbreak of the interimperialist slaughter in 1914, the IWW put up a vigorous opposition, counterposing working-class struggle against the capitalist system *at home*. Their prominent role in the anti-conscription campaign brought them a mass audience, making them a target for severe repression and frame-up by the state. In 1916 the NSW state Labor government of William Holman and the federal Labor government of Billy Hughes oversaw the prosecution on "conspiracy" frame-up charges of leading IWWers who were sentenced to heavy prison terms. The IWW was later targeted by the Unlawful Associations Act and subsequently scores of their supporters were jailed for campaigning against the frame-ups, and those without citizenship deported. ■

Abortion...

(continued from page 1)

access to RU486 illustrates that the special oppression of women—the first and oldest oppression in history—affects women of all classes. The demand for abortion rights is the demand for a simple, basic democratic right to a medical or surgical procedure among the safest in the world. Even in today's reactionary climate, more than 80 percent of the population supports a woman's right to abortion. Access to RU486, like the legalisation of abortion itself, is in and of itself compatible with a liberal bourgeois political system and worldview, and does not challenge the capitalist social order. However while such reforms are possible under capitalism, they are also not permanent, as the escalating attacks in the U.S. on the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision, which overturned state anti-abortion laws, show (see "Free Abortion on Demand!", *Workers Vanguard* No. 866, 17 March).

As revolutionary Marxists we defend abortion rights and every gain won for women, no matter how partial. What is needed is a fight to defend and extend women's rights. We look to the working class, not its mortal enemies in the capitalist state, as the motor force for social progress. We fight for *free abortion and contraception on demand* and for *free, quality health care for all* linked to the need for women's liberation through socialist revolution. In contrast to some feminists and leftists who raise the slogan for a woman's "right to choose" abortion, we recognise that only when society provides such services free and without restriction will they truly be available to all women who need them including workers, immigrants, youth, the poor, both in cities and remote areas. Along with paid maternity leave and free 24-hour childcare, they are vital necessities for women and the working class as a whole.

There are an estimated 70-90,000 abortions every year in Australia, with a third of women likely to have one during their lifetime. However abortion remains in the criminal codes of most states and territories and is often only "lawful" if a threat exists to the woman's life, physical or mental health. Under Western Australian law, amended in 1998 and then considered to be the most liberal, women under 16 still face bureaucratic hurdles while access to a late-term abortion requires approval from a government-appointed panel of doctors. Even in the ACT, where it was removed from the criminal code in 2002, obtaining an abortion after the first 12 weeks requires approval from a hospital "ethics" committee.

It is an outrage that the capitalist state and its bourgeois parliamentarians should have the life-and-death power to interfere in people's most intimate, private decisions. We say: State out of the bedroom! Abolish laws against "crimes without vic-

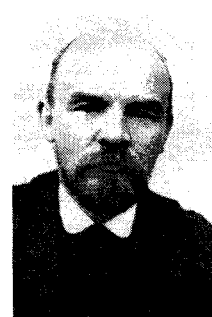
tims" such as prostitution, homosexuality and reactionary age of consent laws, which target youth. We oppose laws that deny teenagers the right to consent to an abortion or restrict their access to contraception.

The patchwork of abortion laws across the country, combined with the lack of medical services particularly in country areas, acts as a severe deterrent to women seeking an abortion. As Melbourne University-based obstetrician, Lachlan de Crespigny, recently stated "The status quo is dangerous for women and the doctors." Doctors who perform abortions increasingly face court actions and state-initiated investigations. For example, under the Victorian Bracks ALP government in 2000, the Royal Women's Hospital suspended a senior medical staff member who was, along with others, subjected to an inquiry for performing a life-saving late-term abortion.

Meanwhile the federal Howard government has been massively funding anti-abortion "counselling" services. In the wake of their defeat on RU486, Howard and Abbott launched a new \$51 million government "pregnancy support" program designed to further intimidate and stymie women seeking abortion. It offers funding to religious and other anti-abortion outfits pushing the same anti-woman bigotry as the crazed "pro-life" reactionaries who regularly harass and threaten doctors, staff and patients at clinics. Recently one rural doctor described how he and the three other obstetricians in the northern Victorian town of Wodonga no longer perform elective terminations because of pressure, including a death threat, from conservative elements within the city (*Age*, 16 September 2005). In July 2001 a fanatic stormed the East Melbourne Fertility Control Clinic, shooting dead a security guard. Further fatalities were prevented when two men in the waiting room heroically disarmed him. The power of the unions should be mobilised in support of women and their allies to *defend the clinics!*

Alongside seeking to prevent any generalised access to abortion, the federal government administers a capitalist system in which almost 200,000 women are unable to work because of the lack of accessible, affordable childcare places and the bulk of working women have no access to paid maternity leave. The gap between rich and poor in this country is now the widest it has been for 50 years. Among the poorest are single mothers who are forced by a lack of childcare and decent jobs to stay at home and are subjected to the prying eye of Social Security. After June this year, single mothers will confront the Howard government's sadistic "welfare to work" scheme which requires single parents with children over six years of age to seek work of at least 15 hours a week and dramatically cuts their welfare payments. In this racist society, cuts to social services and measures against welfare recipients hit Aboriginal

continued on page 4



LENIN

Marx: Wage Labour and Capital

Writing on the eve of May Day, 1891 in London, Marx's lifelong collaborator and friend Friedrich Engels elucidated for a new generation of socialist-minded workers Marx's economic doctrine. From this analysis, Marxists draw the conclusion that a new social order is not just possible but, with every scientific and technical advance in production, urgently necessary. A socialist revolution would, as Engels concluded, "through the planned utilisation and extension of the already existing enormous productive forces"

lay the basis for a society where "the means for existence, for enjoying life, for the development and employment of all bodily and mental faculties will be available in an equal measure and in ever-increasing fulness."

The difficulty over which the best economists came to grief, so long as they started out from the value of "labour", vanishes as soon as we start out from the value of "labour power" instead. In our present-day capitalist society, labour power is a commodity, a commodity like any other, and yet quite a peculiar commodity. It has, namely, the peculiar property of being a value-creating power, a source of value and, indeed, with suitable treatment, a source of more value than it itself possesses. With the present state of production, human labour power not only produces in one day a greater value than it itself possesses and costs; with every new scientific discovery, with every new technical invention, this surplus of its daily product over its daily cost increases, and therefore that portion of the labour day in which the worker works to produce the replacement of his day's wage decreases; consequently, on the other hand, that portion of the labour day in which he has to *make a present* of his labour to the capitalist without being paid for it increases.

And this is the economic constitution of the whole of our present-day society: it is the working class alone which produces all values.

— Introduction to Karl Marx's *Wage Labour and Capital* (1891 Edition) by Friedrich Engels



TROTSKY

Australasian

SPARTACIST



For a workers republic of Australia, part of a socialist Asia!

Marxist newspaper of the Central Committee of the Spartacist League of Australia, section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

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— French Trotskyists Say — Down With Racist “First Employment” Law! Defend Ghetto Youth!

We print below a translation of a 15 March supplement of *Le Bolchévik*, newspaper of the Ligue trotskyste de France, section of the International Communist League. This supplement, which has been distributed to demonstrations and meetings in France, is reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* (No. 867, 31 March), newspaper of the Spartacist League/U.S.

LE BOLCHEVIK

State repression and intimidation of demonstrators protesting the First Employment Contract (CPE) grow more intense every day, with a growing number of arrests. **Freedom now for all protesters! Drop all charges!** The riot cops are tear-gassing and beating students, just as the state last November went after the youth of African and North African origin from the working-class districts who revolted against daily racist oppression and the death at the hands of the cops of two youth fleeing a police checkpoint in Clichy-sous-Bois. For these youth as well **we demand they be immediately freed and all charges dropped!**

The CPE would impose a two-tier system for workers, with a probation period of two years for those under 26 years old. Young workers, whatever their social or ethnic origins, will find themselves at the mercy of their employers: if just once they refuse to work overtime, if just once they go on strike or are seen discussing with a union activist, if they get pregnant, and so on, they are likely to be shown the door. If the attack succeeds, it will be extended to all workers to facilitate layoffs. This measure seeks to weaken the union movement even more and to prepare new attacks targeting all workers. That's why the whole working class has a direct stake in beating back this new attack.

The first targets of the CPE are the suburban ghetto youth who already experience massive unemployment, permanent racist segregation in hiring, education and housing, and constant cop harassment. The so-called “equal opportunities” law, of which the CPE is just one component, also anticipates suspending if not eliminating the family allowance for parents of



Paris, 23 March: Plainclothes and riot cops attack and arrest protester following student demonstration.



Students and unions march in Paris on 18 March against anti-youth employment law.

youth who skip school or “because of any other difficulty linked to inadequate parental authority.” In other words, this law targets the poorest layers of the population, especially those of working-class origins and most particularly families headed by single parents of immigrant origin. [Prime Minister Dominique] de Villepin said as much in his TV interview on March 12, seeking to appease the students and more generally to divide the youth by saying that this measure is aimed at the unemployed ghetto youth and that (white) students, with their qualifications, will continue (!) to receive permanent contracts. **Down with the CPE! Down with the racist “equal opportunities” law! Down with the racist Vigipirate police checks! The workers movement must defend the ghetto youth!**

The CPE is all about undermining the integrity of the working class by reinforcing the divisions between young and old and between dark-skinned youth of non-European origin and those of European origin. It's an attempt to manipulate youth, especially those from the ghettos, against the trade unions themselves. To repel this attack, the workers movement must overcome the narrow limits of trade unionism and confront head-on the special oppression of immigrants and of French-born youth of North African and African origin. The workers movement must fight racist segregation in housing, education and hiring. **For the division of all the work among all workers, without loss in**

pay, on permanent contracts! Not only is the capitalist system incapable of resolving unemployment, but it is the system itself that produces a layer of the permanently unemployed in order to increase the exploitation of all workers. Any serious struggle on this question poses the question of overthrowing the whole capitalist system by workers revolution.

The union leaders and the social democrats—mostly the Socialist Party (PS) but also the Communist Party (PCF)—oppose the CPE, while also trying to put a brake on workers' strike actions. That's why the second major union mobilization was called for March 18, a Saturday. But back in November, these same union bureaucrats didn't lift their little finger to defend the youth under siege in the ghettos. As for the PS and PCF, at the height of the revolt, they were calling for the bourgeois state to “re-establish order,” with the PS even openly supporting the “state of emergency” in order to defend “their” republic. So now when these same misleaders angrily decry [Interior Minister Nicolas] Sarkozy/de Villepin's anti-youth attacks and the government's sending in of the riot police against student protesters, it only serves to underline once again their gross hypocrisy and opportunism and their conciliation of racist oppression. **In fact it was their support to the government against the ghetto youth revolt that emboldened de Villepin to launch his CPE and “unequal opportunities” law in January.**

Behind the social-democratic leaders' anti-CPE radicalism are of course their electoral ambitions for 2007. At last they see a way to try and wipe out the memory of [PS prime minister Lionel] Jospin's “Plural Left,” the previous popular-front government (that is, a government of the PS and PCF together with small bourgeois parties like the Chevènementists, the Left Radicals and Greens). It was Jospin's “Plural Left” that last time around introduced its own brand of minimum-wage youth jobs, put in place the university “reform” and re-launched the racist Vigipirate identity checks. The social democrats, especially the PCF, peddle the lie that they have supposedly learned their lesson, and if they are elected they'll be out there defending the interests of workers, immigrants and youth. But administering the capitalist system means first and foremost defending the interests of their “own” bourgeoisie and its rate of profit against foreign capitalist rivals—which means heightened exploitation of workers and more oppression at home, in the ex-colonies, in East Europe and beyond.

The students must turn to the working class. They should place no confidence in the anti-CPE proclamations of some university presidents, who carry out their ministerial directives to cut budgets, lay off workers and privatize the auxiliary services [cafeterias, cleaning]; they hire campus security and call in the cops, etc. Students' potential allies on campus are not the university presidents who represent the capitalists, but the campus workers and teachers. Capitalism isn't a set of policies from which its rulers can pick and choose; it's a system rooted in the exploitation of one class by another, and the ruling class wields its riot cops, its courts and prisons to try and ensure that this relationship of forces remains in effect. The role of the universities is to train the next generation of ideologues and administrators to run the capitalist system. Students have the choice to either conform—or to rally to the cause of socialist revolution.

The CPE is the latest in a line of anti-worker, anti-youth attacks, and it must be defeated. But even if it were, the capitalists would take the offensive again with new attacks. To finish once and for all with such “flexibility” measures, intrinsic to capitalism, it's the system itself which must be destroyed. We are fighting to build a revolutionary workers party—multiethnic and internationalist—whose goal is to lead the working class in socialist revolution. And that means combatting the politics of those, including the many student activists amongst the Communist Youth and the UNEF student federation, who spout their “fight the right” rhetoric today to pave the way tomorrow to yet another **capitalist** popular-front government led by the PS and PCF.

In May '68, the students' actions sparked a three-week workers general strike, mobilizing millions of workers in the streets, but also importantly at first, in factory occupations. It was those strikes and factory occupations which shook up the ruling class not only here in France but across the world. But in the absence of a revolutionary party, the strikes were demobilized and betrayed, chiefly by the Stalinist Communist Party which, thanks to its influence within the working class, was ultimately able to save the skin of the French bourgeoisie.

But today is not 1968. Now that the degenerated Soviet workers state was destroyed in 1991-1992, the capitalists around the world are stepping up their offensive to demolish workers' gains, including those achieved in the wake of May '68, with the CPE being just one attack in the generalized onslaught to increase the French capitalists' levels of profit as against their rivals. The counter-revolution in the former USSR has brought with it an enormous political

continued on page 8

Abortion...

(continued from page 2)

people hardest. Their grinding oppression is reflected in Third World infant mortality rates and dramatically lower life expectancy. Blamed by their oppressors for their own oppression, Aborigines are being locked into paternalistic and punitive "shared responsibility" agreements.

The intersection of White Australia racism and the view that women belong in the home as child bearers and child rearers for the "white nation" was graphically expressed during the recent debate over RU486. Outdoing racist demagogue Pauline Hanson, the anti-abortion Liberal MP, Danna Vale, raved that Australia could become a Muslim nation within 50 years because Australians are "aborting themselves out of existence"! It's not surprising that Vale's federal electorate includes the beachside suburb of Cronulla where last December white racist mobs carried out murderous pogromist attacks on anyone of "Middle-Eastern" appearance.

The Liberal government's "anti-terror" laws, supported by federal Labor and enforced by state Labor governments, are designed to intimidate and foment divisive racism within the working class at a time when the bosses are pushing through their biggest attack on unions and working conditions for decades. "Anti-terror" hysteria fueled the racist anti-Arab riot in Cronulla last December and countless other incidents of violence and discrimination against people of immigrant backgrounds. Muslim women wearing headscarves have particularly been targeted. Police armed with new powers target non-white, poor and Aboriginal people and these laws are held in reserve for use against the workers in struggle and anyone who opposes the government. The anti-union attacks and "anti-terror" laws must be fought with determined class struggle including broad-based strike actions.

Break with Laborism! Build a Revolutionary Workers Party!

There is no lack of will to fight on the part of the working masses. Over 600,000 workers took to the streets in angry protest against the federal government's anti-union laws on 15 November last year. Many walked off the job in defiance of the ACTU's refusal to call a strike. Loyal to the Australian capitalist profit system, the Laborite union tops are the chief obstacle to unleashing independent working-class struggle. Together with the ALP, they seek to divert workers' struggles into parliamentary or legalistic channels. The Labor Party is a *bourgeois workers party*, thoroughly pro-capitalist in its program and leadership while based on the trade unions.

In the face of the current vicious anti-working-class offensive, the trade-union tops derail workers' anger into impotent community campaigns in defence of "family values" and the "Australian way of life," and the dead end of voting Labor at the next election. They peddle the lie that the bosses' industrial system of Arbitration courts is the cornerstone of defence and equality of wages and jobs. Established in the early 1900s, compulsory arbitration was in fact based on an historic racist pact between the Laborite trade-union bureaucracy and the ruling class that institutionalised tariff-protected industries and a "whites only" labour force. Arbitration also enshrined anti-woman chauvinism, providing the legal basis for lower wages for women, declaring in 1912 that "a man was paid to support a family and a woman only to support herself."

In 2004, while the ACTU talked about supporting the fight for the introduction of paid maternity leave for all Australian women, it derailed workers' anger into a case in the Industrial Relations Commission focusing on the demand for *unpaid* maternity leave! ACTU president, Sharan Burrow stated: "We don't seek to impose additional burdens on business" (ABC-

FM news bulletin, 1 September 2004). Burrow was also ready to hail ALP party policy as a "fabulous foundation stone" for more family-friendly workplaces, despite the fact that it omitted any mention of guaranteed paid maternity leave (*Australian Financial Review*, 1 April 2004).

From voting for the effective ban on RU486 in 1996 to supporting the outrageous ban on gay marriage in 2004, the Labor Party leaders are clearly no friend of women and the oppressed. The Victorian ALP party tops have flouted last December's state Labor conference decision calling to decriminalise abortion. When Labor MP, Carolyn Hirsh, recently signalled her intention to move a private members bill on the question, she was quickly made to back down. Labor premier, Steve Bracks, asserted "We have no plans to have that on



Andrew Meares

Sydney, February 2006: Royal North Shore nurses picket over staffing shortages. Women workers have been at forefront of struggles as bosses escalate attacks on health, education and public transport.

the legislative agenda this [election] year" (*Age*, 4 March).

The federal government's vicious anti-union laws, which attack leave and other entitlements, eliminate unfair dismissal provisions and aim to shred minimum wages, are designed to help the bosses maximise profits by reducing wages and conditions across the board. Today full-time women workers earn on average only 84 percent of average male fulltime wages. When comparing all workers the gap widens, as women, along with youth, are increasingly relegated to part-time and casual work without union coverage. Short of a class-struggle fight, that gap is sure to further widen. The bosses use this growing pool of impoverished workers as a wedge to further drive down the conditions of all, leading to expanding numbers of working poor. Women have a real stake in the fight to defend and extend union power. Indeed, women have been at the centre of many union struggles over the past few years, from strikes and bans by nurses, hospital workers, cleaners and teachers, to pickets at struck manufacturing plants.

To defeat the bosses' anti-working-class attacks requires unleashing union power in a class-struggle fight to defend and extend the gains of all workers, mobilising the hundreds of thousands of as yet unorganised women, immigrant, disabled and young workers barely managing to exist under capitalism. It is necessary for the working class to fight for jobs for all at union conditions; share the available work around with no loss in pay! **Organise the unorganised! Permanency and full entitlements for casual workers! For free 24-hour childcare! For universal paid maternity and paternity leave!** This perspective requires a political struggle against Laborism within the unions—a fight to replace the social-democratic union misleaders with a class-struggle leadership, linked to an internationalist revolutionary workers party. Such a party will be built by splitting the working-class base of the ALP away from the pro-capitalist leadership and will stand as a tribune of all the people as it fights for socialist

revolution to sweep away oppressive and exploitative capitalist rule.

Institution of the Family and Women's Oppression

The main source of women's special oppression under capitalism is the institution of the family, "that archaic, stuffy and stagnant institution in which the woman of the toiling classes performs galley labour from childhood to death" (L.D. Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, 1937). Friedrich Engels explained in his work *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884) the roots of women's subjugation in the rise of private property. With the development of agriculture bringing a social surplus beyond basic subsistence, a leisured, ruling class was able to develop based on a private appropriation of that surplus, thus moving human society away

from the primitive egalitarianism of the Stone Age. The centrality of the family as a repressive, patriarchal institution flowed from its role in ensuring the inheritance of private property from father to son, which required women's sexual monogamy and social subordination.

Along with religion and the state apparatus, the institution of the family serves as a fundamental prop for the capitalist system of oppression and exploitation. The family serves in general as the mechanism for rearing the next generation. Under capitalism, it is also important for instilling obedience and respect for authority in youth, the majority of whom face a future as wage slaves, or cannon fodder for the capitalist military. It serves as an ideological transmission belt for the "values" of the capitalist rulers, inculcating religious backwardness as a brake on social consciousness. Liberal and Labor parties vie to be the best upholders of "family values," bolstering the bourgeois order and its stultifying family institution. Those who don't conform to the "ideal" family, from single mothers to gays and lesbians, are likely to find themselves in the state's crosshairs. From state Labor governments granting control of AIDS care programs to the Anglican Church, to massive state funding of religious schools and anti-abortion pregnancy "counseling" services the bourgeois rulers foster forces that are anti-science, anti-sex and anti-woman.

Of course bourgeois "family values" is vicious in its hypocrisy. Countless Aboriginal families have been torn apart by the racist Australian capitalist state. From the witchhunt of Lindy Chamberlain in the 1980s to the 2001 deportation of disabled Philippines-born mother and Australian citizen, Vivian Alvarez Solon, there have been many others. Refugees and their children are held for years in inhuman detention while callous deportations have divided family members by thousands of miles. **No deportations! Close the hellhole detention camps! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants! For a class-struggle fight for immigrant and Aboriginal rights!**

The overthrow of the capitalist system of private property through socialist revolutions internationally will result in a vast expansion in productive capacity providing material abundance for all and the basis for the disappearance of class-divided society. Only with the social ownership of the means of production will it be possible to replace the institution of the family by collectivising its social functions, thus laying the basis for the liberation of women. We look to the example of the 1917 Russian Revolution. The Bolshevik government immediately gave women full political and legal equality with men. In 1920, they were the first government in the world to overturn criminal penalties for abortion (health concerns prevented earlier legalisation in those days before antibiotics).

While inheriting a backward, largely peasant society devastated by World War I and bloody civil war, the Bolsheviks made heroic efforts to replace the family with social alternatives. They sought to establish free childcare centres and communal laundries and canteens, thus beginning to lay the basis for the full integration of women into social and political life. Despite the rise of a conservative, bureaucratic caste, which under Stalin usurped political power in 1924, the collectivised economic foundations of the Soviet Union remained which meant that women continued to be drawn into social production. As we wrote in "The Russian Revolution and the Emancipation of Women" (*Spartacist* No. 59, Spring 2006), "even 15 years ago women in the Soviet Union enjoyed many advantages, such as state-supported childcare institutions, full abortion rights, access to a wide range of trades and professions, and a large degree of economic equality with their male co-workers—in short, a status in some ways far in advance of capitalist societies today."

Capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union in 1991-92 was an historic defeat for the world's working people, not least Soviet women, and it conditions today's reactionary climate. The International Communist League fought to mobilise the working class to defeat capitalist restoration. Today we stand for the unconditional military defence of the remaining deformed workers states—China, North Korea, Vietnam and Cuba—against imperialist attack and internal capitalist counterrevolution. We call for proletarian political revolutions to oust the Stalinist bureaucracies and to establish workers soviet democracy based on a proletarian internationalist program.

Feminism and Laborite Reformism

The Democratic Socialist Perspective (DSP) was among the many left organisations which cheered the 1991-92 capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union. Ten years earlier, virtually the entire left—including the DSP's forebears in the Socialist Workers Party and the Freedom Socialist Party (FSP)/Radical Women—were making common cause with the Catholic pope in championing the reactionary clerical-nationalist, anti-abortion, anti-Semitic, CIA-funded counterrevolutionary Solidarność in Poland.

The FSP/Radical Women describe themselves as "socialist feminists" attempting to square the circle between Marxism and feminism, although the two are fundamentally counterposed. Feminism is a bourgeois ideology that asserts that the main division in society is between men and women, rather than class versus class. Its logic is that all women have more in common with each other than they do with men, regardless of class. Women's oppression is viewed as a set of bad ideas and policies stemming from the existing patriarchy. As Bolshevik party leader Alexandra Kollontai wrote, the feminists aim "to achieve the same advantages, the same power, the same

continued on page 8

Iraq...

(continued from page 1)

their imperialist acquisitions through the coercive power of their military. From the U.S./Australian counterrevolutionary wars in Korea and Vietnam, which left millions of workers and peasants dead, to the Australian imperialist occupation of tiny East Timor beginning in 1999, history shows that whatever "foreign policy" the Australian imperialists pursue will be brutal, predatory and exploitative whether in Iraq or closer to "home."

Today, as before, first with Britain and since with the U.S., the white racist Australian ruling class exists on the rim of Asia as the lackey of a more powerful white Anglo-Christian imperialism. As part of the counterrevolutionary U.S. alliance, Australia acts as both a junior partner to its U.S. big brother and also an aggressive jackal regional power. The recent visit of U.S. secretary of state Condoleezza Rice underlines that Australia is the southernmost military anchor for the U.S. in the Asia-Pacific region. In this the Pine Gap U.S. spy base, which collects electronic and photographic intelligence from around the world, is vital to pinpointing imperialist military strikes and interventions by the U.S. and Australia in East Asia, the South Pacific and Iraq. It is also doubtless being used to target Iran, which today needs nuclear weapons to fend off the escalating threats and imperialist nuclear blackmail of the crazed nuclear cowboys in Washington and their Australian allies. (See "U.S. Hands Off Iran!", *Workers Vanguard* No. 863, 3 February.) **U.S./Australia hands off Iran! Down with the U.S./Australia alliance! U.S. bases, military out now!**

Our fight for independent proletarian class struggle is counterposed to supporting the various cross-class anti-war coalitions such as Sydney Peace and Justice, Stop the War and the Victorian Peace Network. These coalitions are built as platforms for bourgeois parties, such as the Greens, by various unions, religious groups and reformist left groups, including the Democratic Socialist Perspective, the International Socialist Organisation, the Communist Party and Socialist Alternative. Through these coalitions the reformists seek to channel working-class anti-war sentiment into building alliances with mythical "peace-loving" sections of the bourgeoisie. Pushing nationalistic demands to "bring the troops home" and to "end Australia's involvement" such coalitions reinforce the false idea that the proletariat and their capitalist exploiters have a common national interest. This dangerous lie, also pushed by small "liberal" imperialist ideologues and the pro-capitalist union bureaucracy, serves to tie the working class to the bosses and is counterposed to fighting for workers revolution to sweep away the capitalist system of war and repression.

Such demands also echo the appetites of nationalist bourgeois forces such as the Greens and the pro-capitalist ALP leaders who have been in the *forefront* of pushing for a greater role for bloody Australian imperialism in the Asia-Pacific region. In this they have particularly rattled sabres against North Korea. Today, using the pretext of the bogus "war on terror," ALP shadow defence minister Robert McClelland argues Australia can best assist the U.S. alliance through increased Australian policing and intelligence in Southeast Asia. Now, following the recent strengthening of Australian and U.S. military ties with the blood-drenched Indonesian regime, McClelland singles out the Philippines for additional Australian military "support," and this while the U.S.-backed Arroyo regime is escalating its death squad terror across the archipelago. **Racist Australian imperialist military get out of the Philippines, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands! Out of**

Southeast Asia and the Pacific now!

Seeking "efforts to counter terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction" Rice's visit, along with Japanese foreign minister Taro Aso, established a ministerial level Trilateral Strategic Dialogue between Australia, the U.S. and Japan. Further bolstering last year's reactionary U.S./Japan security agreement, and following the Australian government's decision to allow U.S. long-range bombers to train in the Northern Territory, the strengthening of the trilateral dialogue transparently targets North Korea and China. It is related to the further tightening of the military chain around the bureaucratically deformed Chinese workers state, extending from South Korea to Central Asia.

Wary of jeopardising trade opportunities with China and concerned about hawkish comments from within the U.S. administration, both federal government and ALP leaders speak of "constructive engagement" with China rather than military "containment." However whatever conjunctural diplomatic approach Australian bourgeois politicians take to China cannot disguise the fact that capitalist counterrevolution in that country is a strategic aim of the imperialist rulers, which they seek to achieve through both military pressure and imperialist economic penetration.

We Trotskyists of the Spartacist League stand for the unconditional military defence of the Chinese, North Korean, Vietnamese and Cuban bureaucratically deformed workers states against imperialist attack and internal capitalist counterrevolution, including their testing and holding of nuclear weapons. Central to our defence of the deformed workers states is the struggle for proletarian political revolution to oust the nationalist Stalinist misleaders who through their policies of peaceful coexistence with imperialism and "market reforms" pave the way for capitalist counterrevolutionary forces who seek to return China to the untrammelled imperialist exploitation and misery that existed prior to the 1949 Revolution, and which exists in Iraq and Afghanistan today.

The following article reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* (No. 865, 3 March),

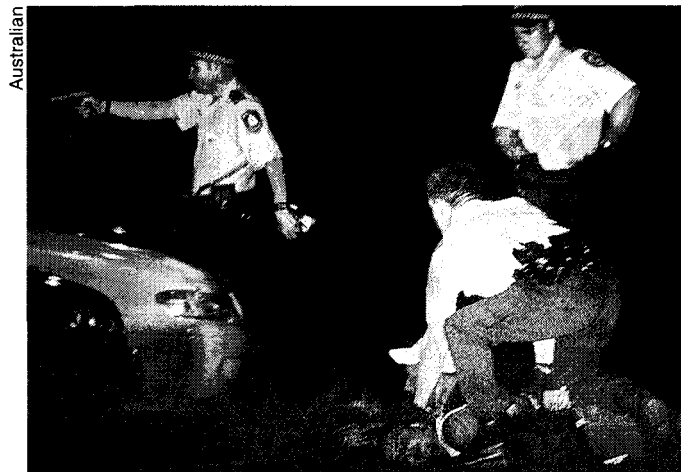


February 2003: SL/SYC takes side in defence of Iraq against U.S./Australian imperialist attack at Sydney anti-war rally.

following the February bombing of the Al-Askariya Mosque in Samarra, details how the U.S./Australian imperialist occupation of Iraq continues to devastate that country.

FEBRUARY 28—The daily slaughter that has come to define life under the blood-drenched U.S. occupation of Iraq is now threatening to spiral into an all-sided bloodbath. On February 22, the Al-Askariya Mosque in Samarra, which houses a thousand-year-old mausoleum for one of Shi'ite Islam's most revered imams, was bombed, obliterating its beautiful golden dome and triggering a wave of attacks between Shi'ite and Sunni Muslims that have thus far claimed nearly 400 lives. In a particularly heinous attack, 47 factory workers in the outskirts of Baghdad were dragged from buses tak-

Sydney, 12 December: Following white racist riot in Cronulla, New South Wales police particularly target Middle Eastern youth for vicious repression. Racist war at home mirrors Australian imperialist jackbooting abroad.



ing them home and executed. In another attack, Atwar Bahjat, a female journalist for the Dubai-based Al Arabiya news channel, was killed along with two of her colleagues.

A three-day curfew imposed on Baghdad and surrounding provinces was punctuated by sporadic gun battles and mortar attacks. After the "coalition" puppet government the U.S. is seeking to forge in Iraq threatened to fall apart, the major Sunni party has said it will resume talks to patch up the government. Iraqi officials and clerics outside the government have been putting on a show of unity to prevent an outbreak of civil war, with the defense minister warning that "if there is a civil war in this country it will never end."

A *New York Times* (26 February) article warned "that an unrestrained civil war... would not only give birth to warring Sunni, Shi'ite and Kurdish enclaves inside Iraq, but that the violence could also spread unpredictably through the region." The article continued, "Iran would side with the Shi'ites.... And Sunni countries like Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Kuwait would feel a need to defend Sunnis or perhaps to create buffer states for themselves along Iraq's borders. Turkey might also feel compelled to move in, to protect Iraq's Turkoman minority against a Kurdish state in the north."

U.S. and Iraqi officials blamed the bombing of the Al-Askariya Mosque on Al Qaeda, while Sunni leaders have blamed reprisals against random Sunnis on the militias of Shi'ite cleric Moqtada

expense of the minority Sunni Arabs, who enjoyed a relatively privileged existence under the regime of Saddam Hussein.

The growing threats of civil war underline that in a fundamental sense, there is no "Iraq." The country was carved out of the collapsing Turkish Ottoman Empire following the First World War by the British imperialists, who forced together historically hostile populations—Kurds, Sunni Arabs and Shi'ite Arabs—that are themselves further riven by clan and tribal rivalries. In such a society, there is certainly no basis for stable bourgeois-democratic rule.

The recent wave of attacks and counterattacks marks an escalation of what Iraq's masses have been suffering through since the U.S. invasion: whole towns laid waste, entire families annihilated, imprisonment and torture at the hands of the American imperialist occupiers; death-squad Iraqi military forces that have been targeting the minority Sunni population; sectarian bombings and attacks that purposely hit civilians, overwhelmingly Shi'ites, as they try to go about their daily lives. Such are the bitter fruits of U.S. imperialism's "Operation Iraqi Freedom."

In the lead-up to and during the 2003 invasion, the Spartacist League called for the military defense of Iraq against imperialist attack, without giving the brutal capitalist regime of Saddam Hussein—once an ally of U.S. imperialism—an iota of political support. At protests in the U.S. against the war, we called to "Fight U.S. imperialism through class struggle at home!" Today we demand the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of U.S. troops and their allies from Iraq, Afghanistan and the Near East.

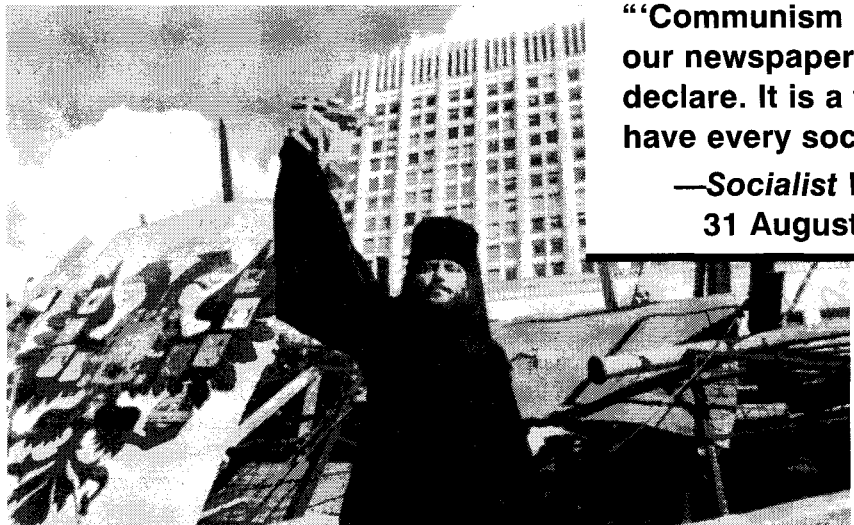
In contrast, the various antiwar coalitions set up or supported by the reformist left refused to call for the defense of Iraq during the war while pleading with the imperialist rulers for money for education and jobs, "not for war." Once the occupation was on, the International Socialist Organization (ISO) and Workers World Party (WWP) turned to painting the insurgencies in Iraq as a "national liberation movement." Behind this seemingly leftist posture stands the same old Democratic Party lesser-evilism, as Bush's difficulties in Iraq play to the Democrats' advantage. This is particularly true now as an increasing number of Democratic politicians are calling for an "exit strategy," fearing that the occupation is becoming increasingly harmful to U.S. imperialism's interests.

As the recent events in Iraq underscore, there is no unitary "resistance." Rather, there are disparate groupings organizing attacks on U.S. forces—and more often against random civilians from the various religious and ethnic populations. When the insurgents strike against the U.S. occupiers, they are striking against the greatest enemy of the world's proletariat and the oppressed. Such acts coincide with the class interests of the working class internationally. However, resistance forces led by religious clerics are by definition sectarian. As we warned in "The Left and the 'Iraqi Resistance'" (*WV* No. 830, 6 August 2004):

"We do not imbue the forces presently organizing guerrilla attacks on U.S.

continued on page 8

British SWP: Reformists Who Hailed Counterrevolution



“Communism has collapsed,
our newspapers and TV
declare. It is a fact that should
have every socialist rejoicing.”
—*Socialist Worker (Britain)*
31 August 1991



British SWP rejoiced over capitalist counterrevolution in USSR. Left: Russian Orthodox priest on Yeltsin's barricades, August 1991. Right: Desperate men and women sell possessions at makeshift market in Moscow, 1992.

They Fought for the Post-Soviet World, Now They've Got It

We reprint below an article that originally appeared in *Workers Hammer* No. 194 (Spring 2006), newspaper of the Spartacist League/Britain, section of the International Communist League.

Here in Australia, the sister organisation of the British Socialist Workers Party is the International Socialist Organisation (ISO) which produces the newspaper *Socialist Worker*. Also proudly loyal to the theory of “state capitalism,” espoused by their political forebears of the ISO, are *Socialist Alternative (SAlt)* who were formed in 1995 by elements expelled from the ISO. Sharing the same political tradition, the leaders of the ISO and SAlt today, cheered capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union in 1991-92 and maintain anti-communist hostility against those states that have undergone anti-capitalist revolutions: China, North Korea, Vietnam and Cuba.

Both SAlt and the ISO, like the SWP in Britain, are ensconced in the cross-class *Stop the War Coalition*, which demands Australian imperialist troops be brought “home” “to reduce the threat” of a terrorist attack. Far from class-struggle opposition to imperialist militarism, these demands fall in behind the pro-capitalist Australian Labor Party tops who are not only gung-ho for the so-called “war on terror” but seek a stronger military presence closer to home to “protect Australian borders” and enforce Australian imperialist plunder throughout the region.

In August 1991, when Boris Yeltsin's counterrevolutionary forces backed by George Bush Sr seized power, every capitalist ruling class on the planet was triumphant. They loudly proclaimed this to be the “death of communism”, hoping to bury the prospect of working-class revolution that the Soviet Union represented. Equally jubilant was the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), whose front page trumpeted: “Communism has collapsed” followed by “Now fight for real socialism”. The article described this as “a fact that should have every socialist rejoicing” (*Socialist Worker*, 31 August 1991).

We of the ICL fought with all our resources against counterrevolution. While the SWP was “rejoicing” for Yeltsin, our comrades in Moscow distributed by the thousands a leaflet dated 27 August 1991 titled: “Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolution!”, which said:

“The working people of the Soviet Union, and indeed the workers of the world, have suffered an unparalleled disaster whose devastating consequences are now being played out. The ascen-

dancy of Boris Yeltsin, who offers himself as Bush's man, coming off a botched coup by Mikhail Gorbachev's former aides, has unleashed a counterrevolutionary tide across the land of the October Revolution.”

— reprinted in Spartacist pamphlet, *How the Soviet Workers State Was Strangled* (1993)

Our leaflet emphatically stated that, although Yeltsin & Co then saw their way clear to implement the reintroduction of capitalism, **the outcome had not yet been definitively decided.** In calling on Soviet workers to defeat Yeltsin-Bush, we said that “Soviet workers are facing a disaster of catastrophic proportions: every gain for which they, their parents and grandparents sacrificed is on the chopping block.” In the ensuing months the Soviet working class did not mobilise in resistance to the encroaching capitalist restoration and thus counterrevolution triumphed. Due to decades of Stalinist lies and misrule, the working class was atomised and bereft of any leadership that opposed capitalism. It also lacked any consistent socialist consciousness and was sceptical of class struggle in the capitalist countries.

What we said at the time has been overwhelmingly confirmed by subsequent events. The political landscape around the world today is still conditioned by the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991-92. The final undoing of the world's first workers state ushered in a global offensive against the world's working class and oppressed by the imperialist ruling classes. The programme that the ICL upheld—that of Trotsky's Left Opposition and of the Bolshevik Party that led the October Revolution—was proven correct. We fought to the end for unconditional military defence of the Soviet Union and the East European deformed workers states against imperialist attack and internal counterrevolution, while fighting for workers political revolution to oust the parasitic Stalinist bureaucracies and replace them with regimes based on workers democracy and revolutionary internationalism. This is the programme we apply today to the remaining deformed workers states—China, Cuba, North Korea and Vietnam.

In sharp contrast, the SWP got what they wanted in 1991. They rejoiced in Yeltsin's triumph because it represented

victory for what their tendency has stood for since it came into existence: the notion that imperialist “democracy” is preferable to Stalinism. In this post-Soviet ideological climate, which is dominated by the widespread belief that “communism is dead”, the SWP projected there would be a radicalisation. This was pure fantasy. Having contributed to this climate throughout the Cold War, and having spent the past 15 years trying to cash in on it, long-time SWP hack John Molyneux has criticised the party leadership because the SWP is not getting the pay-off. At a January SWP conference Molyneux stood as an oppositional candidate for election to the Central Committee on a document exposing the fact that, even according to the SWP's vastly inflated figures, “somewhere during this period of radicalisation and outward success the party appears to have lost up to 5,000 (50%) of its membership (without acknowledging that this was happening)” (from “Why I intend to stand” by John Molyneux, published in *Weekly Worker*, 5 January).

While Molyneux wants to bring the SWP's expectations into line with today's political climate, he firmly upholds the SWP's support for counterrevolution—the

SWP's very own contribution to that climate. Molyneux writes:

“A key problem, in my opinion, was our estimation of the effects of the collapse of Stalinism. We were right to identify this as fundamentally historically progressive and to argue that internationally it created a space for genuine socialist ideas to get a hearing. However we seriously underestimated the extent to which it was perceived by millions, indeed hundreds of millions as the defeat of socialism. This led to what was a major characteristic of the 90s and is still with us today: namely a yawning gap between the large numbers who could be mobilised against various things (pit closures, the criminal justice bill, the nazis, ‘capitalism’, war) and the small number who could be recruited for active revolutionary socialism.”

— *Weekly Worker*, 5 January

Molyneux's statement that the collapse of Stalinism was “fundamentally historically progressive” is a declaration of support to the SWP's political perspective that the restoration of capitalism was preferable to Stalinism. Well, Molyneux and the SWP got what they wanted. For anyone not blinded by anti-communist loyalty to “democratic” imperialism, the restoration of capitalism in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe was a **defeat of historic proportions for the working masses of the whole world.** In the former Soviet Union alone, from 1991 to 1997 gross domestic product fell by over 80 per cent; according to (understated) official statistics, capital investment dropped by over 90 per cent. By the

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Young Spartacus

middle of the 1990s, 40 per cent of the Russian population was living below the official poverty line and a further 36 per cent only slightly above it. Millions were starving; unemployment was massive; life expectancy plummeted. Life for women was drastically altered for the worse, and there was a resurgence of religious backwardness, both Russian Orthodox and Muslim.

This followed the devastating consequences of the tide of counterrevolution that had swept the former deformed workers states in Eastern Europe and led to the capitalist reunification of Germany in 1990. In the "one superpower" world, US imperialism's military might allows it to dominate the world and to rape and plunder neocolonial countries such as Iraq. All the imperialist powers feel they have free rein to grind the working class at home and are trying to reverse historic gains for workers, as seen in the Blair government's attacks on wages, pensions and welfare provision. However it is not the repercussions of counterrevolution for the working masses of the world that bothers Molyneux, whose only concern is that the SWP's numbers have plummeted.

The Significance of the Russian Revolution

Historically the destruction of the Soviet Union through counterrevolution in 1991-92 represented the final undoing of the Russian Revolution of October 1917. A defining event of the 20th century, that revolution was the greatest victory for the working people of the world. For the first time in history the programme of proletarian revolution became flesh-and-blood reality under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky's Bolshevik Party. The young workers state was a beacon of liberation: it decreed land to the peasants; pulled Russia out of the imperialist war; eliminated laws discriminating against women and homosexuals and recognised the right of self-determination for oppressed peoples. Production was collectivised and planned according to need—for jobs, housing, health care and education.

Under conditions of imperialist encirclement, extreme scarcity and social backwardness, a bureaucracy coalesced around JV Stalin. The proletariat had been decimated by the imperialist war and by the Civil War of 1918-20 against internal counterrevolutionary forces that were backed by invading armies of 14 capitalist countries. The failure of the German revolution in 1923 was a decisive factor in the isolation and resulting degeneration of the Soviet state. The Stalinist bureaucracy usurped political power in 1923-24 and later adopted the nationalist dogma that socialism could be built in one country (ie Russia). This was a renunciation of the Marxist understanding that socialism is a classless society based on abundance, requiring an international division of labour, which in turn requires proletarian revolution in several advanced capitalist countries.

The SWP rejected the programme of Trotsky and the Left Opposition, who systematically fought against the degeneration of the Soviet Union, seeking to maintain it as a bastion of world revolution. Trotsky defended the Soviet Union because it remained a workers state based on the planned, collectivised economy while fighting against the bureaucratic misrule of the Stalinists. As he pointed out in *The Revolution Betrayed* written in 1936, the fact that within a decade the country had been transformed from a backward peasant-dominated country into an industrial powerhouse demonstrated the power of the planned economy, *despite* the bureaucracy. These gains included the collectivised economy that enabled the Soviet Red Army to smash the Nazis and liberate Eastern Europe and allowed the USSR to develop the military might to act

as a counterweight to US imperialism. Despite Stalinist degeneration, the fundamental gains of the October Revolution remained until the triumph of capitalist counterrevolution in 1991-92. Whereas Trotsky insisted that the Stalinist bureaucracy was an unstable caste, the SWP adopted the "theory" that the Soviet Union was "state capitalist" and that the bureaucracy was a new ruling class.

Korea and the Cliff Group

The SWP originated out of a capitulation to the anti-Soviet hysteria that accompanied the Korean War of 1950-53 by its founder, the late Tony Cliff, who broke from the Trotskyist Fourth International on the question of defence of the Soviet Union and other workers states. Cliff's break from Trotskyism was precipitated by the anti-communist Cold War hysteria that accompanied the outbreak of the Korean War. He reneged on the Trotskyist position of unconditional military defence of the Chinese and North Korean



Vitali S. Latov
Pyongyang, North Korea, devastated by U.S. bombs during 1950-53 Korean War. Tony Cliff (inset) broke from international Trotskyism, refusing to defend North Korean deformed workers state under attack by U.S., Australian and British imperialism.

deformed workers states against imperialist attack, which took place under the auspices of the United Nations. This was a cowardly capitulation to the British bourgeoisie and to the Labour government that dispatched British troops to Korea.

As we wrote in "The Bankruptcy of 'New Class' Theories" (*Spartacist* no 55 [English-language edition], Autumn 1999):

"The 'new class' theories of these renegades from Trotskyism like [1939 renegade from Trotskyism in the US, Max] Shachtman and Cliff were an attempt to justify their betrayal of the class interests of the proletariat and their own reconciliation with capitalism by denying the working-class nature of the Soviet degenerated workers state and the post-WWII East European deformed workers states. In reality these 'theories' were nothing but attempts—dressed up in pseudo-Marxist terminology—to conceal their real program of capitulation to anti-communist bourgeois public opinion and the renunciation of a proletarian revolutionary perspective...."

The article further noted:

"While clinging to their threadbare theories, the Cliffites and their ilk are oddly modest about their real contribution. The restoration of capitalism in the USSR and East Europe was the implementation of their program. Like Shachtman, who supported Washington's Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba, Cliff & Co. did their utmost to seek to bring victory to U.S. imperialism in the Cold War, lusting for the bloodying of Soviet forces in Afghanistan, championing the 'trade union' credentials of Solidarność—instrument of the Vatican, Wall Street and Western social democracy for capitalist counterrevolution in Poland—and vicariously dancing with the black marketeers, monarchists and yuppies on Yeltsin's barricades in 1991."

Political Consciousness in the Post-Soviet World

In many countries of the world, hundreds of thousands have taken to the

streets in protests against the Iraq War and there have been significant mobilisations in opposition to "globalisation". But to win elements from these protests to revolutionary Marxism requires recognising that counterrevolution has been accompanied by a massive regression in political consciousness. As we stated in a report of the ICL's fourth international conference of Autumn 2003: "the political worldview of the generation that has been politicized by hatred of 'global capitalism' and opposition to the war against Iraq is for the most part far removed from historical materialism and a proletarian perspective, and these youth confront a world in which Marxism is widely portrayed as a relic of the past" (*Spartacist* [English-language edition] no 58, Spring 2004).

The SWP's answer to the retrogression of consciousness is to adapt to it by moving further to the right, increasingly abandoning their erstwhile claim to be the "socialist alternative", which only ever amounted to pressuring the Labour Party

struggle for women's liberation or gay rights in all but name, and they have not publicly disagreed with Galloway on abortion, which he opposes. A recent article in the SWP's press attacks Richard Dawkins, a leading defender of atheism and of science against religious obscurantism. *Socialist Worker* (21 January) complains that Dawkins "can only view religion in an abstract sense—as a set of ideas that need to be fought". Marxism is based on dialectical materialism and atheism and therefore regards every religion as a set of ideas that need to be fought. Religion serves as a kind of consolation for material oppression and degradation, and therefore Marxists explain that for the masses to reject religion requires overcoming the material conditions that give rise to it.

Respect purports to represent Britain's Muslims, who are among the poorest sections of the population and are foremost targets of the government's racist "war on terror" at home. Far from representing the interests of any oppressed minority, Respect is based on a bald-faced acceptance by the SWP of racist British capitalist rule, based on the monarchy, the House of Lords, the established Protestant churches and parliament. Respect certainly does not represent the interests of the working class, minorities or women. It ought to repel young activists who want to fight to overthrow the racist system of capitalist exploitation and to liberate women from the yoke of oppression and religious reaction—whether it comes from church, temple or mosque.

For all the SWP's opportunist adaptations, Respect does not appear to be the get-rich-quick scheme they imagined. George Galloway spent much of January locked in Channel 4's *Celebrity Big Brother* TV show, allegedly trying to "reach a wider audience". This made him and the SWP a laughing stock on the left, gave New Labour a stick to beat him with and didn't go down well with some devout Muslims.

The SWP's capitulation to Islamic forces in Respect is a continuation of their cheering for the victory of the reactionary ayatollahs in the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran. This was followed by their support to the US and British imperialists against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, where the Soviet Red Army was fighting a CIA-backed insurgency of mullahs, warlords and tribal chieftains. We said "Hail Red Army!" and "Extend the social gains of the October Revolution to the Afghan peoples!" The Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan was a prelude to counterrevolution in the USSR itself, which found the SWP rejoicing. Throughout our existence as a tendency, the ICL has placed the Trotskyist programme for defence and extension of the gains of the October Revolution at the centre of our work. As we noted in "The Bankruptcy of 'New Class' Theories", all the "state capitalist" and "new class" theories of the USSR "were predicated on the search for an illusory 'third camp' between capitalism and Stalinism, which always proved sooner or later (mainly sooner) to be firmly situated at the side of their 'own' ruling class. We take pride in having fought to the limits of our ability to defend the remaining gains of October against imperialism and counterrevolution." ■

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France...

(continued from page 3)

demoralization of the workers, reinforced in France by the years of capitalist austerity governments headed by popular fronts (Mitterrand, Jospin), so that the working class currently does not see revolutionary socialism as a viable alternative to capitalism.

It wasn't communism, but its parody, Stalinism, which arrived at a dead end. Despite its Stalinist degeneration, we defended the Soviet Union against imperialism and counterrevolution; we fought for a proletarian political revolution to throw out the Stalinist bureaucracy. For example, in East Germany in late 1989 and early 1990, we threw all our forces into fighting for a Red Germany of workers councils, in East and West Germany, and against capitalist reunification. This was counterposed to the role played by the so-called "leftists" of the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR), Lutte Ouvrière (LO), etc., who supported the counterrevolution and who now whine about the CPE and other consequences of capitalist restoration in the Soviet Union.

To break the vicious circle of capitalist governments of the right wing and of the popular front, it's necessary to break with the reformists and expose these traitors. Instead, the so-called "far left" LCR spends its time trying to organize joint meetings and other unconditional proposals of "unity in struggle" with the likes of [PS head] Hollande and [PCF head] Buffet. On March 11, right after the cop attack on the Sorbonne, [LCR leader] Besancenot again appealed to these same forces: "The youth mobilized against the CPE need the support and the solidarity of all the forces of the left, notably against the high-handedness and intransigence of the government. We propose a meeting, at the earliest opportunity, to prepare a united fight back against these latest government attacks." The LCR's crawling before the PS and other "left forces," such as the bourgeois Chevènementists, in hopes of

making them more combative can only fuel the worst illusions that the working class and militant youth have in the social-democratic traitors, and give a left cover to their ambitions to take advantage of the anti-CPE campaign for the 2007 elections. The price of the LCR's appeal for unity with the PS & Co. today is to disappear the racist character of the "unequal opportunities law" and the fact that its main target is immigrant-derived and working-class youth in the ghettos.

Today the LCR works for the next PS-PCF government, but in April-May 2002, they used their influence in the massive multiethnic demonstrations of youth against [fascist demagogue] Le Pen to call for a vote to [President] Chirac. Thus they bear a share of responsibility for this reactionary right-wing government. LO opposed voting for Chirac, but their support to the racist law on the [Muslim] headscarf and their narrow economist intervention into the working class facilitate the attacks of Chirac, de Villepin and Sarkozy. These reformist organizations cannot struggle against racist oppression, much less lead the working class toward its social emancipation, because their whole perspective is based on class collaboration.

A revolutionary workers party would combat such class collaboration. A revolutionary leadership of the unions would be seeking to mobilize the working class of this country against the CPE and the police repression of demonstrators. The working class is the source of all the profits that the capitalist class seizes for itself, and when the workers stop work and go on strike, they have the power to shut down production and to stop the flow of profit. Through the defensive class struggles in West Europe and in other parts of the world, Marxism—the theory of scientific socialism and proletarian revolution—must again become understood and accepted as its own by the working class. We struggle to build international revolutionary workers parties to lead the workers to new victorious revolutions, as in October 1917 in Russia. ■

take power. But the Stalinist leadership of the ICP subordinated the proletariat to the bourgeois-nationalist Qassim regime. On orders from the Soviet Stalinist bureaucracy under Khrushchev, which was pursuing the pipedream of "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism, the ICP moved to rein in its proletarian base. This paved the way for the Ba'ath party's rise to power in 1963 and its subsequent murderous repression of Communists and trade unionists, carried out in collaboration with the CIA.

From the Iranian oil fields to the ports of Egypt, there is a powerful working class in the Near East that must be mobilized under the banner of proletarian political independence. Marxist parties must be forged to unite the Near Eastern proletariat—Arab, Persian, Kurdish and Hebrew, Sunni and Shi'ite, Muslim and Christian—against imperialism and all the capitalist rulers of the region. Essential to this perspective is the understanding of the necessity of socialist revolution in the centers of imperialism—the U.S., West Europe and Japan. Otherwise, as Marx noted, "all the old crap" will return.

In the U.S., we fight to build a workers party—section of a reformed Fourth International—to lead the multiracial proletariat in socialist revolution. Such a party can only be built through political struggle against the misleaders of trade-union officialdom, who chain the proletariat to its capitalist class enemy, not least through supporting U.S. "national interests." Victorious workers revolution, extended internationally, will end imperialist slaughter and ethnic bloodletting and open the road to eliminating material scarcity and building an egalitarian socialist society. ■

Abortion...

(continued from page 4)

rights within capitalist society as those possessed now by their husbands, fathers and brothers" ("Women's Day," February 1913). For bourgeois feminists, equal rights means the equal "right" for women to hire and fire workers and to run the capitalist state.

On the other hand, Marxism recognises that the class question is decisive and thus rests on a fundamentally different, *proletarian*, class axis. Contrary to the logic of feminism, working women have more in common with their male comrades than they do with bourgeois women; it doesn't matter whether the boss is male or female. The road to the liberation of all women lies through socialist revolution; this is the task of the entire proletariat. Like the Bolsheviks, we recognise the need for special transitional organisations to draw women into the revolutionary struggle. Led and organised by the party, they would take up the fight for working women's needs and broader issues of the class struggle and the fight against capitalism as a whole. In contrast, the FSP pay lip service to Marxism while embracing feminism, declaring that "women will liberate ourselves only by uprooting the profit system and replacing it with a socialist communal society" and "women's liberation can only be won by a movement of radical women" (*Freedom Socialist Bulletin*, Summer/Autumn 2005).

Like the FSP, the DSP also identify themselves with feminism. Over RU486, the DSP shared the excitement of the bourgeois politicians at the outcome of the "democratic parliamentary process." Natalie Zirngast enthused in the pages of *Green Left Weekly*, "supporters of choice should push our advantage and put pressure on state MPs to introduce such bills and remove, once and for all the criminalisation of this fundamental right" (22 February). Such embrace of parliamentary pressure tactics is typical of the DSP's whole reformist political strategy.

The DSP co-exist with the FSP and an assortment of other left groups in Socialist Alliance (SA), an increasingly riven electoral vehicle aimed at keeping workers corralled in the Laborite stable at election time. Thus in the 2004 federal elections, they supported an ALP victory through the preferential voting system. Alongside support to their own candidates, they also shamelessly promoted electoral support to the capitalist Greens. In supporting this bourgeois party committed to the capitalist order, SA and its constituent elements, such as the FSP, trample on the elementary Marxist principle of maintaining the political independence of the working class. It is no surprise then that SA's current lengthy document addressing women's oppression, *Our Gender Agenda*, does not even mention working-class action! Instead of posing the need for socialist revolution to obtain women's liberation they demand "immediate government action" on a broad range of social issues as "essential steps towards complete gender equality."

In all capitalist "democracies," government officials, elected and unelected, are bought and paid for by the banks and large corporations. The capitalist politicians, whether Liberal or Labor, male or female, serve the interests of the bosses *including* when they grant reforms. As Russian revolutionary leader V.I. Lenin pointed out in a polemic against German social democrat Karl Kautsky in 1918:

"Even in the most democratic bourgeois state the oppressed people at every step encounter the crying contradiction between the *formal* equality proclaimed by the 'democracy' of the capitalists and the thousands of *real* limitations and subterfuges which turn the proletarians into *wage-slaves*....

"[T]he workers know and feel, see and realise perfectly well that the bourgeois parliaments are institutions *alien* to them, *instruments for the oppression* of the

workers by the bourgeoisie, institutions of a hostile class, of the exploiting minority" [emphasis in original].

—*The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, 1918

Every substantial gain won by working people and the oppressed has been the result of hard class and social struggle, not appeals to bourgeois politicians and the courts. The massive social and labour struggles of the 1960s and early 1970s occurred at a time of broad radicalisation around the U.S. and Australian imperialists' dirty losing war against the Vietnamese workers and peasants. Mass workers strikes and protests, such as in defence of jailed tramways union leader, Clarrie O'Shea, beat back anti-union laws. These social upheavals also shook loose other reforms such as the 1969 Menhennit ruling in Victoria, which allowed for limited legal access to abortions and formed the basis of subsequent similar rulings in other states. The situation allowed courageous fighters for abortion rights, such as the late Dr. Bertram Wainer, to pioneer abortion clinics in Australia.

However the radicalisation of this period was dissipated as the ALP and trade-union misleaders, aided by fake socialists, kept struggles within boundaries acceptable to capitalism. Many of the reforms wrested from the bourgeois state administered by the Whitlam ALP federal government have since been taken back. Reforms won under capitalism are *always partial* and can be reversed when the bourgeoisie considers the balance of class and social forces favourable. Whatever their intention, those who peddle the false idea that socialism is obtainable by a gradual process of reform—an ever-deepening historical progress under capitalism—act to prop up a system marked by brutal exploitation and the carnage of imperialist war. They are obstacles to workers revolution. Only in a genuine socialist society, based on the collectivised means of production and an internationally planned economy, can gains for workers, women and all the oppressed be consolidated, maintained and extended.

Capitulating to bourgeois liberals and petty-bourgeois democrats, reformists obscure the Leninist understanding that bourgeois democracy is a façade that covers the brutal reality of the capitalist state. Under capitalism, no matter whether Liberal or Labor is in government, the state—the parliament, army, cops, courts and prisons—is committed to the defence of private property and enforcing the subjugation of the working class, women and minorities.

Anti-woman bigotry and hatred is profound in this remote, white imperialist enclave, going right back to the moment the British first stepped foot on these shores, bringing with them private property relations. As we wrote in our statement of program: "Little Australia' social-democratic nationalism glories in the anti-intellectual oafishness of the Australian 'ocker,' and the anti-woman cult of 'mateship.' It is white racist, and proud of its brutally male chauvinist and self-indulgent, parochial, 'national character,' best described as the culture of white pigs" (*For a Workers Republic of Australia, Part of a Socialist Asia!*, October 1998).

Today the ALP "opposition" and union tops, backed by their left tails, serve to reinforce bourgeois ideology within the working class. It is the job of a revolutionary vanguard party, such as we seek to build, to bring to the working class the understanding that only by championing the cause of the oppressed—Aborigines, women, immigrant minorities, gays—can they open the road to freeing themselves from wage slavery. It is the proletariat, both men and women organised at the point of production who have the social power to overturn the capitalist system. **For free abortion on demand! Free, quality health care for all! For women's liberation through socialist revolution!** ■

Iraq...

(continued from page 5)

forces with 'anti-imperialist' credentials and warn that in the absence of working-class struggle in Iraq and internationally against the occupation, the victory of one or another of the reactionary clerical forces is more likely to come about through an alliance with U.S. imperialism. We are intransigent opponents of the murderous communal violence against other ethnic, religious and national populations oftentimes carried out by the very same forces fighting the occupation armies."

We stand for an independent proletarian strategy, one based on the understanding that liberation from the imperialist yoke and equitable resolution of the democratic rights of all the peoples of Iraq and the region more broadly can be achieved only through the overthrow of capitalist rule in the region and the establishment of a socialist federation of the Near East. Should the Iraqi proletariat raise its head, it would face not only the savagery of the imperialist occupiers but also the brutality of the reactionary Muslim fundamentalists and bourgeois nationalists who dominate the "resistance" hailed by the ISO and WWP reformists.

The situation in Iraq requires the forging of a Marxist workers party that will fight against both imperialist subjugation and all manner of nationalism and religious reaction, as part of a struggle for proletarian revolution. Weak and decimated today, the Iraqi proletariat nonetheless has a vivid history of struggle rich in lessons for the future. In 1958, as the British-backed monarchy was collapsing, the working class, led by the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP), was in a position to

Venezuela...

(continued from page 12)

the most pressing needs of the masses, to overthrow capitalism."

Aside from the point that Chávez did not (and does not) "start from a socialist standpoint," every statement in this passage is false or misleading. We will address later in this article the notion that "the leadership of the Cuban revolution" should be a model for Latin American revolutionaries. For now it is enough to show how the IMT's comparison of Castro's Cuba with Chávez's Venezuela twists the facts into a pretzel. When Castro's rebel army marched into Havana on 1 January 1959, the bourgeois army and the rest of the capitalist state apparatus that had propped up the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship collapsed in disarray. By the time Castro declared Cuba "socialist" in 1961, the Cuban bourgeoisie and the U.S. imperialists and their CIA and Mafia henchmen had all fled and every bit of capitalist property down to the last ice cream vendor had been expropriated. What was created in Cuba was a bureaucratically deformed workers state. In contrast, Chávez came to power and rules *at the head of* the capitalist state, the Venezuelan bourgeoisie is alive and kicking, and the imperialists continue to carry on a thriving business with Venezuela, White House threats and provocations notwithstanding.

Chávez's principal concern upon coming to power was to "solve the problem" of the country's faltering oil profits, the lifeblood of the Venezuelan bourgeoisie. He moved immediately to discipline the oil workers union and to otherwise increase the efficiency of the state-owned oil industry, while pressing the OPEC oil cartel to jack up prices. It was for such efforts, and to enforce political stability, that Chávez was initially *supported* by much of the ruling class. This included not least his former comrades in the military high command, who were instrumental in restoring him to power after the 2002 coup. As oil prices climbed, Chávez did siphon off some of the enormous profits to finance a series of social measures: tripling the budget for education, setting up free health clinics and free food distribution programs for the poor, etc. But the aim of such measures is not to effect, but rather to *deflect*, a social revolution—by binding the dispossessed masses more firmly to the Venezuelan state.

However much the lily-white Venezuelan oligarchy may detest this upstart junior officer who boasts of his *zambo* (mixed African and indigenous) heritage, Chávez serves the class interests of the Caracas bourgeoisie—and, through that class, world imperialism. While speaking of "restlessness in the boardrooms" over the regime's populist policies, a *New York Times* (3 November) article headlined "Chávez Restyles Venezuela With '21st-Century Socialism'" reported soberly: "So far, no noticeable exodus of foreign companies operating in Venezuela has occurred. Banks and oil companies are making record profits thanks to oil prices that have left the country, the world's fifth-largest exporter, awash in petrodollars."

In his Porto Alegre speech, Chávez was quick to assure the Venezuelan bourgeoisie and its imperialist overlords that



In Defence of Marxism

April 2005: Fake-Trotskyist Alan Woods, chief left booster of bourgeois-nationalist "Bolivarian Revolution," speaking at solidarity conference in Venezuela.

his is not "the kind of socialism that we saw in the Soviet Union"—i.e., a planned, collectivized economy based on the overthrow of capitalist rule—which he denounced as "state capitalism" and a "perversion." He made it very clear that his friendship with Cuba's leader did not extend to its collectivized economy, saying, "Cuba has its own profile and Venezuela has its own." He lauded and identified with Brazil's Lula, the one-time populist who enforces imperialist-dictated austerity measures. In short, as Chávez declared on his *Alo Presidente* TV show on May 22, his vision of "21st-century socialism" is "not in contradiction with private companies, it is not in contradiction with private property."

Indeed. And so long as capitalist private property prevails, the masses will remain subject to exploitation and oppression, and economic development will be subordinated to the dictates of the world capitalist market, particularly the imperialist oil monopolies. There can be no permanent amelioration of the plight of the urban and rural poor without the **smashing of the capitalist state** and the overthrow of the capitalist social order, leading through a series of proletarian revolutions internationally to a global classless order in which all forms of exploitation and oppression have been eliminated.

Trotsky and Permanent Revolution

This understanding animated the October Revolution of 1917. Led by the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky, the workers of Russia—organized around their own class interests and through democratically elected workers councils (soviets)—swept away the capitalist state and replaced it with a workers state. The Bolshevik-led workers stood at the head of all the oppressed, not least the vast army of poor and landless peasants, and saw their revolution as the opening shot of a necessarily international struggle of labor against the rule of capital.

This is a far cry from what happened in the Cuban Revolution, where Castro's July 26 Movement consisted of peasant guerrillas and declassed petty-bourgeois intellectuals who had become estranged from the bourgeoisie and were independent of the proletariat. Under ordinary conditions, the Castroite rebels would have followed in the footsteps of countless similar movements in Latin America, wielding radical-democratic rhetoric to reassert bourgeois control. It was only as a result of exceptional circumstances—the absence of the working class as a contender for power in its own right, hostile imperialist encirclement and the flight of the national bourgeoisie, and a lifeline thrown by the Soviet Union—that Castro's petty-bourgeois government was able to smash capitalist property relations.

The existence of the Soviet degenerated workers state was crucial in this, providing economic assistance and a military shield that helped stay the hand of the imperialist beast just 90 miles away.

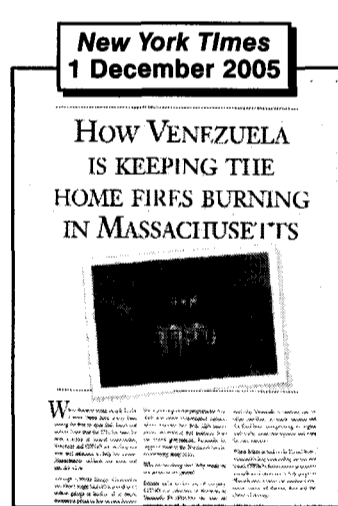
Unlike the Soviet Union, where the original revolutionary and internationalist program of October was trampled underfoot by a conservative, nationalist bureaucracy that usurped political control in 1923-24, in Cuba the workers state was bureaucratically deformed from its inception.

In overthrowing capitalist rule, the Cuban Revolution stopped the plunder of the island by the imperialists and the local bourgeoisie. As with the Soviet degenerated workers state when it existed, we call for the unconditional military defense of Cuba and the other remaining deformed workers states—China, North Korea and Vietnam—against internal counterrevolution and imperialist attack. It is the Stalinist Castroite bureaucracy that undermines the

capitalism emerged belatedly, the tasks historically associated with the bourgeois-democratic revolutions of the 17th and 18th centuries can only be carried out under the class rule of the proletariat. No matter how radical-sounding their political representatives, the bourgeoisies in the backward countries are too weak, too fearful of the rising proletariat and too dependent on the imperialist order to resolve the problems of political democracy, agrarian revolution and independent national development.

In its own way, it is rather appropriate that the capitalist demagogue Chávez idolizes Simón Bolívar, a man described by Karl Marx in a February 1858 letter to Friedrich Engels as "the most dastardly, most miserable and meanest of blackguards." As Marx makes clear in a contribution on Bolívar written for *The New American Cyclopaedia* of 1858, the founding father of Latin American nationalism embodied many of the attributes of the late-emerging semicolonial bourgeoisie of South America. He was venal, corrupt, cowardly and imperious. He repeatedly deserted his troops under fire, stabbed his comrades in the back and relied on the forces of British imperialism for his victories. Following his first triumph in 1813, he allowed himself to be publicly honored, drawn in a carriage by 12 young ladies from the first families of Caracas, and proclaimed himself "dictator and liberator of the western provinces of Venezuela."

The Bolivarian "Marxists" of the IMT turn permanent revolution on its head, arguing that if a bourgeois formation is



Joseph P. Kennedy II carrying fuel oil hose to kick off program providing cheap Venezuelan fuel to low-income Massachusetts residents, as described in newspaper ad.

defense of Cuba, not least by cozying up to and providing a "revolutionary" cover for all kinds of anti-working-class capitalist regimes. As we state in the International Communist League "Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program" (*Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 54, Spring 1998):

"Under the most *favorable* historic circumstances conceivable, the petty-bourgeois peasantry was only capable of creating a bureaucratically deformed workers state, that is, a state of the same order as that issuing out of the political counterrevolution of Stalin in the Soviet Union, an anti-working-class regime which blocked the possibilities to extend social revolution into Latin America and North America, and suppressed Cuba's further development in the direction of socialism. To place the working class in political power and open the road to socialist development requires a supplemental *political* revolution led by a Trotskyist party. With the destruction of the Soviet degenerated workers state and consequently no readily available lifeline against imperialist encirclement, the narrow historical opening in which petty-bourgeois forces were able to overturn local capitalist rule has been closed, underscoring the Trotskyist perspective of permanent revolution."

Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution, confirmed by the Russian Revolution, holds that in those countries where

really committed to fighting for democracy, it can somehow overcome its historic limitations and achieve not only democracy but even socialism. Thus IMT spokesman Jorge Martin writes, "The central idea of the theory of Permanent Revolution is that in colonial and ex-colonial countries the struggle for the bourgeois democratic tasks, if it is pursued to the end, must lead (in an uninterrupted or permanent manner) to the socialist revolution." The programmatic essence of permanent revolution is the struggle for the *class independence of the proletariat* from *all* wings of the semicolonial bourgeoisie—no matter how "progressive" or "anti-imperialist" their proclamations. That struggle can be realized only through forging a revolutionary, internationalist workers party in opposition to all variants of bourgeois nationalism.

Reform vs. Revolution

The task of Marxists is to rip the "socialist" mask off the Chávez regime, to warn that he represents the class enemy. If the IMT's opportunist competitors do not simply fawn over Chávez and his "Bolivarian Revolution," they nevertheless join in depicting the left-talking *caudillo* as a

continued on page 10

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Venezuela...

(continued from page 9)

potential, albeit partial and unreliable, ally of the working class. Thus Peter Taaffe's British-based Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) lauds Chávez for launching a "debate on the development of socialism" that is "crucial for the further development of the Venezuelan revolution" but complains that, "unfortunately," Chávez "has no perspective of spreading a socialist revolution to other [!] countries of Latin America" ("Venezuela: Socialism Back on the Agenda," 6 October).

Then there is the League for the Fifth International (LSI) centered on the British Workers Power group, which titles a chapter in its *Anti-Capitalism: A Rough Guide to the Anti-Capitalist Movement* (2005) "Hugo Chávez: A New Leader for the Anticapitalist Movement?" Polemicizing against admirers of the Mexican Zapatistas who believe that it is possible to effect social change without taking power, the LSI writes:

"Chávez at least shows that genuine reforms cannot come by pleading, which have brought the precious few results for the Mexican peasants, but rather come from seeking to take hold of power. Chávez's faults lie in his unwillingness to destroy all those elements of the Venezuelan state—the judiciary, and police above all—which hamper and frustrate progress."

Chávez will not destroy the agencies of repression that are at the core of the bourgeois state—the judiciary, the police, the prison system and, "above all," the



Glinn/Magnum

Rebel army led by Castro enters Havana, Cuba, on New Year's Day, 1959.

radical youth, nurtured by more than a decade of "death of communism" propaganda from the "left" and the right, the October Revolution is widely perceived to have been a "failed experiment." They reject as well the Marxist understanding that the working class is the unique agency for social revolution against the capitalist order. Moreover, capitalism has, by and large, been equated with that particular set of economic policies known as "neoliberalism"—widespread privatization of public facilities, destruction of social welfare programs, untrammled imperialist aggrandizement.

The recent history of Venezuela amply demonstrates that neoliberalism and populism are nothing but two faces of the same coin, sometimes carried out by the same

CTV as the preserve of a relatively privileged layer of oil and other public-sector workers.

In 1989, Pérez introduced his *paquetazo*, the "big package" of austerity measures. This provoked mass protests, the *Caracazo*, which were brutally suppressed. In an essay in *Venezuelan Politics in the Chávez Era* (ed. Steve Ellner and Daniel Hellinger [2003]), Kenneth Roberts writes:

"The combination of social polarization and political detachment proved to be highly combustible after 1989, as Venezuelans turned on the political establishment and threw their support to a series of independent leaders and protest parties. By the end of the 1990s, widespread disillusionment produced a ground swell of support for the consummate political outsider: a former paratrooper commander who captured the popular imagination by leading a failed coup attempt against a discredited democratic regime."

These were classic conditions for the emergence of a populist strongman like Chávez.

Another example of a Latin American populist nationalist was Mexico's Lázaro Cárdenas, who nationalized foreign oil companies and made significant land distributions to the peasantry in the 1930s. He also broke strikes and subordinated the working class through the corporatist CTM labor federation. In a May 1939 article titled "Nationalized Industry and Workers' Management," Trotsky noted:

"In the industrially backward countries foreign capital plays a decisive role. Hence the relative weakness of the national bourgeoisie in relation to the national proletariat. This creates special conditions of state power. The government veers between foreign and domestic capital, between the weak national bourgeoisie and the relatively powerful proletariat. This gives the government a Bonapartist character of a distinctive character. It raises itself, so to speak, above classes. Actually, it can govern either by making itself the instrument of foreign capitalism and holding the proletariat in the chains of a police dictatorship, or by maneuvering with the proletariat and even going so far as to make concessions to it, thus gaining the

possibility of a certain freedom toward the foreign capitalists."

Bonapartism in Venezuela

In Venezuela, AD founder Rómulo Betancourt, who talked of socialism, governed in league with the military in the 1940s and purged the unions of Communists, turning the CTV into a tame corporatist labor adjunct of AD. Reading from the same script, Chávez advanced social reforms aimed at consolidating a base of support among the plebeian poor. His aim was to use this base as a battering ram not only against his enemies in the oligarchy but particularly against the CTV labor federation, whose top leadership was not only part of AD but also tied to the CIA through the AFL-CIO labor bureaucracy in the U.S.

Under the battle cry of bringing "democracy" to the CTV, Chávez sought to bring the unions to heel. He assumed office in 1998 declaring that the CTV "must be demolished" and tried, unsuccessfully, to ram through a union-busting referendum two years later. For their part, the notoriously pro-imperialist CTV union tops joined with the oil bosses and other anti-Chávez sectors of the bourgeoisie and military in the botched 2002 coup and the lengthy strike/lockout in the oil industry that began later that year.

In April 2003, the Bolivarian Workers Force (FBT) in the CTV and other *chavista* union bureaucrats set up a new union federation under the umbrella of the government. The Unión Nacional de Trabajadores (UNT—National Union of Workers) garnered fully 76.5 percent of labor agreements signed in 2003-04, according to Chávez's Ministry of Labor, while the CTV captured a bare 20 percent. The UNT has now won the favor of the UN's International Labor Organization and the pro-imperialist Trades Union Congress tops in Britain. It has also been enthusiastically touted by the fake left internationally, including those groups that offer some tepid criticism of Chávez himself. In particular, such groups hail the occasional plant occupations and the UNT's call for "*cogestión*" (misrepresented as "workers control") as evidence that the "Bolivarian Revolution" is not simply a product of government policy but is driven by working-class struggle at the base of Venezuelan society.

Socialist Worker (5 August), newspaper of the U.S. International Socialist Organization (ISO), reported rhapsodically that UNT leaders had called for the "formation of a mass workers party that can fight for the socialist revolution in Venezuela." Striking a slightly more critical pose, the Internationalist Group (IG) writes in the *Internationalist* (September-October 2005): "The UNT has adopted socialist language, and even criticizes government plans for 'co-management,' calling for 'workers control.' However, none of the main sectors of the UNT has adopted a revolutionary program aiming



Reuters

Hugo Chávez embracing Fidel Castro in Bolívar City, Venezuela, 2001.

army—because he *administers* the bourgeois state. Sweeping away the dictatorship of capital in Venezuela means sweeping away the bourgeois regime through *proletarian* revolution, not lecturing the capitalist strongman as though he were a wayward apprentice. Indeed, as his left camp followers complain, Chávez has not even purged many individual recalcitrants from his military and police command, as happens after almost every Latin American coup.

Under its patina of pseudo-Leninist rhetoric, the LSI promotes the essence of social-democratic reformism—the notion that the bourgeois state need not be smashed on the anvil of proletarian revolution but can be reformed into serving as an instrument of social transformation. In Britain, Workers Power's home terrain, this has historically taken the form of slavish loyalty to the pro-capitalist, parliamentarist Labour Party (in which the IMT's British group remains deeply buried). In Venezuela, it means whitewashing the fact that populist strongman Chávez is the class enemy of the proletarian struggle for socialism.

Populism, Neoliberalism—Two Sides of a Coin

The popularity of Chávez and his "Bolivarian Revolution" among idealistic young leftists—and wizened opportunists—must be understood against the backdrop of the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union. Among

bourgeois regime in different periods. Carlos Andrés Pérez of Democratic Action (AD), for example, is remembered as the president who nationalized oil and mining in the mid 1970s and also as the president who introduced IMF shock treatment. AD spouted social-democratic rhetoric and controlled the corporatist CTV trade-union federation. Buoyed by a surge in oil revenues in the 1970s, the bourgeoisie amassed enormous wealth. At the same time, the AD and the bourgeois, pro-Catholic COPEI party, which was at different times the AD's rival and its partner, presided over the highest wages for workers anywhere in Latin America, as well as extensive price controls and subsidies for food, transportation, education, health care and other necessities.

But in the 1980s, the oil boom turned to bust and the huge imperialist debt bomb exploded, leading to a plunge in living standards for working people, massive cuts in social services and other stringent austerity measures. The portion of the population living below the poverty line nearly doubled, from 36 to 66 percent, between 1984 and 1995. As industry and agriculture declined, large numbers of formerly unionized workers and the rural dispossessed were driven into the low-wage "informal economy," trying to eke out an existence as street vendors, servants, temporary workers, etc. The rate of trade-union membership dropped from 26.4 percent in 1988 to 13.5 percent in 1995, leaving the

Just Out!

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at preparing the socialist revolution. Rather they seek to pressure the Chávez government to the left." Particularly coming from the IG, this is a rather mild way of describing a union federation that was established under the wing of the Chávez government.

You would not know it from reading its latest article, but the IG was singing a different tune in a November 2000 article titled "Against Chávez, the Stock Market and the IMF—Venezuela: Mobilize Workers Power to Defeat the Anti-Union Referendum!" That article, which appeared in Spanish on its Web site, depicted the Venezuelan populist as simply a stooge of the Caracas stock exchange and the imperialists and played down the dangers of U.S. imperialist intervention, as well as the CTV's organic ties to the bourgeois AD and its historic connections to the CIA's "labor" fronts in Latin America.

What particularly caught our eye at the time was that the IG did *not* describe the CTV as corporatist, an omission all the more remarkable given its use of that label as a justification for *not* defending the Mexican CTM labor federation against government attack. We observed: "Given its history of lining up behind 'anti-imperialist' nationalists from Mexico to Puerto Rico and beyond, one could have expected the IG to cozy up to the nationalist-populist Chávez" ("IG on Venezuela: Opportunism Makes Strange Bedfellows," WV No. 787, 20 September 2002). Having finally sniffed which way the wind is blowing, the IG is now racing to place itself on the left flank of the Bolivarian Revolution fan club. The IG now consigns the CTV to the dustbin.

The UNT leaders certainly talk a more radical line than the CIA-connected CTV tops, but they are no less tied to the capitalist government. In September, the UNT and FBT organized a "political education workshop" in Caracas "with the collaboration of the Ministry of Labour," according to a report by Jorge Martin (www.handsoffvenezuela.org, 26 September). A resolution passed there talked of "the historical struggle for the emancipation of the working class," "socialism as the hope of the oppressed classes of the world" and the need to expropriate the means of production. Prefacing all of this fiery rhetoric was an abject promise to "ratify the leading role of our president Hugo Chavez Frias in this democratic and participatory revolution." All talk of socialist revolution and a mass workers party is simply hot air in the absence of a struggle for *the complete and unconditional independence of the proletariat from the capitalist state and its political parties.*

The "Cogestión" Scam

In trumpeting the scam of "cogestión" (co-management), which is promoted by Chávez and the UNT as "workers control," the reformist left helps strengthen the stranglehold of the capitalist state over the Venezuelan labor movement. In the U.S., the Workers World Party exults that "Workers Are Taking Control in Venezuela": "Everywhere in Venezuela today workers are forging ahead with new formations of workers' organization. They are taking over factories here, experimenting with co-management there. Workers are challenging the old class relationships and coming to a collective realization of their historic role in the struggle for socialism" (*Workers World*, 5 May).

In Marxist terms, workers control is not an institution, nor is it a demand to be raised for implementation by the bourgeoisie. It is dual power at the point of production in a revolutionary crisis—i.e., the workers have the power to veto management actions they oppose. It can only end in the workers seizing state power through a socialist revolution or in the capitalists reasserting their power through a counterrevolution. What is being passed off as "workers control" by the cynical



Rochkind/Polaris

Left: State-owned Alcasa aluminium mill, where workers elect some managers and directors. Right: Chávez with workers at Invepal paper factory following January nationalisation of bankrupt company. "Co-management" schemes help prop up bourgeois order.



Prensa Presidencial

pro-Chávez "left" is in fact a scheme to *institutionalize class collaboration* and more tightly bind the workers organizations to the capitalists and their state. There is nothing new in this. In Trotsky's unfinished 1940 article "Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay," he wrote:

"The management of railways, oil fields, etc., through labor organizations has nothing in common with workers control over industry, for in the essence of the matter the management is effected through the labor bureaucracy which is

Guayana, whose board now includes two directors elected by the workers and four appointed by the state, according to a report in the *Militant* (15 August), newspaper of the U.S. Socialist Workers Party. One local leader of the Sintralcasa union said that he was not for wholesale nationalization, explaining: "We depend a lot on the U.S. economy, so we're not for bringing down the empire." Another said, "Now that we have co-management, the union no longer speaks only of raising wages" and continued, "we have to

post-colonial Algeria in the early 1960s. The Union Générale des Travailleurs Algériens (UGTA) organized independent workers' self-management committees in the factories and on the agricultural estates abandoned by the departing French colonialists. Fearful of a challenge to its rule, the very left-talking bourgeois-nationalist FLN (National Liberation Front) regime of Ahmed Ben Bella pushed through the institutionalization of self-management and ever greater state regimentation of the UGTA. Once the power of the working class had been shackled, the "socialist" Ben Bella was ousted through a palace coup.

A central role in the betrayal of the Algerian workers was played by Michel Pablo, who served as an adviser to the capitalist FLN government. Pablo's pamphlet *World in Revolution* boasted that he "helped codify and institutionalize self-management in Algeria, and draft the Algerian Reform Law and economic and social policy in the country between 1962 and 1965" (see "They Never Learn," WV No. 86, 21 November 1975). Some years earlier, as a central leader of the Trotskyist Fourth International (FI), Pablo authored the liquidationist program that was responsible for the destruction of the FI. Today, Alan Woods' IMT, whose political lineage goes right back to Pablo, aspires to play Pablo's role in Venezuela.

History will reserve a harsh verdict for those "leftists" who promote one or another left-talking capitalist *caudillo*. The way forward for the downtrodden throughout the Americas does not lie through painting nationalist strongmen as revolutionaries and populist forays as revolutions. It lies instead in constructing national sections of a reformed Fourth International in the spirit of uncompromising revolutionary hostility to any and all kinds of capitalist rule. South of the Rio Bravo, such parties will have to be built in political struggle against widespread illusions in populism and nationalism. In the United States, the belly of the imperialist beast, a revolutionary workers party will be built in the struggle to break the proletariat from the Democratic and Republican parties of capital and to replace the pro-imperialist AFL-CIO tops with a class-struggle leadership. ■



Viktor Bulla

Working class in power: Putilov factory workers meet to elect representatives to Petrograd Soviet, 1920.

independent of the workers but, in return, completely dependent on the bourgeois state."

In Venezuela today, the main example of "workers control" is the paper supplies factory Venepal (now Invepal). Formerly employing 1,600 workers, by the time this bankrupt company was nationalized in January, only 350 workers remained. The company, in dire straits since 1997, had simply not been able to restart production after supporting the 2002 lockout against Chávez. The workers finally turned to Chávez, who went on to nationalize the company. However, the company was to be directly run initially by the state, and only at a later stage would it be converted to a co-management structure between workers and the state under the direct supervision of Labor Minister María Cristina Iglesias. Six months after the IMT originally cried "socialism!" over the Venepal nationalization, the Grantites were forced to acknowledge in an Internet article (18 July) that "the leaders of the union have taken the step of disbanding the union and are hoping to buy off the state's stake in the company so that they can be the sole owners and keep any profits from production" (Jorge Martin, "Chavez Announces Expropriation of Closed Factories").

Another example of "co-management" is the ALCASA aluminum mill in Ciudad

increase production and lower costs."

The ISO's *Socialist Worker* assures its readers that "cogestion has nothing in common with socialdemocratic co-management." In fact, that is essentially what it is, a variant of what is known in Germany as *Mitbestimmung* (co-determination), implemented through plant councils (*Betriebsräte*) that by law, if not always in practice, include representatives of management. Perhaps even more pertinent to the situation in Venezuela is the example of "autogestion" (self-management) in

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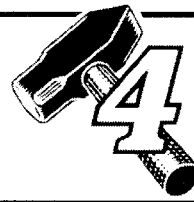
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Venezuela: Populist Nationalism vs. Proletarian Revolution

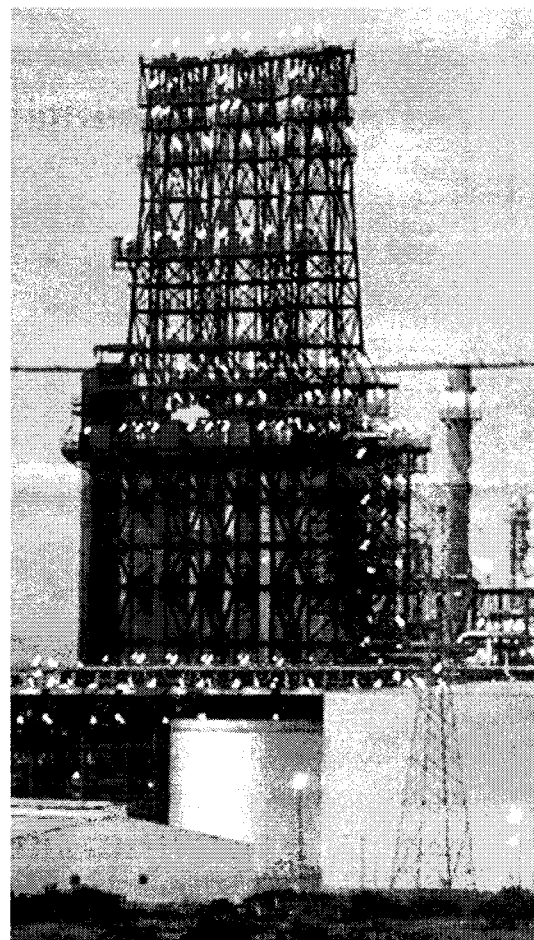
The following article is reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* (No. 860, 9 December 2005), newspaper of the Spartacist League/U.S., section of the International Communist League.

U.S. imperialism continues to pose a clear and present danger to the government of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela. Since being elected president in 1998, Chávez has survived a short-lived coup (in 2002), a months-long effort by a section of the Venezuelan bourgeoisie to shut down oil production, and a well-financed recall referendum, all backed by Washington. And if it were not bogged down in Iraq, the Bush gang might well have organized further provocations.

The very things that have made Chávez a thorn in the side of the arrogant U.S. rulers have made him an idol for masses of impoverished barrio residents in Venezuela and for large numbers of young leftists around the world. Chávez has called Bush an imbecile (*pendejo*) and ostentatiously embraces Washington's chief nemesis in the Western Hemisphere, Cuban leader Fidel Castro. Chávez has condemned the U.S. occupation of Iraq and denounced the "neoliberal" economic policies promoted by the U.S. in Latin America and elsewhere. He has launched social programs benefiting the rural and urban poor in Venezuela and embarrassed the Bush administration by offering to provide relief for the dispossessed people of New Orleans. Most recently, through its CITGO affiliate, Venezuela has begun supplying the poor of the Bronx and parts of Massachusetts with cheap gas and oil for heat this winter.

This last January, when Chávez, speaking under the auspices of the imperialist-funded World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil, proclaimed that capitalism must be "transcended" through socialism, his largely leftist audience burst into delighted soccer-style chants of "Olé, Olé, Olé, Chávez, Chávez." But Chávez is no socialist. A former army colonel now head of the capitalist state, he is an *enemy* of the struggle for socialism—i.e., the fight for workers revolution to expropriate the bourgeoisie. In fact, Chávez is very much in the mold of a string of bourgeois military officers who have come to power on the basis of nationalist populism, from Col. Juan Perón in Argentina in the 1940s to Col. Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt in the 1950s. In the 1950s and '60s, as Soviet-backed nationalist movements swept the semicolonial world, virtually every Third World capitalist demagogue claimed to be a "socialist" or "Marxist-Leninist" of some description. Nasser promulgated "Arab socialism," seized the Suez Canal from the French and British imperialists in 1956 and instituted a series of nationalizations. He nevertheless

White House Vendetta Against Chávez



Oil refinery in Puerto La Cruz, Venezuela, world's fifth-largest oil producing country. Top right: Populist strongman Hugo Chávez speaks to massive demonstration in Caracas, 2004.

presided over the exploitation of the Egyptian toilers on behalf of imperialism—breaking strikes, subordinating the unions to the capitalist state, arresting and torturing Communists.

In the face of another U.S.-backed coup, we, as Marxist internationalist opponents of U.S. imperialism, would again call on the working class to mobilize in military defense of the Chávez government (see "CIA Targets Chávez," *WV* No. 787, 20 September 2002). At the same time, we politically oppose the bourgeois-nationalist Chávez regime. In regard to the 2004 recall referendum organized by the regime's right-wing opponents, we argued for abstention rather than a no vote, which would have been an expression of confidence in Chávez. As we wrote in "U.S. Imperialism's Referendum Ploy Fails—Populist Capitalist Ruler Chávez Prevails" (*WV* No. 831, 3 September 2004): "The immediate perspective that is urgently posed is not only to oppose U.S. imperialist incursions into Venezuela and elsewhere, but to fight to shatter the support of the

workers movement to either Chávez or the opposition, and to forge a revolutionary internationalist workers party to lead the working class to power."

In contrast, the vast majority of self-described socialists and revolutionaries act as the "leftist" marketing department of Chávez's "Bolivarian Revolution." Foremost among these is Ted Grant's British-based International Marxist Tendency (IMT), now led by Alan Woods, author of a paean titled *The Venezuelan Revolution—A Marxist Perspective* (2005). While other opportunists offer the occasional criticism of Chávez, Woods and his outfit actually boast of being "Trotskyist" advisers to the left-talking *caudillo*. In foisting Chávez off as a champion of the poor and oppressed, *the IMT et al. help set workers up for slaughter*. Tying the working class and its organizations to any bourgeois ruler only serves to impede independent working-class struggle. In opposition to groups like the IMT, Marxists seek to prepare the Venezuelan working class to effectively combat the murderous forces of bourgeois reaction,

whether led by Chávez or his bourgeois opponents.

Chávez and Imperialism

Examining the arguments used by fake Marxists like the IMT to justify their support to the "Bolivarian Revolution" will help clarify the difference between populist nationalism and authentic proletarian Marxism. In a 1 March article on their Web site (www.marxist.com) titled "President Chavez Reaffirms Opposition to Capitalism," IMT spokesman Jorge Martin asserts that when he came to power in 1998, "Chavez did not start from a socialist standpoint. He was committed to solving the problems of inequality, poverty, and misery of millions of Venezuelans. But he initially thought that could be done within the limits of the capitalist system." Martin continues:

"Since President Chavez was seriously committed to solving these problems, the oligarchy, en masse, went over to the side of armed insurrection against the democratically elected government...."

"It has been this rich experience of the revolutionary movement, faced with the constant provocations of the ruling class, that has pushed Chavez and many in the Bolivarian revolutionary movement to draw the conclusion that 'Within the framework of capitalism it is impossible to solve the challenges of fighting against poverty, misery, exploitation, inequality'...."

"This dynamic of action and reaction of the Venezuelan revolution reminds us in a very powerful way of the first years of the Cuban revolution. In a process of attack and counter-attack, the leadership of the Cuban revolution, which did not start with the intention of overthrowing capitalism, was forced, in order to solve

continued on page 9