

“Anti-Terror” Law Targets Labor, Minorities

No to Bosses’ “National Unity”! For Class Struggle at Home!

NOVEMBER 6—The weeks of relentless pounding of Afghanistan by thousands of bombs and missiles have produced the intended result. Villages have been reduced to rubble and then reduced to an even finer rubble, with hospitals destroyed, Red Cross facilities obliterated, entire families blown to smithereens. “Humanitarian aid,” i.e., peanut butter, is dropped wrapped in yellow, the color of cluster bombs, the only purpose of the latter being to randomly maim and slaughter. With the Taliban virtually unscathed, the seemingly aimless character of the war has sowed disension in the ranks of imperialist America’s bloc partners, primarily those in the Arab/Muslim world and in Europe. These are disturbed by any number of “what ifs.” What if the war destabilizes Pakistan, putting its nuclear capability up for grabs? What if it triggers a further war between India and Pakistan, plunging the region into chaos? What if access to oil is disrupted? What if these powers are inexorably drawn from their current status as cheerleaders into a shooting war in which they have no direct interest?

The destruction of the World Trade Center was a criminal act that incinerated thousands of ordinary, innocent people. But it is not the death of ordinary people that moves America’s rulers. After all, bin Laden is a Frankenstein’s monster that turned on his creator, American imperialism, which unleashed him and other Islamic reactionaries, like the Taliban, against the Red Army in Afghanistan in the 1980s as part of its decades-long drive to smash the Soviet Union. In its crusade against “godless Communism,” Washington readily accepted the re-enslavement of Afghan women as “collateral damage.” A few years ago, Madeleine Albright also made clear that the death by starvation and disease of over a million Iraqis in the defense of U.S. imperial interests in the Near East was acceptable collateral damage. Using that brutal calculus, it is fair to ask if the thousands killed in the World Trade Center were also “acceptable collateral damage” for U.S. imperialism’s victory in the Cold War.

The U.S. rulers seize on the real horror of the American people over the attack on the World Trade Center. But from the imperialists’ standpoint, the “crime” of September 11 is the insult to their appetites for world domination represented by the attack on the nerve center of U.S. military power, the Pentagon. The Bush administration’s response to the attacks was to proclaim that the world had to decide: either for “us” or against “us” in a war scheduled to last, perhaps, a lifetime, against any and every challenge to Amer-



WV Photo

SL/SYC contingent in October 20 antiwar protest in San Francisco.

Defend Afghanistan Against Imperialist Attack!

ican imperialism. This is the response of a swaggering bully. America’s rulers seek to assure that their drive for profits, based on the exploitation of the working class here and abroad, will encounter no obstacles.

The jobs that are, in the short run, sometimes available as a result of imperialist ventures and wars are today, in the context of a worldwide depression, not to be found. While many workers from around the country have poured into New York City to donate their time and labor in the aftermath of the WTC disaster, the powers that be are satisfied to allow the small businessmen closed down by the devastation to go under. Over 600,000 jobs have been slashed nationwide just since September, and those unemployed will join the ranks of millions of others in the midst of a deepening recession.

Postal workers are ordered to work, the threat of anthrax notwithstanding, while the Senators, Congressmen and Supreme Court justices are carefully insulated from any possible exposure. On Friday, firemen in New York City fought through police barricades to protest against being pulled off the search for the bodies of their own as well as other victims of the attack. One fireman hit the nail right on the head when he pointed out that the dead were being left as garbage for the power shovels now that the gold caches stored in the subbasement of the WTC had been found and secured.

It has only been a few weeks since the air war against Afghanistan began, and it

is becoming increasingly clear to many poor and working people that they have everything to lose by supporting Bush’s crusade for “Enduring Freedom,” including such scant freedoms as are now accessible to them. As we said in our initial statement on the World Trade Center attack (WV No. 764, 14 September): “The ruling parties—Democrats and Republicans—are all too eager to be able to wield the bodies of those who were killed and wounded in order to reinforce capitalist class rule. It’s an opportunity for the exploiters to peddle ‘one nation indivisible’ patriotism to try to direct the burgeoning anger at the bottom of this society away from themselves and toward an indefinable foreign ‘enemy,’ as well as immigrants in the U.S., and to reinforce their arsenal of domestic state repression against all the working people.”

Over 1,100 non-citizens have been rounded up and held, most deprived of access to lawyers or their families. The cynically labeled “USA-Patriot Act 2001” authorizes preventive detention of non-citizens for seven days without charges and effectively indefinitely once they are charged, legalizes FBI break-ins and authorizes the CIA to engage in domestic spying. It also defines “terrorist” to include anyone who is deemed an opponent of the government. The sinister nature of this is already apparent to many black Americans. Reflecting such apprehensions, Chicago-area Congressman Jesse Jackson Jr. pointed out: “The terrorists didn’t attack the Statue of

Liberty, the Constitution or the Bill of Rights or the Declaration of Independence. They attacked the symbols of our economic and military power in the world. It’s the supporters of this bill who are really attacking American liberties that are contained in our most sacred historical documents.”

The federal “anti-terror” law is accompanied by a series of other proposed measures targeting port and maritime workers, airline workers and others for increased surveillance and victimization. Lest workers forget that labor militancy is not a right in the eyes of our bourgeois rulers, South Carolina’s attorney general recently issued a chilling reminder. Referring to the Charleston Five, longshoremen who face prison terms for defending their union against the use of scab labor, he intoned, “I’m against forcing people to join unions in order to get a job. And so this whole idea of ends justifying the means, as we know these terrorists that killed so many people, that’s exactly their argument.”

The “terror” that concerns the U.S. imperialists is any resistance to their prerogatives and class rule. The defense of Afghanistan against imperialist attack is integrally linked to the defense of the working masses here against increasing exploitation and oppression, which requires the overturn of the imperialist order through workers revolution. The task is to educate and mobilize the proletariat to that end. And that requires

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Build PDC Holiday Appeal for Class-War Prisoners!

"The class-conscious worker accords to the class-war prisoners a place of singular honor and esteem. The class-war prisoners are stronger than all the jails and jailers and judges. They rise triumphant over all their enemies and oppressors. Confined in prison, covered with ignominy, branded as criminals, they are not defeated. They are destined to triumph. They are the representatives of an idea that will crack the walls of every prison and crumble them into dust.

"There is a way of saying that the class-war prisoners are victorious, which smacks of superficial optimism and which offers little consolation to men who spend long, almost forgotten years behind the gray walls of the jail. We do not mean to speak in this sense, as though it were an automatic process. The victory of the class-war prisoners is possible only when they are inseparably united with the living labor movement and when that movement claims them for its own, takes up their battle cry and carries on their work."

—James P. Cannon, "The Cause That Passes Through a Prison" (September 1926), reprinted in *Notebook of an Agitator* (Pathfinder Press 1958)

It is in the spirit of class solidarity evoked by James P. Cannon that the Par-

tisan Defense Committee is holding its 16th annual Holiday Appeal for Class-War Prisoners. The fight for these class-war prisoners is all the more urgent as the U.S. capitalist rulers have seized on the horrific and criminal World Trade Center attack to rain bombs on the desperately impoverished peoples of backward Afghanistan, while gearing up the apparatus of state repression against workers, immigrants and the oppressed at home. As masses of workers are laid off, over 1,200 immigrants detained, the new "anti-terror" law ratchets up the government's power to spy on the population, jail activists and trade-union militants and indiscriminately round up non-citizens. All this underscores the link between opposition to U.S. imperialist military adventures abroad and defense of the interests of workers and the oppressed in the U.S.

In 1986, the PDC revived a tradition of the International Labor Defense (ILD) and its founder and early leader James P. Cannon of sending monthly stipends to class-war prisoners as an expression of

solidarity. The Holiday Appeal campaign helps to sustain the PDC's monthly stipend program for 16 class-war prisoners and provides extra funds for holiday gifts for them and their families. This is not an act of charity, but rather the duty of fighters against injustice to those inside prison walls as we struggle for their freedom.

Mumia Abu-Jamal, In a sworn statement filed last May in federal court, Mumia Abu-Jamal reaffirmed once again that he is an innocent man. A prize-winning journalist, former Black Panther Party spokesman in his youth, supporter of the MOVE organization and defiant opponent of racist state terror, in 1982 he was railroaded to death row at the hands of Philadelphia's notorious cop and court frame-up machine on demonstrably false charges of killing a Philly cop.

In a recently published PDC pamphlet entitled *Mumia Abu-Jamal Is an Innocent Man!* we reprint the sworn confession of the man who actually did kill policeman Daniel Faulkner, Arnold Beverly. Beverly's account is affirmed in accompanying declarations by Jamal and his brother William Cook, who was at the scene of the shooting.

The pamphlet features the affidavit of PDC counsel Rachel Wolkenstein, who was a member of Jamal's defense team from 1995 to 1999. It compellingly marshals the evidence of his innocence and powerfully documents the struggle waged against Mumia's former attorneys, who worked overtime to ensure that this exculpatory evidence was never introduced in court.

December marks 20 years of Mumia's imprisonment. The PDC calls on working people, minorities, youth and all opponents of racist capitalist oppression to raise the cry: *Freedom Now for Mumia Abu-Jamal! Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!*

Jerry Dale Lowe, United Mine Workers member framed up on federal charges in the July 1993 shooting death of a scab contractor in Logan County, West Virginia. The scab was part of a convoy leaving the mine, shot in the back of the head from the direction of the bosses' thugs. Lowe was singled out by authorities because he was a militant defender of the picket line. For the "crime" of defending his union, Lowe was sentenced to nearly eleven years in jail in Ashland, Kentucky with no possibility of parole. Last March, his appeal based on new ballistics evidence was turned down in federal court.

Ed Poindexter and **Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa**, former Black Panther supporters and leaders of the Omaha Nebraska Committee to Combat Fascism. Victims of racist FBI COINTELPRO operation, framed up for an explosion in 1970 which killed a cop. Both were convicted on the basis of perjured testimony, sentenced to life and have now spent more than 30 years apiece in jail. Nebraska Board of Pardons refuses to lessen sentences so that they can be considered for parole. Poindexter is at Lino Lake, MN and Mondo is at Lincoln, NE.

Jaan Laaman and **Ray Luc Levasseur** were arrested in 1984 and '85 as part of the Ohio 7. They are radical activists with a shared history of opposition to



Jennifer Beach

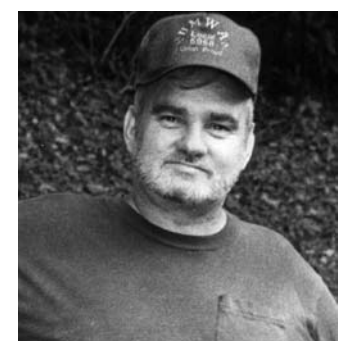
Mumia Abu-Jamal

racism and imperialism. Sentenced to 45 years to life under RICO conspiracy laws on allegations of bank expropriations and bombings targeting symbols of U.S. imperialism in the late '70s and '80s. Jaan Laaman has been transferred to South Walpole, MA. Ray Luc Levasseur is in Atlanta, GA.

Hugo Pinell, the last of the San Quentin 6 still in prison. Militant anti-racist, leader of prison rights organizing along with George Jackson, who was murdered by prison guards in 1971. In prison for over 37 years. Currently serving a life sentence at the notorious Pelican Bay Security Housing Unit in California.

Eight MOVE members, **Chuck Africa**, **Michael Davis Africa**, **Debbie Sims Africa**, **Janet Holloway Africa**, **Janine Phillips Africa**, **Edward Goodman Africa**, **Delbert Orr Africa** and **William Phillips Africa**, are in their 24th year in prison. They were sentenced to 30-100 years after the 1978 police attack on their Philadelphia home, falsely convicted of killing a police officer. Last year, the PCRA petition to overturn their frame-ups was denied.

Jamal Hart, Mumia's son, was sentenced in 1998 to 15½ years on bogus firearm possession charges, targeted for his prominent activism in the campaign to free his father. Although Hart was initially charged under Pennsylvania laws, which would have meant a probationary sentence, Clinton's Justice Department intervened to have Hart thrown in prison. He is not eligible for parole. Hart is at Fairton, New Jersey.



WV Photo

Jerry Dale Lowe

Contribute Now! All proceeds from the Holiday Appeal will go to the Class-War Prisoners Stipend Fund. Send your contributions to: PDC, P.O. Box 99, Canal St. Station, New York, NY 10013; (212) 406-4252.

The PDC is a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defense organization that champions cases and causes in the interests of the whole of the working people. This purpose is in accordance with the political views of the Spartacist League.■



TROTSKY

Proletarian Internationalism vs. Social-Patriotism

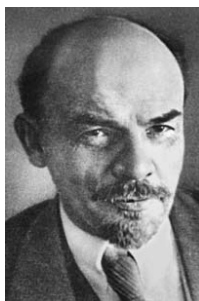
As proletarian internationalists, we call for military defense of backward Afghanistan against the savage attack by America's imperialist rulers. In opposition to the "national unity" promoted by the bosses' labor lieutenants in the AFL-CIO bureaucracy, our task is to mobilize the U.S. proletariat in struggle for its class interests against the capitalist exploiters. Writing as the second interimperialist world war

loomed on the horizon, revolutionary Marxist Leon Trotsky stressed that the working class must be won to the program of revolutionary internationalism if it is to sweep away the capitalist system that breeds war and privation.

The exposure of the thoroughly reactionary, putrified and robber nature of modern capitalism, the destruction of democracy, reformism and pacifism, the urgent and burning need of the proletariat to find a safe path away from imminent disaster put the international revolution on the agenda with renewed force. Only the overthrow of the bourgeoisie by the insurgent proletariat can save humanity from a new, devastating slaughter of the peoples....

A "socialist" who preaches national defense is a petty-bourgeois reactionary at the service of decaying capitalism. Not to bind itself to the national state in time of war, to follow not the war map but the map of the class struggle, is possible only for that party that has already declared irreconcilable war on the national state in time of peace. Only by realizing fully the objectively reactionary role of the imperialist state can the proletarian vanguard become invulnerable to all types of social patriotism. This means that a real break with the ideology and policy of "national defense" is possible only from the standpoint of the *international proletarian revolution*.

—Leon Trotsky, "War and the Fourth International" (June 1934)



LENIN

WORKERS VANGUARD

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The closing date for news in this issue is 6 November.

No. 768

9 November 2001

Benefit for Class-War Prisoners Organize for Jamal's Freedom

New York

**Friday, November 30
6 to 9 p.m.**

AFSCME District Council 1707
75 Varick St. (at Canal), 14th fl

For more information:
(212) 406-4252

P.O. Box 99, Canal St. Sta.
New York, NY 10013

Chicago

**Sunday, December 9
3 to 7 p.m.**

United Electrical Hall
37 S. Ashland (at Monroe)

For more information:
(312) 563-0442

P.O. Box 802867
Chicago, IL 60680

Bay Area

**Sunday, December 2
1 to 4 p.m.**

Centro del Pueblo
474 Valencia, San Francisco

For more information:
(510) 839-0852

P.O. Box 77462
San Francisco, CA 94107

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From an Airline Worker: Airline Bosses Get Billions, Workers Get Layoffs

17 October 2001

To the editor:

As a reader of your newspaper, I wanted to add some of my own observations about what's happening to airline workers in the wake of the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center. The airline bosses seized on the opportunity the tragedy afforded to expedite the restructuring of their companies so as to bust the unions and increase the rate of exploitation of the workforce. Excepting Southwest and Continental, the domestic carriers were projected before September 11 to lose almost \$2 billion combined this year, which management largely attributed to rising labor costs. After the hijackings, that projection more than doubled.

All the companies but Southwest in rapid succession announced furloughs of 10-25 percent of the workforce, totalling more than 100,000, both to reduce the

payroll and motivate their bailout before Congress. This week, Continental, which led the campaign for federal loan guarantees, announced it is content with the cash handout (and furlough of 12,000 employees) and is unlikely to require the loans and the accompanying financial encumbrances in order to turn a profit by next spring. The prospects for other companies are improved, too. Midway Airlines, which closed its doors on September 12, now expects to again fly by late October, with any members of its old workforce who do return to do so at loss of seniority.

Meanwhile, the "Airline Labor Dispute Resolution Act," introduced in the Senate by John McCain on behalf of the industry bosses, seeks to eliminate the right of airline workers to strike and vote on their contracts by forcing all disputes into "baseball arbitration," in which a federal arbiter would select and make binding the

comprehensive contract of one side. A black American Airlines ramp worker who's in the Transport Workers Union told me: "The problem is that there is no 'league minimum' with this company." The International Association of Machinists and TWU are the most vocal unions in opposition, though the strategy is to lobby Congress. The IAM bureaucracy set the servile tone of the union chiefs shortly after the terror attack by announcing to its membership, "Labor, management and the federal government must work together."

I was told that Continental furloughed close to 3,000 employees at Newark. A mixture of resignation and anxiety marked the days leading up to "Furlough Day." One Continental ramp worker likened the flow of long, solemn faces in the Terminal Operations hallway to "a funeral procession." Throughout the airline industry, co-workers sought out each other, not infrequently across craft lines, to exchange phone numbers, job leads and relive shared memories. Those with the seniority to survive what was widely viewed as the first round of furloughs did not escape the sting of cutbacks. There is a freeze on overtime, upon which many depended to maintain a decent standard of living, and hundreds were downgraded to part-time status, impelling scores of the still-employed to search for additional jobs.

Individual expressions of protest were evident. The day the *New York Times*, September 21, ran an article on Continental and the shady financial maneuvering of its CEO, Gordon Bethune, a copy was posted in the Newark Inflight Ops hallway (flight attendants) with the new



Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

headline: "Furlough Gordon!" Quickly removed, presumably by management, it was re-posted the next day. When it was removed for a second time, I'm told it was replaced by a sign warning against "unapproved postings." Though the article merely covered the mundane workings of a typical capitalist enterprise, it gave the lie to internal company propaganda of "Working Together"—Gordon placed the company on shaky financial ground, risking the jobs of the workforce, to protect his own job and maximize his personal wealth. Continental workers at Newark told me that all facilities mechanics survived "Furlough Day," but for eleven new hires it was a short reprieve. In a move that caught the shop off guard, management activated a clause in the contract with the Teamsters that allows it to terminate probationary employees, and the union tops assented. Notification was conveniently timed to coincide with a "diversity" training workshop (the principle message of which was to rat out your co-workers to management) to which the shop was herded, preventing any fraternization with the just terminated mechanics. Two days later, three of those mechanics were back on the job—in the employ of a non-union contracting company—doing the same work for less pay.

For the shift bid at the end of the month, management has broken its agreement with the union and changed the hours of the shifts so it can grind more

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Piran/NY Times

As National Guard troops patrol airports, airline workers are subjected to increased harassment, surveillance.

From a Letter Carrier: For Postal Bosses, Workers' Deaths Are "Acceptable Loss"

31 October 2001
Oakland, CA

Dear Editor:

With its usual combination of callous indifference toward the lives and health of postal workers and a truly maniacal drive for speedup and productivity, the U.S. Postal Service has let an unknown number of postal workers become infected with anthrax. Anything to keep the mail moving (a sentiment that National Association of Letter Carriers president Vince Sombrotto was quick to endorse). As *WV* notes, this does indeed underscore the absolute indifference of the bosses to the lives of working people.

I would make a couple of additional points: 1) as you can see from the newspaper photos, a high percentage of Washington, D.C. (and New York City) postal workers are black—making them doubly expendable in the eyes of the bourgeoisie and 2) unlike Congress which could be disbanded for a long time without much loss, postal workers actually do socially

useful work which the bourgeoisie has trouble doing without.

At the medium-sized post office where I work, carriers are not so much fearful as angry and bitter. One of my co-workers brought to my attention a column by the *New York Times*' Maureen Dowd, entitled "Postal Workers Left in the Dark." This article refers to the fact that Capitol Police dogs got tested for anthrax before postal workers did. Many people thought that about captured where, in the hierarchy of things, the postal workers fall: somewhere below German shepherds, especially if those German shepherds work for the cops.

Another co-worker who is about my age and a Vietnam vet (white) said it reminded him of the Vietnam War, where the brass were always throwing around the term "acceptable loss." A couple of dead postal workers (now on the "front lines") is just "acceptable loss" to the Postmaster General. *Everyone* noted the strikingly different response when it was Congressmen who faced the possibility

of contracting anthrax. After anthrax spores were found on the machines in New York City's Morgan Station and workers were told to stay on the job, sev-

eral workers in my post office expressed the hope that New York postal workers would walk out, rather than wait for the union bureaucracy to file a lawsuit(!).

One worker here told me that the day after the two Washington postal workers died, management didn't have the guts to come out on the shop floor. (These guys are always holding meetings to push speedup and threaten discipline.) Instead, they spoke over the loudspeaker, never mentioning the deaths, but assuring workers that everything was under control and that there were gloves and masks if workers wanted them. Our local union

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Spartacist  Forums

Defend Afghanistan Against Imperialist Attack!

**For Class Struggle Against
Capitalist Rulers at Home!**

**Down With
Anti-Immigrant Dragnet!**
Saturday, November 17, 2 p.m.
Boston University
College of Arts & Sciences
685-725 Commonwealth Ave., Rm. 324
For more information: (617) 666-9453

BOSTON

**Down With Ottawa's
"Anti-Terror" Law!**
Saturday, December 1, 7:30 p.m.
Trinity-St. Paul's Centre
427 Bloor St. West (west of Spadina)
For more information: (416) 593-4138
or e-mail spartcan@on.aibn.com

TORONTO

IBT's Centrist Phrasemongering

We print the following letter in the form that we received it by e-mail.

20 October 2001

To the Editor

In the 12 October issue of Workers Vanguard it is alleged that IBT comrades in Toronto have been pressing Trotskyism [sic] League youth “to agree that all those killed in the attack on the Pentagon ‘deserved to die.’” This is absolutely untrue. We categorically deny making such a statement at any time in Toronto or anywhere else. We are flatly opposed to such views as our 18 September statement makes clear.

On 28 September I had a conversation with young TLER in front of the building at the University of Toronto where Tariq Ali was speaking. During this discussion the question of the omission of the Pentagon bombing from your initial statement came up, along with the question of Lebanon 1983 and other issues. On 19 October, after reading your erroneous account, I met this same comrade at a public meeting on “globalization” at the University of Toronto and asked him if he had been the source of this misinformation. He agreed that I had made no such statement, nor did he know of any other IBT comrade making such a statement. He furthermore denied being the source of the false attribution.

In a subsequent discussion with Comrade Charles I pointed out that in the present political climate the consequences of such falsehoods could potentially be extremely serious. I told him that I was raising this with him, as a leading member of the TL, on behalf of the IBT. He indicated that he was not the source of the quotation. He also advised me that Workers Vanguard has a policy of correcting “factual errors” and suggested that I write to you on this matter.

We look forward to an appropriate correction in the 26 October issue of Workers Vanguard.

Bolshevik Greetings,
Tom Riley

WV replies: The statement in our article “On the Pentagon Attack” (WV No. 766, 12 October) that International Bolshevik Tendency (IBT) members argued that “all those killed in the attack on the Pentagon ‘deserved to die’” was a distortion of a report from our Canadian comrades, which we retract. What the IBT wrote in its 18 September statement is: “Unlike the personnel in the Pentagon, the command center of the U.S. military, the thousands of victims trapped in the World Trade Center’s twin towers and the hundreds of passengers and crew on board

the four hijacked airliners were civilians whose deaths we mourn.”

The IBT has since posted a 21 October “Reply to *Workers Vanguard*” on its Web site claiming that our statement that “the IBT amnesties the ‘war is not the answer’ reformists in the U.S.” is also “a malicious invention without any basis in fact.” On the contrary, our characterization is absolutely true. Neither in its 18 September statement nor in the 21 October cyberspace reply to us (which, to our knowledge, are the only pieces of propaganda the IBT has produced since September 11) does the IBT mention, let alone criticize, the social-patriotism of the reformist left, whose various “anti-war” coalitions are based on bleating appeals to the imperialist ruling class for peace. Instead, the IBT aims virtually all its polemical fire at the Spartacist League, claiming *we* are social-patriotic because

ism, the main enemy of the working people and oppressed of the world. That recognition does not translate this attack into an ‘anti-imperialist’ act, nor do we think the planeload of innocent passengers which was used as the massive bomb ‘deserved to die’ (or the janitors and secretaries who were employed at the Pentagon).”

In 1983, when we raised the evocative slogan, “Marines out of Lebanon, now, alive!” to intersect widespread outrage among the American population against the Reagan administration, the IBT (then called the External Tendency—ET) denounced us as social-patriotic and countered with the call, “Marines: live like pigs, die like pigs!” We wrote in “Marxism and Bloodthirstiness” (WV No. 345, 6 January 1984):

“From a safe distance, the petty-bourgeois radicals embrace the ‘good’ peoples (if necessary first inventing them, as in Lebanon today) and for the ‘bad,’



Lochon/Gamma

Soviet forces land at Kabul airport, December 1979. Trotskyists hailed Red Army intervention against CIA-backed, anti-woman Islamic reactionaries. Those who went on to form IBT couldn’t stomach our hard Soviet-defensist line.

we refused to hail as an “anti-imperialist act” a truck-bomb attack on a U.S. Marine barracks in Lebanon by unknown forces 18 years ago.

We opposed the presence of U.S. (and United Nations) troops in Lebanon from the outset, unlike sundry Third World nationalists and fake leftists who sold the lie that the imperialists would be “peacekeepers” in the multi-sided religious/ethnic civil war then wracking that country. We also made clear that “from the standpoint of the struggle of the international proletariat, the Marine HQ in Beirut was an appropriate target” (*Young Spartacus* No. 114, December 1983/January 1984). However, this did not make its destruction an act of “anti-imperialism.” In fact, no side in the Lebanese civil war was fighting imperialism. Those whose cause was clearest—the Palestine Liberation Organization—had requested imperialist intervention in the first place. And to this day it is still not clear who blew up the Marine barracks.

Marxists recognize that victorious struggle by the proletariat against the imperialist rulers—and the massive arsenal of violence in the hands of the capitalist state—requires the maximum assembling of effective force to deter and demoralize the forces of reaction. But the use of terrorism as a strategy by individuals or small groups—even against a military target—is counterposed to mobilizing the proletariat in class struggle against the imperialist rulers. At the same time, Marxists draw a distinction between attacks on institutions like the Pentagon and random terror against innocent civilians, as in the case of the World Trade Center, even if the perpetrators of the September 11 attacks (whoever they were) might not have drawn any such distinction. As we wrote in “On the Pentagon Attack”:

“The Pentagon is the command and administrative center of the U.S. imperialist military, and rather quintessentially represents the military might of U.S. imperial-

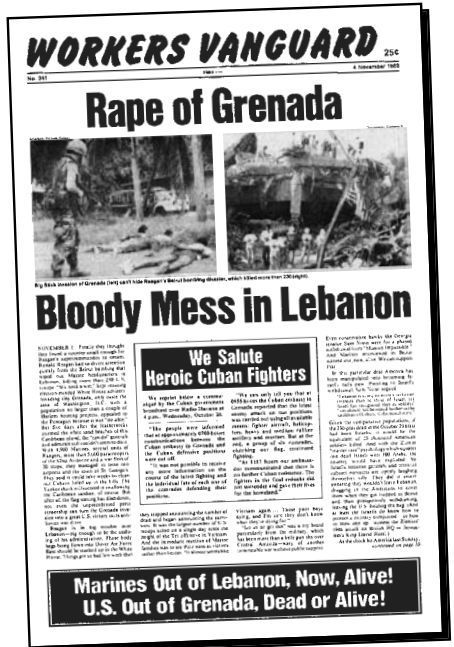
well, the only good one is a dead one. Reactionary in itself, such an attitude—completely divorced as it is from Marxist class analysis—necessarily gives way to anti-communist public opinion. Thus we see many of yesterday’s ‘radicals’ joining up ideologically with U.S. imperialism over the plight of ‘poor little Afghanistan’ and the crushing of counterrevolutionary Polish Solidarność.”

This aptly captured the politics animating the ET/IBT, which was founded by people who quit our organization in the early 1980s when they caught the first whiff of the heightened reaction and repression of Cold War II. The renewed imperialist offensive against the Soviet Union was launched after Red Army troops moved into Afghanistan in December 1979 to aid a pro-Moscow, left-nationalist regime besieged by a CIA-backed Islamic insurgency. Noting that what was posed was not only defense of the Soviet degenerated workers state but the possibility of extending the social gains of the October Revolution to the hideously oppressed peoples of Afghanistan, particularly women, we forthrightly declared, “Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!”

In an early polemic, we wrote: “If the ET were more honest, they would admit that they hated it when we hailed the Soviet Red Army’s military intervention

in Afghanistan” (“The ‘External Tendency’: From Cream Puffs to Food Poisoning,” WV No. 349, 2 March 1984). Four years later, they finally owned up to their real position, declaring: “Trotskyists never hail Stalinist traitors or their state.... The slogan ‘Hail Red Army’ is not a Trotskyist slogan, because what it tells workers is to trust the Stalinists, put your faith in the Stalinists, hail the Stalinists” (see “BT Says Don’t Hail Red Army in Afghanistan,” WV No. 449, 25 March 1988). This retrospective repudiation came even as Soviet troops were being withdrawn, so the IBT’s sole purpose was to clean up its history to remove any taint of “Spartacism.”

Here was a quintessential expression of social-patriotism, on what was a defining question of opposition to the imperialist rulers. In the biggest covert CIA operation in history, the U.S. funneled billions of dollars to the Islamic “holy warriors” in Afghanistan, with the aim of using the Afghan conflict as a launching pad for the destruction of the Soviet Union. Albeit administered by a nationalist Stalinist bureaucracy, the Soviet Union was a



Front page of WV (No. 341, 4 November 1983) as Reagan ordered invasion of Grenada after bloody fiasco in Lebanon.

The International Bolshevik Tendency—What Is It?

International Communist League pamphlet, August 1995

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The International Bolshevik Tendency—What Is It?

Postal...

(continued from page 3)

president also spoke in the same vein over the loudspeaker. Many workers found this whole thing insulting and obnoxious. The union president’s participation served to further discredit him.

Several days later there was a meeting and the speaker was a postal inspector. (Postal inspectors are cops and are universally loathed by postal workers. We are very often the target of their investigations.) There were a number of worried questions about health concerns and I asked about the Brentwood facility in Washington, D.C. and why it hadn’t been closed promptly. As several people commented afterwards, they really didn’t answer any of our questions.

Since then most carriers, mail handlers and clerks are wearing gloves, but not masks. (My doctor tells me that masks won’t do any good, anyway.) I think this is a good idea in general. Post offices are incredibly filthy. Mail, like money, is dirty to begin with. And the Post Office has a policy of never washing a mail bag, tub or tray. They are used (no matter how encrusted with filth) until they fall apart and are only then discarded. The sorting machines are cleaned by blowers that blow the dust into the work areas and into the workers’ lungs. I personally have gotten three serious infections since I started working for the Post Office (including

Funeral of Joseph P. Curseen Jr., one of two Washington, D.C. postal workers who have died of anthrax.



one that required hospitalization and taking the antibiotic Cipro).

The work situation is more terrible than ever: speedup, harassment and the consistent attempt to ratchet up the rate of exploitation. One of the more diabolical plots of the Post Office is the new scanners that we have been issued. They have also issued us little bar codes on adhesive tape that have to be attached to a number of our customers’ mailboxes! We have to scan a bar code before we leave the post office, scan a bar code at the first mailbox on our route, scan the bar code on a mailbox when we stop for lunch, when we return from lunch, when we get to the last mailbox, and when we

return to the post office. This is in addition to punching a time clock.

In regards to the war, the sentiment has been more muted than I expected. It is also more muted than around the Persian Gulf War, when there were a lot of anti-Arab cartoons, etc. The Post Office handed out flag lapel pins, but only a minority wear them. The ones with the biggest flags always seem to be the union stewards and officials. There are also some who have put up flags on their trucks, but many of these seem to be more for protection than out of commitment. A number of my co-workers are Indian, Pakistani or Sikh, as well as Hispanics and all kinds of Asians. One right-winger

sons and daughters who will die”—with not a word in defense of the Iraqi people facing imperialist slaughter! And finally, there is current IBT *supremo* Bill Logan, a sociopath who was expelled from our organization in 1979 for gross crimes against communist morality and elemental human decency—including interference in the personal/sexual lives of comrades, forcing couples apart or making them stay together and forcing a comrade to give up her baby.

In joining this anti-Spartacist lash up in the 1990s, Logan steered the IBT more openly into the waters of social-democratic opportunism. In 1996, the IBT’s British outfit totally liquidated into Arthur Scargill’s Socialist Labour Party (although one might more appropriately charge Scargill with opportunism for accepting them given that the IBT stood to his right, particularly in regard to the Cold War). More recently, the IBT supported the Socialist Alliance in Britain, which ran point in the last elections for Tony Blair’s Labour Party. Both the IBT’s 18 September statement and its recent Web posting avoid any mention of the Labour Party, whose government is the most stalwart ally of U.S. imperialism in the current war. The title of the IBT’s initial statement, “U.S. Imperialist Rule: An Endless Horror,” played well to its audiences at antiwar rallies in Britain and Canada, where anti-Americanism is the stock in trade for those who want to cover for the crimes of their own imperialist rulers.

War provides the clearest test for organizations that claim to speak on behalf of the working class, and it is not only over today’s U.S.-led assault on Afghanistan that the IBT has bared its opportunist underbelly. In 1990, as Washington instigated the United Nations blockade of Iraq that has led to the death of some one and a half million people, the IBT group in the U.S. busied itself in trying to build an “antiwar” coalition with red-white-and-blue reformists, declining even to call to end the blockade as part of the coalition’s “basis of unity.”

Eight years later, when NATO launched its bloody war against Serbia under the guise of defending the Kosovo Albanians, the IBT joined with the rest of the opportunist left in promoting imperialist war propaganda with the call, “Independence for Kosovo!” While claiming to “defend Yugoslavia against NATO’s attack,” the IBT simultaneously lined up behind the Kosovo Liberation Army—which was then literally acting as spot-ter for U.S./NATO air strikes—writing:

“While we offer no political support to the bourgeois-nationalist KLA, we nonetheless side with them militarily in their struggle for freedom from their Serb oppressors” (1917 No. 21, 1999). Only after a month of the bombing, as KLA forces in Kosovo served as military auxiliaries for NATO and KLA supporters in the West joined in openly pro-NATO demonstrations, did the IBT finally acknowledge that the KLA had become a “cat’s paw of imperialism.”

The IBT readily shouted for “Independence for Kosovo!” at a time when this suited imperialist interests. In Canada, the IBT stands with the English-Canadian chauvinist rulers in *opposing* independence for Quebec. In fact, the IBT and the unabashedly Maple Leaf nationalist Communist Party of Canada were the only purportedly socialist groups to join the Canadian ruling class in calling for a “No” vote in a 1995 referendum on independence in Quebec. The IBT’s sole member in Quebec, as he quit, denounced its “de facto bloc with the Canadian bourgeoisie” (see “From the Swamp of Anglo-Chauvinism—‘Bolsh- evik Tendency’ Opposes Quebec Inde- pendence,” *Spartacist Canada* No. 108, March/April 1996).

The IBT seeks to camouflage its many capitulations to bourgeois social- chauvinism with what we have termed “vicarious bloodthirstiness.” Thus much of its latest Web posting is devoted to reit- erating for the umpteenth time the charge that we were guilty of a “cowardly flinch” for raising “Marines out of Lebanon, now, alive!” at a moment when the Reagan ad- ministration was widely reviled because it had sent the troops into the Lebanese quagmire.

The vulnerability of the government over the Lebanon fiasco was demon- strated not least by the fact that it immed- iately launched an invasion of the tiny black Caribbean island of Grenada in order to get an easy “victory.” The sheer absurdity of the IBT’s charge that we went social-patriotic over Lebanon is shown by the fact that we coupled our Lebanon slogan with the call, “U.S. out of Grenada, dead or alive!” on the front page of WV (No. 341, 4 November 1983), where we also hailed the 700 Cuban con- struction workers who resisted the Amer- ican invaders. Unlike in Lebanon, in Gre- nada Marxists *had a side*: with the Cubans and others who fought against the U.S. occupation forces.

In its Web posting, the IBT writes that “Leninists stand for the immediate

and unconditional removal of imperialist troops from neo-colonies as a mat- ter of principle.” But at the time, the IBT wasn’t simply for the unconditional with- drawal of U.S. troops from Lebanon. Rather, they engaged in idiot New Left grooving over the dead Marines, sneering: “The pro-imperialist ‘American masses’ don’t want the *U.S. Marines* to die in Beirut, and neither does the SL leadership. We say: ‘Marines: Live Like Pigs, Die Like Pigs!’” (ET Statement of 12 November 1983, reprinted in *Bulletin of the External Tendency of the iST* No. 2, January 1984). While opposing the many bloody incursions of U.S. imperialism around the world, our purpose is not to gloat over the deaths of American sol- diers—who are disproportionately black and overwhelmingly of proletarian ori- gin—but to make the working class con- scious of the need to overthrow capital- ism through a socialist revolution. Such a revolution will never be achieved if you are indifferent (at best) to the working- class ranks of the army.

The IBT posting demagogically claims that in labeling Reagan’s Lebanon adventure “senseless” our concern was the same as that of the bourgeoisie, quot- ing their 7 February 1984 article “Marx- ism and Social-Patriotism”:

“‘Senseless’ is precisely the way that Reagan’s Democratic critics in Congress perceive his intervention in Lebanon. ‘Senseless’ from the point of view of the best interests of U.S. imperialism. They also want to be sensible and smart and get them out now, while they are still alive.”

In fact, the bourgeoisie doesn’t care how much of its working-class cannon fodder is expended in war. During the Vietnamese Revolution, the rulers in Washington were worried not about GIs

put a personal statement along the lines of “America, defend it or leave it” on all the desks, but management came around collecting it within the hour because someone had complained about it. Some of those who have bought tickets to the Partisan Defense Committee’s Holi- day Appeal over the years start off defending the U.S.’s need to “do some- thing about the terrorists,” but are increas- ingly uneasy and unconvinced about what the U.S. is actually doing. And the Post Office response to anthrax has certainly driven a small wedge into the “united we stand” rhetoric.

At one post office, all the managers were on the back dock, wearing gloves and going through every item of mail. Rumor has it that a guy tried to mail a padded envelope at an L.A. post office, but fled (taking the envelope) when the window clerk went to call a manager to inspect it. Now post offices around the country are looking for the envelope. Is this for real? Who knows. But it is a measure of the hostility to management that the main reaction of carriers was ostentatious snickering at the unprece- dented sight of bosses doing any work.

By the way, the Letter Carriers con- tract expires this November 21. The American Postal Workers Union’s con- tract, which covers most of the inside workers, does not expire at the same time anymore. Their contract is currently in arbitration.

D.C.

coming home in body bags, but about *losing the war*—and that was directly related to the fact that the American army was splintering from within. The Vietnamese liberation fighters did not gloat over the deaths of American GIs, but rather appealed to black troops in particular to turn against their own racist rulers, declaring in one instance: “U.S. Negro Armymen! You are committing the same ignominious crimes in South Vietnam that the KKK clique is perpe- trating against your family at home.”

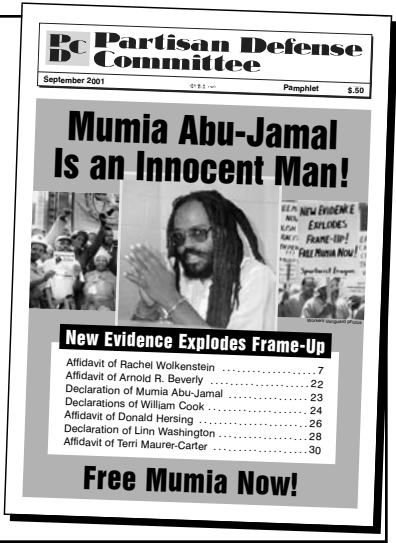
Revulsion in the ranks of the military over senseless slaughter has long been a powerful weapon for communists: many of the early cadre of the Communist par- ties in Europe were World War I POWs on the Eastern front who came home won to Bolshevism and the Russian Revolution. Winning over the largely peasant-derived ranks of the tsarist army was crucial to the victory of the Bolshevik Revolution.

We are Marxists not least because we abhor war and its pointless slaughter of millions of lives. Unlike the reformists the IBT is so happy to tail, we are simul- taneously for the victory of just causes, from the Vietnamese Revolution to the defense of semicolonies and small coun- tries from Iraq to Serbia and now Afghan- istan against imperialist bombing and blockade. This is all part of our struggle to reforge Trotsky’s Fourth International as the instrument for the emancipation of the working class and oppressed world- wide. In contrast, as we wrote in our 12 October polemic, “the IBT’s vicarious bloodthirstiness and conspicuous silence on the social-patriotism of the reformist left merely serve the interests of the class enemy, insofar as their insignificant forces are capable of serving any cause.”■

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Recession...

(continued from page 12)

trade. But one can expect conflicts over agricultural trade to take on much greater weight in the near future. For one thing, there are now strong forces in the U.S. Congress, with farm-state Republicans in the lead, pushing to increase subsidies to American farmers in open violation of WTO-sanctioned treaties. An EU spokesman on agricultural matters, Gerry Kiely, rebuked Washington politicians that “U.S. policy is going in the wrong direction.” That is, in a direction contrary to the interests of European capital.

On the other side, Germany in particular is pushing hard to expand the European Union to the East European countries of the former Soviet bloc (e.g., Poland, Hungary, Slovakia). These countries have much larger peasant populations (over 20 percent in Poland) and far more backward agricultural sectors than the advanced capitalist countries of West Europe. Hence German imperialism’s ambitions to consolidate a sphere of influence in East Europe will almost certainly lead to higher levels of EU agricultural protectionism vis-à-vis the United States.

“Global Warming” and the Politics of Oil

Two of the most publicized disputes between the Bush administration and West European governments—over the Kyoto treaty and the anti-missile defense system—appear at first glance to have little or nothing to do with economic conflicts of interests. But, in fact, they do.



M. Matzel

German troops in Macedonia on eve of 1999 NATO air war against Serbia. Germany now heads up imperialist occupation force in Macedonia.

The dispute over Kyoto is not really about global warming. After all, the American and West European governments clearly cannot even control the level of industrial production or the sales volume of new automobiles within their own national boundaries. How, then, can they possibly regulate industrial pollution on a global scale and its effect on worldwide weather patterns? Obviously, they can’t. The Kyoto dispute is actually about an important and longstanding conflict of interest between American and European capitalism: the economics of world oil.

The United States, with a population of 280 million, accounts for 26 percent of world oil imports. Europe (excluding Russia), with a population of slightly over 500 million, accounts for about 24 percent. The far lower per capita consumption of oil in Europe is achieved by exorbitant taxes on gasoline and heating fuel, which triggered widely popular protests by small truckers and farmers throughout much of West Europe last year. But why should European capitalists be concerned with, much less opposed to, the relatively high level of oil consumption and importation in the U.S.? Because the world oil market is dominated by giant American companies like Exxon-Mobil, which effectively control Saudi Arabia. Although Royal Dutch Shell and British Petroleum are also major players in this



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London, November 2000: truckers protests throughout West Europe against exorbitant fuel prices were widely popular.

game, the core countries of the European Union—Germany and France—are *not* major producers and distributors of oil.

The high level of oil consumption in the U.S. tends to raise the price of oil in the world market. And every additional dollar in the world market price of oil not only enriches an important sector of corporate America at the expense of German and French capitalists but also increases the energy costs of industry and transport in Europe. So the European bourgeoisies have tried to use concern over global warming as a *pretext* to pressure the U.S. to restrict its consumption and especially importation of oil. In response, George W. Bush, who is closely tied to Texas-based oil interests, fed the Kyoto treaty into the White House shredder.

state based on the collectivized property forms established in the wake of the 1949 Revolution.

But in addition to China, Pentagon strategists have plans for a possible nuclear war against another major country, namely Russia. Russia inherited from the Soviet Union a large nuclear arsenal which, although it has subsequently deteriorated, is still the second most powerful in the world after that of the U.S. And Russia’s new capitalist rulers have their own imperialist ambitions even if they are not now in a position to realize them. America’s rulers, having proclaimed their state to be “the world’s only superpower,” view Russia as a potential enemy, despite the recent apparent rapprochement over the “war against terrorism.”

The German ruling class, however, views Russia as a potential ally, a counterweight to American global dominance, for example, in the Near East. Ever since the USSR collapsed, right-wing Russian nationalists have looked toward an alliance with Germany against the United States. And Russian president Vladimir Putin has described Germany as “Russia’s leading partner in Europe and the world” (*New York Times*, 31 August). In terms of current international politics, this is certainly an overstatement. But an alliance of Germany and Russia against the United States is very much a possibility in the not-so-distant future.

U.S. imperialism remains the overwhelmingly dominant military power on the face of the planet. But as we wrote in the ICL’s “Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program” (*Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 54, Spring 1998): “Rival imperialisms, especially Germany and Japan, no longer constrained by anti-Soviet unity, are pursuing apace their own appetites for control of world markets and concomitantly projecting their military power. In the conflicts between rival regional trade blocs today, the outlines of future wars are sharpening. In the face of growing inter-imperialist rivalry, we reassert: *‘The main enemy is at home!’*”

The East Asian Economic Collapse

In the 1960s and early ’70s, Japan—with an annual growth in national output averaging 10 percent—was generally viewed as the economic superstar of world capitalism. Business schools in the U.S. introduced courses on Japanese managerial techniques to be emulated by corporate America. In the 1980s and early ’90s, the so-called East Asian “tigers” (South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore) displaced Japan as the new “miracle” countries of world capitalism. The political leaders of these countries attributed their economic success to the unique virtues of the “Asian character” with its supposed propensity for hard work and high rates of personal savings rather than profligate consumption.

But today, after a decade of stagnation the Japanese economy looks to be in free fall, last week hitting the highest unemployment rate ever recorded in the country’s history. In conjunction with the

American downturn, the Japanese economic downslide is dragging the rest of capitalist East Asia down with it. As a *Business Week* (2 April) headline put it: “Asia Is Catching the Japanese Disease.” How is it that the onetime “miracle” region of world capitalism has become the sickly region of world capitalism?

Certainly not least of the reasons is the radically changed international political context following the destruction of the Soviet Union. During the Cold War, American imperialism was willing to accept large and continuing balance-of-trade deficits with Japan and also South Korea et al. as part of the economic overhead of maintaining the anti-Soviet alliance. But as British financial journalist Christopher Wood wrote in his 1994 tract, *The End of Japan Inc.*: “With the end of the Cold War America no longer sees a need or reason to put diplomatic or strategic interests ahead of its own commercial self-interest.” For similar reasons, Washington in the past tolerated a high level of import protectionism in South Korea combined with generous government export subsidies. That is no longer the case.

At the economic level, Japan in the 1950s and ’60s and subsequently the East Asian “tigers” benefited from labor costs that were very low relative to those prevailing in North America and West Europe. Low labor costs, in conjunction with easy access to the huge American market, encouraged extremely high levels of industrial investment—internally generated in the case of Japan; mainly a transfer of capital from Japan and the United States in the cases of Taiwan and South Korea. However, the East Asian economic “miracle” inevitably led to a crisis of overcapitalization in the classic Marxist sense. Japan, South Korea et al. cannot sell on the world market the vast quantity of commodities they are capable of producing—from steel ingots to automobiles to consumer electronics—at a rate of profit high enough to repay the loans that financed their industrial construction.

Post-World War II Japanese capitalism was based on a tightly knit structure of industrial-financial empires, like Mitsubishi and Mitsui, which were called *keiritsu* (“corporate groups”). This structure—often termed “Japan Inc.” by Western journalists—was eroded in the 1980s by the loosening of financial markets, in part under the pressure of Wall Street. Japanese corporations were now able to raise large sums of money by selling securities (stocks and bonds), whereas previously they were almost entirely dependent for financing on the *keiritsu* main bank.

In the late 1980s, Japan experienced the so-called “bubble economy,” which in many ways prefigured the U.S. stock market/high-tech investment boom a decade later. Speculative mania drove corporate stock (and real estate prices) to ridiculous heights. With an already massive industrial base, Japanese manufacturers now *added* productive capacity equivalent to the entire existing industrial capacity of France! When the “bubble economy” burst in the early 1990s, Japanese corporations were saddled with trillions of dollars worth of industrial plant and equipment that they could not utilize profitably, financed by loans they could not repay. (For an analysis of Japanese capitalism from the end of the Second World War through the collapse of the “bubble economy” and its aftermath, see

CORRECTION

In “U.S. Government’s Domestic Terror Machine” (WV No. 766, 12 October), we incorrectly stated that Democratic Senator Dianne Feinstein had introduced a new “Maritime Security Act” in the wake of the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center. In fact, the Port and Maritime Security Act of 2001 was first introduced into Congress on July 20 by South Carolina Democratic Senator Ernest Hollings.

“Japan Economic Crisis Shakes Imperialist Order,” WV Nos. 693 and 694, 3 July and 31 July 1998.)

To prevent a total economic collapse, the Japanese government has been bailing out the banks to the tune of trillions of dollars over the past decade. And to offset the stagnation of industrial investment, trillions more have been spent on public works projects, which in many cases amounted to nothing more than a rip-off of the state treasury by the *keiritsu* bosses who run the long-ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Where Japan once had the highest rate of economic growth in the capitalist world, it now has the highest rate of growth of government debt. This year the combined central and local government budget deficits reached 10 percent of the country’s gross domestic product, *the highest such level ever experienced by an advanced capitalist country* except in wartime.

At the same time, a large fraction of Japanese banks are actually insolvent, in that their liabilities exceed their income-generating assets. According to the most conservative estimates, Japanese banks are now carrying on their books half a trillion dollars in “non-performing” loans, equivalent to over 10 percent of the total national income.

The severe structural problems of the Japanese economy were partly offset in the late 1990s by the American economic boom. The *keiritsu* benefited not only through increased exports to the U.S. but by greater profits and capital gains on their more than 500 billion dollars in investments in America. When the U.S. boom went bust last spring, influential sections of the Japanese ruling elite decided that drastic measures were needed to deal with the country’s long economic malaise. So with much fanfare, the governing LDP chose a new leader, the right-wing nationalist Junichiro Koizumi, whose promises of a “reform with no sacred cows” included abolition of the restrictions imposed on Japan’s military by the U.S. in the aftermath of WWII—restrictions which continue to have huge support among a population for whom the horrors of war, not least the American A-bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, are still a living memory.

Koizumi’s economic “reform” program is substantially similar to that implemented by the administration of Herbert Hoover in the U.S. with the onset of the Great Depression in 1930-31. This was to encourage bank failures and corporate bankruptcies in order to purge the economy of “inefficient” firms combined with tight money to impose “discipline” on both industrialists and financiers. In the context of a worldwide recession, Koizumi’s program, if implemented, would drive Japan into a full-scale depression. There are, however, powerful vested interests within the Japanese ruling class (not least in the LDP) opposed to Koizumi’s slash-and-burn approach. But whatever the policies of the Tokyo government, Japan—still the second-largest economy in the world—is in a deepening and likely prolonged economic slump.

The former East Asian “tigers” (centrally South Korea) and the ASEAN countries of Southeast Asia (e.g., Thailand) based their economies on the “Japanese model.” Indeed, this region is closely enmeshed with Japanese capitalism through investments, loans, subcontracting arrangements, licensing agreements and the like. The crux of the “Japanese model” is close cooperation between the government and big industrialists with the aim of maximizing the country’s exports, primarily to the huge American market. Thus successive regimes in Seoul provided subsidies and loan guarantees to Hyundai, Daewoo and other South Korean *chaebol* (analogous to the Japanese *keiritsu*).

In 1997-98, the capitalist countries of East and Southeast Asia replicated the “Japanese model” in another respect as well. They, too, suffered a crisis of overcapitalization that left the big (and small)

industrial firms of the region awash with debts they could not repay. For example, South Korea’s Hyundai Electronics, the world’s second-largest memory-chip maker, has debts of over \$6 billion and now faces the prospect of bankruptcy given the presently depressed world market demand for semiconductors.

There is, however, a crucial difference between Japan, on the one hand, and other East and Southeast Asian capitalist countries on the other. This is the difference between an imperialist country and dependent, neocolonial countries. Japanese industrialists are in debt almost exclusively to Japanese banks and other financial institutions (often owned by

its currency, the peso, to the U.S. dollar in foreign-exchange markets. Yet the greater integration of the Latin American economies with that of the United States has brought not prosperity but greater immiseration.

A few months ago, the *New York Times* correspondent in Mexico City wrote: “Mexico has been in a recession for months, and its deep dependence on trade with the United States is the primary cause.” But even the economic boom in the U.S. in the mid-late 1990s did *not* bring about a significant improvement in the conditions of Mexico’s toiling masses. Superficially, the economic statistics looked good. In the seven years

wages last year increased by an estimated 10 percent. But Mexico’s chief attraction for American as well as European and Japanese multinationals is its cheap labor. To the extent that labor becomes *less cheap* in Mexico, Mexico becomes *less attractive* to foreign investors.

Business Week (6 August) noted: “Rivals threaten Mexico’s appeal as a manufacturing hub.” In particular, multinationals now producing consumer electronics in Mexico are considering shifting their operations to Southeast Asia, where wages are as low as 60 cents an hour. *Business Week* quotes Charles Parks, executive vice president for Latin America for SCI Systems, which employs (for now) 10,000 workers in Guadalajara: “Anything that is really price-sensitive is considering moving lock, stock, and barrel, to Asia.”

An important and direct effect of NAFTA has been the devastation of Mexico’s smallholding peasantry, which cannot possibly compete with the highly mechanized and scientifically advanced agribusiness of North America. Fox’s minister of agriculture, Javier Usabiaga, has proclaimed an economic death sentence for the country’s rural toilers: “A small farmer, no matter how productive, is not going to be able to make enough money to survive.... He is going to have to find another job” (*New York Times*, 22 July).

Find another job?! Even during the relatively favorable conditions of the late 1990s, millions of small farmers driven off the land could not find jobs in the urban industrial economy. Many were condemned to the squalid slums around Mexico City or Guadalajara, eking out a near-starvation existence as street vendors or day laborers. And the number of desperately poor former peasants and laid-off workers is now being multiplied by the world economic slump.

The transformation of a smallholding peasantry into an industrial proletariat was a progressive historical development in what are now the advanced capitalist countries of West Europe and Japan. But backward, neocolonial countries like Mexico cannot today replicate their development into advanced industrial economies. Within a capitalist framework, the countries of the so-called “Third World” cannot elevate themselves into the “First World” either by the “free market” neoliberalism of Vicente Fox or by the nationalist corporatism/protectionism practiced by the PRI over the previous half-century.

The social, economic and cultural modernization of Mexico can be achieved only through a *socialist revolution* that places the proletariat, standing at the head of the peasant and indigenous masses and all the oppressed, in power and establishes a planned, socialized economy. From the outset, a victorious workers state in such a backward country—one, moreover, sharing a long border with the U.S.—would have to strive to promote proletarian revolution in the American imperialist behemoth and

continued on page 8



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Japanese capitalism in free fall: homeless protest in Tokyo in 1998; Tokyo stock prices hit 16-year low this July.



AFP

the same individuals and families). The industrial firms, banks and governments of South Korea, Thailand et al. are heavily in debt to banks in Japan, the United States and, to a lesser extent, West Europe. Under the imperialist system, the economic fate of South Korea and Thailand is determined in Tokyo and New York, not in Seoul and Bangkok.

In order to repay their foreign loans in yen and dollars, the capitalists of South Korea and Thailand have to run a balance-of-trade surplus, mainly with the United States. For these countries, the slogan “Export or Die” is not a cliché but a harsh reality. Last spring, Morgan Stanley economist Andy Xie predicted: “A looming US recession threatens to cut off their lifeline” (*London Financial Times*, 12 March). The U.S. recession then looming is now here and, moreover, the Japanese economy has suffered an even sharper decline.

Consequently, a mood of deep gloom has fallen upon the once buoyant capitalists of East Asia. “I don’t think the region is conducive to fast growth,” says the head of Thailand’s largest manufacturer of construction materials. The CEO of a South Korean securities outfit declares: “The real crisis in Korea is diminishing hope for the future.” There is no more telling indication of the destructive irrationality of the world capitalist system than the historic pessimism voiced by the capitalists of a region not long ago hailed as the site of an “economic miracle.”

Mexico Under NAFTA

Since the destruction of the Soviet Union, the Latin American propertied classes have demonstrated their subservience to Wall Street and Washington even more blatantly than in the past. In Mexico, the National Action Party of “free marketeer” Vicente Fox, a former Coca Cola CEO, replaced the long-ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which had institutionalized nationalist-populist demagoguery. Argentina rigidly tied

following the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994, Mexico’s economic growth averaged 4 percent a year. Exports (primarily manufactured products) tripled. Foreign investment, mainly by U.S. multinational corporations, increased at an annual rate of \$10 billion.

Yet for all that, according to the official 2000 census, 40 million Mexican peasants and urban poor—out of a total population of more than 100 million—have to survive on the equivalent of less than \$3 a day. Fourteen million people live in houses with dirt floors, six and a half million in shacks with cardboard roofs; 20 percent of the labor force has no regular full-time employment.

To be sure, workers employed in the profit-making sectors of the Mexican economy were able to take advantage of the economic expansion through strikes and other forms of labor struggle to improve their wages and benefits. In the *maquiladora* assembly-for-export plants, located along Mexico’s northern border,

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Recession...

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internationally. And a revolution in Mexico would indeed have a powerfully radicalizing effect in the U.S.

Over the past few decades, the Mexican proletariat has in a sense extended itself into the territorial boundaries of the United States, mainly in Texas and California, as impoverished Mexican and other Latino workers and peasants have flooded into the U.S. looking for jobs. These immigrant workers, many of whom retain strong family ties to Mexico, have brought with them the experience of bitter class struggles in their homelands. Thus the Los Angeles area, with its large Mexican and Central American communities, has for several years been a center of labor militancy in the U.S. To release this potential for revolutionary struggle requires an *international revolutionary party* capable of liberating the Mexican working class from the shackles of nationalist populism and of breaking the hold of the racist, pro-imperialist AFL-CIO bureaucracy over the American working class. This perspective underscores the crucial nature of the fight in the U.S. for full citizenship rights for all immigrants.

Wall Street Bleeds South America

If the Mexican bourgeoisie has bound itself ever closer to American imperialism through NAFTA, the Argentine bourgeoisie did so in a different way a few years earlier. As a supposed “cure” for the country’s chronic hyperinflation, in 1991 the neoliberal regime of Carlos Menem pegged the Argentine peso to the U.S. dollar at a rate of one to one. Furthermore, the expansion of the domestic money supply was now based on the amount of dollars held by the central bank.

In order to attract more dollars, the financial authorities in Buenos Aires maintained interest rates higher than those prevailing in other Latin American countries. And for a time in the early 1990s, Argentina did attract a sizable flow of speculative (easy come, easy go) money. But the high rates also discouraged borrowing for long-term productive investment in new plant, equipment and infrastructure.

Because of its peculiar foreign-exchange system, the Argentine economy was severely damaged by the U.S. financial/economic boom in the mid-late 1990s. Huge sums of money from Tokyo, London, Frankfurt and elsewhere flooded into the Wall Street bull market. Consequently, the value of the dollar rose sharply in relation to the Japanese yen, the major European currencies and almost all the currencies of Third World countries with the notable exception of Argentina. The Argentine peso and therefore the price of Argentina’s goods in the world market also rose sharply compared to almost all other countries, including its main trading partner, Brazil. Mainly due to mounting balance-of-trade deficits, Argentina slid into recession three years ago, that is, well before the current world slump.

Ironically, in the name of “free market

Buenos Aires, August 29: tens of thousands of trade unionists march to protest government cutbacks.



reform” Argentina’s capitalists have deprived themselves of the normal market mechanism for reducing a balance-of-trade deficit, namely, currency depreciation, which reduces the world market price of exports and increases the domestic price of imports. The stubborn refusal of successive Buenos Aires regimes to devalue the peso (as Brazil devalued the *real* in 1999) is not simply due to wrong-headed ideological dogmatism. To “stabilize” the currency, over the past decade the Argentine government and many large businesses denominated most of their new bond issues in dollars. So a devaluation of the peso would increase Argentina’s debt proportionally. That is why of all major Third World countries Argentina was and still is the most likely to default on its government debt.

So late last year Washington, operating through the International Monetary Fund (IMF), put together the usual “emergency rescue package” for Argentina. This is *not a bailout of Argentina*; it is a bailout of U.S. banks that hold Argentine government (and private) bonds. As the *Wall Street Journal* (20 August) explained: “The possibility of an Argentine debt default sends shudders through Wall Street since Argentine bonds comprise one fifth of the benchmark emerging-market debt index.”

The American imperialists are intent on making the working people of Argentina repay with interest the loans that the Buenos Aires regimes have negotiated with the U.S. Treasury and Wall Street banks. As usual, the IMF “rescue package” contains conditions of harsh austerity: suspension of the social security system, increase in the retirement age for women from 60 to 65, a freeze on spending by the provincial governments that provide much of the country’s social services.

For almost a year, Argentina has been convulsed by mass labor strikes and popular protests against the Washington/IMF-dictated austerity. Commenting on these protests, the Buenos Aires correspondent for the *Washington Post* (6 August) wrote: “After a decade of free market reforms, many workers, politicians and business leaders are deeply discouraged by the outcome, and doubting the very wisdom of the capitalist model they once embraced.” This analysis, typical of the current thinking in American ruling circles, *falsely* identifies “the capitalist model” with “free market” neoliberalism as espoused by the IMF. Latin America has always been capitalist and no more so today than in the past. The difference is that in the past the prevalent bourgeois ideology was nationalist populism represented by Peronism in Argentina and the PRI in Mexico.

Thus one can speak of a nationalist-corporatist “model” of capitalism in Latin America. Strategic sectors of the economy were state-owned. Domestic industry was protected by high tariffs and import licenses. Foreign-exchange transactions and short-term capital movements were subject to a wide array of controls, while various restrictions were placed on foreign-owned businesses. Despite occasional anti-Yankee demagoguery, nationalist regimes like the Peronists in Argen-

tina and the PRI in Mexico in fact functioned as the local political agents of Wall Street, keeping the proletariat in line through their agents in the corporatist labor bureaucracies. These regimes also periodically slashed workers’ wages and depressed the living standards of the masses to repay their debt to U.S. and other foreign banks, usually through the mechanism of accelerated inflation rather than the deflationary measures now favored by the IMF. That is, money wages continued to rise but the price of food, fuel, clothing and other necessities rose even faster.

The *Washington Post* correspondent is probably right that the current economic crisis in Latin America, from Argentina to Mexico, will produce a shift in the political-ideological climate away from “free market” neoliberalism back toward the nationalist populism of yesteryear. However, such a shift in the political climate and balance of forces is not in itself anti-capitalist. In a sense, it would strengthen the forces of capitalism in Latin America by recementing the ties of the working class to its own national bourgeoisie, which is well practiced in demagogic denunciations of Wall Street and Washington.

To liberate themselves from Wall Street’s debt peonage, the workers and rural toilers of Latin America must be won to the principles and program of *proletarian internationalism* as represented by Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky. As the Grupo Espartaquista de México (GEM), section of the International Communist League, wrote following Fox’s election last year (*Espartaco* No. 14, Autumn-Winter 2000; translated in *WV* No. 748, 15 December 2000):

“The struggles of the Mexican and American proletariat are politically and economically linked, even more tightly since the imposition of the NAFTA ‘free trade’ rape of Mexico by American imperialism. The GEM fights to win the Mexican proletariat to an international revolutionary

perspective joining their struggles with those of their class brothers and sisters in the U.S., through combatting the nationalism that chains the proletariat to its bourgeoisie. Correspondingly, our comrades in the Spartacist League/U.S. fight to break American workers from the reactionary nationalism and racism against blacks and immigrants that infect the workers movement and serve to tie the workers to the ruling class.”

Reforge the Fourth International!

Coming amid the slaughter of the first global interimperialist conflict, World War I, the October Revolution of 1917 showed the international proletariat a way out of recurrent capitalist crises and wars. Despite the subsequent bureaucratic degeneration under Stalin, the Bolshevik Revolution, by expropriating the bourgeoisie and laying the basis for a planned economy, enabled the Soviet Union to become a major industrial and military power. The Stalinist regimes of East Europe and the former Soviet Union, falsely labeled communist, collapsed precisely because their nationally limited program of “building socialism in one country” could not withstand the economic pressures of capitalist imperialism.

Similarly, the nationalist bureaucratic caste in China daily places the gains of the 1949 Revolution in ever greater jeopardy. Even as the capitalist world sinks into economic crisis, the Beijing bureaucracy, now entering the WTO, seeks to promote greater reliance on imperialist investment. The gains of the 1949 Chinese Revolution that overthrew capitalist class rule must be unconditionally defended against imperialist attack and internal counterrevolution. The task facing the combative Chinese working class is the forging of a revolutionary working-class party committed to the overthrow of bureaucratic misrule through a political revolution that installs a government based on workers (soviet) democracy and proletarian internationalism.

For all the bourgeoisie’s triumphalism about the supposed “death of communism,” the current world economic crisis cries out for an internationally planned socialist economy. To achieve this requires workers revolution, from industrialized Third World countries like South Korea, South Africa, Brazil and Mexico to the imperialist centers of North America, Europe and Japan. What is needed is an authentically communist international party—a reformed Fourth International based on Lenin and Trotsky’s program of world socialist revolution—to render the proletariat conscious of its historic task as the gravedigger of capitalism, a party capable of politically defeating the reformist misleaders and bourgeois nationalists who bind the exploited and oppressed to the bloodsuckers of Wall Street, Frankfurt and Tokyo. ■

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Class Struggle...

(continued from page 1)

breaking the allegiance of the workers to their class-collaborationist, social-chauvinist leaders.

Centrists and Renegades

Reformist groups like the International Socialist Organization and Workers World Party, who busy themselves attempting to enlist dissident Democratic Party politicians (currently with scant success) in building “peace” coalitions, offer up the pipe dream of an imperialist system cleansed of war and injustice. We Marxists say that only workers revolution can end imperialist war, and as part of that task we seek to break the proletariat from the chauvinist “national front” and to mobilize class-struggle opposition to the war. And while such a perspective may seem remote in the U.S. today, in Italy the COBAS (Rank and File committees) unions have called for a political general strike on November 9 in opposition to the imperialist war against Afghanistan and to the Italian government’s assault on social benefits. Similarly in 1999, the COBAS launched a one-day general strike in opposition to the U.S.-led NATO air war against Serbia. Such labor actions against the war in this country would challenge the jingoist



Perry/NY Times

NYC, November 2: cops attack firefighters protesting order to pull back from search through WTC ruins. Over a dozen firefighters, including union officials, have been arrested.

“national unity” used to cement the workers behind the war aims of their capitalist exploiters.

Our perspective is based on the experience of the October Revolution of 1917, which triumphed amid the slaughter of World War I because of the Bolshevik program of turning the imperialist war into a civil war. Proletarian opposition to the imperialist depredations of the exploiters can, in the words of Leon Trotsky, be pursued “only through the revolutionary mobilization of the masses, that is, by widening, deepening, and sharpening those revolutionary methods which constitute the content of class struggle in ‘peacetime’” (“Learn to Think,” May 1938).

This is the understanding we have propagated in our sales at work locations, in the ghettos and in all our interventions at antiwar protests and meetings. Nevertheless, the Internationalist Group (IG), a handful of centrist renegades who fled our organization in the mid-1990s under the pressures of imperialist “death of communism” triumphalism, have recently taken us to task for having “flinched” in the face of the jingoist warmongering now rampant in this country. In an Internet manifesto dated October 2001, the IG excoriates us for our supposed “opposition to calling for the defeat of ‘their own’ bourgeoisie in an imperialist war. All talk of socialist revolution comes down to ‘pie in the sky in the sweet bye-and-bye’ if you don’t come out four-square for the defeat of ‘your own’ bourgeoisie in an imperialist war.”

At bottom, the IG deliberately muddles the question of a military defeat in a particular war with the proletarian defeat of one’s bourgeoisie through socialist revo-



AP

Kabul, October 26: Red Cross facility hit by U.S. air strikes for second time in ten days.

lution. The latter is the program animating any truly revolutionary party in peacetime as in wartime. The slogans used to proceed toward that end—to lead the working masses from their current level of consciousness to the seizure of state power—are, however, necessarily conjunctural. Thus, upon returning to Russia after the overthrow of the tsar in early 1917, Lenin had to fight against those in the Bolshevik Party who wished to lend support to the bourgeois Provisional Government. Having won this battle, he then had to caution left proletarian elements of the party who wanted to immediately call for the overthrow of the Provisional Government. On 5 May 1917, the Central Committee passed the following motion authored by Lenin: “The slogan ‘Down with the Provisional Government!’ is an incorrect one at the present moment because, in the absence of a solid (i.e., a class-conscious and organised) majority of the people on the side of the revolutionary proletariat, such a slogan is either an empty phrase, or, objectively, amounts to attempts of an adventurist character.”

The IG, in an effort to back up its empty phrasemongering, offers the following example: “The French defeat at the hands of the Algerian independence fighters culminating in 1962 demoralized the French bourgeoisie and helped lead to the worker-student revolt of 1968, which posed the first potentially revolutionary crisis in Europe in years.” In reality, the eight-year-long colonial war in Algeria bears no resemblance to what is happening in Afghanistan today.

It is interesting to examine our position of defense of Afghanistan against the U.S. onslaught as compared to a situation which was, in some ways, similar: the 1935 invasion of Ethiopia by imperialist Italy. Ethiopia under Emperor Haile Selassie was a cruelly oppressive society—one of the world’s last bastions of chattel slavery—characterized by tribal backwardness, subjugation of minority peoples and unrelenting exploitation of the peasant masses. Revolutionaries defended Ethiopia against Mussolini’s Italy because the latter was an imperialist power, regardless of the fact that the form of imperialist rule was fascist rather than democratic.

In calling on the working class to defend Afghanistan against U.S. imperialism, we apply the same Leninist principle of siding with backward countries against imperialist attack. That said, the U.S. war against Afghanistan is in important ways different from the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, which was aimed at realizing Italy’s longstanding intention to colonize that country. The U.S. does not aim at an occupation of Afghanistan—at least not at this point—although now that they’re in Central Asia the imperialists will grab what they can. In attacking Afghanistan, the U.S. seeks vengeance for the insult to its imperial might.

Such is not always easily available even to the mightiest imperialist power. In the 19th century, when Britain was the world’s leading imperialist state, its ambassador to Bolivia disdainfully

declined a cup of Bolivian beer. Bolivian officials were so offended by his condescending attitude that they dragged him through the streets of La Paz tied across the back of a donkey, then forced him to drink a whole barrel of the brew. Infuriated by this act of *lèse majesté*, Queen Victoria insisted that the Royal Navy bombard Bolivia in retaliation. When one of her advisers finally summoned up the courage to inform her that Bolivia was landlocked, the queen demanded a map and, dipping her pen in an inkwell, marked a bold X across the country, declaring “Bolivia does not exist!”

The IG’s spurious analogy with colonial wars notwithstanding, it seems currently unlikely that the U.S. will launch a significant land invasion of Afghanistan. Indeed, its maiden efforts in this regard, a commando raid in October, led to results that must have induced nightmares of the humiliating American defeat in Vietnam among the Pentagon brass. The London *Independent* (30 October) reported: “The raid was a purely cosmetic one for the benefit of the media and the public on a target, which intelligence had claimed, would be poorly defended. The tenacity of the Taliban in fighting back has so alarmed the Pentagon that no further raids have taken place since.”

Washington’s most likely variant at this time is for continued, incessant and purposeless bombing for which the Taliban has no possible military redress. Again, this was not the case in the 1935 Italo-Ethiopian war. Italy was a second-rate imperialist power riven by sharp class contradictions and constrained in its

intentions by its bigger imperialist rivals. Although in the upshot Italy was victorious after a seven-month-long ground war, it was not unreasonable for the then-Trotskyist U.S. Socialist Workers Party to project a possible military victory by Ethiopia:

“It can be said without exaggeration that a defeat of Italy and a revolution on the Apennine peninsula can have unforeseeable results. The whole European system of alliances and states would fall apart. The proletariat in Germany, Austria, Spain, on the Balkans, and not least of all in France, would receive an enormous impulsion; the face of Europe would be altered. That lies in the direct class interests of the international proletariat. But still more. A defeat of Italy in Africa, a victory of Ethiopia, might deliver the imperialist bandits a terrific blow in Africa.”

—“Questions of the Italo-Ethiopian War,” *New International* (October 1935)

None of these factors currently constrain the U.S., although, to be sure, the war will exacerbate tensions among the imperialist powers, and its price in misery at home may awaken class combativity in the American proletariat. Thus, the call for a U.S. military defeat is, at this time, illusory and the purest hot air and “revolutionary” phrasemongering—and one which derives from forsaking the mobilization of the U.S. proletariat with the aim of the conquest of state power.

Unlike the IG, the SL is committed to breaking the American working class and the oppressed from their class-collaborationist bondage to the Democratic Party and to forging a revolutionary workers party to overthrow American imperialism through socialist revolution. While the IG waxes oh-so-revolutionary in the ether of cyberspace, we actually fight for a proletarian, revolutionary, internationalist perspective on the ground. In a recent intervention at a rally at the ILWU Local 10 longshore union hall in San Francisco in defense of the Charleston Five (see WV No. 767, 26 October), an SL supporter called for class struggle at home and for defense of Afghanistan against the imperialist attack. “Both ruling parties,” she declared, “are fanning the flames of patriotic fervor to line up the population behind their military aims abroad and to further chain the working class to the interests of the bosses at home.” She concluded as follows:

“For decades, the pro-capitalist AFL-CIO leadership has tied workers to their class enemy through support to the Democrats....

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Class Struggle...

(continued from page 9)

“For that reason, we believe it is necessary to wage a political struggle within the unions to forge a revolutionary workers party that will fight for black freedom, for immigrant rights and for our class brothers and sisters abroad against U.S. imperialism. Such a party will lead the fight to get rid of the capitalist order and create a workers government and a new society without exploitation. This is the only road to end racism and war forever. Those who labor must rule!”

In order to tell the truth about this imperialist war, our comrade had to battle the disruptions of one Jack Heyman, a left-talking ILWU local bureaucrat styled by the IG as a “workers leader,” who was thwarted in his efforts by longshoremen in the audience.

We Said: Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!

The IG’s r-r-revolutionary phrasemongering is shared by another clot of centrists, as exemplified by a 9 October joint statement signed by the League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI, centered on the British Workers Power group), the Morenoite Fracción Trotskyista in Mexico and the Communist League-Workers Power in Greece. They, too, are enamored with the call for “defeat of the imperialist forces.” Where the IG attacks us for focusing on the indefensible nature of the indiscriminate attack on the World Trade Center, their centrist counterparts omit altogether any condemnation of the slaughter of thousands of ordinary working people and minorities in that attack, indicating a congruence with the worldview shared by U.S. imperialism’s leaders and Islamic fundamentalists inspired by bin Laden—that entire peoples are responsible for the crimes of their rulers.

In the case of the LRCI et al., anti-Americanism is intermingled with preposterous slogans and some very red rhetoric to appeal to any and all who might read it, from the psychiatrically challenged to youth in search of an alternative to pacifism and reformism. The red rhetoric is unserious bombast, as captured in the call on “soldiers to organise resistance in the armed forces...to rebel against the imperialists and their mass-murdering Generals” and on “workers in the munitions factories to boycott and sabotage imperialist war production.” For these opportunists, words are meant not for the class struggle but for Greek tavernas, English pubs and Latin American cantinas. In Britain, the real substance of Workers Power’s “revolutionary defeatism” is captured in their organizing to “LOBBY PARLIAMENT as it debates the war.”

Indeed, voting Labour is just about the only “principle” the British Workers Power group adheres to. In 1997 as well as this year Workers Power voted for “Bomber Blair” and his Labour Party. In the 1999 NATO war against Serbia, the LRCI was marching in demonstrations shot through with placards reading “NATO Good Luck,” championing the Albanian Kosovo Liberation Army, which was then a pawn for NATO. Their current left posturing over Afghanistan is a function both of the growing unpopularity of the U.S. bombing among Europeans and the peripheral nature of Afghanistan from the standpoint of the European imperialists.

As to the preposterous, there is the call for “united action of all Afghan forces—including Islamist forces—to repel the imperialist assault,” a task of interest to those who believe in alchemy. The notion that there can be any but the most ephemeral unity among the various tribes within Afghanistan’s borders is belied by a history of constant internecine conflict. These peoples have no coherent national interest because Afghanistan is not a nation. The “Afghan forces” are today, as in the past, engaged in shooting at each other, with the Taliban, based on the dominant Pashtun people, arrayed against the largely Tajik and Uzbek Northern Alliance, which currently acts as a puppet of U.S. imperialism.



Dickinson College

Italian imperialist invaders (left) fought Ethiopian resistance forces for seven months in 1935-36 war of annexation.



Movietone News

Declaring “Afghanistan has suffered over 20 years of war,” the LRCI joint statement lumps together the CIA-backed *mujahedin* war against the Red Army intervention in Afghanistan with the later war among the rival *mujahedin* groups, the Taliban and the components of the Northern Alliance. In other words, the LRCI and its current bloc partners are united in hoping that no one will look too closely at where they stood on the U.S. proxy war in Afghanistan at the time! We *hailed* the Red Army in Afghanistan and fervently desired that Soviet commandos would take out the Islamic fanatics who threw acid in the faces of unveiled women and murdered those who dared teach young girls. Not so Workers Power, which *condemned* the Soviet presence



Australasian Spartacist

Melbourne, October 13: Australian Workers Power pushes reformist pacifism on the ground; centrists’ “revolutionary” hot air is strictly for cyberspace.

while stopping short of echoing the imperialist cry for a Red Army withdrawal. The Morenoites openly backed the *mujahedin*. In France, they called for the Soviet Army to pull out of Afghanistan and leave its arms with the anti-Communist Islamic guerrillas. In Italy, the Morenoite group looked forward to “the possibility of extending the Iranian revolution within the borders of the USSR” (*Avanzata Proletaria*, 12 January 1980)!

As a left cover for its opposition to the Soviet military presence, Workers Power at the time concocted an Afghan proletariat as an independent “revolutionary force.” The current LRCI joint statement raises the demand for a “workers’ and peasants’ government” in Afghanistan, where there are no workers and not much of a peasantry. This idiocy is now echoed by the IG in its call for “socialist revolution” in Afghanistan. It was only the intervention of the Soviet Union that opened the possibility of bringing the Afghan peoples into the 20th century. That’s why we raised the call, “Extend social gains of the October Revolution to Afghan peoples!” Today, social revolution can come to Afghanistan only through socialist overturns in those countries in the area with significant proletarian concentrations, from Iran to Pakistan and India. Central to a revolutionary perspective in such countries is the fight against the age-old subjugation of

women. Indeed, the Afghan conflict in the 1980s was the only war in modern history fought centrally over the status of women.

In reality, the IG has little taste for the proletariat—whether in the U.S. or in the “Third World.” Instead the IG peddles its wares to a variety of petty-bourgeois nationalist audiences. In its latest Web posting, the IG sneers that “the SL presents itself as the vanguard fighter against Islamic fundamentalism.” Its contempt for our unqualified opposition to Islamic reaction is a tacit rejection of our call for a Red Army victory against the mullahs in Afghanistan in the 1980s (which the IG feigns to stand on). It is also a promissory note to nationalists from those parts of the planet where Islam is dominant, in the name of a “united front” against American imperialism, to forswear the struggle for proletarian power in those countries. It is, in embryo, an abandonment of Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution, which holds that the proletariat in the backward countries is the only force capable of leading the struggle for social and national justice. As Trotsky stressed, only proletarian revolution can break the imperialist yoke over such countries and, with its extension to advanced capitalist countries, end imperialism forever.

The growth of Islamic and other religious fundamentalism in backward countries is a measure of the bankruptcy of the post-independence bourgeois-nationalist regimes, which enforce imperialist starvation dictates while themselves promoting obscurantist backwardness. Take, for example, predominantly Hindu India, where the caste system and such hideous practices as *suttee* (the burning of widows) flourish after more than five decades of “democracy.” The weight of social backwardness is evident in all aspects of the society. Some 70 million Indians are afflicted with goiter and 200 million are at risk of iodine deficiency, which is the single most preventable cause of mental retardation. Iodized salt is a cheap, ready means for combatting such medical disorders. Yet in the wake of a clamor by small-scale salt producers, Gandhians and fascist groups tied to the ruling BJP, last year Hindu-chauvinist prime minister Atal Behari Vajpayee overturned a ban on the sale of non-iodized salt.

For Socialist Revolution in the Bastion of World Imperialism!

In Europe no less than in America, the working class has been subjected to a continuous attack on jobs, wages and benefits. In large measure these attacks have been carried out by governments led by social-democratic parties. In addition to the COBAS strike called in Italy, there is evidence of popular discontent throughout Europe. At the end of October, the giant IG Metall union in Germany called for a halt to the bombing, only to be reprimanded by “their” Social Democratic chancellor, Gerhard Schröder, who lectured: “Concern yourself with the living conditions of your members, but keep your fingers out of foreign policy, because you understand nothing about it” (*Spiegel Online*, 31 October). An IG Metall spokesman replied, “We’re not about to let even Schröder shut us up.”

While workers throughout Europe are

no doubt suspicious that the war against Afghanistan may redound to their detriment, the union tops also seek to voice the interests of their own bourgeoisies through appeals to anti-Americanism. Thus, the vice chairman of IG Metall warns against “blindly following orders from America.” Such anti-American nationalism is also promoted by centrists like the LRCI, whose occasionally left-sounding rhetoric is mere window-dressing that serves to reinforce working-class illusions in the social-democratic labor lieutenants of capital. Only the Leninist commitment to drive the social-chauvinist misleaders out of the labor movement, to split the masses of workers from their social-democratic betrayers, can prepare the way for the long overdue and increasingly urgent socialist overturns necessary in Europe and elsewhere.

While in the U.S. the working class remains largely in support of the war, tears are beginning to appear in the fabric of jingoist “national unity.” For many postal workers facing the threat of potentially deadly anthrax infection, Osama bin Laden likely appears as less of an enemy than their own bosses. The arrest of four firemen’s union officials following last Friday’s protest near the ruins of the World Trade Center will justly be taken as a warning by many workers that the bosses will crack down on any labor unrest. Beginning with the strikes last month by Minnesota state workers and at three General Dynamics tank plants, it is evident that many workers resent the losses to their living standards sustained during the recent nine-year boom and are dismayed by the prospects of further losses—including the loss of any paycheck at all—as a result of the recession and the war effort. The Republicans’ plan to grant even further massive tax breaks to the rich will doubtless add kindling to these smoldering resentments.

Evidence of such dissatisfaction can be found in the fact that a layer of local trade-union bureaucrats is voicing opposition to the U.S. bombing. This also finds its echo among black Democrats. In September, Oakland Democrat Barbara Lee cast the sole vote against the Congressional war resolution; subsequently 66 Congressmen and one Senator voted against the “anti-terror” law. And Lee, who received death threats after her vote, was feted by a rally of several thousand hosted by local liberal Democrats and the ILWU tops.

Both the ILWU on the West Coast and a lash-up of more than 400 New York City trade unionists, including 12 local presidents, have come out in opposition to the war. A statement issued by “New York City Labor Against the War” declares that war “will redirect billions to the military and corporate executives, while draining such essential domestic programs as education, health care and the social security trust. In New York City and elsewhere, it will be a pretext for imposing ‘austerity’ on labor and poor people under the guise of ‘national unity’.”

The black Democrats and oppositional trade-union tops are positioning themselves to get ahead of and contain the increasing discontents that the capitalist rulers’ war at home and abroad, coming

Airline...

(continued from page 3)

work out of the mechanics from 10 p.m.-4 a.m., the time block for heavy maintenance projects, without paying overtime. One consequence is that mechanics on the afternoon shift will be expected to take on a project like changing a shaft and bearing at the end of the shift instead of just replacing a bearing, while performing all the same work earlier in the day. This change will place greater stress on the morning shift, which will no longer have backup for fixing jams and doing emergency maintenance during a critical period when there are a lot of bags in the system.

The changing of shift schedules to speed up work is not limited to facilities maintenance. Flights now arrive and depart from Newark in groups known in the industry as banks whereas previously, when there were 25 percent more flights, arrivals and departures were relatively continuous. The bank system allows the company to maximize feeding passengers into connecting flights at its hubs. For the part-time ramp workers, many of whom were downgraded from full-time, it means their shifts now coincide with the banks so that they have to perform the same amount of work in four hours that they previously did in six or eight hours.

Other measures the industry bosses have tried to rally their workforces behind the companies include “voluntary” pay cuts, individual schedule reductions and early retirement. Born out of the culture of company loyalty bred by the profit-sharing prevalent in the industry, and perhaps best understood as profit-sharing in reverse, the voluntary pay cuts, at American Airlines and Southwest in particular, are a means for shifting the blame for layoffs to the workforce (in the event there are too few volunteers). The executive pay freeze through the end of the year at the major carriers is a cynical ploy to seek to cement the bond of the workforce to the company and set a precedent for accepting wage cuts. Of course, all the top executives already have each taken home hundreds of thousands of dollars this year. Southwest grossly entitled its voluntary pay cut program “Pledge to LUV” after the code for its Dallas Love Field base.

The airline that has most bungled its efforts to reduce labor costs, thereby raising the ire of its workforce, is Northwest.

It is the only major airline at which the executives will not forego compensation for the remainder of the year, while already having cut 10,000 positions. The company, apparently mistakenly, sent furlough notices to pilots high on the seniority list, prompting threats of work actions. I was told the company “corrected” these furloughs. But the Northwest bosses have specially targeted the aircraft mechanics, who obtained a record-setting contract earlier in the year. By the numbers, a disproportionate number of aircraft mechanics were furloughed and with minimal severance pay. The craft union Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association has filed breach of contract grievances in the courts on behalf of its membership.

What the AMFA was really pushing hard was national chauvinism. I was directed to an AMFA statement available on the internet in which it attacks Northwest for keeping open foreign aircraft maintenance repair stations while it is laying off its American-based workforce.

Management also is seeking to smash the unions through route realignment. As much as possible given their fleet composition, companies are switching routes to regional jets. The regional jet (or “express”) workforce more often than not labors for lower “B-scale” wages, historically enforced by the parent companies backed up by the union officials of the parent company workforce. Last week, United transitioned six destinations to regional jets. Delta has announced new regional jet service at its hubs in Atlanta, Cincinnati, Dallas/Fort Worth and Salt Lake City. At Continental, almost twice as many mainline pilots (1,100) than express employees in all crafts (600) were furloughed. Many of these furloughed mainline pilots are seeking to “bump into” express. By the terms of their contract, the mainline pilots can displace from their job express pilots with less company seniority. This bumping has heightened the division between different sectors of the workforce and greatly incapacitated the unions.

In general, the course of events has exacerbated craft divisions. Pilots are particularly notable in this regard, perhaps not surprising given their military background (e.g., 1,200 of United’s 10,500 pilots are active National Guard reservists). Though its position has shifted with the winds of bourgeois opinion, at one point acceding to Bush’s opposition only to reverse itself under the weight of

its ranks, the Air Line Pilots Association, the main pilots union, wants pilots armed in the cockpit. Of course, in its scheme, the FBI would train and deputize pilots as federal law enforcement officers. The ALPA bureaucrats have gone so far as to lobby the FBI to back its plan in Congress.

In any case, the Association of Flight Attendants and other flight attendants unions have floated proposals for making instruments of self-defense, from pepper spray to handguns, available to its membership. That the flight attendants, the front-line workers in the event of any hijacking, were serious about self-defense was driven home to me when one flight attendant noted, “I am a liberal at heart [i.e., pro-gun control], but I cannot help but feel that if five or six people on board those planes had guns, none of this would have happened.” In a bitter feud, the ALPA and other pilots union tops have successfully spiked all such proposals before the federal government, arguing with a strong dose of male chauvinism that a potential hijacker could easily disarm a flight attendant.

I also witnessed on CNN an ALPA representative go on a tirade against the airport baggage screeners for allowing ramp personnel (subtext: black and immigrant) to pass through checkpoints with a wave of their ID badges while subjecting (white) pilots to thorough searches of their persons and baggage.

Overnight following the September 11 attacks, the airports were turned into armed camps. One worker told me that the next day at Newark, from where one of the hijacked United flights departed, Port Authority and military police were spotted virtually strip-searching United employees. Today, the National Guard, federal marshals, state police, city police and Port Authority police, all armed, patrol the airports around the country.

Employees are under increased scrutiny. The Federal Aviation Administration is pursuing a comprehensive background check of all those with ramp access, an investigation it is conducting jointly with the FBI and other federal law enforcement agencies. At Chicago airports, all employees now are required to pass fingerprint checks, a security measure likely to be adopted elsewhere. At Newark, if an employee follows another through a gate or ramp access door without first closing it and re-punching the entry code, the consequence is termination. As well, industry workers, especially Hispanics,

like the larger immigrant population, have been persecuted and detained at security checkpoints, even with the full complement of their IDs.

Wanting to avoid additional expenses at all costs, the airlines have recruited various sectors of their workforces to help cover the demand for greater security. At a number of airlines, management has ordered aircraft mechanics to conduct bomb sweeps of aircraft after the last flight of the day, and the FAA has mandated that flight attendants perform this function before and after every flight.

As in other industries, the union tops are peddling the “United We Stand” rhetoric of the ruling class. A United ramp worker, who had voted with his union to authorize a strike approximately three months ago, said, “We cannot strike now. United can’t pay us any differently. It might not be around in a year.” Almost none of the unions were even notified about the furloughs, which does have union members fuming. Most contract negotiations are on hold, including that between the Teamsters mechanics and Continental, and between IAM mechanics and fleet service workers (cleaners and ramp workers) and United.

By and large, the industry workforce is for U.S. “retaliation” for the September 11 attacks, conditioned by a logic that runs as follows: Jobs are secure only if passengers return, which will occur only if the threat of terrorism is stomped out, the mechanism for which is the U.S. military. Most of the social-chauvinism is directed at Arab people. The targeting and detention of Arab passengers as well as their expulsion from some flights is well-documented. Mechanics from South Asia are the subject of intense harassment, not only by management but by white mechanics as well.

But after the first two weeks, more thoughtful comments and criticisms of U.S. retaliation were expressed with greater frequency. An older black facilities mechanic noted, “If there was no bin Laden, the U.S. would find someone else to bomb. And America is just going to anger more people and create more enemies.” Before the military strikes began, an East European worker observed, “America puffs out its chest, shakes its fist and yells loud, and we are all supposed to march behind it. But it just wants war to save its economy from a recession.”

A.W.

amid a deepening recession and the enduring character of racist oppression, will generate among working people and minorities. Selling themselves as the friends of labor and blacks is the long-standing card played by the Democrats, which is why they are historically the preferred party of the bourgeoisie when it comes to mobilizing the population for war. Jesse Jackson Sr. offers such services to his capitalist masters in an article in the Chicago *Defender* (15 October) headlined “Victory at Home, Victory Abroad!”—the NAACP’s slogan during World War II. Trying to stoke support for the war among the black population, Jackson holds out the promise of a better future if they rally ’round the flag: “In many ways, we are two nations under one flag. We want to be one nation under one flag.”

Black columnist Mary Mitchell captured some of the mistrust of the black population for the government’s “war against terrorism,” writing in the Chicago *Sun-Times* (9 October): “When black people think of terrorists, they don’t immediately think of the Taliban or Osama bin Laden. They think of the Ku Klux Klan, the Aryan Nation, Southern slaveholders.” Mitchell went on to complain that the same government that gutted welfare is now dropping “millions of dollars of food into the mouths of a people who live in the country ruled by a sworn enemy.” Such anti-foreigner prejudices have their domestic reflection in anti-immigrant chauvinism, which is

fanned by the likes of the black Democrats and Farrakhan’s Nation of Islam, who seek to channel the anger of the ghetto poor into hatred for Arab, Korean and other immigrant shopkeepers. This is deadly poison which only serves the divide-and-rule schemes of the American bourgeoisie, whose rule is fundamentally premised on the subjugation of black people at the bottom of this society.

While the Republicans unabashedly enforce the interests of big business, the Democrats lie and do the same thing. As we note in the Programmatic Statement of the SL/U.S., “For Socialist Revolution in the Bastion of World Imperialism!”:

“The shell game through which the Democratic Party—the historic party of the Confederate slavocracy—is portrayed as the ‘friend’ of blacks and labor has been essential to preserving the rule of racist American capitalism. Our principal task in the U.S. is to break the power of the pro-capitalist trade-union bureaucracy over the labor movement. It is this bureaucracy—itsself a component part of the Democratic Party—which politically chains the proletariat to the bourgeoisie and is the major obstacle to revolutionary class consciousness, to the forging of a revolutionary workers party.”

While the Sweeney leadership of the AFL-CIO openly supports the imperialist war, the antiwar union officials offer consoling words of opposition, but no deeds. A strike by the heavily black postal unions—in defense of the very lives of their members—to shut down anthrax-contaminated worksites would resonate widely among working people and minorities. But that would mean defying

federal anti-strike legislation, challenging the government’s proscription of strikes that it deems threatening to “national interests.” In thrall to the bosses’ laws, the postal union tops instead push fruitless court suits.

For America’s capitalist rulers, workers are mere fodder for profit at home and war abroad. The callous indifference of the bosses and their government to the lives of postal workers only underscores that the interests of capital and labor are fundamentally counterposed. Such an understanding is the beginning of wisdom if the working people are to struggle successfully against this system of exploitation and war.

American “democracy” has been purchased through the brutal exploitation of the colonial and semicolonial masses around the world, generally through imposition of murderous anti-labor dictatorial regimes. Our task in the bastion of world imperialism is to build the multiracial revolutionary workers party, section of a reformed Fourth International, that will lead the proletariat in the overthrow of the American capitalist order, the expropriation of the bourgeoisie as a class and the establishment of a planned socialist economy. *For class struggle against capitalist rulers at home! Defend Afghanistan against imperialist attack!* ■

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WORKERS VANGUARD

It Didn't Start on September 11

Behind the Global Capitalist Recession

We conclude below an article begun in WV No. 767 (26 October).

NOVEMBER 1—"The recession has begun," proclaimed the chief economist for Pittsburgh's PNC Financial Services Group following yesterday's announcement that the American economy underwent an outright contraction in the last business quarter for the first time in a decade. He added that "the fourth quarter will show an even deeper drop." President Bush asserted that the economic decline

PART TWO

was the result of the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center, an ignorant statement belied not least by the fact that the period after September 11 accounted for less than three weeks of the last quarter. For the more than a million manufacturing workers who were given their walking papers before the economic fallout from September 11, which led to several hundred thousand more layoffs, the "news" of a recession was no news at all.

The deepening economic crisis is certain to exacerbate existing tensions between the U.S. and its rival imperialists in West Europe and Japan, as they each scramble to buttress their profits. In the immediate aftermath of September 11, the French *Le Monde*, speaking for the most anti-American bourgeoisie in Europe, proclaimed on its front page, "We Are All Americans!" What this meant was that, like the American capitalist class, the European rulers intended to use the "war against terrorism" to further their own aims internationally and domestically, especially moving to further crack down on immigrants and asylum-seekers and to regiment the proletariat "at home" in the face of the burgeoning economic crisis. Meanwhile, as the U.S./British air war against Afghanistan continues, the cracks in the facade of "anti-terrorist" unity have become ever more visible, with a *New York Times* headline today warning, "Public Apprehension Felt in Europe Over the Goals



AFF

World recession hit before September 11: Taiwanese jobless demonstrate outside parliament amid record unemployment in summer; French airline workers protest threatened closures and layoffs in June.



Reuters

of Afghanistan Bombings." Even the most staunchly pro-American of the European Union (EU) countries, Blair's Britain, has openly opposed White House talk of a new assault on Iraq.

U.S.-Europe Conflicts Escalate

When Bush visited Europe in the spring, *Le Monde* (12 June) declared more characteristically: "His ambition seems to be to turn the United States into a sort of me-nation, a country essentially busy, on the international stage, defending national interests defined in the narrowest way." In the first months of his administration, Bush certainly seemed to go out of his way to insult and antagonize America's NATO "allies" with his go-it-alone policies and cowboy-style diplomacy. For example, he unilaterally rejected the Kyoto treaty on global warming and declared his intent to scrap the 1972 anti-ballistic missile treaty.

Yet clearly the tensions between Washington and West European capitals did not originate with the inauguration of the new right-wing Republican administration. Economic nationalism has been on the rise on both sides of the Atlantic for several years, especially since the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, which removed the main factor restraining the rivalry between American and European (centrally German) imperialism.

At the time of Bush's European tour, the London *Economist* (9 June) pointed out that "unilateralist tendencies" within American ruling circles "have long been present, especially in Congress, which had put 70 countries under sanctions by 1999, balked at paying America's UN dues and thumbed its nose at the Kyoto climate-change treaty long before Mr Bush, too, gave it a Bronx cheer." To this list one can add the differences between the Clinton administration and the European Union over competition, investment and agricultural policies that led to the breakup of the December 1999 World Trade Organization (WTO) meeting in Seattle. At the political-military level, the Clinton White House consistently torpedoed European initiatives in war-torn ex-Yugoslavia (particularly Bosnia) in the mid-1990s for fear these would undermine the American-dominated NATO alliance.

The visible increase in tensions between Washington and European capitals earlier this year was not mainly due to the change from Clinton to Bush but rather to the changed economic condition in the U.S. and therefore the world. During the 1990s, European industrialists and financiers made a lot of money in the U.S. through increased export earnings, increased sales revenue from their American-based operations and capital gains on their holdings of high-tech and other American corporate stocks. But

now the situation is just the opposite. European exports (e.g., German industrial machinery) are being hurt by the American recession and its impact on East Asia. European-owned factories in the U.S. are operating way below capacity. And any European financiers who weren't smart enough to sell off their American corporate stocks early last year have taken a bath. The conflicts between American and European capital are now over the division of a *smaller and shrinking* total economic pie.

A clear and important case in point is the steel industry. The contraction of the American manufacturing sector during the last few years has hit the steel industry especially hard. Many companies are losing money and some (the giant LTV and Bethlehem Steel) have even filed for bankruptcy. To protect this core component of the U.S. military-industrial complex (and as a sop to the protectionist demands of the trade-union tops), in June Bush announced broad new restrictions on steel imports, declaring, "It's in our nation's interest that if there are unfair trade practices in the steel industry we address them in a very aggressive way." In response, EU trade commissioner Pascal Lamy lectured the American ruling class: "The cost of restructuring in the U.S. steel sector should not be shifted to the rest of the world" (*New York Times*, 7 June). Christian Georges, an economist with the French Crédit Lyonnais Securities, commented, "You can expect that the European Commission will retaliate." Obviously so.

Some of the sharpest trade battles between the U.S. and EU have been over agriculture—e.g., "the banana wars" over Caribbean fruit exports a few years ago and European restrictions on imports of American genetically engineered beef. To date these disputes have involved a relatively small amount of total agricultural

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AP

Soup kitchen in Buenos Aires. As Argentine government enforces imperialist austerity, one in five workers is jobless.