

The

Summer 2006

No. 24

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Internationalist



Defend the Palestinian People and Lebanese Shiites!

Israeli/U.S. Rape of Lebanon



Nasser Nasser/AP

**Defeat Zionism Through Arab/Hebrew Workers Revolution!
Drive the U.S. Imperialists Out of Iraq and All the Near East!**

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Front page photo: Lebanese rescue worker carrying one of at least 27 children killed in Israeli bomb attack on Qana, July 30. The bombs were made in U.S.A.

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

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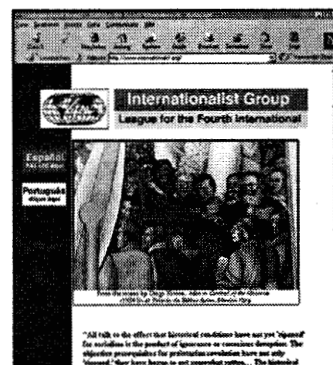
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The Internationalist

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for the Reforging of the Fourth International



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Summer 2006

For Workers Action Against the War!

Israeli/U.S. Rape of Lebanon

Defeat Zionism Through Arab/Hebrew Workers Revolution!

AUGUST 2 – Just as demonstrators in New York last Saturday were chanting, “Hey, hey, Olmert, what do you say? How many kids did you kill today?” the Israeli prime minister and his war cabinet were planning their murderous air strike against the village of Qana in southern Lebanon. Hours later, precision bombs brought down an apartment house where scores of civilians were trapped, almost entirely women and children. More than 60 people were killed in this pinpoint attack, including at least 34 kids. A decade earlier, Israeli shells killed 105 Lebanese in the same village as they sought refuge in a United Nations post. Imitating Nazi tactics in World War II and colonialists in 19th century Africa, the Israeli generals seek to intimidate through “collective punishment” and wholesale slaughter. More than 900,000 Lebanese have been forced from their homes so far by the bombing

The latest attack on Qana was hardly exceptional, and certainly no mistake. All over the south of Lebanon, rescue workers have been pulling scores of bodies of women and children out of the rubble of destroyed buildings every day. Repeatedly Israeli war planes have struck refugee columns, leaving bodies of youngsters strewn along the roadside. But the sheer scope of this massacre brought rage against the Zionist mass murderers and their U.S. imperialist patrons to a white hot flame. In Beirut, demonstrators carried signs portraying the American secretary of state Condoleezza Rice as a vampire. Angry crowds sacked offices of the United Nations, while in the U.N. Security Council diplomats debated whether to “immediately work for a ceasefire” or to “work for an immediate ceasefire.” Either way, they are all accomplices in the slaughter.

As the fighting dragged on, the U.S. role in co-sponsoring the Israeli assault on Lebanon has been underscored. The London *Guardian* (31 July) reported that shrapnel found at the site of the Qana massacre bore the markings “Guided Bomb BSU 37/B,” made in the U.S.A. A week into the Israeli attack it was reported that the Pentagon was rushing high tech munitions to Tel Aviv, including 100 laser-guided 5,000-pound GBU-28 bunker bombs, to be dropped from Israel’s U.S.-manufactured F-15 fighter bombers. Washington has also reportedly supplied Israel with white phosphorous, depleted uranium, cluster and vacuum bombs. Meanwhile, U.S. war criminal Rice and her attack dog at the U.N. John Bolton have easily blocked limp calls for a ceasefire, as President George Bush Jr. encourages the Israelis to keep up the bombing.



Kevin Frayer/AP

Rescue workers hold up body of young child covered in dust from rubble of his home hit by Israeli air strike in massacre that killed 60.

The incontrovertible fact is, *this is a joint U.S./Israeli war*. It is part of Washington’s war plans, beginning with the invasion and colonial occupation of Iraq, to reshape the region into a “new Middle East” under total U.S. imperialist domination. The U.S.’ NATO allies and imperialist rivals are also complicit. As usual, Britain’s Tony Blair ran interference for Bush even though almost two-thirds of the British public opposes his close ties to the U.S. French president Jacques Chirac has offered to supply troops for a “United Nations” army in southern Lebanon that would have as its main task the disarming of Hezbollah. Even Russian president Vladimir Putin, seeking a place in the ranks of the Great Powers, came out for Israel’s supposed right to self-defense in the midst of its blatant war of aggression.

The Qana massacre and an earlier Israeli attack on a U.N. post gave the lie to the Zionist claim that while Hezbollah rockets have killed a number of civilians in northern Israel, the civilians killed by Israeli bombing raids were supposedly unintended “collateral damage.” Not only are the munitions precisely guided, and the targets selected by top Israeli civilian leaders and military commanders, when top United Nations officials repeatedly contacted Israel’s mission in New York over a period of nine hours to call off the shelling of a U.N. post, the bombardment continued unabated, killing several “peacekeepers.” The slaughter at Qana is a replay of the U.S. bombing of the Amiriyah refugee shelter in Baghdad where over 400 women and children were killed during the 1991 Persian Gulf War under President George Bush Sr.

At the very outset, Israel's military chief Dan Halutz vowed that "Israel would turn Lebanon back 20 years by striking its vital infrastructure" (*Jerusalem Post*, 12 July). Israeli rockets laid waste to airports, roads, bridges, TV transmission towers and left a whole swath of the capital, Beirut, reduced to rubble. But despite the massive bombing, the war has not been going as planned for Israel. Attempting to drive Hezbollah fighters out of southern Lebanon, the Israeli army ran into stiff resistance as soon as ground troops crossed the border. The "Israeli Defense Force" was forced to retreat from the Hezbollah stronghold of Bent Jbail, only two miles into Lebanon, and when the IDF returned, it was ambushed, leaving nine Israeli soldiers dead. Complaints have been growing in Israel that the war is not being waged aggressively enough.

Although Israeli and U.S. spokesman insistently label Hezbollah as "terrorists" (while the Zionists and imperialists terror-bomb Beirut and Baghdad), they have been taken by surprise by the Lebanese Shiite group's capacity as a regular military force. Not only was Israel's most advanced warship taken out by a Hezbollah strike, not only have Hezbollah rockets struck Haifa and even farther south into Israel, Hezbollah fighters have tenaciously fought off Israeli troops in close combat. Accustomed to overpowering Palestinian resistance groups equipped with little more than small arms and home-made explosive devices, Israeli generals and politicians are finding that "destroying" the Lebanese Shiite group or driving it out of missile range of Israel may take a heavy toll in Israeli military casualties and an even heavier toll on Israel's ability to suppress opposition through intimidation.

It has been axiomatic that the ability of the Zionist rulers to keep their garrison state fully regimented is dependent upon its unquestioned military domination in the region. Suddenly, this dominance has been thrown into doubt. Already, the first Israeli reservist has been jailed for refusing to serve in Lebanon, and many more may follow. An antiwar demonstration on July 22 drew 6,000 in downtown Tel Aviv. On July 30, Arabs and Jews from northern Israel issued a joint statement declaring that they "do not believe the government of Israel," because of the "huge gap between the declared aims of the war and Israel's actual military operations," because only a month earlier "a military exercise was conducted as a rehearsal for an attack on Lebanon," because "this war mainly serves the interests of the American policy in the Middle East" to "establish a new order in the Middle East that does not serve the interests of its peoples."

The Zionist generals will not be deterred by a few thousand "peaceniks," but Israel is a small country and the toll in casualties reverberates through society. Israel was forced to withdraw from southern Lebanon in 2000 in good part because of domestic discontent over the steady drain in military losses. Anything perceived as a loss could throw the country into turmoil, and at this point Hezbollah can "win" simply by withstanding the onslaught. Meanwhile, Arab governments that were initially silent over the Israeli invasion or even de-



Lebanese protesters burn Israeli and U.S. flags, July 31. Bombs that killed women in children in Qana were made in U.S.

nounced Hezbollah's strike that snared two Israeli soldiers are coming under pressure from the masses. Zionist "security experts" sneeringly dismiss the "fevered hostility to Israel" of the "Arab street," but the corrupt sheiks and decrepit military-based regimes do not sit tranquilly in their seats of power.

We have called to drive Israel out of Lebanon and all of the Occupied Territories, and to drive the U.S. out of Iraq and all the Near East. The Zionist and imperialist warmongers can be defeated, but the question is how. It will not happen because of Israeli, Arab and U.S. "moderates" somehow getting together, as many bourgeois liberals seeking to build a new "peace movement" believe. Their calls for intervention by the United Nations will only aid Israel, particularly since U.N. "peacekeepers" will be told to enforce Security Council Resolution 1559 to disarm Hezbollah. To genuinely oppose the rape of Lebanon, it is necessary to defend the Palestinian people and Shiite population targeted by the Israeli/U.S. attack and stand on the side of those who seek to resist the invasion militarily.

The invasion of Lebanon is only the latest of a series of Near Eastern wars, and part of the U.S.' global "war on terror" aimed at securing a "new world order" under American domination. What is required to galvanize powerful opposition to imperialism and Zionism is not an alliance of convenience between various nationalist and Islamic fundamentalist forces who in earlier wars have been at each others' throats, but rather building revolutionary working-class opposition on a program of *proletarian internationalism*. This is what is needed to break through the bunker mentality that holds the Israeli population chained to its Zionist rulers through unrelenting war hysteria. While defending the oppressed Palestinian people, and recognizing the right of self-determination of both the Palestinian Arab and Hebrew-speaking nations, the Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International call to defeat Zionism through Arab/Hebrew workers revolution.

continued on page 10

Defend the Palestinian People and Lebanese Shiites!

Israel Launches Regional War on the Road to World War III



Tyler Hicks/New York Times

Largely Shiite areas of southern Beirut, Lebanon were bombed to rubble by Israeli warplanes.

Drive the Zionists Out of Lebanon and the Occupied Territories!
Drive the U.S. Imperialists Out of Iraq and All the Near East!

JULY 21 – On July 14, Israel began a full-scale assault on Lebanon, bombing targets, military and civilian, throughout the country. First on the list was Beirut's airport, followed by blowing up 55 bridges and all highways leading out of the country. Tens of thousands of Lebanese managed to rush to the Syrian border before the main roads were destroyed, but now the entire Lebanese population is trapped. Westerners are being evacuated by sea, and many Lebanese are worried that Israel will escalate its bombing as soon as they are gone. Having blockaded the country, the Zionist militarists are proceeding to pulverize the south-

ern part of the capital, flattening whole city blocks, as well as attacking cities and Palestinian refugee camps from north to south. To date (July 21) over 350 Lebanese have been killed in the massive and indiscriminate Israeli bombing. Meanwhile, over the past month Israeli tanks have returned to Gaza, cutting the narrow territory in half, blocking deliveries of food and fuel and killing over 100 Palestinian Arabs.

Working people the world over must vigorously denounce and fight against the two-pronged Israeli attack, which along with the U.S. imperialist occupation of Iraq threatens to engulf

For an Arab/Hebrew Workers State in a Socialist Federation of the Near East!
Smash Imperialism Through International Socialist Revolution!

the entire Near East in war.

Particularly hard-hit in the Israeli onslaught against Lebanon have been the Shiite Muslim communities where the Islamic organization Hezbollah is strong. There, the Israeli air force is massacring the civilian population, including many children, killing whole families in their homes, bombing trucks carrying medical supplies, United Nations "peacekeepers," milk processing plants, even Lebanese army barracks. Hezbollah responded by firing waves of Katyusha rockets into northern Israel. They hit the port city of Haifa for the first time ever, and a missile or drone took out an Israeli warship. The Israeli army made an initial foray into southern Lebanon, but pulled back after meeting stiff resistance. Nevertheless, the air attack has manifestly failed to "degrade" Hezbollah's military capacity. So Israel has mobilized its army reserves, which exacts a tremendous economic cost, indicating a full-scale ground invasion is in the offing.

Leaders of the Zionist state portray their assault as "retaliation" for Hezbollah's July 12 stunning attack on Israeli military forces on the border, in which eight soldiers were killed and two captured. This effective action left the Israeli army smarting, but what followed is far more than a reprisal. It was "a wonderful option to do something the army was already prepared to do, with a well-constructed operational plan on the shelf," commented the head of an Israeli "peace" center. War minister Amir Peretz, head of the Zionist "Labor" Party, declared that "we shall not allow Hezbollah forces to remain any further on the borders of the state of Israel." The only way that can be accomplished is by an occupation by Israel or some "international" force doing its bidding. The last time Israel tried this, in 1982, it was bogged down in southern Lebanon for 18 years and was ultimately forced out by Hezbollah guerrillas.

Whatever the pretext used by Israel to justify its aggression, the international workers movement must stand squarely for defense of the Palestinian people and Lebanese Shiite population under attack, and for the defeat of the Israeli assault. The current invasion of Lebanon is part of an overall plan by the Zionist expansionists to unilaterally redraw the borders of the Near East and impose their military dominance on the Arab peoples. Having declared the bogus "peace process" dead, they intend to fence in the Palestinians and confine them to giant prisons in Gaza and the West Bank, Zionist settlements will fill in huge swaths of the Occupied Territories, and the stage will be set for a future mass expulsion, euphemistically known in Zionist circles as "transfer." This "final solution" to the "Palestinian problem" today is openly avowed only by Zionist hardliners, but it is the logic of the decades-old policy of "creating facts on the ground."

There is no "equivalence" between the blows struck by the Lebanese Shiite Hezbollah and Palestinian groups such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad and various secular nationalist resistance forces on the one hand, and the Zionist military juggernaut on the other. The Zionists and imperialists brand Hezbollah as "terrorist," when they are the biggest state terrorists of all. Contrary to the hysteria trumpeted by the bourgeois press in the West, the existence of the Hebrew-speaking population of Israel is in no way threatened today, whereas the Palestinian Ar-

abs and Lebanese Shiites are very much in danger of being decimated and driven out of their lands. Proletarian internationalists stand with those resisting Zionist occupation. The League for the Fourth International calls to drive the Zionists out of all the territories conquered by Israel in the 1967 war, including East Jerusalem, as well as from Lebanon. All the West Bank settlements are military outposts for the subjugation of the Palestinians.

The deliberate targeting of the civilian population in Lebanon by Israeli commanders has led even that pliant imperialist tool, U.N. commissioner for human rights Louise Arbour, to talk of war crimes. These are empty words, of course; nothing will be done against the war criminals in Tel Aviv, or the U.S. political and military commanders who have slaughtered over 100,000 Iraqis. While noting that Israeli attacks on Lebanon, Gaza and the West Bank are far deadlier, massacring whole villages and neighborhoods, deliberately bombing refugee columns, communists oppose indiscriminate attacks on the general population of Israel such as suicide bombings of non-military targets. A Hezbollah rocket recently struck a railway repair shop in Haifa, which has a large Arab population, killing eight workers. Another barrage hit the Arab town of Nazareth in northern Israel, killing two Palestinian children at play.

Revolutionary Marxists recognize the right of self-determination of both the Palestinian Arab and Hebrew-speaking peoples, that is, their right to national existence in the area. The creation of the state of Israel, a theocratic Jewish state which is inherently oppressive to the Palestinians, was a historic crime by the Western imperialists, coming on top of the monstrous annihilation of 6 million European Jews in the Nazi Holocaust. Instead of accepting the Jewish refugees from the fascist slaughter, the "democratic" imperialists pushed them into Palestine. But the fact is that there is now a Hebrew-speaking nation in the same area as the Palestinian Arab population, and proletarian revolutionaries defend the democratic rights of both. At the same time, we warn that the conflicting national rights can only be equitably resolved through workers revolution.

Imperialists Trumpet "Peace" and "Democracy" While Delivering Death and Destruction

The phony Near East "peace" process collapsed with the Camp David talks in 2000, when U.S. president Bill Clinton demanded Palestinians submit to the carving up of the West Bank. This was driven home by the subsequent provocation staged by Ariel Sharon at the Al Aksa Mosque with the full cooperation of the "Labor" Zionist government of Ehud Barak. Since then many Palestinian secular nationalists and Israeli leftists have abandoned their earlier support for a Palestinian "mini-state" and call for a democratic, secular Palestine, the original program of the Palestine Liberation Organization. However, there is no way that under capitalism there can be a democratic solution to the conflict between two competing claims to national self-determination on the same territory. How would water rights be divided between Israel and Palestine, for example? What about the undeniable right to return

of the Palestinian refugees forced from their homes in 1948?

U.S. imperialist warmonger in chief George W. Bush claims to be fighting for “democracy” in Iraq and throughout the Near East, except when people make the “wrong” choice. The current round of fighting began with the Israeli army returning to Gaza to punish the population for voting for the Islamist Hamas. In addition to cutting off the flow of funds in order to strangle the Palestinians economically, Israel has bombed Palestinian Authority offices, arrested one-third of the PA cabinet members and targeted Hamas leaders for assassination. For good measure, the Israeli military blew up the main power plant in Gaza and murdered an entire Arab family on the beach. But in all their frenzy against Hamas, Zionist propagandists leave out that Israel helped set up the organization, funneling substantial sums to it, to serve as a counterweight to the Palestinian nationalist Fatah.

Many pseudo-socialists today give political support (“critical,” of course) to the Islamist Hamas, just as yesterday they tailed after Fatah and its leader Yasir Arafat, on the grounds that they are opposed by the Zionists. Yet both Arab nationalists and Islamists are more than prepared to do a deal with imperialism, if only they could. In contrast, the Trotskyists of the Internationalist Group and LFI defend the Palestinian people while opposing all religiously based states, whether a Jewish state of Israel or an Islamic state in Iran or U.S.-occupied Iraq. We hold that in the case of historically intermingled or interpenetrated peoples, the only possible framework for a just solution to national rights is under proletarian rule, when the working people of all nationalities, peoples and minorities can resolve democratic questions through their common efforts in a collective economy.

In the present case, while recognizing the right of national self-determination on behalf of both the Palestinian Arab and Hebrew-speaking peoples, we fight for an Arab-Hebrew workers state in a socialist federation of the Near East. This can only be achieved by joint struggle of the working people against their Zionist, Islamic fundamentalist and Arab nationalist rulers.

In Lebanon, as well, the imperialists and Zionists claimed to be supporting “democracy.” Last year they stage-managed a “Cedar Revolution,” forcing Syrian forces to leave the country and setting up a puppet government in Beirut. The gilded youth of the Christian and Sunni Muslim Lebanese bourgeoisie – hip young men in their BMW sports cars, sleek young women with their Armani accessories – provided TV images of mass support. Many of these are now bitter that the reward for their efforts is renewed destruction of a country still being rebuilt three decades after a ruinous civil war and after two decades of Israeli occupation in the south. Impoverished Shiites, on the other hand, participated in pro-Syrian demonstrations that were not televised. While giving no political support to the Syrian regime, Marxists point out that Lebanon was carved out of Syria after World War I by the French colonialists as an artificial state, then dominated by pro-Western Christian forces, in order to hold Arab nationalism in check. As shown in the civil war of 1975-90, Lebanon is a checkerboard of communalist enclaves, which under capitalist rule will always be oppressive to one minority or another (Shiites, Christians, Alawites, Druze, etc.)

Israel



Sebastian Scheiner/AP

War fever: Israeli girls write on artillery shells (Kiryat Shmona, July 17). “To Hezbollah with ... from Israel.”



Nasser Nasser/AP

“The child whose dead body lies like a rag doll beside the cars which were supposedly taking her and her family to safety is a symbol of the latest Lebanon war” (Robert Fisk). Name unknown, her parents were also killed in Israeli attack on refugee column outside Ter Harfa, Lebanon, July 15.

There are similarities between the latest attack and the 1982 invasion, when the Israeli army rolled up to Beirut and oversaw a massacre of Palestinians by the fascist Christian Falange in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps. But today’s attack comes in a new context, of U.S.-led imperialist invasions and colonial occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq. Moreover, Israel’s invasion of Lebanon is clearly being done in conjunction with its patrons in the White House and the Pentagon, where a powerful pro-Israel camarilla has given a green light to the Zionist expansionists. Palestinian “president” Mahmoud Abbas, a figurehead without a state or a government, warned that the attack on Lebanon could lead to a regional war. In fact, Israel has already launched the war. The Zionists are counting on the Saudi, Egyptian and other reactionary Arab regimes to do nothing, and are calling for the Lebanese government to control Hezbollah, which it will not and cannot do. Many European imperialists in the Group of 8 meeting in the tsarist palaces of St. Petersburg, Russia, have called for United Nations intervention. But U.N. “blue helmets” will only serve as mercenary border police on behalf of Israel and U.S. imperialism.

Israeli and Western imperialist spokesmen are portraying the present conflict as a "proxy war" with Iran, a main sponsor of the Hezbollah. While there is no evidence that Tehran had anything to do with the capture of a couple of Israeli soldiers on the Lebanese border, it is clear that the Zionists and their supporters in the U.S. have been pushing for a showdown with the Persian ruling mullahs for years. A Zionist hawk writing in the New York "neoconservative" *City Journal* (Spring 2006) recently called for an attack on Iran of "swift, massive, devastating force that decapitates the regime – but no occupation." An attack on Iran would be the height of folly for the U.S. military, already bogged down in Iraq. But that may not deter the warmongers in the White House, the Pentagon and the U.S. Congress, on both sides of the aisle, from "unleashing" the Israelis who have an arsenal of hundreds of atomic bombs, the means to deliver them and a leadership insane enough to set off a conflagration that could end up consuming Israel.

A military attack on Iran, however demented and improbable, is the *ultima ratio*, the final "argument" of the imperialist hue and cry over Iran's efforts to develop nuclear power, fully within its rights under the U.S.-imposed "non-proliferation" treaties. As Trotskyists who never gave political support to the Islamic "Iranian Revolution," and who call for workers revolution to bring down the reactionary rule of the mullahs and imams, the IG and LFI defend semi-colonial Iran and its right to obtain nuclear weapons for self-defense against the nuclear-armed imperialists and Zionists. Similarly, even under the anti-Communist butcher Saddam Hussein, revolutionary Marxists defended Iraq and its right to develop any weapons needed for defense against the imperialist mass murderers who have since laid waste to the country with a Hitler-style Blitzkrieg and ruinous colonial occupation. Trotskyists also unconditionally defend the North Korean bureaucratically deformed workers state against imperialism, while fighting for political revolution to replace the nationalist Stalinist bureaucracy with a proletarian internationalist leadership.

Hezbollah and Hamas may have grievously misjudged the Israeli government in figuring it would agree to an exchange of three Israeli soldiers for some of the estimated 9,000 Palestinians (and an unknown number of Lebanese) being held in Israel's jails. But the Israeli rulers may have made a far greater miscalculation in figuring that they could launch a new war and keep it within strict limits. Even the *Wall Street Journal* (20 July), normally a big backer of any and every Israeli adventure or atrocity, worries: "But escalating the conflict is risky for Israel. The casualties would likely be far greater than the Israeli military has experienced so far. The operation could fail, dealing a devastating blow to Israel's reputation in the region." While many opportunist leftists who habitually tail after "Third World" nationalists consider Israel as nothing but an imperialist outpost, the real relationship between the Zionists and the imperialists is more complex. Strategic Forecasting, a corporate military analysis outfit, recently noted:

"Israel has national security requirements that outstrip its manpower base. It can field a sufficient army, but its industrial base cannot supply all of the weapons needed to fight high-intensity conflicts. This means it is always dependent

on an outside source for its industrial base and must align its policies with that source.... It was after 1967 that it entered into a patron-client relationship with the United States. This relationship is its strength and its weakness. It gives the Israelis the systems they need for national security, but since U.S. and Israeli interests diverge, the relationship constrains Israel's range of action."

—Stratfor, *Mideast Crisis: Backgrounder* (14 July 2006)

Socialism or Barbarism

For U.S. imperialism, control of the Near East is key to its exercise of world domination, not so much to supply its own energy needs but to be able to turn the oil spigot on and off, and thereby to have the whip hand over imperialist rivals. Already, the Israeli attack sent the oil price soaring to a record \$78 per barrel. Washington has sought to impose a Pax Americana on the strategic region for decades, particularly since the 1989-92 East European counterrevolution that brought down the Soviet Union and whetted U.S. appetites for a New World Order, with it as the "sole superpower." The Zionists, of course, have always sought to sell their services to imperialism, going back to when they got a British foreign minister to issue the famous Balfour Declaration in 1917 by offering to act as gendarmes for Britain astride the vital Suez Canal. But the interests of the Zionists and the imperialists are not identical. Indeed, rabid Israeli right-wingers are prepared to blow up the world in pursuit of their messianic expansionist plans.

As bombs fell on Beirut, Democrats and Republicans alike rushed to defend Israeli aggression, with war hawk Hillary Clinton taking the lead in missile-rattling. For now, U.S. secretary of state Condoleezza Rice and U.N. ambassador John Bolton have beaten down calls for United Nations action to impose a ceasefire or send a "peacekeeping" force. After a couple more weeks of Israeli bombing and ground incursions in which Israel will try to "clear" the population south of the Litani River, turning it into a "free-fire" zone, military "experts" say, Washington will seek to organize a "multinational" force, perhaps like the NATO expeditionary force in Afghanistan, to police southern Lebanon and enforce a U.N. Security Council resolution calling for disarming Hezbollah. But, as the *Wall Street Journal* (17 July) noted, peacekeeping presumes the parties want to make peace. If Hezbollah, with wide backing in the local Shiite population, refuses to be disarmed and undertakes guerrilla war, it won't be "peacekeeping" or even "stabilization" but *counterinsurgency*, at which Israel already failed to "prevail" in Lebanon during 1982-2000, and the U.S. isn't doing so hot in Iraq either. If Israel should strike at Syria or Iran, it would reverberate throughout the region. And if one of the decrepit conservative Arab regimes were to topple in the face of mass protest over the war, the example could spread like an oil slick.

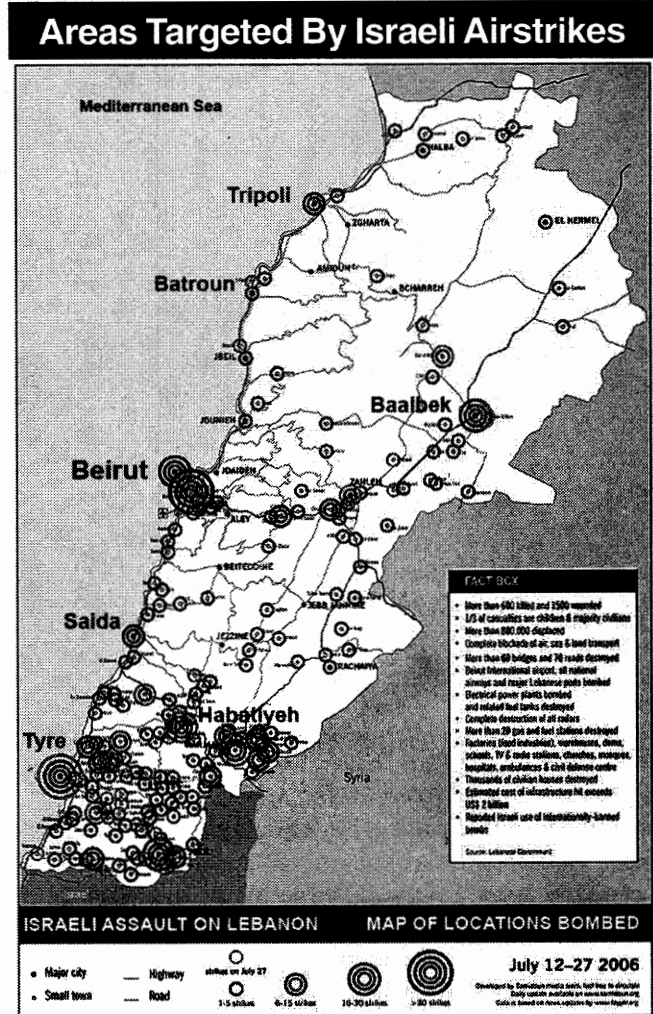
Recently a mainstream pro-Zionist columnist, Michael Goodwin, declared that "World War III has begun," and that the key is "The U.S. must prevail" – along with Israel of course (*New York Daily News*, 16 July). "Prevailing" in a nuclear war – against what adversary, and how? This is not just the ravings of a pundit gone haywire but official U.S. doctrine. In the Clinton administration excerpts from a clas-

sified "Defense Planning Guidance for the Fiscal Years 1994-1999" were leaked which set the goal of "precluding the emergence of any potential future global competitor," like the U.S.' NATO allies. In the Bush II administration, war secretary Donald Rumsfeld's Quadrennial Defense Review called to "prevail against current threats" and to "dissuade potential adversaries." With the Cold War deterrent strategy of "mutually assured destruction" (MAD) gone, has some evil genius in the Pentagon dreamt up a new strategic doctrine of "nuclear unilateral total slaughter" (NUTS)? That is clearly the direction that the "Bush doctrine" of preemptive war points.

At the St. Petersburg Group of 8 summit, U.S. president Bush remarked at a private dinner to Russian president Vladimir Putin that he desired to "promote institutional change in parts of the world like Iraq - where there is a free press and free religion" (!) and he hoped that "Russia would do the same thing." When Putin icily replied that "we certainly would not want to have the same kind of democracy as they have in Iraq," Bush retorted, "Just wait" (*New York Times*, 16 July). This kind of off-hand remark from the leader of the world's most powerful imperialist power - who declared that he was "driven with a mission from god" to invade Afghanistan and Iraq and who is pursuing a Manichean battle against an "axis of evil" - isn't likely to endear the U.S. to "potential future global competitors" that it wants to "dissuade." As inter-imperialist squabbles over Iraq, Israel and other world conflicts multiply, trade wars such as between European and U.S. airplane manufacturing rivals Airbus and Boeing, can escalate to other forms of competition. And Russia still has the military wherewithal to annihilate the U.S. several times over.

To note that Israel's invasion of Lebanon is on a course toward an inter-imperialist World War III is not to say that it is about to break out tomorrow. Rather, we are in a period of clashes building up to the main event, such as the Balkan Wars that preceded World War I, or the 1930s Japanese invasion of China and the Spanish Civil War prior to World War II. The timing is not pre-determined and events such as the current Israeli attack in the midst of a raging civil war in Iraq can have unforeseen consequences. Clearly, the Israeli general staff didn't count on Hezbollah having and using missiles that could hit Haifa and possibly Tel Aviv, or that could take out Israeli warships, any more than the Pentagon war planners prepared for an extended and deepening insurgency in Iraq. Israeli and U.S. generals may suffer setbacks on the battlefield, but what is key is how these colonial wars intersect the class struggle worldwide.

It is on the home front that the imperialists and Zionists are ultimately vulnerable. Today, the Israeli public may be solidly lined up behind Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's invasion. But let guerrilla attacks drag on endlessly with a steady drain of casualties and Israeli support for war will dissipate, as it already has in the U.S. It is then that the potential for sharp workers struggle against the war will increase. Israeli society is rent by a class divide, as are all the Arab countries, and the interests of the Hebrew-speaking workers (including many who came from elsewhere in the Near East and are native Arab-speakers) are not identical with those of their Zionist masters. Military



reverses and sharp internal clashes (e.g., over clericalism) can break the regimentation of a besieged fortress, and the mass of the Israeli population cannot wish to live forever in a garrison state. What will be required is a revolutionary leadership, a Trotskyist party, to make use of such contradictions to open the road to united class struggle of Arab and Hebrew working people.

The League for the Fourth International has called for, and sought to initiate where possible, class struggles against the imperialist war, including "hot cargoing" (refusing to handle) war matériel by transportation workers, and workers' strikes against the war. Recent motions passed by the San Francisco/Oakland Local 10 of the West Coast International Longshore and Warehouse Union calling for the organization of a one-day labor strike against the war in Iraq, and for union action against anti-immigrant vigilantes, although they were turned down by the ILWU bureaucracy, point in the right direction. The same program of class war against the imperialist war is valid in the Israeli attack on Lebanon and the Palestinian Arab population. Impotent boycotts of Israeli academics are ultimately appeals to U.S. imperialism (why not call for U.S. universities to refuse to hire American professors, since the U.S. is guilty of far greater war crimes than Israel?). Pious calls for U.N. intervention only aid Israel. Instead of these dead-ends, far more powerful would

be action by European and American dock workers refusing to load or unload ships carrying war cargo to Israel and Iraq.

At the time of World War I, the German communist revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg declared that the choice facing mankind was barbarism or socialism. Certainly, the Zionist rulers of Israel and the imperialist warmongers in Washington show the ugly face of barbarism as they rape and pillage their way through Iraq and dismember the Palestinian people. We call on the workers of the world to unite in class struggle to drive the imperialists from Iraq and Afghanistan, to defeat the colonial occupation and the "war on terror" which is actually a drive to terrorize the world into submission, as well as to drive the Zionists from all the occupied territories, from Gaza to the West Bank to Lebanon. Above all, the struggle against imperialist war is a political fight. Against the bipartisan capitalist-imperialist war party, we seek to forge a revolutionary workers party, in the U.S. and elsewhere. Ultimately, to put an end to the imperialist chamber of horrors, from the carnage of World War I to the Nazi holocaust (and U.S. atom bombing of Japan) in World War II, to the torture and murder camps of Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo today, it is necessary to sweep away the capitalist system through international socialist revolution. ■

Rape of Lebanon...

continued from page 4

In antiwar protests in the West, the reformist and bourgeois leaderships seek to assuage different constituencies. In the United States, United for Peace and Justice (UPJ) orients to the Democratic Party and liberal Zionists and has refused to raise calls for Palestinian statehood in protests over the Iraq war. The UPJ only criticized Israel for its "disproportionate response" to Hezbollah, as if its seizure of two Israeli soldiers was the cause of the long-planned Israeli invasion. The UPJ also sent a delegation to the American mission to the U.N. with a letter to ambassador Bolton which "call[s] on the Bush administration to work with international partners to broker an immediate and unconditional ceasefire." This is obscene: the U.S. is hardly a neutral party but the main force prolonging the Israeli invasion. It is necessary to *defeat* the U.S. war in the Near East, not to beg the war hawks to show mercy toward their victims. Moreover, when the U.S. gets around to pushing for a "ceasefire" it will be to better attack Hezbollah and Palestinian fighters under siege in Gaza and the West Bank.

Other antiwar groups have announced protests over the war on Lebanon, including a nationwide series of demonstrations on August 5 called by the International Action Center (IAC), led by the Workers World Party (WWP); and an August 12 march in Washington, D.C. called by International ANSWER, led by the Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL), a split-off from the WWP. Both the PSL and WWP give essentially uncritical support to Hezbollah, portraying it as having "gained wide political legitimacy for its determined resistance and its well-organized, non-corrupt social services" (*Workers World*, 3 August) and as "the leadership of a genuine resistance force against the Israeli settler state" (PSL article, 1 August). Yet while Hezbollah has struck blows against the Israeli mili-

tary, it is an Islamic fundamentalist force which like similar Palestinian and Iraqi groups is deeply hostile to communists, secularism, the rights of women and non-Shiite communities.

The Zionists and imperialists will not be defeated by politically supporting Hezbollah, the Palestinian Hamas or Iraqi Islamic and bourgeois nationalist resistance groups. All of these forces are perfectly prepared to cut a deal with U.S. imperialism, if only they had a deal-maker in the White House. These are all reactionary forces who are enemies of workers, ethnic/religious minorities and socialists. Hezbollah, although it is based on the downtrodden Shiite Muslim masses, the largest minority in Lebanon, is part of the government installed by U.S. and Israeli pressure last year. During Lebanon's 1975-90 civil war Hezbollah fought in shifting alliances with and against Sunni Muslims, Druzes, Alawites, Maronite Christians, Greek Christians and other communalist forces, it refused to defend the Palestine Liberation Organization which was the target of Israel's 1982 invasion, and it reserved particular hostility for the Lebanese Communist Party, one of the few social forces with supporters in the various communities.

It is striking that while the various antiwar coalitions and their reformist socialist sponsors tail after different bourgeois forces in the Near East and the imperialist West, they studiously ignore the fundamental force that could mobilize real social power to defeat imperialism and Zionism: the working class. Rather than calling for consumer or academic boycotts of Israel, the IG and LFI have called for union action against the war. Concretely, arms and munitions are being sent to Israel from ports in the United States, Britain and continental Europe. Longshoremen, who have called in the past for boycotts of South African and Chilean shipping, and air cargo workers could and should refuse to handle any war materiel bound for Israel, or for a future "United Nations" force. Right now, at the height of the Israeli invasion, dock workers should refuse to load or unload any ship or cargo plane to or from Israel. Workers' pickets of a Zim Lines ship or El Al cargo plane would send a powerful message of international labor solidarity with the victims of Zionist aggression.

Above all, a political battle must be waged against the imperialist butchers and all the capitalist parties responsible for the slaughter in the Near East. In the U.S., both Democrats and Republicans stand with Zionist Israel, as they have for decades. To defeat the war on Iraq, the war on Afghanistan, the war on Lebanon and the threat of U.S. wars on Iran and North Korea, it is necessary to bring down the system that spawns them as it wages a war on immigrants, blacks and workers with escalating repression on the "home front." These wars are not just about "Big Oil" as simplistic pseudo-Marxists (like the WWP) pretend. Rather they are part of a drive by U.S. imperialism to nail down its hegemony and defeat any potential rival which could threaten its world domination. Revolutionary workers parties must be built throughout the Near East and in the imperialist countries in the fight to sweep away the capitalist system of war and poverty through international socialist revolution. As Lenin and Trotsky did in the first imperialist world war, it is necessary to fight imperialist war with class war. ■

Philippines Crackdown: Fight Arroyo with Workers' Power!



Bullitt Marquez/AP

Riot police chase demonstrators after breaking up march on “people power” monument February 24 after President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo declared state of national emergency.

**Not Another EDSA “People’s Power” Fraud!
Build the Nucleus of a Philippine Trotskyist Party!**

MARCH 23 – Once again the Philippine political landscape reverberated from the noise of police banging their shields, reminiscent of the martial law years of the 1970s. Once more, tanks and armored personnel carriers rolled through the streets of Manila and lined up outside army headquarters as crowds gathered, recalling the coup d’état that set off the EDSA¹ “people power” mobilization and brought down strongman Ferdinand Marcos three decades ago. Except this time only a few thousand civilians came out to join with military “rebels” instead of hundreds of thousands. So Philippine president Gloria Macapagal Arroyo managed to wriggle out of it, barely, for now. Meanwhile, government repression continues to escalate.

“GMA” proclaimed a state of emergency on February 24, then lifted it a week later. In the meantime, she claimed, the country grew “stronger,” and the threat of a coup had diminished. More to the point, her masters in Washington let

¹ Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA) is the ring highway encircling central Manila, on which Fort Bonifacio, the HQ of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) is located and where crowds gathered in response to appeals by Catholic Cardinal Sin and in support of military mutineers who brought down Marcos in 1986.

the Philippine president know that her move was not opportune: it undercut the Bush regime’s claim to be promoting “democracy”; it could set off a hornet’s nest of discontent reaching from the poor into the middle class; it was bad for business, and, most importantly, it threatened to exacerbate tensions in the faction-ridden Philippine military. Her hold on the repressive forces was shaky at best, and the 5,000 U.S. troops presently in the Philippines would not be able to put down a popular revolt. One Iraq at a time is more than enough for the Pentagon these days.

Although the government’s aim in proclaiming the state of emergency was “sowing fear” among its opponents, as “Justice” Secretary Raul Gonzalez frankly avowed, it didn’t have the desired intimidating effect. There were protests daily, from Manila to Mindanao, relatively small at first, testing the depth of the crackdown, but they could mushroom. Maoist guerrillas in the countryside stepped up their actions. Yet the bourgeois opposition, after their coup plotting fizzled, limited itself to legalistic gestures. Five months ago it was calling on the servile Congress to impeach Arroyo; now it “challenged” her emergency decree by appealing to the impotent Supreme Court. And as always the reformist labor misleaders hitched their wagons to various civilian and military factions of the ruling class.

Internationally, there was a slew of protests against Arroyo's crackdown. Most called for ousting Arroyo with "people power" – i.e., for mass mobilization behind the civilian/military *bourgeois* opposition such as brought down Marcos (EDSA 1) and Joseph Estrada (EDSA 2), installing another capitalist politician as president (Corazon Aquino in 1986, Arroyo in 2001). The Internationalist Group participated with a very different program in a February 27 picket of the Philippine Consulate in New York called by the Gabriela Network. IG signs proclaimed "Drive the U.S. Out of Iraq and Philippines," "Not Another 'People Power' Fraud, But Workers Revolution!" "No Alliances with Trapos², AFP³ and Church – Workers to Power!" and "Smash GMA State of Emergency with Workers Power!"

"GMA lifts state of emergency...But crackdown continues," declared the front page of the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (4 March). The police are continuing to carry out arrests without warrants, threatening to ban any demonstrations without official permits and are monitoring the media for "sedition." Six center-left congressmen are still holed up in the House of Representatives, with cops at the door to arrest them if they step outside. Others on a pick-up list of 59 individuals charged with rebellion are still being sought. Rep. Crispin Beltran is still being held by the Philippine National Police (PNP), who keep switching charges against the leftist former labor leader in order keep "Ka (comrade) Bel" in custody. And union leaders are still being gunned down by what police and military assassins.

In short, the Philippines is undergoing "creeping martial law." As the government's isolation deepens, it resorts to increasingly dictatorial measures to cling to office. The question is how to fight it. "GMA" is still in Malakanyang Palace largely because the fractured civilian/military bourgeois/reformist opposition lacks coherence. But the task is not to find a new figurehead to preside over a "reformed" capitalist regime. That would preserve power in the hands of the same reactionary forces that have ruled the republic since the United States granted the Philippines semi-colonial independence in 1946. Rather, proletarian revolutionaries must seek to mobilize the working class, at the head of the urban poor, the peasantry and oppressed ethnic/national minorities, in a fight to "Sweep away GMA – Workers to power!"

Three Days in February

On Friday, February 24, Arroyo issued Presidential Proclamation No. 1017, decreeing a state of emergency throughout the country. Her General Order No. 5 implemented this by outlawing "actions ... obstructing governance, including hindering the growth of the economy and sabotaging the people's confidence in government, and their faith in the future of this country." Arroyo authorized military and police to make arrests without warrants, ban demonstrations and gatherings, take over newspapers and broadcast media, and generally "prevent or suppress ... any act of insurrection or rebellion, and to enforce obedience to all ... decrees, orders and regulations promulgated

² "Trapos" = traditional politicians, also means dirty rags in Tagalog.

³ Armed Forces of the Philippines.



Internationalist Group/League for the Fourth International at February 27 New York City protest against Philippines state of emergency.

by me personally or upon my direction."

Ironically, this blueprint for personal dictatorship was proclaimed on the 20th anniversary of the downfall of Marcos, who had established martial law 14 years earlier. The date was no accident. Arroyo claimed that a coup d'état was being prepared by an unholy alliance of communists and military officers, to be carried out during February 24 demonstrations marking the 1986 "people's power" revolt. Coup plot or not, a big turnout at these demonstrations would have shaken the GMA government, which has long lacked "the people's confidence," for sure since proof surfaced that the gang in Malakanyang (the presidential palace) brazenly stole the 2004 election⁴.

Arroyo's PP 1017 was easily confused with Marcos' infamous Proclamation 1081 that established martial law in 1972. Indeed, in briefing the press, AFP chief of staff general Generoso Senga twice referred to Arroyo's decree as "1081." With the authority of General Order 5, police occupied the offices of the *Daily Tribune*, a paper that had championed "Oust Gloria" protests, seizing the Saturday edition. At least nine newspapers were shut down, radio and television broadcasting stations occupied and opposition figures ordered to be arrested, as was a University of the Philippines (UP) professor and newspaper columnist.

The February 24 demonstrations proceeded anyway, turning into protests against the government crackdown. After school classes were canceled and rally permits revoked, Arroyo declared the State of National Emergency at 1 p.m., The first demonstration to be attacked was that of Laban ng Masa (Masses' Fight), with about 5,000 to 7,000 participants. After the three main leaders of the social-democratic Akbayan (Citizens' Action Party) were seized, the march was broken up by police

⁴ See "Presidential Crisis in the Philippines: Workers Should Sweep Out Arroyo and All the Bourgeois Politicians," in *The Internationalist* No. 22, September-October 2005.

batons and water cannon; 62 were arrested, including a six-year-old and eleven other minors, charged with inciting to sedition! An announcer on radio station DZMM asked, "How can a 6-year-old kid incite sedition when he is still sucking milk from a bottle?"

By late afternoon, some 10,000 to 12,000 demonstrators in the larger "national democratic" (ND) bloc, associated with the Stalinists, massed in the Makati business district, but were blocked by police from linking up with the "civil society" groups led by ex-president Corazon Aquino. That third march (of the bourgeois opposition) was allowed to proceed to lay a wreath the shrine for the former president's husband, Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino, murdered by Marcos' agents in 1983. By 6 p.m., the police proceeded to brutally disperse the ND bloc.

On Saturday, a list was issued of 59 individuals charged with "rebellion." First to be seized was Crispin Beltran, a member of Congress and spokesman for the Anakpawis (Toiling Masses) party list. At a loss for any other pretext, "Ka (comrade) Bel" was arrested on a warrant from the Marcos regime (on charges of inciting rebellion) in 1985 (!) when Beltran was an official of the Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU – May 1st Movement) union group. Several other leftist legislators, including Satur Ocampo of the Bayan Muna (People First) and Lisa Maza of the Gabriela women's party lists were put under detention in the House of Representatives. Retired Philippine Constabulary chief Gen. Ramon Montano was seized on a golf course.

Also on the government's arrest list was former president Joseph ("Erap") Estrada, accused of financing the "coup plot," who barricaded himself inside a hospital room; Senator Gregorio ("Gringo") Honasan, the former colonel and commando leader reputedly involved in every coup and attempted coup in the past two decades, who has not been located so far; Jose Maria Sison, the founding chairman of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), now in exile in the Netherlands where writes as a political advisor to the National Democratic Front (NDF); Gregorio ("Ka Roger") Rosal, leader of the New People's Army (NPA); plus other leftists, some in exile or already in jail.

Arroyo denounced the political opposition of conspiring with "authoritarians of the extreme Left represented by the NDF-CPP-NPA and the extreme Right, represented by military adventurists" who are "now in a tactical alliance" and "a concerted and systematic conspiracy" to "bring down the duly constituted government elected in May 2004" (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 25 February). This claim elicited general hilarity. The Philippines has been convulsed by months of demonstrations following the leak of tape recordings showing that those elections were stolen by GMA working together with top generals. And it was well-known that discontent was rife in the military over rampant corruption and the way top officers had proffered their services to Arroyo. The government claimed to have uncovered an "Operation Hackle" in mid-February.

On Sunday, February 26 came the showdown with the military, which turned into a comic opera scene. First, Col. Ariel



Philippine president Gloria Macapagal Arroyo chats with Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim, head of Scout Rangers special forces regiment on January 31. Three weeks later Lim was arrested for rebellion.

Querubin marched his 1st Marine Brigade into Marine headquarters to protest the sacking of the corp's commandant. He was accompanied by lawyers and civilian supporters of the RAM and Laban ng Masa. Tanks, V-150 armored personnel carriers and Simba light armored tanks lined up outside. Querubin called on people to mass outside the base to "protect the Marines." But this never materialized, as police surrounded the whole of Fort Bonifacio (HQ of the Philippine Army and Marines). Who did show up were various *trapos*, former president Aquino and Imee Marcos, daughter of the dictator, but they were denied entry as well. By 11 p.m. Querubin announced, to the consternation of his civilian backers, that it was all over and the Marines would follow orders of the chain of command.

There is no doubt that various clans in the faction-ridden officer corps were talking about booting out Arroyo, among them veterans of previous coup attempts. This included the *Revolutionary Patriotic Alliance* (RAM, led by Honasan, who harks back to the group that overthrew Marcos in 1986); the *Young Officers Union* (YOU, which in 1989 tried to overthrow the Aquino government), including Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim, head of the elite Scout Rangers regiment, and Marine Col. Querubin; the *Soldiers of the Filipino People* (Marcos loyalists led by Gen. Zumel), who in 1995 together with the RAM and YOU was amnestied by the government of President (former AFP chief) Fidel Ramos; and the *Magdalo* group of young officers who in July 2003 staged a mutiny against Macapagal Arroyo by holding an "armed press conference" in the Oakwood luxury hotel.⁵

It is also clear that the military plotters were in contact with business leaders and bourgeois politicians. *Time Asia* (24 February) reported on a meeting in the home of Jose Cojuangco, brother of ex-president Corazon Cojuangco Aquino and a leading capitalist. In a "you are there" account,

⁵ See "Soap Opera 'Coup Attempt' in the Philippines," *The Internationalist* No. 17, October-November 2003.

the magazine noted that “plans were being hatched for what one of the ringleaders called a ‘withdrawal of support’ from President Arroyo” by military chiefs. One of the businessmen phoned “a person he identified as an American official in Washington, assuring him that the post-coup regime would still be friendly to the U.S.” Later, they spoke with General Lim, and “over the speaker phone, Lim confirmed that it was ‘all systems go’ for the planned movement against Arroyo.” At the EDSA memorial, “they would be met by a contingent of Catholic bishops,” and a Marine general would read a statement disavowing Arroyo.

But it was not to be. General Lim was arrested a few hours later.

“Creeping Martial Law”

This was the second time in recent months that Gloria Macapagal Arroyo managed to escape shipwreck in a political storm. But her statement in proclaiming the state of emergency – “As commander-in-chief, I control the situation” – is far from the case. What is true is that her regime has become increasingly bonapartist,⁶ with a steady drumbeat of dictatorial actions. Immediately after issuing Presidential Proclamation 1021 lifting PP1017, the government said that the left-wing legislators would be seized if they set foot outside the Philippine Congress and the individuals for whom arrest orders had been issued were still being sought. On March 8, an International Women’s Day march of some 10,000 demonstrators was brutally dispersed by the police, who clobbered marchers with their batons and arrested Akbayan Rep. Risa Hontiveros-Baraquel and Alliance of Progressive Labor (APL) secretary-general Josua Mata.

The state of emergency was only a continuation of the escalating repression of recent months. As of December 2005, the human rights organization Karapatan reported that roughly 3,500 people had been victimized by the government during the previous eleven months. This includes bombings, indiscriminate fire on demonstrators, and salvagings (summary executions). Following the assassination of Nestlé union president Diosdado “Ka Fort” Fortuna in September⁷, Ricardo Ramos, the president of the Central Azucarera de Tarlac Labor Union (CATLU) at Hacienda Luisita was murdered in October. Hacienda Luisita, owned by the Cojuangcos, was the site of a massacre of up to 14 people in November 2004⁸ during a bitter strike

⁶ After Louis Napoléon Bonaparte, who after finishing off the 1848 Revolution in France, had himself proclaimed president and then emperor, imitating the First Empire of his uncle, Napoleon Bonaparte. Karl Marx coined the term “bonapartist” to signify a “strong state” using dictatorial or police measures to ensure its existence.

⁷ See “Filipino Working-Class Fighter Murdered,” *The Internationalist* No. 22, September-October 2005.

⁸ See “Massacre of Sugar Plantation Workers in the Philippines,” *The Internationalist* No. 21, Summer 2005.



Pat Roque/AP

November 2004 protest over state terror which has made Philippines most dangerous country for journalists, 66 killed since 1986.

that lasted an entire year. And on March 17, Tirso Cruz, a member of board of directors of the United Luisita Workers’ Union (ULWU) was shot and killed by gunmen on a motorcycle.

In addition there are the army massacres of peasants suspected of being sympathizers of the Maoist NPA, such as the killing of ten unarmed civilians at Palo, Leyte in November. From February to August, at least 56 people were killed or missing in Samar while it was under the boot of Gen. Jovito Palparan (now in Tarlac). In Mindanao, site of the continuing war for secession and independence of the Moro people, there have been hundreds of reported attacks by the military on the civilian population affecting tens of thousands of people. Church workers and journalists have been targeted in this wave of repression. According to the May 2005 report, *Marked for Death*, by the Committee to Protect Journalists, “the Philippines is the most murderous country of all,” with far more media workers killed than even in Iraq. While the anti-communist CPJ reports 22 Filipino journalists murdered since 1980, Philippine human rights groups report 39 killed since Arroyo took office in 2001, with 12 assassinated last year alone.

Since the defeat in Congress of the drive to impeach President Macapagal Arroyo last September,⁹ the government has multiplied its repressive measures. Among these are the “Calibrated Preemptive Response” (CPR) policy codified in Executive Order 464, allowing the police to ban all kinds of rallies and protests that “continue to subvert the economy and peace and order of the country,” as GMA spokesman Ignacio Bunye put it. Where previously demonstrations were given a few minutes to disperse, under CPR the police immediately start indiscriminately attacking. The most prominent of these was last October 15 when water cannon were sent to disperse several hundred marchers headed by a former vice

⁹ See “Arroyo Impeachment Dead, ‘People Power’ Pop Front Goes On,” *The Internationalist* No. 22.



Protest in Makati business district of Manila over Hacienda Luisita massacre, November 2004.

president and three Roman Catholic bishops. EO 464 also prohibits any government, military or police official from attending Congressional inquiries without authorization from the president herself.

When Malakanyang refused to let cabinet officials testify in budget hearings, Congress retaliated by passing a one-peso budget for those departments whose secretaries did not show up. The administration's response was to embrace proposals for "Charter Change" ("Cha-Cha"). When put forward by former president Fidel Ramos amid calls for Arroyo's resignation last July, this plan for a parliamentary system was held to be more democratic than a presidential system, in making the head of government responsible to Congress. Now Arroyo wants to use it to discipline Congress. To drive the point home, she set up a Consultative Commission ("Con Com") which concocted a plan to cancel the 2007 legislative and local elections ("No-El"), to prevent an opposition sweep. This would have let the president stay on until 2010 when she could run for parliament and become prime minister, thus perpetuating her grip on power.

The "No-El" scheme elicited shrieks of protest from the *trapos*, fearing for their sinecures, and was shelved, at least temporarily. Arroyo's next ploy was the state of emergency, which her administration had been working on since last September at least. As she was forced to retreat on that as well, the government is making a push to ram through an "anti-terrorism" bill that was bogged down in committee. This would define "terrorism" as "the premeditated, threatened [or] actual use of violence, force, or by any other means of destruction perpetrated against person/s, property/ies...with the intention of creating or sowing a state of danger, panic, fear, or chaos to the general public, group of persons or particular person...." This

elastic definition could outlaw everything from a rally to a strike, or even a call for or talk of a strike. The government brought in a United Nations delegation to bolster its call for an "anti-terror" law.

Popular Front Dead End

This brief survey of the government's latest moves demonstrates what the League for the Fourth International has been saying for some time: that Arroyo, who has campaigned under the slogan for a "strong republic," is relentlessly pushing to shore up her shaky rule with bonapartist measures. For Marxists, pointing to the danger of a police state, military dictatorship or other form of a bourgeois "strong state" underscores the need for workers revolution. Trotskyists stress that the tendency to restrict and do away with even the most basic bourgeois "democratic" rights is inherent in capitalism in this period of imperialist decay, going hand in hand with the full-scale assault on workers' gains. We point out that the overthrow of the original bonapartist regime, the French Second Empire of Louis Napoleón, led to the Paris Commune, the first workers government in history.¹⁰

For reformist socialists, however, pointing to the bonapartist character of a régime is used as an excuse for advocating a coalition with "democratic" sectors of the bourgeoisie. Typically, such a government is termed "fascist," although it lacks the mass base of enraged petty bourgeois that characterized the European fascist movements, resting instead on the military and police apparatus. And the revisionists' response is to call for a "popular front" to combat it *on the political terrain of bourgeois democracy*, rather than fighting for workers revolution. As in Sukarno's Indonesia in 1965 or Allende's Chile in the early '70s, popular-frontism is paid for in workers' blood, paving the way for fascist and bonapartist reaction by acting as a roadblock to proletarian revolution.

In the Philippines today, the policy of virtually the entire left in the "Oust Gloria" movement is to make common cause with the bourgeois civilian/military opposition. In the immediate aftermath of Arroyo's proclamation of a state of emergency, NDF "chief political consultant" Jose Maria Sison issued a February 25 statement declaring, "To oust the Arroyo regime, it suffices for the legal patriotic, progressive and other anti-Arroyo forces and their allies among the active and retired military and police forces to do their best in mustering their own respective following and in drawing the broad masses of the people to gigantic mass actions." Sison added that "among the opposition parties, the legal forces of the national democratic movement and the ranks of retired and active anti-Arroyo military and police officers in the broad

¹⁰ See the Internationalist Group Class Readings pamphlet, *Marxism vs. Bonapartism* (September 2004).

united front there is a growing common desire to form a transition council” to negotiate peace with the NDF.

The Communist Party of the Philippines put out a special issue of its publication, *Ang Bayan* (27 February), headlined “Resist Gloria Arroyo’s new fascist dictatorship,” and calling for NPA units to “coordinate with the anti-Arroyo and other friendly units within the AFP and PNP.” In another issue of *Ang Bayan* (12 March), Sison suggests formation of a “Roundtable Council of Advisors” to include “former presidents” and other leading figures, and a “Unified Command” to include “major groups of retired and active military and police officers.” This is in line with the CPP’s Stalinist policy of “two-stage revolution,” the first stage being (bourgeois) “democratic” and later (never) for socialism. Sison claims the “united front” between Mao Zedong’s Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and Chiang Kai-shek’s Guomindang against the Japanese as a precedent for allying with “anti-Arroyo military and police officers.” But Mao’s call for a “united front” was a dead letter, as Chiang always concentrated his fire against the Communists.

While the CPP/NDF/NPA and their “national democratic” camp looked to “major groups” of military officers and “former presidents” (Ramos?), various social-democratic left and not-so-left groups sought a civilian-dominated “transition council” to replace Arroyo. According to *Bulatlat* (19 March), this included the “Solidarity Movement” headed by former “defense” secretary Renato de Villa along with Bayan Muna (People First), Bayan (New Patriotic Alliance) and other popular-frontist groups; as well as Laban ng Masa (People’s Fight) headed by former University of the Philippines president Francisco Nemenzo. The Arroyo government has dreamt up an elaborate “right-left” coup plot in order to justify arresting a broad array of opponents. But the “evidence” it presents points only to initial contacts of civilian oppositionists, dissident military officers and leftist leaders. What it comes down to is they did what Arroyo herself did during EDSA 2, which put her in the presidential chair.

More important than how far they had advanced on this road is the fact that the reformist Philippines left sought an alliance with bourgeois opposition forces, civilian and/or military – as it has for decades. This is what “people power” was all about in EDSA 1 and 2, and for the last nine months all the left groups have been seeking another EDSA revolt. This is what last year’s “oust Gloria” drive came down to. Had they achieved their aim, it would have represented not a victory but another setback for the working people, saddling them with yet another capitalist government which in the name of “reform” would tighten the screws of exploitation and intensify repression.

Following the (predictable) defeat of impeachment in the House of Representatives in September, the response of the nat-dems was to call for a “people’s court” to try Arroyo. This sarsuela (a folk dance of love and hate) – initiated by Bayan Muna, Bayan and the KMU – was empty political theater. The purpose of the “Citizens’ Congress for Truth and Accountability” was “submitting the evidences to the people that have not been heard during the impeachment trial,” as former vice president

Guingona put it (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 26 October) – in other words, a pretend impeachment. After a couple of hearings, the play-acting impeachment predictably fell apart as well.

For their part, the Partido ng Manggagawa (PM – Workers Party) and allied groups (BMP, Sanlakas, Akbayan, Laban ng Masa) organized a “working people’s summit” in mid-October, which called for strike action against the regime. The summit set a national day of protest “to call for President Arroyo’s removal and to express their opposition to the expanded value-added tax law” (*Manila Times*, 10 November 2005). The EVAT plan, raising the sales tax from 10 percent to 12 percent, was adopted at the urging of the International Monetary Fund. But while using a more “workerist” or laborite language than the Stalinists and national democrats, this bloc is also angling for a popular front. The aim of their *welgang bayan* (people’s strike) is to install a “transitional revolutionary government” with sections of the bourgeoisie.

PM legislator Rene Magtubo says that a “TRG” should foster “the basic interest of the working people: just trade, a just debt [!], a democratization of the resources,” etc. But in an article in the PM’s paper *Obrero* (July 2005), Sonny Melencio admitted that such a transitional government would include “representatives of the bourgeois opposition.” During February 24 protests against the state of emergency, Melencio, speaking for Laban ng Masa, declared that, “We call for a ‘Transitional Revolutionary Government’ which may just put people in power who don’t want to go any further, but that is the next step.” Moreover, Laban ng Masa leader Nemenzo was reportedly in touch with the high-ranking AFP officers who planned to “withdraw support” from Arroyo, and even organized a “backup” crowd at the UP campus to join with the Marines (*Newsbreak*, 14 March).

The PM/BMP/Sanlakas/Akbayan/Laban milieu was influenced by the late Filemon “Popoy” Lagman, shot to death in 2001, who broke from CPP in 1994 after rejecting the peasant-based “people’s war” thesis of the Sisonites, which accorded the urban working class at most an auxiliary role. But Lagman did not break with the Stalinist dogma of a “two-stage revolution.” The Lagmanites’ calls for workers action are invariably linked to calls for parliamentary “struggle” and for popular-front alliances with the bourgeois opposition. They tack on demands against the EVAT to demonstrations for a transitional “revolutionary” government including businessmen, big landowners, *trapos* and generals. In reality, they are calling for another capitalist government to provide the illusion of pro-worker policies while stepping up anti-worker repression and “reforms,” as both the Aquino and Arroyo governments have done.

For Permanent Revolution! Build a Trotskyist Nucleus in the Philippines!

Trotskyists, in contrast, insist that to fight the escalating repression unleashed by the Arroyo government it is necessary to mobilize the working class, impoverished peasantry and urban poor on a class basis, to fight for socialist revolution.

February 24 being the 20th anniversary of the 1986 EDSA “people power” revolt against the Marcos dictatorship, a host

Itsuho Inouye/AP



Social-democrats (above) and Stalinists call to “oust Gloria” while making “popular front” with bourgeois traditional politicians

of articles in the press recalled that signal event of the last half century of Philippine history. Much of the discussion turned on how the left, and the Communist Party in particular, after dominating the anti-Marcos struggle for years, was pushed aside at the crucial moment by the bourgeois opposition that coalesced around Cory Aquino. Answering charges that the CPP was “caught flatfooted” because of its Maoist strategy which dismissed the perspective of an urban insurrection, Sison responded defensively, saying that a “convergence of various forces” were responsible for bringing down Marcos (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 24 February). But the fact is that, after boycotting the “snap election,” the CPP flip-flopped and supported the military officers movement led by Gen. Fidel Ramos and Defense Minister Ponce Enrile.

Despite its pick-up-the-gun rhetoric and decades of guerrilla warfare, the CPP’s strategy from the outset has been guided by the Stalinist program of popular-frontism – that is, of class collaboration with sectors of the capitalist class. They have sought not just to win individuals from the Philippine military (such as then Lt. Col. Victor Corpus, who after a stint with the NPA returned to the AFP to become a leading military intelligence official) but to ally with “major groups” in the bourgeois officer corps. The CPP’s guerrillaist politics amount to “armed reformism,” based on the petty-bourgeois peasantry rather than the proletariat and intended to pressure the ruling class. From “Ninoy” and Corazon Aquino to Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, the Sisonites have repeatedly sought political alliances with the bourgeois “opposition,” which is why they are constantly playing second fiddle to some new ruling-class politician. In the aftermath of the recent “state of emergency,” Sison writes, in a March 15 statement:

“In the absence of a civilian political opposition strong enough to replace the Arroyo regime with a new civilian government, the conditions become more than ever fertile for the growth of the people’s armed revolutionary movement and likewise for a military coup by military and police officers

who calculate that they need to remove the stinking Arroyo regime to save the ruling system from the armed revolution.”

Yet Sison’s “armed revolutionary movement” is *not* aiming at a revolutionary overthrow of Philippine capitalism; rather it seeks to negotiate a role for the CPP within that system.

This is the CPP’s outlook not only in the Philippines. An article in *Ang Bayan* (21 December 2005) on “A united front against the Nepalese monarchy” praises the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) for dropping its “sectarian” policy toward the bourgeois opposition: “Previously, the CPN(M) was too ‘Left’ in relating to the parliamentary parties. The CPN(M) one-sidedly regarded them as opportunists and refused to maintain relations with them. On the eve of the continuing march of the CPN(M) to victory, the party realized that that was an incorrect policy. It has rectified this sectarianism.”

So according to Sison & Co., the Nepalese Maoists were ultra-left sectarians for failing to make a political alliance with the bourgeois parliamentary parties, an “error” that has been “rectified.” In fact, in both Nepal and the Philippines, the Maoists’ armed struggle has for years been aimed at allying with capitalist sectors. The CPN(M) was earlier in a bloc with the bourgeois opposition until the latter pushed it out, while the CPP supported the ascension of Aquino and Arroyo. Now they are preparing to repeat this betrayal.

The question of how to combat bonapartist regimes in semi-colonial countries like the Philippines and Nepal is not new. The so-called “Third World” has abounded in tin-pot dictators ever since the colonialist powers granted political independence to their former colonies while keeping them economically subjugated and politically dominated by imperialism. In fighting against these dictatorships, the Stalinists typically align themselves politically with those who portray themselves as democrats. But because the tendency toward bonapartist rule in the semi-colonies is inherent in the imperialist system, from China in the 1920s to Chile in the 1970s, the bourgeois “democrats” repeatedly turn out to be butchers, turning on their left “allies” or else opening the way to a bloodbath against the workers and peasants. Thus the Stalinist program of “stages,” borrowed from the Menshevik social democrats, turns into a recipe for bloody defeat.

Leon Trotsky, co-leader with V.I. Lenin of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in tsarist Russia, emphasized the inability of the weak bourgeoisies of the economically backward capitalist countries to carry out even the basic tasks of the democratic revolution, notably democracy, agrarian revolution and national liberation. This was why Trotsky insisted, in his theses on *permanent revolution*, on the need for the *proletariat*, supported by the peasantry and led by a communist party, to take power in order to achieve democratic demands and proceed to undertake socialist tasks, expropriating the bourgeoisie and extending the revolution internationally. This was the program of the Russian October Revolution, which is diametrically opposed to Stalin’s

twin policies of building “socialism in one country” and “revolution in stages” elsewhere, which translated into the formation of “popular fronts” with out-of-power bourgeois forces. As this produced one disaster after another in the 1930s, from Germany to Spain and France, Stalin earned the bitter sobriquet of being the “great organizer of defeats.”

In his last essay, which lay incomplete on his desk when he was murdered by a Stalinist agent, Trotsky wrote:

“[T]he governments of those backward countries which consider inescapable or more profitable for themselves to march shoulder to shoulder with foreign capital, destroy the labor organizations and institute a more or less totalitarian regime. Thus, the feebleness of the national bourgeoisie ..., the pressure of foreign capitalism and the relatively rapid growth of the proletariat, cut the ground from under any kind of stable democratic regime. The governments of backward, i.e., colonial and semi-colonial countries, by and large assume a Bonapartist or semi-Bonapartist character; and differ from one another in this, that some try to orient in a democratic direction, seeking support among workers and peasants, while others install a form close to military-police dictatorship.”

—Leon Trotsky, “Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay” (August 1940)

The government of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo is undoubtedly belongs to a semi-bonapartist regime heading toward naked military-police rule. What, then, should be the policy of the proletariat toward such regimes? It must be the program of *permanent revolution*, of the struggle for workers revolution which alone can spark a thorough-going agrarian revolution against the large *capitalist* landowners who oppress the peasantry; which alone can break the yoke of imperialism and achieve national liberation; which alone can break the cycle of imperialist-imposed petty tyrants who enslave the impoverished masses.

The Stalinists and social democrats refer to Arroyo as an imperialist puppet, and so she is. But what does that mean in practice? That another, independent, nationalist bourgeois leader could be installed in her place? Who among the endlessly squabbling capitalist politicians and eternally coup-plotting military officers could stand up to the imperialist puppet masters and its thousands of troops in the Philippines? None of them, clearly. Another bourgeois leader in Malakanyang Palace would inevitably be one more puppet of Washington and Wall Street until the imperialist stranglehold is broken, which requires proletarian revolution from the semi-colonies to the bastions of world capitalism. Trotsky wrote in his “Manifesto of the Fourth International on the Imperialist War and The Proletarian World Revolution” (May 1940):

“[T]he Fourth International knows in advance and openly warns the backward nations that their belated national states can no longer count upon an independent democratic development. Surrounded by decaying capitalism and enmeshed in the imperialist contradictions, the independence of a backward state inevitably will be semi-fictitious, and its political regime, under the influence of internal class contradictions and external pressure, will unavoidably fall into dictatorship against the people.... The struggle for the national indepen-

dence of the colonies is, from the standpoint of the revolutionary proletariat, only a transitional stage on the road toward drawing the backward countries into the international socialist revolution.”

In the Philippines today, the relentless march toward a bonapartist “strong state” regime can only be stopped by a revolutionary mobilization of the working class, backed up by the impoverished peasantry and millions of urban poor. Such a display of power would attract the support of sections of the wavering middle classes who fear chaos and a new Marcos-like regime or military junta. Playing political games with the bourgeois opposition and conspiring officers, as the reformist left has done in the “oust Gloria” and impeachment campaign, can only undercut that struggle. It may even open the door for U.S. imperialism to engineer a “change of control” in its Philippine subsidiary, as Washington did by replacing Marcos with Aquino.

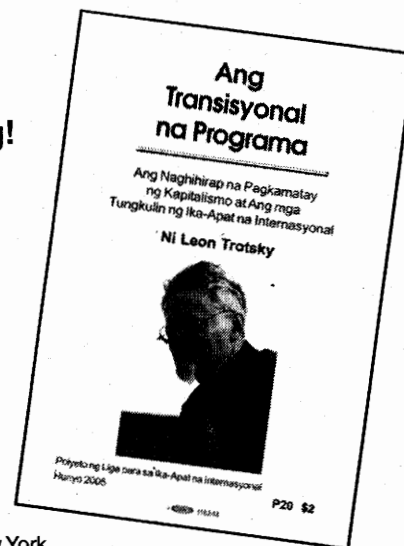
The power of the proletariat should be mobilized in the streets and in strike action against every attack on democratic rights and every blow against the livelihoods of the masses. A campaign based on the working class should be waged to drive the U.S. troops and agents out of the Philippines. An international campaign should be waged to free Crispin Beltran and other prisoners of the Arroyo regime. Above all, the nucleus of a Trotskyist party must be built, exposing the bourgeois politics of the several competing mini-popular fronts and politically challenging the hegemony of the Stalinist and social-democratic reformist politics on the left.

The League for the Fourth International declares that if the Filipino working people are to sweep away the bottomless corruption and brutal repression of bourgeois rule and put an end to the mass misery produced by capitalist exploitation, they require a revolutionary-internationalist, Leninist-Trotskyist workers party to lead that fight, not only in the Philippines but throughout Southeast Asia and in the centers of world imperialism. ■

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Liberal Racism = Education for War

New York Regents Exam Pushes Apologies for Imperialism

MAY 17 – A scandal erupted this week over vile apologies for imperialism in the New York State Regents exam on global history and geography given last January. On Monday, the *New York Daily News* (15 May) published an exclusive reporting on black students and educators in Bushwick who are up in arms over exam questions asking students to read outright apologies for colonial rule and then “state two ways British imperialism would benefit Africans.”

There have been innumerable outraged protests over the institutionalized discrimination of high-stakes standardized testing, and racism in the New York schools. Here we have a blatant example of the way in which the educational system pushes imperialist ideology. This is not an isolated incident but part of an international trend. It reflects the current political climate in the United States and elsewhere, in which justifications for empire have become fashionable.

This is education for imperialist war, and it must be fought tooth and nail. It goes hand in hand with the arrests last year of two Muslim high school girls who were dragged from their homes, transported hundreds of miles to be held in immigration jails without charges, because some police-state officials considered the young women “would-be suicide bombers.” We call on the United Federation of Teachers and all teachers, parents and others to denounce the racist Regents exams.

The readings on the Regents, from Frederick Lugard, an official of the British East Africa Company who helped colonize Uganda, talked of the colonizers’ “desire of civilized administration,” and claimed that “Europe is in Africa for the mutual benefit of her own industrial classes, and of the native races in their progress to a higher plane.” It praised the colonial masters for “endeavouring...to teach the native races to conduct their own affairs with justice and humanity.” What racist filth!

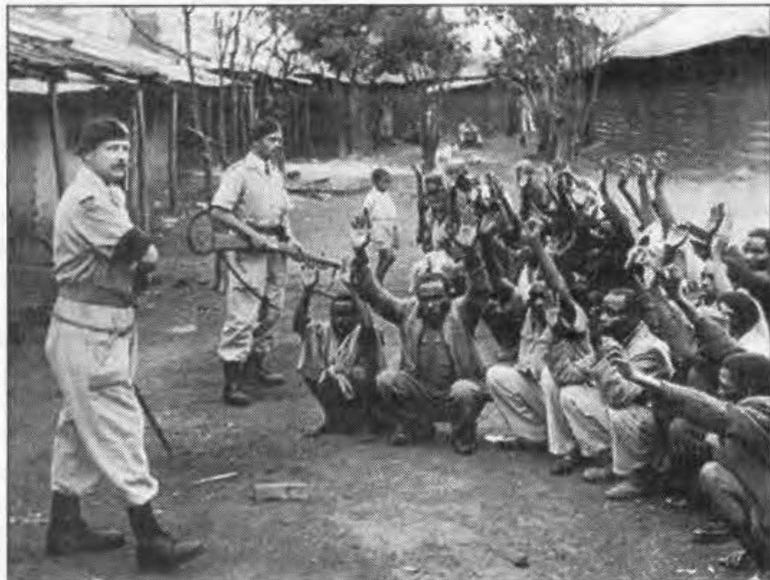
This is nothing but the age-old justification for the colonial conquest and rape of Africa and Asia,



British colonial conqueror Cecil Rhodes stands astride Africa in 1892 cartoon from British magazine Punch. From preparatory materials for January 2006 Regents exam.

Europe’s supposed “civilizing mission,” the “White Man’s Burden,” as colonial apologist Rudyard Kipling put it. Brian Favors, who teaches at Bushwick Community School, compared the test question to “asking a Jewish child to state two ways the Holocaust benefited Jews.” One student was so upset with the question that she complained to an exam proctor; she then ran out of time and never finished the exam’s final essay (on the same theme).

Initially caught off-guard, the authorities have pulled together to defend the colonialist exam. A *Daily News* (17 May) editorial declares, “No offense, history exam is fine.” How so? They argue that “Based on this document [the Lugard pieces] and according to this document, students were asked to cite several ways in which imperialism benefited Africa” (emphasis in original). And the exam included a se-



Kenyans rounded up by British army during 1948-52 “Mau Mau” rebellion when independence fighters were labeled “terrorists” by colonial rulers. Regents exams tells students to “state two ways British imperialism would benefit Africans.”



U.S. Marines slaughtered over 600 men, women and children at Mount Dajo (above) on Philippines island of Jolo, March 1906. President Theodore Roosevelt congratulated General Wood on “the brilliant feat of arms.” Hundreds of thousands of Filipinos were killed in the U.S. conquest of the islands. But the New York State Board of Regents banned any mention of “an example of imperialism from United States history,” and specifically anything concerning the U.S.’ “acquisition of the Philippines,” in student essays on the subject of imperialism in January 2006 Regents exam.

lection criticizing imperialism from African independence leader Kwame Nkrumah. “Nowhere is there a promulgation of racism,” they claim.

Dead wrong. We read the exam, and the teachers scoring and rating guide. First of all, it’s not just a matter of a single question. There are three lengthy selections praising imperialism. No, this is not the White Citizens Council, the Nazi Party or Colonel Blimp taking over the educational system – it is *liberal racism*. The test wants students to weigh both sides of the question, you see. The essay is to discuss imperialism from the point of view of the imperialist power, and from the view of the colonized people. But from the standpoint of working people and the oppressed, there are no “two sides” to imperialism.

What’s next? Are the Regents going to have readings next year from Confederate rulers and abolitionists and then debate the “pros and cons” of slavery? Will they have students read excerpts from Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* and the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and then tell students to write essays on anti-Semitism the Holocaust from the point of view of Jewish victims and the tsarist or Nazi perpetrators, *based on their documents*? You can imagine the uproar if anyone proposed this. But if it has to do with Africa, and the holocaust of slavery which slaughtered millions of black people, the administrators who run the capitalist education system figure they can get away with “even-handed” racism.

Last year there was a similar case in France. The National Assembly passed a law praising French colonial rule in Africa. The law of 23 February 2005 mandated “educa-

tional programs recognizing in particular the positive role of the French presence overseas, notably in North Africa.” This obscene law was voted not only by the conservative government but also most of the “socialist” opposition. Only months later when youths of African and North African origin revolted last fall against police terror in the working-class and immigrant suburbs was there an outcry over the apology for colonial rule.

The French example makes clear that what was behind this sudden drive to “reevaluate” colonialism is the capitalist rulers’ need to justify imperialist war. The February 2005 law was passed to defend France’s dirty war of torture and indiscriminate bombing in Algeria, to make it a crime to “defame” the mercenary colonial troops who fought for the French. Now French troops are again policing the Ivory Coast and propping up tinpot dictators in West and Central Africa. And the educational system is to provide the ideological justification.

In the case of the New York Regents exam, the key is the emphatic instruction: “Do *not* use an example of imperialism from United States history in your answer.” The teachers’ guide explicitly says there can be no reference to the “acquisition of the Philippines as a result of the Spanish-American War,” in which millions of Filipinos were killed. On the other hand, imperialism “*providing an education as a positive effect*” in India would be an acceptable answer. So, too,

would be references to the “enrichment of life (art, music) with introduction to other cultures,” and the “spread of Christianity to Africa.” But there will be no reference in school tests to Vietnam, or Iraq and Afghanistan today.

The answer to this blatant apology for empire and imperialist war will not be found in educational reform. Certainly, class-conscious teachers should do their best to counteract the ideological poisoning of their students’ minds. It is necessary to fight the racist discrimination of high-stakes standardized testing. Marxists oppose the escalating privatization and corporate control of “public” education. We call to *kick the military recruiters out of the schools* where they prowl the halls looking for cannon fodder for their imperialist war machines. We advocate abolition of the New York state Board of Regents and of the NYC Department of Education and for *teacher-student-worker-parent control of the schools*.

But as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels pointed out over a century and a half ago, in *The German Ideology* (1847): “The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas; i.e., the class, which is the ruling material forces of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force.” To defeat the apologies for war it is necessary to defeat the imperialist war they justify; to sweep racist ideology into the dustbin of history it is necessary to bring down the imperialist system that spawns it.

At the present time, the racist offensive is directed particularly against immigrants. As in World War II when viru-

continued on page 27

Spartacist League Disappears the Bolivian Proletariat

The political degeneration of a once-revolutionary organization can take some strange forms indeed. When it still upheld authentic Trotskyism, the Spartacist League (SL – leading section of the International Communist League [ICL]) paid close attention to the class struggle in Bolivia, one of the most turbulent and politicized countries in the Western Hemisphere. Not only did events there reverberate throughout the region (including neighboring Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Peru), but Bolivia provided crucial lessons for revolutionary struggle around the world. Yet in the ten years since the 1996 purge of cadres who went on to found the Internationalist Group, the yearly index to the SL's *Workers Vanguard* shows not a single article on Bolivia. This silence – remarkable in light of the repeated upheavals, massacres by U.S.-backed rulers, overthrow of presidents and international debates over the Andean country – reflects the increasingly narrow worldview of the rightward-moving SL/ICL.

The Internationalist has published extensive articles on the upheavals and workers mobilizations in Bolivia over the last three years, including a series of on-the-spot dispatches in June 2005.¹ From *WV*, nothing. But now *Workers Vanguard* has broken its ten-year silence on Bolivia – for the purpose of answering the last issue of *The Internationalist*, in which we wrote:

“For its part, the now centrist Spartacist tendency has reached a new low as its Mexican comrades now denounce us for calling for soviets in the May-June [2005] Bolivian events, claiming this is impossible since according to them there is ‘no working class in Bolivia today’ (never mind the thousands of factories in the city of El Alto alone). In other words, these fake-Trotskyists believe socialist revolution is impossible in Bolivia.”

– “Bolivian Elections: Evo Morales Tries to Straddle an Abyss,” *The Internationalist* No. 23 (April-May 2006)
In response, *Workers Vanguard* (14 April) devotes the heart

¹ See “Bolivia Aflame: ‘Gas War’ on the Altiplano, Workers to Power!” and “Bolivian Workers Uprising Knifed, Workers Still on Battle Footing,” in *The Internationalist* No. 17, October-November 2003. Also “Bolivia Explodes in Sharp Class Battle,” “Bolivian Capital Shut Down by Mass Protests,” “Pitched Battles in the Streets of La Paz,” “Bolivian Workers Move Against Threatened ‘Constitutional Coup,’” “Bolivia Was ‘On Brink of Civil War,’” and “El Alto and the ‘People’s Assembly,’” in *The Internationalist* No. 21, Summer 2005. Also available at www.internationalist.org.



Internationalist photo

Bolivian proletariat “barely exists,” according to the SL/ICL. What of the thousands of mine workers (above) in La Paz’s central square at symbolic funeral for miner killed by army, 10 June 2005?

of a three-page article (“Bolivia: Trotskyism vs. Bourgeois Nationalism”) to attempting to refute us. It does not deny our characterization of the SL’s position – on the contrary, *WV* quotes it, reaffirms it and revels in it. Instead, the article tries to back up the grotesque claim that in writing about Bolivia, the IG and League for the Fourth International “conjure up a proletariat where it barely, if at all, exists”! So the dynamite-wielding miners and other workers who battled the cops and army in 2003 and again in last year’s near civil war, bringing down the second president in two years, either “barely” exist or don’t exist “at all,” depending on what’s most convenient for the SL at the given moment. Too bad – for the bourgeoisie – that the Bolivian workers refuse to recognize their supposed non-existence.

Workers Vanguard intones, “what has been missing since the inception of the protests in Bolivia has been participation by an organized proletariat.” As expert witness for the prosecution, it cites an article by one Jim Straub “on the reformist Left Turn organization’s Web site” in January 2005. Straub told readers that “once armed miners and factory workers brought down governments,” but no longer. This is not just view of a single Internet liberal anarchist. As we noted in our article on the Bolivian elections, Evo Morales’ vice president Alvaro García Linares has made a specialty of claiming that proletarian struggle had melted away into the classless action of “multitudes” – precisely in order to justify the *bourgeois* program of nationalist class collaboration.

Months after the article *WV* approvingly quotes, trucks carrying hundreds of miners armed with dynamite descended from El Alto to La Paz in May-June of last year. Mass protests of workers, slum-dwellers and peasants grouped around the miners, who repeatedly sought to seize Plaza Murillo outside the presidential palace, clashing with government troops. Before being forced to step down, then-president Carlos Mesa said the country was “one step from civil war.” This may have escaped the notice of *WV*, but not of the bourgeoisie and its cops, who arrested miners and seized their trucks, nor of the army sharpshooters who murdered mine cooperative leader Juan Coro Mayta as he led workers and peasants converging on Sucre, where the rightist-dominated national parliament had fled to escape the mass protests.

WV sneers that the Internationalist Group “gushes over” unionized miners’ participation in the protests. It presents a picture of “atomized” people “sifting through the remains of closed mines or straining minerals out of rivers” like “prospectors” from some old-timey movie. And after conjuring up the image of Bolivia’s miners as leftovers from the Yukon gold rush, *WV* concludes: “The proletarian instrumentality for overturning capitalism has been qualitatively diminished.” “If one looks only at the relationship of forces within Bolivia itself,” it adds (setting up a straw man, as we always address Bolivia in its international context), “this period does not augur well for the struggle against imperialism and its domestic bourgeois agents.”

One can only imagine these pompous pedants standing up at a miners’ mass rally in the Plaza San Francisco in La Paz last June, proclaiming to the workers: The struggle does not augur well – go home! Besides, you “barely, if at all” exist! In fact, when we ask ICL spokesmen what they would have called for at the height of the mass protests – since they denounce our call for workers councils (soviets) – they cannot answer.

You do not have to be an expert on Bolivia to see through the SL’s excuses for turning its back on these struggles, some of the most explosive of recent years. It notes that the state mining company COMIBOL was decimated in the “neoliberal” frenzy of 1985-87. What this meant, however, was not that mines simply disappeared but that many were snatched up by private capitalists.

ICL spokesmen have told us they “know from the Internet” that there are no sizeable mines in Bolivia. At an antiwar protest in New York in April, an ICL cadre informed us that “there is no mining company there with more than a hundred workers.” At a Grupo Internacionalista class in Mexico City earlier this month, a hapless ICL member intervened to push the “no proletariat in Bolivia” line, then blurted out: “OK, maybe there is a photo on the Internet of some miner throwing a stone in last year’s protests.” Talk about cyber-space “reality”! We have been in the Bolivian mines, as well as at the mass mobilizations in La Paz, and to present them as non-existent or no more than scratching or panning



Internationalist photo

Miners from “red Huanuni” march on La Paz, dynamite in hand, 6 June 2006.

for the last dregs of minerals is not just false but ridiculous.

WV refers to former president Gonzalo Sánchez de Losada, who was driven out in the October 2003 “Gas War.” How did the hated “Goni” become Bolivia’s most famous multi-millionaire? Through owning profitable mining concerns, notably the Compañía Minera del Sur (Comsur), a mainstay of the employers’ “Medium Mine Association.” It may surprise “Marxists” of the epigone *WV* variety, but this wealth came not from “prospecting” but from the exploitation of real live workers.

No mine with more than a hundred workers? The *Workers Vanguard* article seeks to disappear the approximately 6,000 FSTMB union members working at 44 different mines (as well as the thousands of former miners still affiliated with the union). The Huanuni mine, which has returned to Comibol control, is a center of labor radicalism prominent in the May-June 2005 upsurge; it employs 1,020 workers (“Huanuni rojo,” *El Diario* [La Paz], 25 June). The government recently announced that it would train 65 army troops to “guard” the mine, replacing the 110 cops previously assigned to this task (*La Patria* [Oruro], 21 April). According to a U.S. government report, nine companies of the Medium Mine Association employ 5,000 miners, while “an estimated 45,000 miners” belong to the National Federation of Mining Cooperatives (U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service and U.S. Department of State, “Bolivia: Mining Industry Sector Analysis 2006”).

And what about Bolivia’s oil, and its natural gas, the second largest supply in Latin America and the source of 75 percent of the gas used in São Paulo, the region’s biggest industrial center? Does it just pump itself? What about the workers of the Cochabamba industrial zone? Or the Senkata gas plant in El Alto, whose workers struck during the May-June 2005 events?

The SL/ICL seeks to present El Alto as a town of artisans, vendors and self-employed people. *WV* turns again to its liberal expert Straub, approvingly citing his statement that the El Alto population are “people without regular work, union representation, or even the proverbial Boss to struggle against.” This is *bourgeois ideology* in the most literal sense. Even the sectors of the population that work in small workshops and commercial establishments are, in the great majority of cases, exploited by a boss. The unionized workers in El Alto who belong to the Regional Workers Confederation (COR) have been a headache for

Imperialists (and Brazil), Hands Off!

Morales' Fake "Nationalization" of Bolivian Gas

The following article is translated from *Vanguardia Operária No. 9* (May-June 2006), newspaper of our comrades of the *Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil*.

On May Day, Bolivian President Evo Morales loudly proclaimed that he was "nationalizing" the country's natural gas. The Brazilian bourgeoisie received this news with rabid hostility. Despite the initial "moderate" tone of Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, the Petrobras oil company, a multinational firm headquartered in Brazil, threatened to cut off investments in the neighboring Andean country. The Spanish government of social democrat Zapatero championed the interests of Spanish imperialism and the Repsol oil firm. Brazil's bourgeois press screamed that the price of gas will go sky high and warned against future shortages. The reality is quite different.

We Trotskyists defend Bolivia against threats from the imperialists and the ruling class of Brazil, a regional power in Latin America. The limited measure of control of the country's hydrocarbon resources announced by Morales is an expression of the elementary right of self-determination. At the same time, we stress that his decree is a far cry from the expulsion of imperialist companies. The Bolivian president is just trying to force a renegotiation of the gas contracts in order to increase the taxes and royalties paid by the multinational giants that have pillaged the country for decades.

Bolivian workers, as well as indigenous peasants affiliated to Morales' party (the Movimiento al Socialismo), carried out a bitter struggle in May-June 2005 against the same law that

Morales is implementing today. They demanded the nationalization of hydrocarbon (oil and natural gas) resources, a demand that Morales took up only with great reluctance while interpreting it in such a way as to conciliate the imperialists.

The Rio de Janeiro Oil Workers Union has criticized the repulsive chauvinism of the Brazilian capitalist press and defends Bolivia's gas "nationalization" under the slogan "Oil belongs to the people." Under capitalism, however, a nationalized company belongs not to the workers but to the bourgeois state, and is dependent on the world capitalist market.

As Trotsky wrote in the "Transitional Program" (1938), the demand for expropriation differs from "the muddleheaded reformist slogan of 'nationalization'" in that:

"(1) we reject indemnification;

"(2) we warn the masses against demagogues of the People's Front who, giving lip service to nationalization, remain in reality agents of capital;

"(3) we call on the masses to rely only upon their own revolutionary strength;

"(4) we link up the question of expropriation with that of seizure of power by the workers and farmers [peasants]."

The League for the Fourth International calls for the expropriation of Bolivia's oil and gas under workers control, through the seizure of the industry's facilities by the workers and not the massacring bourgeois army, as a step towards the worker-peasant-Indian government to begin the international socialist revolution, the only way to smash imperialism. ■

more than one government. And while *WV* cherry-picks sources to back up its "no proletariat" line, an extensive study of El Alto states that of the 215,000 economically active people in the city, "approximately 55% are employed as workers (*obrerros*), defining the proletarian character of the population" (*El Alto: 9 aspectos que configuran la ciudad* [2005]).

We have extensively described the city of El Alto in "El Alto and the 'People's Assembly'" (*The Internationalist* No. 21, Summer 2005). We noted that its 5,000 industrial enterprises range "from *microempresas* (small workshops) to large gas, textile, leather, food, paper, cement and pharmaceutical plants." We pointed out that even though reformist union bureaucrats have left many of the area's workers unorganized, the Federation of Factory Workers' members "include the workers at the Coca-Cola and Pepsi-Cola bottling plants and the Pil milk products factory; Cementos Viacha and the Texturbol, Hilasa, Polar and other textile plants strung along the highway to Viacha; the Stege meat products plant, Vultexiber, Faderpa, Hilpaz and others on the highway to the mining town of Oruro." Meanwhile, "down the road in La Paz, the Federation includes the 1,500 employees of the Matex plant (which makes Polo brand clothing for the U.S. market), the workers of the Cervecería Nacional brewery, Vita and Inti pharmaceuticals, and many oth-

ers." Of these, *Workers Vanguard* says nothing. They are not supposed to exist, so they don't.

The fact is that none of this matters to the SL/ICL, since they have no intention of doing anything in or about the class struggle in most of this region, where the "boiling water" of social turmoil can (in the infamous phrase they used to justify fleeing class struggle in Brazil) pose "unacceptable risks to the vanguard." Their latest "argument" is a transparent excuse for passivity, saturated with historical pessimism. It goes hand-in-hand with their claim that there has been a qualitative retrogression in workers' consciousness globally that makes Trotsky outdated when he wrote (in the Transitional Program) that the historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of proletarian leadership. Their denial of the possibility of revolution in Bolivia is not only anti-Marxist but strikingly confirms our characterization that their outlook increasingly reflects that of the Anglo-American labor aristocracy.

One of the last times Bolivia was even mentioned in *Workers Vanguard* was five years ago as part of another lengthy "polemic" against the Internationalist Group, in that case for upholding the call to "Defeat U.S. Imperialism." In a rambling apologia for abandoning this elementary Leninist slo-

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**FULL CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS FOR ALL IMMIGRANTS!
MOBILIZE LABOR TO RUN OUT RACIST VIGILANTES!**

Protest Against NYC Provocation by “Minutemen” Immigrant-Bashers

On July 26, some 150 supporters of immigrant rights, labor and left groups staged a noisy protest at Ground Zero, the former World Trade Center, in downtown Manhattan against a “press conference” called by the racist vigilantes of the “Minuteman Project.” The anti-racist protesters far outnumbered the handful of Minuteman supporters and in an hour-long face-off kept up a constant barrage of chanting across police barriers. At the end there was a brief jostle as demonstrators crossed the street to get to where the immigrant-bashers were staging their event. For the racist Minuteman vigilantes to hold a race-hate event in New York City, where a large majority of the people are members of ethnic minorities and immigrant families make up over 40 percent of the population, was an outrageous provocation and threat.

A call to protest the Minutemen was first issued by the May 1 Coalition. The Coalition name refers to the May Day protest for immigrant rights that as part of a nationwide call brought out several hundred thousand marchers in New York. The Internationalist Group issued its own leaflet calling for full citizenship rights for all immigrants and to “Mobilize Labor Against ‘Minutemen’ Vigilantes” (see page 7). “The workers movement should mobilize its power to defend the immigrant population and run these nativist fascists out of town,” the IG call said. In the week and a half leading up to the protest, the IG approached a number of unions and immigrant labor groups as well as leafleting an SEIU Local 1199 meeting and key subway barns and workshops.

An hour before the scheduled “press conference,” protesters gathered two blocks away. IG supporters led chants of “New York is a union town – Drive out the Minutemen,” “Minuteman vigilantes – out of New York!” and “Minuteman, Ku Klux Klan, racist killers, hand in hand.” Many Latino immigrants and others enthusiastically chanted in Spanish, “*Aquí estamos, y no nos vamos, y si nos echan, pues*



Internationalist photo

Demonstrators chanted, “New York is a union town, Drive out the Minutemen!” and “Minuteman, Ku Klux Klan, racist killers, hand in hand.”

regresamos” (We’re here, we’re staying, and if they throw us out, we’ll just come back). As they marched on the Minuteman site, protesters chanted, “Minutemen, not welcome here” and “Immigrant rights are workers’ rights.”

At the head of the march was a banner of the Justice 4 Immigrants Filipino Coalition calling for “Legalization for All.” May 1 Coalition signs declared: “MinuteKlan Out! Immigrant

Internationalist photo



Workers from former Windows on the World restaurant atop the World Trade Center came out to say "No to the

Bashing Not Welcome in NYC." The banner of the Internationalist Group proclaimed: "Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants! Drive Out Racist 'Minuteman' Vigilantes! Build a Revolutionary Workers Party!" An IG sign made the link between imperialist war and attacks on immigrants, declaring: "Defeat U.S. Imperialist War on Iraq, Bosses' War on Immigrants." An IG leaflet explained that the Minutemen seek to provoke police repression against immigrants and leftists as occurred earlier this month in Los Angeles.

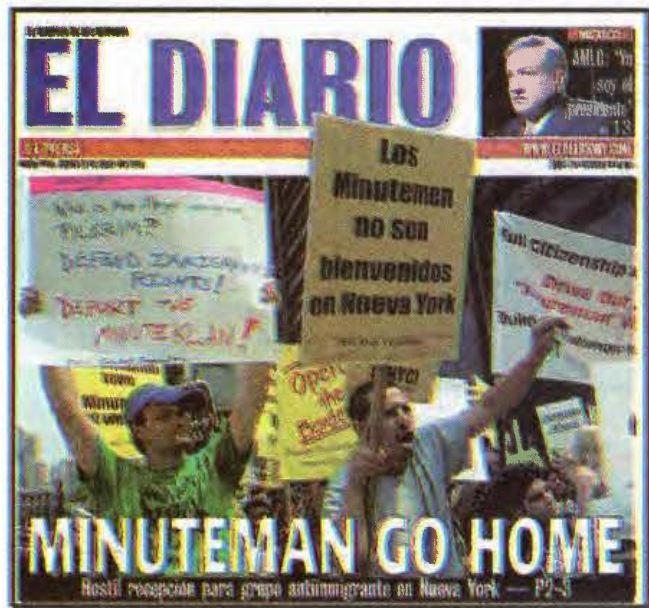
In a classic example of reformist sectarianism, the "No One Is Illegal Coalition" run by the International Socialist Organization called a separate press conference at a different location three blocks away, discouraging people from going to the meeting place of the competing May 1 Coalition, led by the Workers World Party and its International Action Center. When they arrived at the site opposite the Minutemen, ISOers chanted

for "amnesty now." In sharp contrast to this plea for the government to pardon workers for the supposed crime of being here without "papers," the IG chanted for "full citizenship rights for all immigrants." While the ISO and WWP joined in the popular-front slogan, "The people united will never be defeated," the IG chanted: "Democrats, Republicans, racist parties of imperialist war." Several left groups, including the Spartacist League and Revolutionary Communist Party, only sent newspaper salesmen.

The "Minutemen" obscenely sought to exploit the setting of the September 11 attacks to denounce "illegal immigrants" as potential "terrorists," just as the U.S. government uses "9-11" as a battle cry for its "war on terror" that seeks to terrorize the world into submission. A poignant note was added toward the end of the protest with the arrival, at the invitation of the IG, of several immigrant workers from the Restaurant Opportunities Center of New York with a sign saying, "Restaurant Workers of the WTC Say No to the Minutemen." A number

of their fellow union workers at the Windows on the World restaurant atop the World Trade Center were killed in the September 2001 attacks. And as every New Yorker knows, the majority of restaurant, deli and greengrocer workers – not to mention taxi drivers, much of construction, and innumerable other sectors of the city's workforce – are immigrants, "documented" and otherwise.

A news account by the Reuters press agency reported that Minuteman leader Jim Gilchrist was "whisked away when some immigrant rights supporters broke through a police barrier and scuffled with Minutemen supporters." While it was hardly a scuffle, the racist vigilantes knew they were in hostile territory. If any of these outfits try to stage another provocation here, there should be a massive countermobilization by the multi-ethnic workers movement in defense of immigrants and all the oppressed against the immigrant-bashers. ■



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For Militant Workers Defense Against Nativist Fascist Immigrant-Bashers!

The “Minutemen”: Racist Vigilantes Seek to Provoke Police-State Crackdown

**Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!
Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!**

The “Minuteman Project,” now rebaptized as the “Minuteman Civil Defense Corps,” is the largest of several vigilante groups that are on the cutting edge of the anti-immigrant backlash. The Minutemen are shot through with fascist outfits like the Ku Klux Klan, National Socialist Movement Nazis, “neo”-Nazi skinheads and their ilk. These are not just racist bigots: they are armed and dangerous. In the media-hyped Minuteman “border patrols” in Arizona last year, participants were photographed sporting AR-15 automatic rifles and 9 mm. pistols. These racist vigilantes and nativist fascists seek to terrorize immigrants, while going after leftists, labor and even liberals. As we wrote last fall:

“Their aim is to goad the federal government into launching an all-out round-up of ‘illegal’ foreign-born workers.... [T]he immigrant-bashing thugs must not merely be protested, they should be run out by the overwhelming power of the organized working class. Revolutionaries seek to mobilize the unions to come out in force to chase off the fascist vermin who represent a danger to the safety and well-being of the minority, immigrant and working-class population. Militant worker-immigrant defense must be organized to disperse these would-be killers while their forces are small and vulnerable.”

—“For Militant Workers Defense of Immigrants!” *The Internationalist* No. 22, September-October 2005

Importantly, this past May the San Francisco/Oakland, California Local 10 of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) passed a motion urging the ILWU to “continue its principled fight for the rights of immigrant workers by calling for an end to the deportations, granting full

citizenship rights and mobilizing the labor movement against racist attacks by Minutemen.”

Jim Gilchrist, co-founder of the “Minutemen,” is coming to Ground Zero in New York City to promote his new book, subtitled “The Battle to Secure America’s Borders,” which purports to be a “how to” manual on organizing violent racist hate groups. Gilchrist wants to spew out his anti-immigrant hate-mongering by using the September 11 (2001) attack on the World Trade Center, in which many immigrant workers died. In the same way, the United States government has used “9-11” as a battle cry for its “war on terror,” launching an imperialist war on Afghanistan and then Iraq in an attempt to terrorize the world into submission to the U.S. *diktat*.

The publication of an idiot’s guide to racist vigilantism is one more gimmick by an outfit that has focused on publicity-grabbing stunts to market its xenophobic (anti-foreigner) message. Gilchrist runs for Congress in Orange County, California, speaks at the National Press Club in Washington and is interviewed by “Lou Dobbs Tonight” on CNN, while Minuteman co-leader Chris Simcox appears frequently on the Fox News show “Hannity & Colmes” in order to gain a “respectable” image for their immigrant-bashing. The media portray their antics as “citizen activism” and “volunteerism,” as if they were collecting money for United Fund charities or a blood drive.

But this is just a mask, like Louisiana KKKer David Duke who exchanged his white hood and robes for a suit and tie to run for office in a “white flight” suburb of New Orleans. But “Klan in a suit” Duke and “Minuteman” Gilchrist are sinister figures. What the media don’t report is how the Minutemen and related vigilante groups are infested with Nazis, Klansmen, long-time white supremacist militia men, etc.

Protesters picket outside Minuteman event in Babylon, Long Island last September.



Internationalist photo

Unite All Workers! Defend Immigrant Workers' Rights!

The following resolution was passed last May by the San Francisco/Oakland-area Local 10 of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union. At the International convention it was scuttled by the bureaucrats. Even so, it points the way toward the necessary labor mobilization in defense of immigrants.

Whereas, millions of working people have demonstrated against HR 4437 which passed the House of Representatives and would build a 700 mile wall at the border with Mexico and make it a felony to be an undocumented worker or to help one; and

Whereas, other 'guest worker' proposals offer employer schemes to exploit immigrant workers without providing full rights; and

Whereas, the ILWU Warehouse Division has been organizing workers, many of whom are undocumented, yet defiant in the face of employer attacks; and

Whereas, this massive migration is the result of the debastating effect of NAFTA on the Mexican economy, pushed by both parties, Republican and Democrat; and

Whereas, the ILWU Longshore Division sent a delegation in 1994 to Mexico to try to galvanize opposition among longshore unions to the unionbusting and anti-worker effects of NAFTA but was unsuccessful; and

Whereas, the ILWU has always defended immigrant workers rights beginning with International President Harry Bridges who the U.S. government tried to deport four times; and

Whereas, the present wave of largely Latino and Asian immigrants face the threat of deportation and such threats only serve to intimidate workers and drive down wages and working conditions for all workers;

Therefore be it resolved that the ILWU will continue its principled fight for the rights of immigrant workers by calling for an end to the deportations, granting full citizenship rights and mobilizing the labor movement against racist attacks.

Gilchrist ally Barbara Coe, head of the California Coalition for Immigration Reform, belongs to the Council of Conservative Citizens, remnants of the White Citizens Councils that terrorized blacks and murdered civil rights workers in Mississippi and Alabama in the 1950s and '60s.

Lately, the Minutemen and their various fronts have been lurking in front of offices of left groups around the country, such as outside Revolution Books in New York, and even outside the Manhattan office of Democratic war hawk Hillary Clinton, champion of militarizing the Mexican border. In Los Angeles on July 8, some 250 "Minutemen" managed to trigger a vicious assault on leftist counterdemonstrators by para-

military L.A. cops. As the racists taunted "commies" and supporters of MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán), police dragged out leftist demonstrators, repeatedly kicking them in the kidneys, beating them on the head with riot sticks and pistol-whipping a young white woman. The Minuteman carried a gloating video of this on their website.

This is a classic provocation, and no doubt these fascist provocateurs would love to do the same in New York. But their wider aim is to provoke a police-state crackdown on immigrants, a policy supported by significant sections of the capitalist ruling class. The drive for "immigration reform" to "control our borders" is supported by both Democrats and Republicans. Like the fascist fringe groups, they portray this as part of the war on terror. Over the last century imperialist wars have regularly been accompanied by scapegoating immigrants as the "enemy within."

The response of many immigrants' rights groups and much of the left has been to pressure the Democrats with calls for "amnesty," as if undocumented immigrants had committed some crime, and for some kind of "road to citizenship." In reality, what is happening is not a push to legalize undocumented immigrants but a drive to *illegalize* them and prepare the way for round-ups, putting tens of thousands in concentration camps (the contracts have already been awarded to Halliburton) and mass deportations. Instead of begging for "amnesty" like the opportunist left which tails after the Democrats, the Internationalist Group calls for *full citizenship rights for all immigrants* and seeks to forge a *revolutionary workers party* that defends all the oppressed. ■

New York Regents...

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lent anti-Japanese racism accompanied the locking up of tens of thousands of people of Japanese ancestry in concentration camps, today anti-immigrant racism accompanies the marauding of fascist vigilantes like the Minutemen and preparations for locking up immigrants in concentration camps. In addition to the existing "facilities," Halliburton has the contracts to build new camps for *hundreds of thousands* more.

The Trotskyists of the Internationalist Group fight for *full citizenship rights for all immigrants*, and for labor to *defend immigrants against racist attacks*. We call on working people and oppressed minorities to break with the partner parties of U.S. capitalism, Democrats and Republicans alike (and their shells like the Greens and Working Families Party), and to join the struggle to build a *revolutionary workers party*. As Karl Marx wrote in the first volume of *Capital*: "The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins, signalized the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production." It will take *international socialist revolution* to put an end to the holocaust of capitalist imperialism and along with it the despicable ideological justification of oppression. ■

International Socialist Revolution vs. Reformist “Anti-Globalization”

Zapatistas’ “Other Campaign”: In Search of “Another” Mexican Capitalism

The following is a translation of an article from the forthcoming El Internacionalista (Edición México) No. 2 (August 2006), published by the Grupo Internacionalista, Mexican section of the League for the Fourth International.

In the recent election campaign the three main contending parties – the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), the National Action Party (PAN) and the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) – repeatedly joined together in repressing the workers (such as the workers at the Sicartsa steel plant in Lázaro Cárdenas, in the state of Michoacán) and peasants (at Atenco). In the midst of this, the “Other Campaign” initiated by the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) has awakened interest among sectors which are tired

of the insipid disputes at the top, the interminable media battles over the results of the latest opinion poll and the monumental sums worthy of the Pharaohs expended on the current electoral battle. In addition, the Other Campaign has attracted many radicalized youth who see in the recent “anti-capitalist” rhetoric of Insurgent Subcomandante Marcos – now rebaptized as Delegado Zero – an alternative to fight against Mexican capitalism today. Yet these hopes are illusory, since the real program of this campaign consists of “saving our Fatherland” from the “ravages caused by neo-liberal globalization,” *without making a social, and above all socialist, revolution.* Ultimately, the perspective of the Other Campaign is that of pressuring the bourgeoisie which has characterized the EZLN since 1994.

While so many people are fed up with the electoral circus, the EZLN has proposed an alternative form of political entertainment and diversion. The Other Campaign is based on the June 2005 Sixth Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle and its call for a “national campaign to build another way of doing politics, a program of national and left-wing struggle, and for a new Constitution.” This corresponds to a particular electoral conjuncture. None of the main participants in the current electoral dispute – the ultra-reactionary PAN candidate Felipe



Eduardo Verdugo/AP

Delegado Zero roars through village of La Garrucha on way to San Cristóbal de las Casas to kick off the “Other Campaign,” January 1.

Calderón, the ultra-corrupt PRI candidate Roberto Madrazo and the neo-liberal with a human face Andrés Manuel López Obrador – is opposed to the politics of privatization and abject submission to imperialism. In the past, many intellectuals, sections of the workers and peasants and the petty-bourgeois left were drawn to the campaigns of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas in 1988, 1994, 1997 and 2000, with their nationalist airs. But today this commodity is not being offered among the electoral options currently on sale. Under the watchword of “looking downwards and to the left,” the Other Campaign seeks to win the sympathies and occupy the attention of a part of the electorate which has been orphaned. As a result, it has won wide support (explicit or de facto) among leftist groups, from nationalist formations to Stalinists and anarchists and those who (falsely) claim to be Trotskyist.

The Zapatistas have gone out of their way to signal that their campaign doesn’t represent any threat to the government. The Sixth Declaration not only commits the EZLN, naturally, to maintaining a “cessation of offensive fire” but also to “not having any kind of secret relation with political-military organizations nationally or in other countries.” It has been quite a while since the EZLN ceased to present it-

self as a guerrilla group. Neither has it called to boycott the vote, as the Oaxaca teachers proposed, nor to oppose voting for the bourgeois parties or candidates. A journalistic account in *La Jornada* (19 January) was headlined, "The Other Campaign Is Not Promoting Abstentionism." Marcos explicitly spelled out that "Electoral preferences or sympathies are in no way an impediment to being part of the Other Campaign... On July 2 [date of the national elections], everyone will vote for whomever they want to elect." The truth is that the Other Campaign *does not offer any alternative to the bourgeois electoral circus*. Despite its ambiguous rhetoric, its program does not propose to put an end to capitalism, this hateful system based on the exploitation of the working people, the oppression of women and youth, the racist exclusion of the indigenous peoples and open repression against those who are seen as hindering the business dealings of the capitalists. The Other Campaign is only seeking another policy for Mexican capitalism. At most it offers a distraction from the rule by the Mexican bourgeoisie and its imperialist partners.

Ever since he began his national tour, exchanging his horse for a motorcycle, accompanied by a rooster disguised as a penguin, Delegado Zero did little more than meet with organizations of the "people from below," with long-winded chats in the prolific poetic prose that is his style. Marcos himself confirms, in an interview with Sergio Rodríguez Lascano in *Rebeldía* (May 2006), that at the outset the Other Campaign "began as a complaint box," and that until the repression in Atenco, "we weren't engaged in struggle as the Other Campaign, we were making roll call." He added:

"Before Atenco there was kind of an implicit accord: while the Other Campaign was taking place below, it wasn't looking up: if you don't mess around with us, we won't mess around with you.... But when the attack at Atenco occurred ... we said: okay, now the truce has been broken."

Now the main demand of the Other Campaign is to get the Atenco comrades out of jail, an elemental demand for all of us who oppose this repressive regime. But Marcos adds: "Let them go and we will return to the margins of society. If not, we are going to make as much noise as possible." So the Zapatistas' Other Campaign functioned as a "complaint box," engaged in a "roll call," maintaining a sort of "truce" with the government, which he is now offering to reestablish. Marcos reiterated, "Once all the comrades who were taken prisoner in Atenco are released, the Other Campaign will continue below." Even when he talks of "making as much noise as possible," the Other Campaign only proposes marching in many-hued demonstrations, essentially made up of students, instead of mobilizing the powerful class force, that of the workers, capable of staying the hand of state repression and ultimately bringing down the capitalist state which exercises it.

The Other Campaign forms part of the anti-globalization movement, now known as "*altermundismo*" (roughly, "alternative globalization") from its slogan "another world is possible." The failure to specify *what kind of world* is being sought is deliberate. This is a movement of the petty-bourgeois left that was thrown for a loop and politically disoriented following the

downfall of the Soviet Union and the East European deformed workers states, bureaucratic regimes which (falsely) claimed to be socialist. At no time have Marcos or the EZLN called for socialism, or even for a revolution. Quite the contrary, in an interview with Hermann Bellinghausen in *La Jornada* (11 May), Delegado Zero stated: "The Other Campaign is only presenting itself at the level of left-wing anti-capitalism, without going any further than that. That's why the Other Campaign talks of rebellion, not revolution." The Other Campaign wants another Mexico, but what kind of Mexico? The list of demands in the Sixth Declaration – "housing, land, work, food, health, information, culture, independence, democracy, justice, liberty and peace" – is the same as in the first Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle dating from 1994. This program is in no way socialist: it is merely a *democratic* program for the *reform* of capitalism.

When the EZLN calls itself anti-capitalist, what it means is that it criticizes the "capitalism of today," not that it proposes to struggle to bring down the capitalist system. At most it seeks to "depose" the government – not to overthrow it, mind you, since, Marcos says, that would require "using arms." Put another way, he calls to "get rid of this government by civil and peaceful mobilization, which is our constitutional right, and install another [government]" (*Rebeldía*, May 2006). The Zapatistas and the pseudo-socialists who tag along after them raise a call for "joint coordinated defense of national sovereignty," of "our Mexican fatherland," in which the Mexican national state would miraculously become independent of "global capitalism." They seek to mobilize "the people," a multi-class amalgam including "small property owners, small businessmen" and "members of the clergy" (Sixth Declaration) and even sectors of the bourgeoisie. Revolutionary Marxists take precisely the opposite stand: what is necessary is to put an end, once and for all, to capitalist exploitation and the bloody rule of the Mexican bourgeoisie, through the working class taking power and undertaking a socialist revolution extending beyond the borders to the rest of Latin America and, fundamentally, north of the Rio Grande, to the United States, the most powerful imperialist country on earth.

The perspective of the Other Campaign is that of pressuring the bourgeoisie which has characterized the EZLN since the beginning. Ours, on the other hand, is the Trotskyist perspective of *permanent revolution*, of *proletarian internationalism*, which is counterposed, from top to bottom, to the "*democratic*," *bourgeois and nationalist* outlook of the Other Campaign. In the face of the brutal repression on which every bourgeois government bases itself, above all in a semi-colonial country like Mexico; in the face of the massacres of steel workers in Lázaro Cárdenas, of peasants and townspeople in Atenco and the Oaxaca teachers, and in order to generalize the tenacious resistance of the workers, the Grupo Internacionalista has fought for a *national strike against the murderous government*. We insist: in the face of the bourgeois electoral circus (and that of the World Cup of soccer which accompanies it), we don't need another "circus," another *anti*-electoral campaign, a street theater. What's needed is hard struggle to build a *revolutionary workers party*.

The Other Campaign and the Popular Front Around the PRD

One of the more striking aspects of the Other Campaign is that it appears to represent a certain turn to the left in the Zapatista politics. Shortly after it emerged a decade ago, the EZLN exchanged its bullets for votes in favor of the PRD, and particularly its eternal candidate Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. While many leftists at the time hoped that the uprising in Chiapas signaled the beginning of a revolution, the Zapatistas insisted in dozens of manifestos, interviews, resolutions and communiqués, which today fill several volumes, that their aim was not to take power but to contribute to the “transition to democracy” in Mexico. Like the reformist left, the Zapatistas believed that this transition would come about with the departure of the PRI from Los Pinos [the presidential residence] and the return to it of the son of General Cárdenas.¹ “A government of democratic transition and a new Constituent Assembly which assures, in law and in deeds, the fulfillment of the demands of the Mexican people for democracy, liberty and justice” – this was the objective set out by Marcos on behalf of the Clandestine Revolutionary Indian Committee – General Command of the EZLN in a letter to Cárdenas dated 15 May 1994.

In the elections of July 1994, the EZLN called to “vote against the candidates of the Institutional Revolutionary Party and equivalent parties” (*La Jornada*, 31 June 1994), in a clear attempt to win votes for Cárdenas. The National Democratic Convention, called for August of that year, specifically excluded those who “do not agree with trying the electoral road,” while hailing the plenum of the PRD leadership which displaced itself to the “Aguascalientes” of Chiapas.² In an June 1994 interview with Gaspar Morquecho titled, “Drums of Peace, Drums of War,” Marcos stated:

¹ General Lázaro Cárdenas del Río was president of Mexico from 1934 to 1940, during which time (under pressure from militant workers’ strikes) he nationalized the railroads and oil industry and laid the basis for the corporatist system in which the workers, peasants and military, as well as virtually every other sector of Mexican society, were incorporated into the state party, then known as the Party of the Mexican Revolution, which subsequently became the PRI. Ever since, General Cárdenas has been the symbol of left-wing bourgeois nationalism in Mexico. His son, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas Solórzano, was a leading PRI politician who broke with the PRI in 1988 and went on to lead the Party of the Democratic Revolution. His son, in turn, Lázaro Cárdenas Batel, is a leading PRD politician and current governor of the state of Michoacán, who ordered the police to attack strikers at the Sicarta steel plant in the city of Lázaro Cárdenas, named for his grandfather.

² Aguascalientes was the site of the Revolutionary Convention of 1914-15 which marked the high point of peasant radicalism during the Mexican Revolution. To mark the continuity of the neo-Zapatista movement with its historical predecessor, the EZLN named the meeting place of its National Democratic Convention in the Chiapas jungle “Aguascalientes.”



Gregory Bull/AP

Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas glad-hands with Subcomandante Marcos during encounter in Lancandón Jungle, November 1994.

“So what we are saying is that it is necessary to incorporate the whole of this civic insurgency ... in a movement whose banners are sufficiently broad to include all: the radicals, the centrists and the democrats, i.e., the more cautious... And it has to be before the elections precisely so that they vote. In other words, the proposal of the [National Democratic] Convention is to attempt to force change by means of elections.”
—*Cuadernos Agrarios* No. 10, July-December 1994

Marcos and the EZLN keep repeating, without major modifications, this perspective of unity with nationalist and “democratic” exploiters. In the 2000 presidential elections, although they did not call to vote for any particular party, they called for throwing the PRI out of the presidency and for strengthening the opposition in Congress. On the eve of a visit to Ciudad Universitaria (main campus of the National University in Mexico City) by the PRD candidate, the Zapatista command vouched for Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas’ “leftist” credentials of and called to try the “peaceful road to political change.” The memory was still fresh in the minds of the students of how Cárdenas, then head of government of the capital city, ordered *granadero* riot police to repress students on 4 August 1999 (just as his successor in the post, Rosario Robles, did on several occasions up to the point of coordinating with the Federal Preventive Police the military seizure of the struck university facilities). In a communiqué directed to former leftists who were calling for a vote in favor of Fox, the EZLN wrote at the time:

“We think that [Cárdenas and the PRD] are still part of the left, with all the nuances and criticisms that one can make.... If the left is eliminated from the electoral spectrum, meaning the [elimination of a] peaceful road to political change, what option is left for millions of Mexicans who have their hopes and efforts set on deep social change? Abstention? Guerrilla war?”
—EZLN Comunicado, 19 June 2000

In the face of the crumbling of the apparatus of corporatist social control, the pillar on which the PRI-government rested, there arose at the end of the 1980s a bourgeois alternative centered on a group of former PRI politicians led by Cárdenas Jr. This new "opposition" sought to maintain the ties binding important sectors of the working movement that were breaking out of the straitjacket of *charro* [corporatist] trade unionism³ to a section of the bourgeoisie. For that purpose, almost the entire reformist left entered into the new bourgeois political body (initially the National Democratic Front, later the Party of the Democratic Revolution). This included the Mexican Socialist Party, a block of the epigones of Mexican Stalinism and former followers of Vicente Lombardo Toledano⁴ together with left nationalists like Heberto Castillo, along with Maoists, Guevarists and the pseudo-Trotskyist PRT, followers of the Ernest Mandel. Around this party, which sought to revive the populist and nationalist politics of the old PRI, a class-collaborationist alliance was formed, a "popular front." At key moments, the EZLN injected a new verve into the Cárdenas popular front, helping to keep the exploited and oppressed under the control of the exploiters and oppressors.

From its very origins, and despite being an armed organization, the EZLN has acted as a pressure group in the orbit of the PRD. Marcos himself recognized this in explaining the need to distinguish himself from the party: "The EZLN was tied to the PRD from before and had to take its distance," remarked Delegado Zero in his recent interview with *La Jornada*. "We had to make a special point of distancing ourselves from the PRD because in our prior history we distinguished from the others." The alliance of the EZLN with the bourgeois PRD became harder to maintain after the "march of the color of the earth" (2001) which ended up at the national Congress. Although the latter was supposed to vote a constitutional reform recognizing Indian rights and culture in the spirit of the Agreements of San Andrés Larrainzar (*Sacam'chen de los Pobres*), the PRD group in the Senate vote along with the PRI and the PAN against the proposal of the Commission for Harmony and Peace (the COCOPA) supported by the Zapatistas. On top of this there was the series of attacks on Zapatista

³ At the beginning of the post-WWII anti-Soviet Cold War, the Mexican government, at the instigation of the United States, carried out a red purge in the unions, throwing out (and frequently jailing) Communists and installing government puppets. The emblematic figure of this purge was railway labor boss Jesús Díaz de León, known as the *charro* (cowboy) for his predilection for dressing up in fancy Mexican cowboy duds. Ever since, the corporatist state-controlled "unions" were known as *charro* unions.

⁴ Vicente Lombardo Toledano, a former teacher, was a founder of the Mexican Workers Federation (CTM) in 1938, initially allied with the Stalinist Communist Party. As the PRI turned to the right in the 1940s, he founded the Popular Party (later Popular Socialist Party), a satellite party whose purpose was to mop up leftists and nationalists who had become uncomfortable in the PRI. For decades Lombardo Toledano was the leading figure of a left-nationalist current in and around the PRI-controlled labor movement.

communities by paramilitary groups which went over from the PRI to the PRD during the administration of Chiapas governor Pablo Salazar Mendiguchía, who was put into office as the joint candidate of the PRD and PAN and, a not unimportant detail, by leave of the EZLN.

By summer 2005, following a "red alert" in which the *caracoles* (local administrations) were closed throughout Zapatista territory in the face of ominous troop movements, the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle was launched. This made the break from the PRD official, and particularly from the candidacy of Andrés Manuel López Obrador, which the EZLN refused to support. The EZLN broke with the PRD not because it is a bourgeois party, but because it had "betrayed" the struggle for Indian rights and culture. According to Marcos, the Zapatistas "discovered" that the PRD was part of the rotten Mexican "political class," and as such it went back on its pledge. In a letter to a sympathizer of the PRD and AMLO, Marcos commented: "When we referred to rogues and crooks in the PRD, we were talking, and do so today as well, about the same people you refer to as inconsistent, who kidnapped the party." What he never says is that the franchise of Cárdenas and López Obrador is a capitalist party. The truth is that the PRD has always been loyal to the interests of the class it represents: the bourgeoisie – and those interests are necessarily counterposed to those of the oppressed. But to say this would be to cut the umbilical cord which ties Zapatismo to the petty-bourgeois intellectuals who have always been one of its constituency.

It's no accident, therefore, that intellectuals who once supported Cárdenas are now trying to combine support for the Other Campaign with voting for the PRD. A case in point is the philosopher Enrique Dussel. Making use of the old social-democratic distinction, he stated that voting for the PRD would be like a minimum program, "perfectly compatible" with the anti-capitalist maximum program of the EZLN. On the pretext of "not dividing" the "militant left" (that is, not separating the bourgeois PRD from the left that supports the Other Campaign), Dussel opines that "The two campaigns are complementary and strategically they should have the same aim.... One has to keep the timing in order and dose them out tactically" ("The dual campaign," *La Jornada*, 4 January). More recently, in an article titled "Elections of Fear" (*Memoria* No. 208, June 2006), the prominent Cardenista intellectual Rosa Albina Garavito accepts the Zapatista analysis of the PRD, saying that it "is the sum of small interest groups making use of the electoral ticket and whose electoral ambitions draw them into the orbit of a charismatic and honest candidate like AMLO." However, Garavito goes on: "Not voting for AMLO or abstaining at the polls next July 2 is opening the doors to the consolidation of the right in power," so that she hopes people can reconcile "voting for AMLO and sympathizing with the Other Campaign."

Although many PRD intellectuals are now reproaching Marcos for supposedly "playing the game of the right" by not calling to vote for Andrés Manuel López Obrador (as he did for Cárdenas in 1994, 1997 and 2000), the Other Campaign doesn't pose a real break with the bourgeois and nationalist politics

embodied by the PRD. They are only taking their distance from one bourgeois candidate who is not to their liking. The Trotskyists of the Grupo Internacionalista, on the other hand, call to not vote for the PAN, PRI or PRD, or for any other bourgeois politician or party; to break the popular front around the PRD; and to fight to sweep away the capitalist system, beginning by building the nucleus of a revolutionary workers party.

The Sixth Declaration, "Anti-Capitalist" Struggle and Socialist Revolution

One of the reasons why many people have seen in the EZLN's turn a break from its earlier policies is that for the first time in more than ten years of public life, the Zapatistas are posing as their goal "fighting against capitalism." It should be recalled that Subcomandante Marcos had made himself popular in vast circles of "progressive" intellectuals around the world defending the "post-modern" perspective according to which the EZLN didn't share the declared goals of the traditional Latin American guerrilla movements. The Zapatista emblem was, therefore, to fight for improvements in the living conditions of the Indian communities, for recognition of their autonomy, etc., *without fighting to take power*. Hence the title that the Zapatista academic John Holloway gave to his attempt to codify the EZLN program: *Change the World without Taking Power*.

As could be expected, the Zapatista call to build a movement that transcends the framework of "Indian demands" and instead bases itself on "the working people of town and country" along with other sectors oppressed by capitalism had a considerable resonance among leftist groups. Before the rooster could crow, almost the entirety of the reformist would-be socialist organizations subscribed to "the Sixth [Declaration]" and signed up with "the Other [Campaign]": from the Lombardists of the Party of the Communists to the Stalinists of the Communist Party of Mexico Marxist-Leninist, the long-since ex-Maoist Corriente En Lucha and pseudo-Trotskyists of various affiliations (the Morenoites of the POS – with their brand-new National Political Association, the MAS,⁵ which feeds off government funds, and UNIOS; the Mandelites of the LUS, etc. Although these groups, in different ways, proclaim themselves socialist in their Sunday speechifying, which neither the EZLN nor the Other Campaign do, in their daily politics they join together on the lowest common denominator: the "democratic," i.e., *bourgeois*, character of their reformist minimum programs ("democratic revolution," "democratic government," "nationalist and democratic government," "revolutionary democratic government," according to their particular preferences).

Today the Zapatistas use an "anti-capitalist" rhetoric, Marcos talks (occasionally) of "fighting against capitalism" and

⁵ The Partido Obrero Socialista and its new incarnation, the Movimiento al Socialismo, as well as Unidad Obrera y Socialista derive from the international current led by the late Nahuel Moreno; the Liga de Unidad Socialista is one of the offshoots of the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores after the bulk of this party went with the PRD and its leaders now act as semi-official spokesmen for the Zapatistas.

(very occasionally) of "ending capitalism." But the EZLN's perspective continues to be essentially the same democratizing and nationalist politics it has pursued since it burst onto the scene a dozen years ago. The Sixth Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle criticizes capitalism in various places, but what it understands by "capitalism" is another story. The fundamental thesis of "the Sixth" is that one must fight against the contemporary version of capitalism, *neo-liberalism*. Thus it states: "And so it turns out that the capitalism of today is not the same as before, when the rich were content to exploit the working people in their countries, but rather what there is today is something called Neo-Liberal Globalization. This globalization means that the capitalists no longer rule over the workers in one or several countries, but instead they seek today to rule everything in the whole world." Like the rest of the anti-"globalization" movement, what the EZLN calls for is not a struggle to abolish capitalist property internationally but rather a "plan for struggle so that our Fatherland, which is Mexico, does not die." In other words, it is a utopian reformist attempt to confine capitalism within national borders.

In reality, capitalism has been a *worldwide system* since its beginning. With the conquest and looting of the American continent in the 16th century, a world capitalist market was constituted which gave rise to mercantile and later industrial capitalism. The big problem with the so-called "globalization" of capitalism is *not*, according to the Zapatistas, the rule of capital per se (whatever the nationality of its owners), but the domination in one country of capitalists from *another* country: "Thus neo-liberal globalization seeks to destroy the Nations of the world so that there will only remain one Nation or country, the country of money, of capital." The problem, say the Zapatistas, is that neo-liberalism is destroying the *nation*. However, the nation includes various classes with counterposed and irreconcilable interests. What "national" capital seeks is to exploit the labor of its wage slaves. Leon Trotsky, in his theory of *permanent revolution*, explained that the only way that a nation oppressed by the yoke of imperialism could emancipate itself is through *international socialist revolution* which sweeps away all the exploiters, whatever their nationality. The Trotskyists do not cry "*¡Patria, patria!*" (Fatherland, fatherland)⁶ but "Workers of the World, Unite!"

In fact, modern nations are the direct result of the rule of capital. The "fatherland" is nothing but the private preserve of the national bourgeoisie for its exploitation and commerce. That is why Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels emphasized in the *Communist Manifesto* that the exploited *have no fatherland*. The EZLN, despite its supposedly more leftist rhetoric, continues to wrap itself, literally, in the tri-color flag of the Mexican bourgeoisie, as do the bourgeois politicians. The "Mexican fatherland" was constituted on the basis, first of the brutal exploitation of the Indians (bringing them to the point of physical extinction) and then of their systematic oppression and exclusion. The Mexican flag certainly is *not* the flag of the indigenous peoples, but rather the symbol of their centuries-old exploitation, of the revolting anti-Indian racism of the *criolla* (domestic) bourgeois-

⁶ From the refrain of the Mexican national anthem.

sie with its ideological mystification of exalting *mestizaje* (mixed race). It's worth recalling that in the Revolutionary Convention of Aguascalientes (the one of 1914, which ended in tragedy, not its 1994 imitation) Antonio Díaz Soto y Gama caused a scandal by crumpling up the Mexican flag in his fist, saying that it symbolized "the lie of history" because "what is called our independence was not the independence of the Indian, it was the independence of the *criolla* race and the heirs of the conquest."

What the Zapatistas call for is *not* to end the rule of capital in Mexico and the rest of the world, but rather to defend "national" capital against foreign capital. This is the complaint of the weak colonial bourgeoisies in countries of belated capitalist development in the face of the enormous pressure of their imperialist senior partners. Despite its "leftist" rhetoric, the EZLN program is that of a sector of the Mexican bourgeoisie. Consider the following passage from the Sixth Declaration:

"As for the worker of the cities, the factories close and they end up without a job, or factories are opened called *maquiladoras*⁷ which are owned by foreigners and which offer miserable pay for many hours of work.... And if anyone works in a small or medium-sized company, no longer, because it has been shut down and bought up by a big multi-national."

And if the *maquiladoras* are owned by "national" capital? If there were only national capitalists, like Carlos Slim of a couple of decades ago, or national state-owned industries like PEMEX, what then would be the Zapatistas' complaint? In reality, what they want is to return to the "golden days" of the PRI's rule, as the PRD also yearns for – at least in its Cárdenas version.

Finally, Zapatismo is not a working-class current, and it is quite conscious of this, even though opportunist leftists try to disguise this. On May Day, the Other Campaign marched *after* the union mobilization had ended; on June 10, the day commemorating the 1971 massacre, Marcos explicitly opposed participating in the march called by the CNTE and the SME,⁸ and called instead for a student demonstration later in the day. The well-worn pretext of the supporters of the Other Campaign is that the workers' contingents are politically subordinated to the PRD or the PRI. This gratuitously confuses the workers ranks with their popular-frontist or *charro* leaders. However radical this posture may sound, in reality it represents a kind of *entente* with the union leaderships which the Other Campaign is not prepared to fight against.

Fake Left Buries Itself in the Other Campaign

There is at least an apparent coherence between the bourgeois-democratic program of the EZLN and its social base, the Indian peasants with their petty-bourgeois dream of earning a decent life from their plots as small landowners. Even then, this program cannot defend the impoverished toilers of the soil

⁷ Free trade zone plants, exempt from import and export duties and many taxes.

⁸ The CNTE is the mass union grouping of dissident teachers; the SME is the independent union (not directly controlled by the government) of electrical workers. The leaders of both support the PRD.



ES MAS

Telephone worker Jorge Salinas was savagely beaten by 23 police at San Salvado Atenco, May 4. Prior to Atenco repression, Marcos says the "Other Campaign" had a sort of truce with the government.

from the competition of the huge monopolies of imperialist free trade, or from the depredations of the murderous army, tasks which will require a socialist revolution. The case of the left groups who have allied themselves with the Other Campaign is quite different. These opportunists set aside their formal socialist program and immerse themselves in "the Other" in order to win sympathizers. It must be said that this is nothing new for them, and that they have long ago worked out a "theoretical" justification for this programmatic dilution. The Mexican Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist) and its Revolutionary Popular Front (FPR), which invariably march under a portrait of Stalin, render something more than iconographic homage to their political forefather. The PCM follows to the letter the Menshevik strategy of "two-stage revolution," which Stalin turned into the official policy of the Communist International in the semi-colonial countries. According to this anti-Leninist dogma, in a country like Mexico the immediate tasks consists of fighting for a "democratic" (bourgeois) revolution and only later (never) for socialist revolution.

In its newspaper, *Vanguardia Proletaria* (January 2006), the PCM raises the slogan, "Fight for power, fight for the Democratic People's Republic," which it designates by its initials (in Spanish), RDP. It makes it clear that "the RDP ... is not a Republic of a Socialist character." The article spells out:

The Democratic Popular Republic, although in an economic sense it moves essentially in the framework of capitalism, has as its axis nationalization of strategic industries and resources, non-payment of the foreign debt and national sovereignty over natural resources, which have been expressed in the Promotora [the National Committee to Promote Struggle Against Neo-Liberalism], the National Dialogue [for an Alternative National Project] and will certainly be expressed throughout the Other Campaign."

Thus the Stalinists of the PCM admit that their hypothetical RDP is not socialist, and that under it "the economic founda-

tions of capitalism survive." This slogan is completely contrary to the *workers and peasants government* that the Bdsheviks organized in 1917, the first resolution (written by Lenin) issued by the revolutionary power stated that "the workers and peasants government to be created by the revolution, as a soviet government which will assure for the urban proletariat the support of the mass of poor peasants, will firmly advance toward socialism, the only means of saving the country from the innumerable tragedies and the horrors of the war." The aims of such a government, as Lenin described them in his letter "To the Citizens of Russia" (25 October [7 November] 1917) included, "the abolition of landed proprietorship" and "workers' control over production."

The PCM's call for an RDP is diametrically opposed to the revolutionary policies of Lenin and Trotsky in 1917. It is also worth noting that the organizations cited as possible vehicles for their political project, in addition to the Other Campaign — i.e., the National Committee to Promote Struggle Against Neo-Liberalism and the National Dialogue for an Alternative National Project — are class-collaborationist coalitions designed to support the candidacy of López Obrador. One of the most prominent members of the Promotora is Camilo Valenzuela, leader of the Democratic Left Network inside the PRD. As its name quite clearly indicates, the Promotora's goal is to "promote national unity," i.e., "unity" nationalist-oriented sectors of the bourgeoisie. The "workers" component of this popular front consists of the union bureaucracies of the "independent" unions, the most prominent being the Mexican Electrical Workers Union (SME) — which has insistently called for the election of AMLO — along with the STUNAM union of National University workers (whose leader, Agustín Rodríguez, is running for Congress on the PRD ticket), the CNTE (whose Mexico City leader, David Martín del Campo, is also a PRD candidate) and the various groupings led by these unions such as the Mexican Union Front (FSM) and the National Workers Union (UNT).

Similarly, the Stalinist-Lombardist Party of the Communists places its support for the Other Campaign in the framework of a program from a "nationalist and democratic government" and the call by the Second National Dialogue (in Querétaro this past February) for a "new democratic institutionality." The PC explicitly states that its "strategic and tactical line" consists of "fighting to point the bourgeoisie along the road of defense of the national interests," and it writes that under the PRI, "the alliance with the national bourgeoisie was indispensable, because it had in its hands the state apparatus" ("The Political Line of the Party of the Communists," 30 December 2005). It was precisely this policy which for decades subordinated the Mexican proletariat to its bourgeois rulers who disguised their class domination with the tri-color flag and nationalist rhetoric. In reality, the PRI's "revolutionary family" represented the bourgeois sector that usurped the Mexican Revolution of 1910-17 and assassinated Emiliano Zapata and Francisco Villa. Today the Stalinists want to repeat this ill-fated history, with the neo-Zapatistas, blocking proletarian revolution with their bourgeois-democratic popular-front program

The PCM and PC loyally follow the political line of Stalin,

who borrowed from the Mensheviks the conception of a "democratic" revolution as the first "stage" which would leave power in the hands of bourgeois sectors. This policy was the counterpart internationally of his nationalist, conservative and profoundly anti-Marxist dogma of allegedly "building socialism in one country." In China in April 1927, the implementation of this policy had disastrous consequences, such as the Shanghai Massacre, carried out by the butcher Chiang Kai-shek and his bourgeois nationalist party, the Kuomintang, Stalin's "ally," who drowned in blood the workers insurrection led by the Communists themselves. Eight days before the massacre, the Chinese Communist Party put out a joint declaration with the KMT calling for a "democratic dictatorship of all the oppressed classes...and not to establish a dictatorship of the proletariat" (cited in Jacques Guillermaz, *History of the Chinese Communist Party* [Random House, 1972]). Subsequently, this same "stagist" policy and its organization embodiment, the popular front, served to block socialist revolution in countries such as Spain in 1936-39, Greece during and after World War II, Indonesia in 1965 and Chile in 1970-73.

It was on the basis of the Chinese experience that Trotsky generalized the theory of *permanent revolution*, which he had elaborated on the basis of the Russian Revolution of 1905 and which became reality in the October 1917 Revolution. This perspective holds that in countries of belated capitalist development, the national bourgeoisies are so feeble and are bound with so many ties to the imperialists and large landowners (latifundistas) that they can no longer play any progressive role. Thus instead of fighting for satisfaction of the tasks historically associated with the democratic revolutions — democracy, agrarian revolution and national liberation — the weak national colonial and semi-colonial bourgeoisies ally themselves with the imperialists and native arch-counterrevolutionaries. As a result, Trotsky concluded, simply in order to carry out the most elementary democratic demands, it is necessary to transcend the framework of capitalism, expropriate the bourgeoisie as a class, establish a government of soviets (councils) of the workers and poor peasants, go over to socialist measures and extend the revolution internationally, especially to the colonial powers. This was, precisely, the program of the Revolution of October 1917.

Breaking with the Stalinist perspective requires breaking with *all* sectors of the bourgeoisie. The Other Campaign, on the other hand, fights for liberty and the demands of the "Mexican people." Thus the PCM issues a call for "unity in action of the Mexican people" (*Vanguardia Proletaria*, June 2006). But the bourgeois-democratic perspective is not the exclusive birthright of the Stalinists. Even the Mandeliste pseudo-Trotskyists of the Liga de Unidad Socialista (LUS) praise the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle for raising the banner of "our struggle, that of the Mexican people" (*Umbral* No. 36, September 2005). Rather than fighting to form a proletarian vanguard party, which is Leninist and Trotskyist according to its organization and programmatic character, these imposters have always tailed along behind an infinity of non-proletarian forces. The Partido Obrero

Socialista (POS, now Movimiento al Socialismo, MAS) of the Mexican followers of the late Nahuel Moreno, went so far as to claim that the EZLN has “adopted some Marxist concepts to understand our country and the world” (“Why We Signed the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle,” in *El Socialista* a August 2005). And what might those “Marxist concepts” be? The reference of Stalinist origin to the “Mexican people” as the protagonist of the struggle?

Marxists insist that the proletariat is the only social class with the objective historical interest and strength necessary to expropriate the bourgeoisie as a class and lay the bases for socialism through international extension of the revolution. In reality, the “Third World” nationalism of the Sixth Declaration has nothing in common with Marxism. Lenin denounced this kind of capitulation with disdain:

“Bourgeois nationalism and proletarian internationalism these are the two antagonistic and irreconcilable watchwords which correspond to the two sides which separate the classes in the capitalist world.”

—“Critical Remarks on the National Question” (1913)

Ever since it arose in the French revolution of 1789, the concept of the “people,” a multi-class category, has designated not only the exploiters but also the small and large landowners, the peasantry (the rural petty bourgeoisie) and supposedly “progressive” or “democratic” sectors of the bourgeoisie. Under the pervasive calls for “popular unity” and slogans for a “popular (or people’s) government,” “popular front,” etc., there lurks the perspective of class collaboration. The reformists say “popular” in order not to say “proletarian.”

For Genuine Trotskyism: Fight for Proletarian Revolution

Various fake-Trotskyist tendencies like the LUS openly support *bourgeois* populist governments like that of Evo Morales in Bolivia. Manuel Aguilar Mora, the main leader of the LUS, argues in a recent article that due to the “historical regression” of the workers movement in Mexico, today a specific characteristic of the evolution of the Mexican people again asserts itself, namely, that the poorest and most marginalized peasant sectors have at crucial moments of its development played the role of vanguard, orienting our people: this was the case during the period of national independence in the 19th century, and was repeated during the Mexican revolution of the early 20th century” (“The Sixth Declaration: Its Political Meaning,” in *Umbral* No. 36, September 2005). Thus the spokesman for the LUS dismisses the permanent revolution which insists on the need for the working class to take power under the leadership of a communist party of the proletarian vanguard. Now he holds that the vanguard is embodied in a peasant movement, which, as Aguilar Mora himself admits, has nothing to do with Marxism.

Contrary to this petty-bourgeois perspective, Trotsky held (along with Lenin, Engels and Marx) that all historical experience had shown that under capitalism the only social force with the interest and socio-economic power to carry out a revolution socializing the ownership of the means of production is the working class, and more particularly the *industrial proletariat*.

Although huge sectors of the peasantry in backward countries are suffering under brutal, centuries-old oppression, the peasantry itself is a contradictory social layer, composed of small property-owners and those who aspire to this status, divided between landless peasants, middle peasants who live off their own toil, and real *kulaks*, or rich peasants, who exploit the labor of others. The peasantry does not have the coherent class interest which would enable it to act as a vanguard; rather, it serves as a rearguard for one or the other of the fundamental classes of capitalist society. The proletariat, on the other hand, can and must place itself at the head of all the oppressed to bring down the bourgeois regime and open the way to socialism, a classless society of abundance. The praises sung by pseudo-Trotskyists to the peasant and Indian movement, which is nationalist to the core, praising the Zapatistas of the past and their epigones of today, represent the rejection of the perspective of international socialist revolution.

Finally, this bourgeois-democratic perspective is expressed in the Zapatistas’ call, shared by Stalinists and fake-Trotskyists alike, to point the struggle toward a new *constituent assembly*. Among the most emphatic supporters of this policy is the Liga de Trabajadores por el Socialismo (LTS – Socialist Workers League), a group that isn’t formally affiliated to the Other Campaign while tailing after it. For the LTS and the international tendency to which it belongs, the Trotskyist Faction (FT), the constituent assembly has been the polar star of its politics in practically every country on the continent. It corresponds to their line, inherited from Morenoism, for a “democratic revolution,” a slogan raised by Yankee imperialism under Ronald Reagan. While the Sixth Declaration calls for a new constitution, the LTS puts forward a “Free and Sovereign Constituent Assembly, which would discuss and resolve the most pressing demands of the worker and peasant majorities” (“Our Position on the Sixth Declaration of the EZLN,” 25 September 2005). Giving the lie to its pretensions of fighting for socialist revolution in Mexico, these neo-Morenoites chase after the neo-Zapatistas in proposing a *democratic* policy in a country that already suffers under the yoke of formal bourgeois pseudo-“democracy.”

Even under the most generous interpretation of the slogan for a “new constitution” in Mexico, what Mexican workers need is not a new edition of the Aguascalientes Convention of 1914, dominated by radical peasant forces led by Zapata and Villa, which because of the revolutionary incapacity of the peasantry were unable to resist the imposition of rule by the northern bourgeois landowners headed by generals Álvaro Obregón and Plutarco Elías Calles. The workers, peasants and Indians can not climb out of poverty by means of a *fourth* bourgeois revolution, after three prior ones that failed (the wars of Independence of 1810-22, the war of the Reform of 1858-1867, and the Mexican Revolution of 1910-17), but only through a workers revolution, supported by the poor peasantry. We fight for a workers and peasants government, based on councils of workers and peasants, which would destroy the oppressive bourgeois state, expropriate the capitalists and extend the revolution internationally, above all into the heart of U.S. imperialism.

The LTS tries to coyly approach the “new movement” initiated by the Zapatistas, arguing that “we join in the actions pushed by the ‘Other Campaign,’” at the same time as it seeks to maintain a fig leaf of “independence” by not subscribing to the Sixth Declaration. But despite the lukewarm criticism that it softly makes speaking out of the left side of its mouth, this “separation” is purely formal. Moreover, “as part of a policy of unity,” the LTS says in an “Open Proposal” to the Other Campaign, “in recent months we proposed unity in the unions and the Other Campaign to strengthen the struggle, as we did in the Workers Conference” (*Estrategia Obrera*, June 2006). They propose to the Zapatistas “united” action to “advance class-struggle, democratic, anti-boss and anti-bureaucratic currents.” To call on a tendency based on the Indian peasantry to lead the workers movement utterly negates the need for an *proletarian* vanguard independent not only of the bosses’ parties but also of petty-bourgeois forces who seek to reform capitalism instead of workers revolution. This is not an isolated case, but fits in entirely with the constant practice of this tendency.

The LTS/FT used the same maneuver with the anti-globalization movement that today calls itself *altermundismo*, just as they did with the appearance of the neo-Zapatistas, and before that with the neo-Sandinistas en Nicaragua, and as Moreno did with the Peronists in Argentina. They propose a series of coalitions and other unitary bodies in order to sidle up to the petty-bourgeois or even bourgeois currently in style, or to “unite” the left (in this case, the “anti-capitalist” left). At the same time, they call on the LUS and POS/MAS to carry out “a joint intervention in the face of fundamental facts of the class struggle and the action of the workers movement.” They call for “an open Assembly of the left and the workers, inviting as well all those who are part of the ‘Other Campaign,’” in order to “decide upon a common electoral policy.” The LTS already agreed upon a bloc with the LUS for electoral propaganda, while the latter has a “socialist coalition”

with the ex-POS, etc. These are not united fronts for particular joint actions; instead they are the most shameless *propaganda blocs* to bring together a gaggle of centrist and reformist forces and some outside the workers movement altogether. But there is a certain basis for this: in fact, there is no principled question which separates these opportunists, who are always inveterate tailists.

As Trotsky wrote of a similar proposal by German centrists at the beginning of the 1930s faced with a growing Nazi movement:

“We shall be told that the bloc between Rosenfeld-Brandler-Urbahns is only a propaganda bloc for the united front. But it is precisely in the sphere of propaganda that a bloc is out of the question. Propaganda must lean upon clear-cut principles and on a definite program. March separately, strike together. A bloc is solely for practical mass actions. Deals arranged from above which lack a basis in principle will bring nothing except confusion.”

—Leon Trotsky, *What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat* (January 1932)

To underscore his thesis, Trotsky adds: “The idea of nominating a candidate for president on the part of the united workers’ front is at its root a false one.” The “frontism” of the opportunists, whether Stalinists or ostensible Trotskyists, has the purpose of denying the burning need for a revolutionary vanguard to lead the struggles of the proletariat and other oppressed layers of capitalist society. Every so often, the LTS, LUS, POS/MAS and UNIOS and the rest may mention the need for a revolutionary workers party, but not a Trotskyist party. What the opportunists seek is a party of the “broad vanguard,” or “new vanguard,” etc. But what the Mexican proletariat, the poor peasantry, the Indians and all the oppressed require is a Bolshevik-Leninist party based on the program of permanent revolution. A reformist or centrist party would tend to sow confusion.

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After Massacres at Sicartsa Steel Mill and Atenco

Mexico: Oaxaca Teachers Repel Bloody Cop Assault



Indymedia/Mexico

Teachers (at rear) face off with an army of police after June 14 eviction attempt. The 40,000 teachers camped out in the center of the state capital regrouped and retook the main plaza, routing the cops.

Grupo Internacionalista Urges National Strike to Avenge the Blood of Oaxaca

The strike by 70,000 Mexican teachers in the southern state of Oaxaca, now (at the beginning of August) entering its third month, has thrown the entire state into convulsions. The attempt by Governor Ulises Ruiz on June 14 to dislodge tens of thousands of teachers camped out in the state capital backfired badly. Set upon by an army of 3,500 paramilitary riot police, after several hours of pitched battle the teachers retook the city center, which they have held ever since. It was the third time in two months that Mexican working people were subjected to murderous police assault, and in each case they valiently fought off the uniformed thugs.

In Oaxaca the cop assault not only failed miserably, it produced a wave of revulsion among the poor and working people, the Indian population and large sectors of the middle class. A series of “megamarches” culminated in a huge out-

pouring of a half-million or more anti-government demonstrators on June 28, on the eve of nationwide elections.

For several weeks, the strike leadership had called for a boycott of the vote. But at the last minute the teacher union tops did a turnaround and called for a “punishment vote” against the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) of the hated governor Ruiz and the National Action Party (PAN) of Mexican president Vicente Fox. This amounted to a backhanded call to vote for the candidate of the bourgeois populist Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), Andrés Manuel López Obrador, widely known by his initials AMLO. The result was a heavy turnout for AMLO, who took 46 percent of the total in Oaxaca. The overall results are being sharply contested, with huge marches in Mexico City protesting fraud and supporting the PRD. But the Oaxaca teachers strike has largely been lost in the shuffle.

Immediately upon learning of the bloody assault on the Oaxaca teachers on June 14, the Internationalist Group called a protest picket on an hour's notice outside the Mexican consulate in New York City. The next day the IG initiated a second demonstration with over 50 protesters, including a contingent from the Professional Staff Congress, the faculty union at the City University of New York. A photo of the demonstration was published in the Mexico City daily *La Jornada* and many strikers later told us that they were greatly encouraged by this immediate show of international labor solidarity.

The Grupo Internacionalista (GI), Mexican section of the League for the Fourth International, have been actively present in Oaxaca almost continuously during the last month and a half of the strike distributing thousands of leaflets, talking with strikers and addressing an assembly of the teachers union. From the outset, our comrades warned against giving any political support to the PRD and its candidate López Obrador. This capitalist party, they stressed, was coresponsible for each of the recent bloody cop attacks on workers. (In Oaxaca, PRD deputies in the state legislature voted in advance to authorize the governor to use "public force" to evict the teachers.) A June 16 GI leaflet declared: "Not One Vote for the Bourgeois Parties PRI, PAN and PRD! Break with AMLO, the PRD and Its Popular Front! Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!"

As the Oaxaca teachers union leadership started talking of a "punishment vote" against the governor (and for López Obrador), the Grupo Internacionalista issued a second leaflet, "Oaxaca Teachers Strike at the Crossroads" (29 June), warning that a vote for the PRD could doom the strike. Calling on the national Senate, "that den of big-time thieves," to oust the blood-drenched governor would only lead to his replacement by another capitalist politician, like the governor

of Chiapas, who after being elected with the endorsement of the PRD and PAN, turned around and attacked the militant teachers and Zapatista Indian rebels. In the face of police attack, the GI called on teachers, miners and steel workers to form workers self-defense committees and to initiate a "national strike against the murderous government."

As we go to press, the fate of the Oaxaca teachers strike hangs in the balance. Although the state government promised not to use force to dislodge the teachers' sit-in, it has issued orders to state police to prepare for mass arrests. The rebellious educators have vowed to make the state "ungovernable" in support of their call for Ruiz' ouster. They have occupied the governor's offices, the state legislature and state supreme court, as well as dozens of city halls. But while these tactics reflect the militancy of the teacher ranks and the discontent of the impoverished population, "ungovernability" is one of the criteria set out in the Mexican constitution for relieving the head of a state of his duties through a *juicio político* (political trial). So while the country is convulsed with anti-fraud protests against Fox's National Action Party, the Oaxaca teachers' leaders are beseeching the PRD and PAN senators to impeach the PRI governor.

As opposed to this appeal to the capitalist parties, including the ruling right-wingers, the Grupo Internacionalista has called for the formation of workers defense committees independent of all the bosses' politicians. The response to the undoubted electoral fraud, a constant in Mexican elections, should not be support for one bourgeois candidate over another but a mobilization of workers' power in a national strike and a fight to build a revolutionary workers party.

We print below a translation of the June 16 leaflet by the Grupo Internacionalista in response to the bloody police attack on striking teachers two days earlier.

For a National Strike to Avenge the Blood of Oaxaca!

JUNE 16 – Two weeks before the Mexican presidential elections, the government of Oaxaca under Governor Ulises Ruiz of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) staged a blatant provocation, violently evicting teachers who have been occupying the downtown area of the state capital. In the classic manner of military dictatorships, thousands of city and state police fell upon the teachers as they were sleeping in the 53 blocks where they have been camped out for the last three weeks. Firing off tear gas grenades in all directions, they invaded the union headquarters, destroyed the teachers' tents and burned what was left of their encampments. But the government only succeeded in shooting itself in the foot, and the eviction was a failure. After three hours of pitched battle, the 40,000 strikers managed to break through the police barriers and to drive out the forces of repression.

Amid the great confusion reigning in the city, there were reports of several people killed: an initial notice by the Mexican Red Cross reported eleven dead, a number that was later reduced to four according to spokesmen for the teachers and the Oaxaca daily *Noticias*. Clarity is still lacking on this issue. What is certain is that Social Security hospitals treated 92 people

wounded in the attack, several of them in serious condition; in addition, a number of teachers are still missing. In short, the streets of Oaxaca ran red with the blood of the working people. It was a real massacre – the third in less than two months – coming after the April 20 shooting of workers at the Sicartsa steel plant in the Pacific Coast port city of Lázaro Cárdenas, Michoacán; and the deadly attack on the townspeople of San Salvador Atenco, near Mexico City, on May 4. In the electoral contest, each of the three main bourgeois parties is posing as being the toughest on "security" issues. In fact, the PAN (National Action Party), PRI and PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution) have all sent killer cops against the working people. This is how the Mexican ruling class prepares its electoral farce that is drenched with workers' blood.

In the wake of his failed paramilitary operation and facing the fury of the working class nationally and internationally, Governor Ruiz had to retreat. He freed ten strikers and suspended (but did not drop) arrest orders for 25 teachers union leaders. The federal government of President Vicente Fox joined in and the Ministry of the Interior (under the rightist Carlos Abascal) dispatched an undersecretary to act as mediator. They intimated

that all of a sudden they might be able to find federal funds to pay for "rezoning" the teachers which would provide a minimal raise to their starvation wages. But matters will not be resolved with a round-table "dialogue." This battle is not over, and any "truce" could prove fatal. Although they have withdrawn from the center of the city, the strikers have not abandoned their mass sit-in and they are now demanding the head of the repressive governor. The union has called not to vote for any of the presidential candidates, and is proposing to boycott the July 2 election – which they have the power to disrupt, at least on the state level.

What is urgently needed at this time is to break out of the state framework and to undertake a *national strike against the murderous government*, fighting for *victory to the strikes* by Oaxaca teachers and mine workers; for *total trade-union independence* from the bourgeoisie, breaking the shackles of the corporatist pseud-unions and throwing back the government attack on miners and metal workers; for *freeing and dropping all charges* against the arrested workers, peasants and teachers, victims of the repressive onslaught by the ruling class. What's needed above all is a political reply to the bourgeoisie's class offensive, refusing to give a single vote to the PAN, PRI, PRD or any other bosses' party, breaking with the popular front tying the "independent" unions to the PRD candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador, and forging the nucleus of a *revolutionary workers party* which would fight for a workers and peasants government to begin international socialist revolution.

Teachers, Miners and Peasants in the Face of the Capitalist Assault

It is striking that in each of the recent massacres, the workers under attack tenaciously resisted the repression and routed the repressive forces. In *Lázaro Cárdenas*, they took back the Sicartsa steel mill in a hard battle against the police and marines. (It now seems that the Fox government may be trying for a repeat performance in the copper mine town of *Cananea*, Sonora near the Arizona border, where the miners walked out when they were ordered to work on the centenary of the great strike that sparked the Mexican Revolution of 1910-17.) In *Atenco*, hundreds of police from the state of Mexico fled from the fury of the population incensed over the arrest of some flower sellers. And now in *Oaxaca*, the uniformed guard dogs of capital received a sharp response from those they sought to put down.

It began with a silent operation in the early morning hours of June 14. At 4:50 a.m., the general secretary of the union,



Marco Ugarte/AP

Oaxaca teachers resist police attack on June 14. Break with the popular front around the PRD! Form workers self-defense committees!

Enrique Rueda Pacheco, sounded the alert over Radio Plantón (Radio Sit-Down, the strikers' radio station), calling on the ranks to prepare for "organized resistance against the repression that the state government is carrying out in an irrational manner." At 5:15, the police took over the Teachers' Hotel (union headquarters), a few blocks from the city center, and then advanced on the Zócalo, Oaxaca's central plaza. Enveloped in dense clouds of tear gas from troops on the ground and from a helicopter which flew over the plaza for hours, the police managed to momentarily "recapture" the Plaza de Armas and the Alameda. At gunpoint and brandishing riot clubs, they pillaged and burned the teachers' encampments, dismantled the equipment with which the strikers broadcast Radio Plantón; and savagely beat teachers they encountered.

But what happened next certainly wasn't part of the operational plan. While the governor with his hands soaked in blood tried to hide his crimes behind his own cloud of verbal laughing gas, talking about a fantastical "state of law," *Excelsior* (15 June) reported on its front page that the teachers "Force Police to Flee." The Oaxaca daily *Noticias* described how the teachers used buses to smash through police barricades:

"At around 7:45, the 40,000 teachers regrouped almost in their entirety and began to corner the police who as the minutes passed were forced to fall back to the Alameda de León and the Zócalo, due to a shortage of munitions, mainly tear gas canisters. A helicopter of the special operations police circled over the historical city center and fired off grenades on multiple occasions, but still they could not defeat the teachers....

"About 8:50, the educational workers now numbered thousands and proceeded to launch the final battle. The police were forced to pull back and abandon the Zócalo, retreating along Bustamante Street, after offering their last defense."

Throughout the day, federal and state authorities banded

about threats of a new attack by the Federal Preventive Police (PFP). It was reported that Hercules troop transport planes filled with the paramilitary police were headed to Oaxaca to "finish the job." The governor wanted to "clear" the Zócalo in order to "promote tourism" and carry out the demands of the state Coparmex (employers' association) to get rid once and for all of this "rabble" of teachers who fight for higher wages. Ruiz claimed to have the support of the federal government, but apparently the president's office decided otherwise. Interior minister Abascal announced later that it would be "better" not to attempt a new eviction. The federal government made an electoral calculation and decided to leave the PRI governor twisting in the wind.

The Story of the SNTE and CNTE: Oaxaca Teachers in the Eye of the Storm

In the face of the all-sided anti-labor repression, what's needed is a class-struggle leadership to wage an all-out battle against the capitalist government. In the first place, it is necessary to burst the shackles of the corporatist "trade-unionism" (represented by the CTM, CROC, CROM, CT, SNTE and related federations) which during more than half a century of PRI rule served as the labor police of the regime to suppress the Mexican workers, break their strikes and murder their best fighters on a mass scale. Today the corporatist bureaucrats offer their services to the Fox government, although they have occasionally fallen afoul of their godfather as they find themselves caught between a furious proletariat and a decaying regime. This is what happened with the mine leader Napoleón Gómez Urrutia ("Napito") after the "industrial homicide" in Pasta de Conchos¹ for which the corporatist mine and metal union was co-responsible along with the company and the capitalist state.

The effects of the corporatization of the workers movement in Mexico are still being felt. The National Education Workers Union (SNTE), under its *caudillo* (strong man) Carlos Jonguitud, served for decades as the political instrument of the PRI (of which it was a part) to control the rural areas of the country. When discontent over his misrule boiled over, Jonguitud was replaced by the current "moral leader" of the SNTE, Elba Esther Gordillo, who was hand-picked by the PRI president Carlos Salinas de Gortari and designated union president in an all-night meeting in Gobernación (the interior ministry). The SNTE maintained its control over the teachers through internal

¹ On February 19, an explosion in the Pasta de Conchos mine in the state of Coahuila trapped 65 miners underground where they were left to die. In the face of the outraged relatives of the doomed miners, who complained to the press that the "union" was "the same as the company," Gómez Urrutia accused management of "industrial homicide," although the union had signed off on fraudulent safety certifications along with the company and state labor inspectors. The mine owners then demanded Gómez' ouster and the Fox government summarily dismissed him (just as they had installed him four years earlier). The Grupo Internacionalista opposed government intervention while calling on the miners and metal workers to break the corporatist stranglehold and fight for genuine workers' unions, free of state control, with a class-struggle leadership.

terror, with bands of hired gunmen whose job was to "clean out" any dissidents. Jonguitud and Gordillo between them are responsible for the assassination of more than 150 members of their "union." When a labor body engages in mass murder of its members, dedicates itself to breaking strikes and not simply selling them out (as the reformist bureaucrats regularly do), when it is an integral part of a whole repressive apparatus, then it is no longer a workers union, but instead a state apparatus for control of labor.

The Oaxacan teachers in particular rebelled against this repressive apparatus, playing a key role in the National Educational Workers Coordinating Committee (CNTE), a union tendency which in much of the country acts as a separate union. This is the case in the state of Oaxaca, where the CNTE controls Section 22 of the SNTE. Although the PRI no longer holds the presidency of the country, the corporatist apparatuses have continued offering their services to the federal government, now run by the PAN. Thus the general secretary of the SNTE, Rafael Ochoa, declared that "the SNTE dissociates itself" from the Oaxaca teachers' struggle. In the same tone as Fox's education secretary, he asked "who is supplying the money to pay for the [strike] movement" (*La Jornada*, 6 June). Even after the June 14 massacre, Ochoa insists that "the teachers in the struggle belong to the National Education Workers Coordinating Committee (CNTE) and not to his union" (*Noticias [Oaxaca]*, 15 June). SNTE leaders yearn to put an end to the labor militancy of the Oaxaca teachers and would not hesitate to call on the police to do so, as they did against the CNTE in Mexico City.

But breaking the stranglehold of corporatism on the Mexican workers is far from sufficient. It is also necessary to free the proletariat from the political bonds tying it to the ruling class via the pro-capitalist leaderships of the "independent" unions who are subordinate to the PRD, among them top leaders of the CNTE. It is pro-PRD union bureaucrats in the first instance who stand in the way of action by the proletariat on a national scale against the repression (offering the mockery of a three-hour national work stoppage). They don't want to pose problems for PRD candidates and particularly for its presidential hopeful, López Obrador, who calls for "dialogue" with the butchers (i.e., for the teachers, miners, peasants, etc. to surrender).

Massacres and Elections: Plenty of Stick, Not Much Carrot

The six-year term of Vicente Fox is drawing to a close as mass repression rains down on the working people of the countryside and the cities. Fox's victory in the 2000 elections was seen as the longed-for end of the "perfect dictatorship" of the PRI. But the end of the PRI-government regime of a state party and its replacement by a PAN-PRI-PRD condominium has only brought more repression, helping to dispel many democratic illusions. No matter who emerges as the victor in the July 2 elections, the workers' blood will continue to be spilled until the gruesome capitalist ruling dynasty in Mexico is swept away once and for all.

In fact, the string of police massacres is closely linked to the elections. The PRI, PAN and PRD are up to their necks in

the electoral circus and are going after each other with all they've got. The main theme of their campaigns is the "lack of security." The bourgeois candidates are competing over who can be the best repressor in upholding the business affairs of capital. Felipe Calderón of the PAN promises a "firm hand"; Roberto Madrazo of the PRI says he "knows how to do it"; and López Obrador proposes to throw in a little carrot along with the stick. Until now, the triplet parties of the pseudo-democratic "alternation" have not hesitated for an instant in banding together in the hour of repression. At Sicartsa, it was a joint action by the local

(PRI), state (PRD) and federal (PAN) police. In Atenco, the repression was ordered by a PRD mayor and the PRI governor, backed by the PAN federal government. They cut down 14-year-old Javier Cortés and National University student Alexis Benhumea, who died last week after more than a month in a coma. The toll in Oaxaca is not yet known.

The Oaxacan teachers of Section 22 also know that the "PRI, PAN and PRD are the same thing," as a teacher said last week in a union assembly of the sit-down strikers. "First they kill the Sicartsa workers in Michoacán, then two youths in Atenco," he went on. "This is the work of the same wretches. The PRI, PAN and PRD, all three of them, are parties of the rich. We call not to vote for any of them; what we have to do is boycott the July 2 elections." His conclusion is correct, but insufficient. A negative, passive policy is not enough. In the face of the repressive onslaught by the capitalist regime, we must build the indispensable vehicle to wage a political struggle against the bourgeoisie: a revolutionary workers party.

It must be a Leninist vanguard party; a party of class struggle, which points the way and mobilizes the working people to win battles like the Oaxaca teachers' strike; an internationalist party, capable of fighting the nationalist demagoguery peddled by the bourgeois politicians (while subordinating themselves to the imperialists), also reflected in the empty posturing of the Other Campaign². It must be a party based on the Trotskyist program of permanent revolution, which in the face of the anti-democracy of the bourgeois regime that oppresses the peasants, Indians and all working people raises the program of workers revolution, not only in Mexico but also on the other side of the Line, in the imperialist bastion to the north, where millions of

² The "Otra Campaña" initiated by the Zapatistas calls for opposing the mounting repression without suggesting the means to fight it, other than repeated demonstrations (see page xx).



Marco Ugarte/AP

300,000 marched in Oaxaca, June 16, against the repressive governor Ulises Ruiz in support of the teachers strike.

Mexican workers form a human bridge and a growing, potentially militant sector of the North American proletariat.

In fact, the struggle of the Oaxaca teachers and the massacre they have suffered has had a strong impact in the United States. Our comrades of the Internationalist Group, U.S. section of the League for the Fourth International (LFI), initiated a mobilization protesting the repression in Oaxaca in front of the Mexican consulate in New York. Already on April 14, the day the massacre took place, the IG called an emergency picket, pulled together in less than an hour. Yesterday, June 15, they held another protest attended by more than 50 people, among them many members of the Professional Staff Congress, the faculty and staff union of the City University of New York. Demonstrators chanted angrily, "Atenco, Oaxaca, massacres in Mexico," and "Hail the Mexican teachers' strike!" Union speakers expressed solidarity with their Mexican brothers and sisters. And last night, the San Francisco local of the West Coast U.S. dock workers union, the ILWU, unanimously approved a motion protesting the repression in Oaxaca.

The IG also fights for *full citizenship rights for all immigrants* under the slogan: "The workers' struggle has no borders." In Mexico, the fundamental objective of the Grupo Internacionalista is to build the nucleus of a genuinely revolutionary workers party, as part of a reforged Fourth International. This is not something that will become necessary in the distant future: faced with the government repression against the working people, it is necessary to build this indispensable political instrument for proletarian revolution. Today is when it is possible to give the final push to bring down the tottering corporatist edifice and land a telling blow against the murderous regime. We call upon teachers and other fighters who want to go from resistance to a fight for revolution to join the ranks of the Grupo Internacionalista. ■

For a National Strike Against the Repression!

The Second Battle of Atenco



**Immediate Release of Everyone
Arrested in Atenco! Drop the Charges!
Not One Vote for the Bloody Bosses' Parties,
the PRI, PAN and PRD!
Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!**

In a brutal police attack against the town of San Salvador Atenco, near Mexico City in early May, the forces of "law and order" murdered a 14-year-old boy, Javier Cortés Santiago, and mortally injured Alexis Benhumea, an economics student of the National University (UNAM) and supporter of the Zapatistas' "Other Campaign," who after a month in a coma died on June 7. In response to the cop onslaught, a series of protests were launched.

The Grupo Internacionalista actively participated in assemblies, work stoppages, street blockades, demonstrations and sit-ins calling for a national strike against government repression. While the Zapatista supporters of the Other Campaign limited themselves to street protests and artistic events to pressure the government, the GI took groups of students to unions (electrical workers, teachers, university workers) to urge them to undertake a proletarian counteroffensive to stop the repressive attack by the bourgeoisie in its tracks.

We print below a translation of the leaflet on the events in Atenco which our comrades of the GI have distributed along with sales of almost 3,000 copies of a supplement to El Internacionalista calling for a national strike.

MEXICO CITY, May 5 – In San Salvador Atenco, you can breathe the atmosphere of a war zone. Yesterday morning, a huge police operation was mounted involving more than 3,000 members of federal, state and local police forces. The repressive forces closed a pincer around the town at 5:30 a.m. and proceeded to comb through the streets, continuously shooting off tear gas canisters. After putting down the peasants who resisted, they undertook a series of raids and searches in police-state fashion. Those arrested were brutally beaten and heaved into the police vehicles.

So far there are reports of 217 people arrested, among them dozens of peasants from San Salvador Atenco as well as members of several left groups. *Reforma* described the operation in a front-page story as a "purge." And with good reason: by means of this attack, the federal government of the rightist National Action Party (PAN), the state government in the hands of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and the municipal government led by the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) are getting their long-sought revenge against the peasants who four years ago decisively refused to give up their lands. The bourgeoisie is glorying in its brutal show of force. But hits only reflects its tremendous fear that social content could get out of hand.

As was the case with the brutal repression against the workers at the Sicartsa steel mill two weeks ago, the police attack was coordinated by the three main parties of the Mexican bourgeoisie. On top of this, the bourgeois media are whipping up hysteria against the supporters of the Zapatistas' "Other Cam-

paign,” and some are explicitly calling for the arrest of Subcomandante Marcos. Against this bosses’ offensive it is necessary to mobilize the social force of the working class. Although there were street blockades yesterday at various points in the capital to protest the repression, more is required than stopping traffic. The working class must make its social power felt by the bosses: the electrical workers of the SME should throw the switch in protest over the crackdown and thereby, together with the miners, the teachers, university workers, dock workers, etc., launch a *counteroffensive of the exploited and oppressed against the blood rule of the bosses*.

Against the bourgeois repression against workers and poor peasants, against the provocations directed at leftists and supporters of the Other Campaign, what’s needed, as we wrote in our recent supplement to *El Internacionalista* (May 2006) is a “National Strike Against the Murderous Government!” Mexican Army out of Chiapas! And to achieve this we must forge a revolutionary workers party on the basis of complete proletarian class independence from the bourgeoisie, its state and its parties.

This time around it was peasants with their machetes who had to face off against the forces of the state, just as the steel workers two weeks ago faced the brutal cop attack of the repressive forces of the state of Michoacán, the federal preventive police (PFP) and the Mexican Army, who murdered strikers occupying the steelworks in protest over state intervention in the unions and the company mass murder of 65 miners at the Pasta de Conchos mine in Coahuila.

The scenes threw the bourgeoisie as a whole into a near panic. Some of the media went so far as to declare hysterically that this is just the climate in which revolutions break out. The spectre of “untamed Mexico” (*México bronco*) is writhing under the boot of the Mexican bourgeoisie, which unleashed its guard dogs in order to impose by fire and blood its domination over workers fighting against the government attack and the impoverished peasants who refused to be robbed of their lands.

When the news reached the members of the Other Campaign, Subcomandante Marcos (now calling himself Delegado Zero) announced from a stage in the Plaza de las Tres Culturas in Tlatelolco (where four decades ago the Díaz Ordaz government massacred thousands of protesters) that his campaign schedule would be interrupted in order to rush to the aid of the townspeople of Atenco. He again announced a “red alert” for all the autonomous municipalities in Chiapas, in anticipation of a new escalation of repression. *The Grupo Internacionalista calls upon the workers movement as a whole to defend the Zapatista communities in the face of a new state attack. Army out of Chiapas!*

The media soon began predicting that Marcos would leave Mexico City to head up the revolt. What they are thinking is that now they have the perfect excuse to accuse the Other Campaign of being the source of “destabilizing the country” at a time when the electoral campaigns are heading into the home stretch for the July 2 election. But however much they lambaste each other, the fact is that the bosses’ parties immediately joint together when it comes to repressing the workers and peasants.

The working class is not represented by anyone in the electoral circus. Not one vote for the bourgeois parties – the PRI, the PAN and the PRD, or their midget satellites!

To give an energetic response to this generalized threat of repression, it is necessary to put an end to all political subordination to the bourgeoisie on the part of the exploited and oppressed. It is urgently necessary to form defense committees consisting of workers in the main trade unions in the country as well as the townspeople of San Salvador Atenco in order to prevent the unleashing of an even more powerful wave of repression. Today, a national strike is more urgent than ever to prevent and defeat the capitalist onslaught.

The May Day mobilization of the working class made it clear that the new upsurge of the workers movement is being channeled into shoring up the class-collaborationist alliance of the popular front around López Obrador and the bourgeois PRD. Hiding behind a façade of phony radicalism the trade-union “leaders” tied to the PRD, along with the *charros* and *neo-charros* tied to the PRI, hypocritically raise the slogan of trade-union autonomy. But they end up appealing to the labor tribunals of the bourgeois government, continuing to subject the working class to the tutelage of the capitalist state while raking in electoral dividends from this or that bourgeois candidate.

The call for no vote to the PAN put forward by the speakers on the platform shows clearly that what they are about is garnering working-class support for the campaign of López Obrador. It’s hardly surprising that the Other Campaign, headed up by Subcomandante Marcos, has tried to avoid a clash with the leaders of the workers movement in the Mexico City Zócalo, since its aim is not to unleash the potential strength of the proletariat in order to sweep away this regime once and for all, but rather to sustain the illusions of the exploited and oppressed in the possibility of pressuring the bourgeoisie into carrying out a “democratic transformation” of the country.

In this “untamed Mexico” what is needed is not another bourgeois-democratic revolution but a socialist revolution that spreads internationally, above all to the north, into the belly of the imperialist beast. But this requires building a revolutionary workers party which brings together the vanguard of the working class on a genuinely revolutionary program: a program which raises above all the principle of the political independence of the working class from all subordination to the bosses’ parties. The struggles of the working class cannot remain on the purely defensive plain or limit themselves to resistance. Instead, they must unleash their enormous strength against the brutal offensive of the employers and thereby go over to a counter-offensive.

The need to sweep out all the misleaders and build a genuinely revolutionary leadership is indispensable to accomplish this. The purpose of the Grupo Internacionalista and the League for the Fourth International is to accomplish this task. All those who seek to fight break out once and for all from the disgusting swamp of capitalism should join us in the struggle to build the nucleus of a revolutionary workers party, as part of the battle for international socialist revolution in the spirit of Lenin and Trotsky. ■

SL Disappears Bolivian Proletariat...

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gan – including gems like “it seems currently unlikely that the U.S. will launch a significant land invasion of Afghanistan” – they recounted an anecdote about Bolivia. While their point was obscure at the time (beyond showing that they could tell stories about faraway lands), what they wrote is strikingly relevant here:

“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!’”

– *Workers Vanguard*, 9 November 2001

Today, the SL takes its own petulant hauteur for reality, marks its own little X and proclaims: *The Bolivian proletariat does not exist!* The fact that this is ludicrous does not make it any less disgraceful. Of course, the attempted disappearing act is not intended for revolutionary-minded militants in Bolivia or anywhere else in Latin America, where it would be greeted with well-deserved contempt. Instead, it aims to justify to the ICL’s own more credulous members and periphery why it retreats from revolutionary struggle.

The ICL’s death sentence for the Bolivian proletariat is just another version of the “death of communism” decreed by the imperialist rulers following the counterrevolution that destroyed the Soviet Union. The revolutionary politics of Lenin and Trotsky are alive and well and as relevant as ever on the Bolivian altiplano, in the Brazilian factories or on the streets of France. It is the bourgeoisie that seeks to render the workers invisible and declares their struggles non-existent or predestined to defeat. Against such ruling-class ideology, Trotskyists fight to lead the workers to victory in the worldwide struggle for socialist revolution. What is disappearing is not the Bolivian working class but any remaining claim by the SL/ICL on that program, outlook and tradition. ■

Zapatista “Other Campaign”...

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How, for example, should the fight for *land to the peasants* be waged, so that they may climb out of the age-old poverty to which they have been condemned since the dawn of colonial rule? In its first Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle of 1994, the EZLN called for a *revolutionary agrarian law*, in order to divide up to land “in COLLECTIVE PROPERTY to form cooperatives, peasant companies or agricultural and

livestock production collectives.” But how is this new division of the land to be carried out? The LTS and other pretend Trotskyists who want to dress up in Zapatista fatigues call for a “radical agrarian reform” which would grant land to poor peasants or agricultural laborers, repeating Zapata’s slogan from 1915, “the land belongs to him to works it.” This would only serve to extend poverty while peasants desperately try to scratch a living out of their tiny plots of land. In the Transitional Program, Trotsky called for an *agrarian revolution*, that is, for the peasants themselves to seize the land. He stressed that nationalization and voluntary collectivization of the land would only be possible by means of a workers revolution that would defeat the large landowners and capitalists who today dominate the countryside and provide the inputs and machinery for the industrialization of agriculture which would turn it into a source of abundance for the toilers.

A central demand of the Zapatistas, and also of the National Indian Congress (CNI), has been for *autonomy of the indigenous peoples*, a demand which was dismissed by the whole of the bourgeois parties when the federal Congress voted down the “Agreements of San Andrés.” The Grupo Internacionalista has written: “Marxists support the right of the native peoples to decide their own fate. For the areas where Indians are concentrated, we join in demanding the *right of regional and local autonomy*.” At the same time, we added: “For this to have any reality, it must include control over natural resources, including land, water and petroleum. This will be strenuously resisted by Mexico’s capitalist rulers,” who will not loosen their grip on the enormous reserves of oil, water power and natural gas in Chiapas. Therefore, we noted, “Effective autonomy for indigenous peoples will only be possible through socialist revolution instituting a planned economy.” (“Mexico: Regime in Crisis,” Part 2, *The Internationalist* No. 2, April-May 1997). Nor can the age-old oppression of the Mexican peasants and Indians be overcome simply within the national framework.

The EZLN uprising of January 1994 was carried out under the banner of opposition to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which to them represented economic ruin with the import of massive quantities of cheap agricultural produce from the United States. It is also evident that for the rural and urban poor to escape from poverty it is necessary to *cancel the debt with the imperialist banks and governments*, which today absorb the lion’s share of the national budget. Many left groups include calls for repudiation of the foreign debt as part of their bourgeois-democratic program culminating in a constituent assembly (in the case of the pseudo-Trotskyists) or a popular-democratic government (in the case of the Stalinists). Thus they obscure the fundamental reality that no bourgeois government, however populist or “anti-neo-liberal” it may be, can break the ties of dependency and subjugation which subject the semi-colonial countries to imperialist domination. Even a bureaucratically deformed workers state like Cuba, isolated in a capitalist sea, is limited by the “eternal debt.” National liberation will only be possible by means of a socialist revolution extending beyond the borders, to the south to form a Socialist United States

of America and to the north where millions of Mexican workers in the heart of imperialism will play an important role in the workers revolution "in the belly of the beast."

The Zapatistas of the Other Campaign have nothing to say to the Mexican proletarians now residing in the Gran Norte, other than to defend "national sovereignty." They also want "another Mexico" where workers would not be obliged to emigrate in search of work. In any case, to pose for Mexico today, a highly industrialized country, a return to the old Mexico of Zapata and Villa, with a rural vanguard, is only a nostalgic dream. To say to the Cananea copper miners and the coal miners of Monclova, to the steel workers of Lázaro Cárdenas and the teachers of Oaxaca that they should join a Zapatista movement, even if it declares itself "anti-capitalist," is to seek to revive a lost cause. The fate of Mexico, "so far from god and so close to the United States," as Porfirio Díaz is said to have remarked, has been to have a series of failed bourgeois revolutions, with heroes who almost without exception have been martyrs due to the defeats that were suffered. But if the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalist barrier is broken by raising the banner of the program of proletarian internationalism, Mexico can serve as the spark to set off a revolutionary conflagration that extends throughout the continent.

Socialist revolution in Mexico is not an alternative to be realized in a far-off future: on the contrary, it is the only solution even to resolve the most elemental democratic demands and for the survival of the workers, peasants, Indians and all the oppressed. The Grupo Internacionalista, Mexican section of the League for the Fourth International, is committed to the construction of a revolutionary workers party, a Leninist-Trotskyist party, that is the necessary instrument to wage the political battles that will lead the proletariat and the oppressed toward the establishment of a workers and peasants government. The Trotskyists say: *the next Mexican revolution will be working-class and internationalist – not petty-bourgeois nationalist – or it will not be.* ■

Mexico Elections...

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arrive at the polls already stuffed with votes for the incumbent; of the *mapache*, the raccoon, who empties boxes of opposition ballots and replaces them with pro-government votes, or simply removes the ballot boxes altogether. Here is where in the 2000 election, a PRI governor (in Yucatán) handed out thousands of washing machines to party loyalists and took a photo of the "presents" lined up. And in 1988, this is where the ultra-modern computerized voting system suddenly "crashed" at 2 a.m. the night of the voting, and when it came up again the next day the lead had mysteriously switched from challenger Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas to the PRI machine candidate Carlos Salinas de Gortari.

Fraud in Mexico is not an aberration but an integral part of the electoral process. And not just in Mexico. In the United States as well, everyone is familiar with the notorious "hanging chads" in the highly dubious Florida vote in the 2000 presidential election and Chicago mayor Boss Richard

Daley's legendary admonition to machine captains to "vote early and often." In fact, the whole system of bourgeois elections is a swindle. Behind the veneer of "democracy" it is money that decides who wins and loses, the money of the various capitalist forces whose interests are affected. The state, as Marxists have insisted, is a machine for imposing the interests of the ruling class, and the government is its executive committee. Whether it is by "dirty tricks," handing out bags of cement in Mexico or buying up TV time in the U.S., this is how the contending bourgeois forces ensure that the "popular vote" reflects their interests. As Marxists, we give no political support to any of the competing capitalist parties and fight everywhere to organize revolutionary workers parties. Even when Trotskyists use elections to propagandize the revolutionary program, we warn that the whole system is rigged against the working people.

While supporters of the competing bourgeois parties are slugging it out, the Grupo Internacionalista, Mexican section of the League for the Fourth International, declares that these elections are drenched in workers' blood. The GI repeatedly proclaimed: "No vote for any of the bosses' parties! Break with the popular front around López Obrador! Forge a revolutionary workers party!" Much has been written about the "campaign of fear" by the PAN and Calderón, backed up by top business sectors, who portrayed AMLO as a wild-eyed radical. In fact, the PRD candidate is a run-of-the-mill "center-left" populist politician who uses some mildly nationalist rhetoric while dutifully enforcing the interests of big capital. This used to be the registered trademark of the PRI, until it climbed aboard the "free trade" bandwagon and began selling off state-owned industry to its cronies at fire-sale prices. And the "carrot" was always combined with the stick. During the run-up to the July election, *all* of the leading parties – the PAN, PRI and PRD alike – took part in this "strategy of tension," launching a series of vicious police and military assaults on workers, peasants.

Two strikers killed – or more accurately, executed – shot in the head by police sharpshooters at the Sicartsa steel mill in Lázaro Cárdenas, Michoacán on April 20. A 14-year-old youth and a National University student killed at San Salvador Atenco, near Mexico City, on May 4. And then a full-scale assault by an army of 3,500 state and municipal police on an encampment of teachers in the capital of Oaxaca on June 14. These horrendous crimes show the hideous face of bourgeois "democracy." But just as importantly, in each case the intended victims refused to be intimidated, valiantly fought back and drove out the uniformed attackers. At Sicartsa, after a pitched battle lasting several hours, the strikers retook the plant while police cruisers burned. At Atenco, peasants and townspeople, incensed over the arrest of flower growers (!), chased the police out of town and held several cops as security until their comrades were released. In Oaxaca, the teachers grabbed city buses to break through the metal police barriers and chase off the repressors who had run out of ammunition. We salute these heroic acts of self-defense by our class brothers and sisters.

Now that the election campaign has entered the phase of pushing and shoving over the vote counting, we do not diminish our political opposition to the capitalist parties one iota. Particularly in such a close and hard-fought election, where there are plenty of potentially suspicious elements, we support the demand for a recount, vote by vote, ballot box by ballot box. But while most of the left has enthusiastically climbed aboard the AMLO express, dropping earlier criticisms of the PRD candidate and instead calling to "defend the vote," the Grupo Internacionalista warns that at present the mammoth marches called by López Obrador are in fact *political rallies* on behalf of his Coalición por el Bien de Todos (Coalition for the Well-Being of All). At such times, revolutionaries must swim against the stream, warning that even if popular pressure is enough to sway the bourgeois courts, *el peje* (AMLO's nickname) will administer Mexico on behalf of the big corporations and repress against those who fight against the capitalists.

But if the struggle passes from the terrain of the electoral circus, if the capitalist state declares a victor by means massive fraud, imposing the candidate of an incumbent regime that can only stay in power by a repressive *mano dura* (crackdown), if instead of giant *pejemarchas* there are mass protests against actions pointing to a police-military dictatorship, proletarian revolutionaries would call for a *working-class mobilization against the bonapartist threat*. Following the repeated police and military attacks on workers, peasants and teachers and facing the prospect of a showdown over the elections, we call on class-conscious workers to fight to break the ties binding the "independent" unions to the popular front around López Obrador, to continue to fight for a revolutionary workers party, and to form *workers defense committees* independent of all bourgeois politicians and parties.

AMLO in the Service of the Multinationals

The most recent demonstrations on behalf of López Obrador have brought out hundreds of thousands of PRD supporters. The Zócalo was a sea of yellow flags (the party colors), families came from distant states. In general, the crowds had a plebeian character, with many peasants and workers, but also a lot of middle-class support for AMLO in the capital, where the PRD has controlled the local government for the past nine years. Prominent left-wing writers and intellectuals such as Elena Poniatowska, Carlos Monsiváis and Paco Ignacio Taibo II are out drumming up support. The independent unions have formed a "front for defense of the vote" to rally workers to the PRD, while at the National University (UNAM) a coalition for "critical support" to López Obrador has been formed, in order to attract those leftist students who might have a "stomach ache" over supporting the candidate of the party which arrested 1,000 students in order to break the ten-month 1999-2000 UNAM strike. In the plaza, they chant, "*Andrés aguanta, el pueblo se levanta*" (Andrés, hold on, the people are rising up) and even "*si no hay solución, habrá revolución*" (if we don't get satisfaction, there will be a revolution).

The PRD candidate's call to establish a "permanent assembly" camping out in the Zócalo and in the center lanes of La Reforma has already angered conservative forces, who are

raising a clamor for President Vicente Fox to send in the Federal Preventive Police to evict them. But this "popular" mobilization is on behalf of a candidate who has declared in advance that he would pose no problems for the capitalists, or for the U.S. imperialists, always vigilant about what is happening just "south of the border." While many of AMLO's leftist backers denounce "neo-liberalism" and "globalization" (i.e., economic *policies* rather than the capitalist-imperialist *system*), his prospective economics minister, Rogelio Ramírez de la O, announced that López Obrador's economic agenda would be "social neo-liberalism" (*El Universal*, 2 June).

During his closing rally in the Zócalo, AMLO directly addressed the captains of industry and finance, saying: We will not act in an irresponsible way, we won't provoke a crisis, no one needs to get worried.... In short, there will be a technical, not ideological, management of the economy... there will be control of the public deficit, the autonomy of the Central Banc will be guaranteed and inflation will be avoided" (*La Jornada*, 29 June). By vowing to "maintain control of the macroeconomic variables," what the PRD candidate is saying is that he will maintain the starvation and privatization policies of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. And he has already shown he would do it. As head of the Mexico City government, López Obrador made an alliance with Carlos Slim, the third richest man in the world, to "clean up" the historical city center. Hundreds of residents were kicked out of their homes so that the magnate could buy up a million and a half square meters of choice real estate. Slim reciprocated saying: "I will keep investing in Mexico, no matter who wins the July 2 vote, including López Obrador."

Many opportunist leftists who have joined in the AMLO rallies justify their actions by claiming that U.S. imperialism is trying to block López Obrador from winning. There are certainly many in the U.S. administration who would prefer Calderón, yet even Washington war hawk Condoleezza Rice declared that "we are prepared to work with any president and any government which arrives at the highest office of that country [Mexico]" (*La Jornada*, 25 April).

Form Workers Defense Committees! Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!

López Obrador is one of a series of "center-left" bourgeois politicians who have come forward in Latin America in recent years, including Luis Ignacio Lula da Silva in Brazil, Lucio Gutiérrez in Ecuador, Evo Morales in Bolivia and Tabaré Vázquez in Uruguay. All of these politicians have carried out the "neo-liberal" policies of their imperialist overlords, and those who have already been in office for a couple years have become the objects of mass working-class protest and downright hatred. Gutiérrez was run out of Quito after repeated protests over rising fuel and electricity prices; public sector workers have struck against Lula in Brazil; and Morales is facing peasant unrest over his failure to implement his own land reform. Everywhere, the supposedly revolutionary left supported these capitalist politicians (some "critically," others enthusiastically). The League for the Fourth

International, in contrast, has constantly warned against voting for any parties or candidates of a popular front, that is, of a class-collaborationist alliance binding the workers organizations to sections of the bourgeoisie.

Now the issue is posed of protests over electoral fraud. Generally, "anti-fraud" movements remain within the framework of capitalist electoral politics, such as the bourgeois "progressives" in the United States in the early 20th century, or "reform" movements against Democratic Party machine politics. In Mexico, the opposition to the long-lasting PRI-government, whose predecessor was described by Leon Trotsky in the late 1930s as "bonapartism *sui generis*," that is, of a unique kind, was channeled into the PRD and the PAN, bourgeois parties of the "left" and the right. But sometimes, in periods of acute social tension, popular discontent boils over and leads to sharp *class* struggles, not on the electoral terrain but in battles pointing toward civil war.

Recently in Haiti, reactionary forces tried to steal a pseudo-election held under the auspices of the United Nations, a disguised form of colonial rule, in order to keep the favorite candidate of the slum dwellers, René Préval, from taking office. In an article titled "Attempted Election Threat in Haiti" (*The Internationalist* No. 23, April-May 2006), the LFI stated:

"With open confrontation in the streets over the attempt by right-wing reactionaries to steal the election, revolutionary Marxists stand on the side of the vast mass of poor black Haitians against the U.N. occupation forces and Haitian police on the other side of the barricades, while giving no political support to Préval and [his mentor, former president Jean Bertrand] Aristide. We warn against illusions in these *bourgeois* liberal populists.... What is needed is a *class* mobilization on both sides of the Haiti/Dominican border, to lead the urban and rural poor against their exploiters and oppressors. Trotskyists would have opposed voting for 'Préval prezidan,' or for any of the capitalist candidates, while calling today for the formation of committees of working and poor people to expropriate the bourgeoisie and drive out the U.N. mercenary occupiers."

In Mexico today, a fight for workers defense committees must be directed not only against the PAN government in Los Pinos (the Mexican president's residence) but also against the PRD government of the Federal District. Don't forget that the newly elected governor of the D.F., Marcelo Ebard, was the head of public security under the López Obrador administration. It was he who brought in the Giuliani company as advisors to introduce a program of "zero tolerance" to harass popular neighborhoods, including where there were protests over high water rates due to the surreptitious privatization carried out by AMLO. It is quite possible that if a "moment of truth" should arrive when the PRD decides to call off protests over fraud because it threatened bourgeois "stability" and "governability," demonstrators will be facing Ebard's cops.

Last year, when the Fox government with the support of the PAN and PRI in Congress removed the executive immunity of López Obrador, there was a similar outpouring of mass support for AMLO. The whole of the left climbed on board in the name of supporting López Obrador's immunity, except

for the Grupo Internacionalista. We insisted that proletarian revolutionaries do not support executive immunity for their official actions, but that we would oppose any attempt to keep López Obrador off the ballot. AMLO's immunity was removed, but he was not stopped from running for president. Groups like the pseudo-Trotskyist Liga de Trabajadores por el Socialismo (LTS) who have in the past hesitated before hitching their caboose to the AMLO popular front, this time immediately climbed on board, calling for a "national strike against fraud" and for a "constituent assembly." This is a call on the working class to put a capitalist candidate in office. "

Even more blatantly opportunist outfits, like the Militante tendency which is part of the bourgeois PRD, declared: "Against Election Fraud, AMLO Should Call a General Strike" (*Militante*, 4 July). These calls are the antithesis of Trotskyism. On the political and electoral level, Trotskyists oppose all support to bourgeois forces such as the popular front. But when the conflict is posed on the terrain of the class struggle, then revolutionaries call to mobilize the workers' forces, not to "defend the vote" but to defend the workers against the bonapartist threat. And our aim will not to polish up bourgeois democracy with a new constitution or constituent assembly, but to fight for the overthrow of capitalist rule and the establishment of a workers and peasants government, to initiate the socialist revolution in Mexico, and throughout the Americas. ■

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Mexico: Bourgeois Elections and Workers Blood

**Down with the PAN, PRI and PRD!
Break with the AMLO Popular Front!
Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!**

Police cars burn after striking workers retake Sicartsa steel plant in Lázaro Cárdenas, Michoacán, April 20. Federal, state and local authorities sent army of 1,000 police and marines to oust strikers from plant they were occupying. Two workers were killed, shot in the head.

The Great Swindle: Fraud in the Electoral Farce Form Workers Defense Committees!

When Mexican voters went to the polls on July 2, the election campaign had only reached the half-way point. A month later, the outcome is still up in the air. Hundreds of thousands of supporters of Andrés Manuel López Obrador, the candidate of the bourgeois populist Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), have taken to the streets in mass marches of 500,000, 1 million and up to 2 million protesters protesting crooked vote counting and an election process shot through with fraud. López Obrador, widely known by his initials AMLO, has camped out in Mexico City's Constitution Plaza, the Zócalo, vowing to stay until every vote is recounted. Felipe Calderón, the candidate of the right-wing National Action Party (PAN), who according to federal election officials, had a razor-thin lead of half of one percent in the vot-

ing, is counting on the electoral court and the state machinery to impose his "victory." The candidate of the long-ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), Roberto Madrazo, bombed out and his party is engaged in internal feuding. This drama will continue to play out for weeks.

Was there fraud in the recent Mexican elections? How could there not be? Forget about the World Cup, Mexico is world champion in election fraud. Under the long-ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which ran the country as a state party for seven decades, election fraud became an art, if not a science. This is the land of the *carousel*, with revolving-door voters who go from poll to poll casting votes for the governing party; of the *casillas embarazadas*, of the "pregnant ballot boxes," which

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