

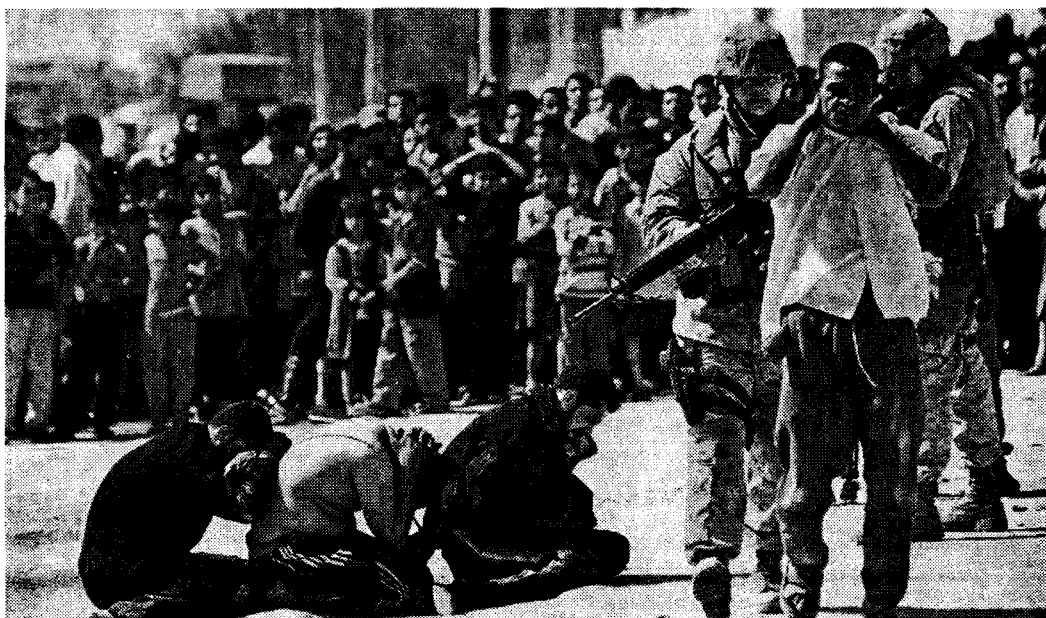


**For Class-Struggle Opposition to Racist Australian Imperialism!**

# U.S./British/Australian Troops Out of Iraq Now!



Daily Telegraph



Reuters  
Above: U.S. and Australian troops secure oil fields, Baghdad airport.  
Right: Imperialist occupation armies terrorise colonial victims in Iraq.

MAY 23—The colonial subjugation of the Iraqi people under U.S., British and Australian military occupation is well under way. On 29 April in Falluja, 30 kilometres west of Baghdad, hundreds of unarmed demonstrators, overwhelmingly youth, marched against the U.S. military's occupation of their local school. The imperialist military fired directly into the crowd. At least 13 people, including children, were killed. Many

were injured. The burial of the dead inspired another demonstration against the imperialist occupation. This was again met with force—another 75 people shot and wounded. "They are stealing our oil and they are slaughtering our people," said Shuker Abdullah Hamid at his cousin's funeral.

The rapid imperialist victory was not a war but a one-sided slaughter against a country bled white by 12 years of sanc-

tions. U.S. imperialism and its British and Australian allies pounded Iraqi cities with anti-personnel cluster bombs designed to kill and maim the maximum number of people in densely-populated urban areas. Terrifying "bunker buster" bombs levelled entire neighbourhoods. Confronted with overwhelming odds and saddled with a bloody Ba'athist regime installed by the Americans in the first place, the fact that the long-suffering

Iraqi people managed to put up any resistance at all to the imperialists is heroic. It is a measure of their opposition to foreign occupation and rape of the oil-rich natural resources of the country.

Today, heaps of corpses of Iraqi men, women and children clog morgues and hospitals. U.S. Marines crunch under their boots the remains of museum works of art dating back to the beginning of *continued on page 4*

**Down With the Colonial Occupation of Iraq and East Timor!**

# Aceh: Indonesian Troops Out Now! Australian Imperialism Hands Off!

MAY 24—Under orders of president Megawati Sukarnoputri the Indonesian military (TNI) have launched a massive operation against separatists in the Sumatran province of Aceh. In Indonesia's largest military operation since the 1975 invasion of East Timor, more than 45,000 Indonesian troops are on an offensive in Aceh and outlying islands against the Islamic separatist Free Aceh Movement (GAM). The Indonesian offensive in Aceh follows the failure of "peace" talks in Tokyo between the central government and GAM, aborted when five GAM leaders were provocatively arrested and denied participation in the talks. In a chilling expression of TNI intent, General Endriartono Sutarto urged his officers to "Hunt them down and exterminate them" (*Australian*, 21 May).

For more than a century, the Acehnese have fought tenaciously against both Dutch and Indonesian attempts to impose outside rule. News out of Aceh indicates a vicious campaign of terror against the Acehnese population. Scores have been killed, including children, and some 287 schools have been torched. The Indonesian government is preparing to round up 200,000 people and put them into tented camps guarded by soldiers. A similar technique was used by the British in Malaya in the 1950s to deny guerilla forces access to food and information.

### Military Terror Aids Imperialist Stability, Exploitation

Of great import to the imperialist powers, Aceh is at the western point of the strategically important Strait of Malacca,

through which most of Japan's oil and gas imports and much of Australia's trade are transported. With one of the world's largest oil and gas and substantial timber and gold reserves, Aceh is a place of brutal imperialist super-exploitation. While the blood-soaked Indonesian capitalists, corrupt governmental bodies and TNI get their cut of fabulous profits, the imperialist conglomerates such as Exxon-Mobil take the lion's share, raping and plundering the resources under protection of the imperialist-funded Indonesian military who act to suppress any opposition.

The Indonesian military are currently using U.S.-supplied weaponry and combat aircraft such as C-130 Hercules transport planes and rocket-equipped OV-10 Broncos counter-insurgency aircraft against Acehnese villagers. Meanwhile

the Australian government continues to fund "peacekeeping" operations in the province and has begun rebuilding links with Indonesia's military under the guise of combating "terrorism." These efforts include military cooperation with the Indonesian army to work with Kopassus Special Forces, notorious for torture and killing in Aceh and throughout the archipelago. *All Indonesian troops out of Aceh now! Australian imperialism bloody hands off!*

In ordering the military assault in Aceh, the Javanese chauvinist Megawati declared with cold equanimity, "Indonesia will not lose anything if we lose some of them. It is better to protect 220 million other Indonesians." Facing presidential elections next year, her whipping up of crude nationalism against the Acehnese also serves to deflect seething anger among the masses away from her government as it oversees vicious blood-sucking IMF-imposed austerity.

The Australian imperialists are particularly keen to see the separatist *continued on page 2*

# Aceh...

(continued from page 1)

movement in Aceh quelled as they worry that the break-up of Indonesia could lead to the separation of West Papua and instability in their deeply oppressed Papua New Guinea neocolony, itself chafing under IMF-imposed debt bondage. Particularly concerned about Indonesia, reportedly the U.S. is now seeking to station Marines and F-16 fighter jets in bases in Australia's Northern Territory. Alongside the U.S., the Australian rulers are furiously acting to enforce capitalist rule throughout East Asia to ensure the smooth flow of profits from their super-exploited neocolonies.

Moreover the U.S. and Australian rulers see "stability" of the capitalist order in Indonesia as key to their goal of encircling China. With U.S. bases in Afghanistan and Central Asia, the intended entrenchment in the Philippines and existing bases in Japan and South Korea, an American presence in Indonesia would lock the chain around China. The imperialists seek the overturn of the social gains of the 1949 anti-capitalist revolution in China through a combination of military pressure and capitalist economic penetration. For unconditional military defence of the Chinese, North Korean, Cuban and Vietnamese deformed workers states against imperialist attack and internal capitalist counter-revolution!

Indonesia is a dependent neocolony of the imperialists. For years the Javanese chauvinist bourgeoisie has ruled over this prison house of peoples through bloody military terror. Following sometimes-huge demonstrations supporting separation of Aceh and continual unrest in West Papua, in 2001 the Indonesian regime—following suggestions from the Australian and U.S. imperialist overlords—offered "autonomy" deals within the confines of a unitary Indonesian state. These were rejected by the Acehese separatists. Since 1976, more than twelve thousand people have been killed and tens of thousands disappeared. At the height of the butcher Suharto's crackdown—between 1989 and 1992—at least 2,000 Acehese were killed and many were tortured, raped and abducted by the Indonesian army. Mobil Oil's role in these atrocities is well-documented. According to survivors of a death camp and other investigators, Mobil supplied the Indonesian army with heavy earth-moving equipment to dig mass graves (see "Mobil Oil and the Indonesian Death Camp," *Workers Vanguard* No. 705, 22 January 1999).

## For a Trotskyist Party in Indonesia

Their victory in the war against Iraq has emboldened the imperialists for more brutal subjugation against other semicolonial and colonial countries and encourages their servile bourgeois allies in these countries to carry out more despotic terror. With the U.S. imperialists backing a murderous military campaign by the Arroyo regime in the south of the Philippines against the Moro Muslim minority, Megawati has been depicting the GAM as similar to Al

Qaeda and Jemaah Islamiyah, whose members are currently on trial over the indefensible acts of terror bombing in Bali last October. As an article in the *Australian Financial Review* (20 May) stated, "Indonesia is unlikely to be criticised by major powers such as the United States for attempting to crack down on an Islamic separatist group in the current global climate."

In Indonesia and other countries of belated capitalist development strangled by imperialism, religious fundamentalism as a mass movement has spread in the absence of revolutionary leadership and as an illusory means to relieve the poverty and immiseration of the masses. In Indonesia, religious fundamentalism and nationalism are often intertwined and act to particularly target women and the largely Christian Chinese minority. While we stand firmly in defence of the Acehese against the chauvinism of the Javanese rulers, we equally fight the reactionary designs of the Muslim GAM and the religious leaders who stand behind them. The anti-woman Islamic fundamentalist forces, feeding off the frustration and anger at military atrocities and the desperate conditions of capitalist rule, already impose their reactionary writ on the streets of Aceh. Women have been forced into strict Islamic dress codes and alleged prostitutes and petty thieves humiliated and paraded through the streets of the capital. Meanwhile some



Asp photo

**Sydney University, 21 August 2002: Spartacist-initiated protest demands Australian/UN troops out of East Timor!**

pro-independence forces have called themselves "Taliban" after the savage anti-woman fanatics in Afghanistan.

Brought together in huge modern industries, it is workers who uniquely possess the class interest to overcome the communal, national, religious and other divisions which are manipulated by the capitalists to "divide and rule." A revolutionary Trotskyist party in Indonesia, in fighting for proletarian unity, would champion the struggles of all the oppressed including the minority peoples of Aceh and West Papua. Such a party would be based on the program of permanent revolution which teaches that in dependent countries like Indonesia, where all wings of the local capitalist rulers are bound together with their imperialist masters, only the revolutionary dictatorship of the workers, leaning on the poor peasantry, can satisfy the most basic needs of the masses: freedom from imperialist subjugation, liberation for the myriad oppressed minority peoples, social equality for women and alleviation of the terrible poverty of the hungry masses. If it is not to be strangled

by backwardness or imperialist intervention, this struggle for proletarian revolution in Indonesia must be linked to the fight for workers rule in Japan and Australia and the advanced capitalist countries in Europe and North America. Such an understanding is anathema to the reformists and centrists of the Socialist Alliance, which includes the International Socialist Organisation (ISO) and Workers Power (WP). Socialist Alliance endorsed the call by Democratic Socialist Party (DSP) front group Action in Solidarity with Asia and the Pacific, for the Australian government to "initiate a special humanitarian assistance program directed to the people of Aceh." The Australian bourgeoisie, which at home brutally oppresses the indigenous

## East Timor, the "Left" and Big Lies

Aboriginal population and carries out racist scapegoating of Asian immigrants, is not about to provide "humanitarian assistance" to the people of Aceh. In 1965, Australia and the U.S. "aided" the Indonesian rulers in their anti-Communist slaughter of up to one million workers and peasants that brought the military dictator Suharto to power. For the next 30 years, Australian Liberal/National Coalition and Labor governments backed Suharto's brutal military rule including the 1975 invasion of East Timor. Now the Australian capitalist rulers have a military occupation force in East Timor to guard the profit-gouging of White Australian imperialism in East Timor and beyond. The call by fake-left groups for imperialist "assistance" to Aceh is but a stepping-stone for open appeals for Australian military intervention. The program of reformist left groups is based on seeking to pressure "democratic" imperialism to play a progressive role. Indeed in September 1999 the fake-socialist groups from the DSP to the ISO, Socialist Alternative (SA), the Taaffeite Socialist Party (SP) and WP all marched in lockstep with the Labor Party in demonstrations that screamed for Australian imperialist troops to go to East Timor and "save" the Timorese from brutal Indonesian-backed forces. The Australian/UN occupation of East Timor has meant racist state terror, the massacre of unarmed high school student protesters last December, an unemployment rate of up to 90 percent in urban areas and open imperialist theft. The racist Australian bully-boys used the build-up to the attack on Iraq to strong-arm leaders of their East Timorese neocolony into signing away some *U.S.\$30 billion* in royalties from East Timor's



**Murderous TNI forces torment alleged GAM guerilla fighter arrested in East Aceh.**

seabed gas and oil fields. As we have from the very start, we stand forthrightly opposed to the Australian-led colonial occupation of East Timor. **Australian troops/cops out of East Timor, PNG and Solomon Islands!**

As the reality of the occupation of East Timor becomes increasingly apparent, the centrist and reformist left have been trying to rewrite their sordid history of support for the Australian imperialist invasion. A prime example is the SP, who now claim that "Almost alone at the time, the Socialist Party opposed the Australian intervention and warned that East Timor would eventually pay a price for it" (*The Socialist*, March/April). In fact in 1999 the SP, then called the Militant Socialist Organisation, repeatedly hailed the chauvinist rallies calling for Australian and UN troops to East Timor as the "magnificent response of the Australian people." They even claimed, "If it wasn't for the pressure of the Australian people, Canberra and 'our' armed forces would be once again putting the 'national interest' (i.e. protecting the interests of Australian bosses in Indonesia) before the massacres of the people of East Timor" (*Militant*, October 1999). According to these reformists, Australian imperialism was really acting against itself—by invading East Timor!

For their part, the centrist WP not only lie about their own actions in 1999 but go out of their way to cover for the reformists. In an 8 May statement WP says "the socialist left in Australia, took very different roads" over East Timor:

"One side supporting the occupation of East Timor by the Australian imperialist military, the other opposing their occupation of this land.... One side including the DSP, ALP and the Greens; the other the ISO, Socialist Alternative, Workers Power, FSP and others."

This is rubbish. While Socialist Alternative made mealy-mouthed noises like "peacekeepers are not the answer" and WP, in words, even called for Australian troops out with the ISO and SP not only marched in the "Troops In Now" demonstrations but they wildly hailed them. They also cheered the racist pro-imperialist bans on Indonesia enacted by the Laborite trade-union misleaders and designed *solely* and *explicitly* to speed up the entry of Australian troops. The Laborite trade-union bureaucracy's and fake left's support for "Troops In Now" rallies over East Timor aided the Australian imperialists, garnering support for the murderous military that has since gone to Afghanistan and Iraq.

Unlike our reformist and centrist opponents who capitulate to bourgeois nationalism and promote the lie that the capitalist rulers can somehow act on behalf of the oppressed, we seek to build a revolutionary internationalist proletarian party which stands in implacable opposition to capitalist class rule and chauvinist poison. Solidarity with the toiling masses of the region, not least in Indonesia, means class-struggle opposition to racist Australian imperialism. As part of our struggle for a workers republic of Australia, part of a socialist Asia, we stand in revolutionary opposition to the Australian capitalist rulers and every attempt by them to impose racist imperialist domination throughout the region. ■

Australasian

# SPARTACIST



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

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# Massive Strike Wave Sweeps France

**Down With Vigipirate!  
Down With  
Racist Expulsions!**

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**For a Multiethnic  
Revolutionary  
Workers Party!**

The following article is reprinted from Workers Vanguard (No. 804, 23 May), newspaper of the Spartacist League/U.S.

MAY 19—A strike by up to two million workers last Tuesday brought France to a virtual halt as schools and government offices were closed and public transportation and air traffic were brought to a near standstill. French workers are fighting to beat back attempts by the government of conservative president Jacques Chirac to cut retirement benefits for public employees and increase their payments into the pension system. The union leaders meant the strike to be a one-day “show of force” to back up their negotiations with the government, but the workers were not following the bureaucrats’ script. Workers at many locations, voting daily in general assemblies on the shopfloor, continued the strikes, keeping the country largely tied up throughout the week.

There has been considerable public support for the strikes despite the disruption that accompanied them: Lines of tied-up traffic around Paris totaled an estimated 200 miles; the streets of the capital were filled with people walking, skating or cycling to their destinations. It is widely understood that attacks on state employees’ pensions are simply a prelude to attacks on everyone’s pensions and other social benefits. But leaders of the main trade-union federations, fearful of the explosive anger among the ranks, have tried to put a lid on the situation. Leaders of the Socialist Party-led CFDT trade-union federation broke the united front of all the major union federations by signing a deal with the government and then despicably engaging in active strike-breaking against the workers who continued to strike. The division of the proletariat into separate unions run as political fiefdoms weakens the workers’ struggles. Our comrades of the Ligue Trotskyste de France fight for industrial unionism—one industry, one union—to maximize the workers’ unity against the employers and the capitalist state.

Today, hundreds of thousands of strikers—primarily teachers, hospital personnel and postal workers—braved heavy rain to march in Paris and other cities. However, while public transportation was shut down in Marseille, most railroad, subway and other public transportation workers, who were key in tying up the country last week, have returned to work. Calling for a nationwide demonstration on Sunday, May 25, the leaders of the Force Ouvrière and CGT union federations are cynically manipulating the combativity of the workers back into a parliamentary framework of “pressuring” the government.

While centered on public employees, last week’s strikes mobilized a significant component of workers from the private



Reuters

Lille, 13 May: French public employees march against attack on benefits on day of massive strike that shut down transportation and public services.

sector. In the industrial city of Lyon, fully one-half of the strikers were in private industry. This is significant because the strategic component of immigrant workers in the French industrial proletariat is entirely concentrated in the private sector (racist French law bans non-citizens from public sector jobs). “Left” and right-wing governments alike have used racist attacks on minorities to divide and demoralize the working class in France, from racist discrimination in hiring, education and housing to the Vigipirate campaign of military and police terror against immigrants and minorities. Seizing on the terror attacks in Morocco last week, the French government announced that it is raising the Vigipirate “anti-terrorism alert” to “Code Orange,” a threat not only to the country’s besieged

minority communities but to striking workers as well.

We reprint below a 15 May leaflet issued by the LTF, section of the International Communist League.

\* \* \*

With the massive May 13 strikes and demonstrations, which continue today, the working class is ripping apart the reactionary national unity behind the Chirac government that was stitched together by the SP [Socialist Party], CP [Communist Party] and LCR (Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire) together with the trade-union bureaucrats. From their outright vote for Chirac last year “against Le Pen,” to heralding the French imperialists as a force for “peace” against U.S. imperialism’s colonial slaughter of Iraq, these traitors

have done everything in their power to tie the working class to the class enemy. This strengthened the hand of the bourgeois state to launch a murderous rampage with thousands of soldiers in the Ivory Coast, troops Chirac now threatens to send to Congo. At home the government used national unity to increase its racist war on immigrants with the first “charter flights” of deportations in many years. Emboldened by its success in trampling over the rights of Africans at home and abroad, the capitalist ruling class now has the organized trade-union movement in its cross hairs.

This is the biggest strike wave in this country since the powerful December 1995 strike against the attack on pensions by the Gaullist government of Juppé. It is crucial that the working class draw the lessons of 1995. The strikes then did force the right-wing government to withdraw its attack, but this was channeled into bringing to power the Jospin popular front in 1997, where the CP and SP ruled in alliance with the capitalist Chevènementistes [followers of ultra-chauvinist politician Jean-Pierre Chevènement] and Greens. Like all popular fronts—governmental alliances between workers parties and capitalist parties which rule on behalf of capital—this one did its job in attacking the interests of the workers and serving those of the capitalists and in shifting the struggles from the factory to parliament. After five years of savage attacks and racist “security campaigns” under Jospin, Le Pen’s fascists got a massive vote and the Gaullists came back to power with a vengeance, and with an even more drastic assault on pensions.

Every gain the government wants to take back today is one the workers movement wrested through hard class struggle. It’s going to take more such struggle and a political fight to hold on to past conquests and win new ones. Against the sectarian division of the working class we need to unite all the workers as one solid fist: *one industry, one union*. We need solid industry-wide strikes which *shut down production*. The government’s challenge that our strikes are “illegal” is an ominous prelude to unleashing the forces of capitalist law and order against strikers and moving in scabs. We need *picket lines which mean “don’t cross!”* Government experts whine that we don’t understand the demographics and costs of the looming pension and social security crisis. We say, we’ve created the wealth of this society and we won’t pay for the crisis of the inherently unjust capitalist system. The owners who have made millions in profits off our sweat should pay. We demand a *sliding scale of wages and*

*continued on page 8*

## ICL Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program

The Declaration of Principles of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) is a concrete expression of our purpose: to build national sections of a democratic-centralist international which can lead the struggle for worldwide socialist revolution. This important document, which was adopted at the Third International Conference of the ICL in early 1998, was published in the four language editions of *Spartacist* and additionally in nine other languages.

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AP

## Troops Out...

(continued from page 1)

human civilisation. The threat of epidemic disease looms large. Lack of refrigeration and electricity contributes to the rising incidence of diarrhea.

Up to 1,200 Australian troops will stay in Iraq carrying out "niche operations" like patrolling the airport. Patrick Corporation, notorious for their savage 1998 union-busting attack on the Maritime Union, have won a lucrative contract at Baghdad International Airport.

The occupation of Iraq will be much more difficult and possibly more deadly for the imperialist forces than the invasion was. On 19 May over 10,000 people marched in Baghdad against the colonial troops. But opposition to the occupation of Iraq and to Israeli terror against the embattled Palestinian people centrally demands class struggle in the imperialist centres against the bloody capitalist ruling classes.

We reprint below a leaflet, "U.S./British/Australian Troops Out of Iraq Now!" distributed at recent May Day protests in Sydney and Melbourne. It underscores that the fight against imperialist barbarism can only be victorious if it becomes a struggle against the capitalist order.

Cold-blooded mass murder of untold thousands of Iraqi soldiers and civilians by the U.S. imperialists and their British and Australian allies has culminated in the occupation of Iraq. Already this colonial takeover has provoked outrage and resistance in Iraq. The people of the northern city of Mosul got their first real taste of the imperialists' "liberation" on 15 April when U.S. Marines fired directly into a crowd of demonstrators

protesting against the occupation. Within minutes, ten Iraqis had been shot dead and dozens more wounded.

The racist jackal Australian imperialists have been ecstatic to report that their elite SAS special forces, part of a 2,000-strong Australian contingent, killed Iraqis during the war and RAAF FA/18 Hornet jets took part in bombing raids. Now Australian corporations are salivating at the prospect of joining cronies of the U.S. Bush administration in getting a cut of the "reconstruction" bonanza funded by the plunder of Iraq's oil wealth.

As proletarian internationalists, who fought for the military defence of Iraq without giving any political support to the anti-communist Saddam Hussein regime, we say: **Down with the racist colonial occupation of Iraq! U.S./British/Australian troops out of the Middle East now! No illusions in the UN!**

### Lessons of the Anti-War Protests

The protest marches of millions around the world were a welcome expression of defiance against American imperialism and its allies. In this country multiracial youth courageously staged student strikes and demonstrations in the face of threats of expulsion, police batons and racist harassment. However despite its unprecedented size, the anti-war movement had no effect on the war-crazed imperialist rulers; nor did it lay the necessary political basis for future struggles against imperialist barbarism. It is crucial to understand why.

From the very beginning, anti-war protests were politically dominated by the bourgeois Greens and Democrats and elements in the pro-capitalist Labor Party (ALP) that postured as opponents of war. Reformist "socialist" groups like the Democratic Socialist Party (DSP), International Socialist Organisation (ISO) and Socialist Alternative actively promoted these forces by joining with them in class-collaborationist anti-war coalitions like the Victorian Peace Network. For radical youth under the sway of these reformist groups, this meant that their strivings to fight against colonial barbarism were channelled into building platforms for pro-imperialist politicians—the same ones who would proclaim more and more fervently their support to "our troops" as things heated up. After the invasion of Iraq commenced, ALP leaders stated that calling for Australian troops to leave the Persian Gulf was unrealistic. Meanwhile, Greens leader Bob Brown stated that "the hope must be that the war will be short and swiftly remove Saddam Hussein." He continued: "Our one point of unity is heartfelt support for our loyal Australian defence force personnel in Iraq" (Greens media release, 21 March).

It is impossible to successfully fight against imperialist war in alliance with those who uphold the capitalist military and capitalist state—the rapacious exploiting class's instrument for vio-



Craig Abraham

Iraqis rally in defiance of colonial occupation. East Timorese (above) protest Australian imperialist looting of oil resources during visit by prime minister Howard.

lently enforcing its interests. This was brutally illustrated during the 26 March and 2 April school and university strikes against the war, when state governments run by the "anti-war" ALP orchestrated vicious police attacks and arrests of the protesting youth. The reactionary NSW Labor government, whose vice-premier, Andrew Refshauge, had been a prominent speaker at anti-war rallies, outrageously banned striking students on 2 April from marching. This followed a racist red-baiting campaign which witch-hunted leftist rally organisers as "extremists" and targeted "Middle Eastern males" as "troublemakers." Assisting in this were other "anti-war" "allies" like the Laborite NSW Labor Council bureaucrats and the ALP leaders of the National Union of Students, all of whom denounced the 2 April student strike.

The central lesson that must be drawn is that the fight against imperialist barbarism can only be victorious if it becomes a struggle against the capitalist order. For it is the economic crises endemic to capitalism itself which compel the bourgeoisies of the richer countries to madly scramble for new sources of raw materials and new spheres of exploitation. To do this the imperialist capitalists must wage wars to subjugate the colonial peoples and ward off imperialist rivals.

Among the more leftist anti-war activists there was a sense that to prevail

troops would be denied food or other materials. It's out of the question." The Laborite union misleaders identify their interests with the "national interests" of the capitalist ruling class and its state and hence betray the interests of their own members. In a political struggle against these nationalist bureaucrats, a class-struggle leadership of the unions must be built. Such a leadership would be linked to a revolutionary workers party that would fight to combine the struggle against union-busting and racism at home and the fight against imperialist pillage abroad into a determined struggle to sweep away the increasingly destructive capitalist system.

To prepare the political conditions for such a fight it is necessary to intervene into every just struggle to bring revolutionary consciousness to militant workers and radical youth. In the anti-war protests, Spartacist (SL) and Spartacus Youth Club (SYC) literature and slogans particularly sought to promote the understanding that imperialism and its military cannot be pressured to play a progressive role and must be consistently opposed. This set us politically against the reformists who in the name of "unity" of all those who say "no to war," ensured that the main slogans of the protests, like "Bring the troops home," avoided taking a side with Iraq against imperialism. Such slogans were carefully tailored to ensure

**War is not the answer.**  
Act now... before it is too late!

UN resolutions on disarmament and human rights will only work if they are applied without fear or favour, and widened so that all the nuclear powers and Middle East states abolish their stocks of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons. Concern about weapons of mass destruction (WMD) means working for a world-wide reduction in armaments and arms sales.

**Reformist left groups, including Socialist Alternative, Socialist Party, International Socialist Organisation and Resistance joined class-collaborationist Victorian Peace Network. VPN anti-war confab made openly pro-imperialist call for disarmament of Iraq on eve of U.S./British/Australia onslaught.**

against the power of the warmongering ruling class the organised working class needed to be mobilised. The actions of Italian rail workers and Scottish train drivers in blocking military goods destined for the Persian Gulf gave a tiny glimpse of the power that could be brought to bear. Proletarian anger at this war was reflected in promises by union leaders to call anti-war protest strike action. Yet when the war started the Laborite union bureaucracy, like their social-democratic counterparts in Europe, fell into line behind the troops and acted to demobilise class-struggle actions. The promised mass union strikes all but evaporated save for a handful of limited and poorly built actions. As "left" Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC) secretary Leigh Hubbard hurrumphed, when the question of anti-war black bans was raised, "There was never any question

acceptance by the ALP "lefts" and Greens who largely wanted troops brought "home" from the Gulf so that they could enforce Australian capitalism's predatory interests in its "own backyard." The more recent actions of Australian troops around "home" have included kidnapping refugees on the high seas like on the *Tampa* and terrorising and imprisoning anti-UN activists in East Timor. Against the pandering to Australian nationalism of rally organisers, the SL/SYC, in defending Iraq, raised slogans such as: **Not one person, not one cent for the Australian imperialist military! Australia/UN out of East Timor now!**

### The Fake Left and Defence of Iraq During the War

As we warned, the victory of the imperialists in Iraq has emboldened them for more neocolonial terror abroad and

**SPARTACIST** 4

WINTER 2002-03

Statement of the International Communist League  
**Down With the UN Starvation Blockade!**  
**Defend Iraq Against U.S. and Allied Imperialist Attack!**

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# NSW Labor Government Targets Striking Students

## Drop the Charges Against Anti-War Protesters!

The Partisan Defence Committee, the class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defence organisation associated with the Spartacist League, faxed the following protest letter to the office of the NSW assistant police commissioner on 1 April.

The Partisan Defence Committee protests your attempts to ban the Sydney demonstration against the imperialists' murderous war on Iraq planned for 2 April by anti-war student activists and leftists. We also strongly protest the vicious police attack on and arrest of young anti-war demonstrators at the 26 March student rally and march. Of the 33 people reported arrested at this thousands-strong, spirited and heavily immigrant student protest, 14 have been charged. These include Anwyn Crawford, charged with malicious damage and violent disorderly conduct, Yusef Dib, charged with assault and resisting police, as well as Mohammed Elassaad and six other unnamed youth under the age of 18. We demand the charges against all the protesters be dropped!

The racist targeting of "Middle-Eastern males" as "troublemakers" is part of a war being waged against Arab and Islamic people by the state. Such racist violence-baiting along with red-baiting, expressed in NSW premier Bob Carr's talk of leftist "extremists," has been eagerly taken up by the capitalist press and is designed to criminalise and cow any dissident. What hypocrisy to scream against violence while the war criminals of Washington, London and Canberra oversee their massive, deadly bombing campaign of Baghdad and other cities throughout Iraq.

Students reported that during the 26 March protest police including Tactical Response Group (TRG) officers tore off the hijab of a young Muslim woman, slapped a young girl in the face, punched a young man and smashed one student head first into the ground before arresting him. A ten-year-old boy was dragged away, his arms twisted high up behind his back. In a further provocative and outrageous assault on civil liberties, lines of TRG and mounted police corralled as many as a thousand protesters

**Sydney: Police arrest schoolgirl at 26 March protest against war on Iraq.**



Brett Faulkner

in the area in front of Prime Minister Howard's Phillip Street office, refusing to allow protesters to leave, some for well over two hours. This tactic, intended not least to intimidate and terrify the young protesters, gave many a salutary lesson about the true nature of capitalist "democracy."

The vicious and heavy-handed police tactics on 26 March follow police harassment at the 5 March student walk-out when officers went through the crowd searching bags and taking down names, in particular targeting immigrant youth. Later, a group of Arab youths on their way home from the demonstration were forced off a train by over a dozen police who made them kneel on the platform while the officers publicly humiliated and harassed them, searching their belongings and taking down their names. For years the Carr Labor government has waged a "law and order"

campaign that has meant increased racist police harassment of Arab and Asian youth, particularly males and especially in the working-class suburbs of western Sydney.

The ban on the 2 April demonstration dovetails with the government's strong-state "anti-terror" laws which increase police powers and numbers and are designed to regiment the population into submission by outlawing any dissent. Despite these attempts, tens of thousands here and millions of people around the world continue to march in opposition to the slaughter the U.S., British and Australian governments are perpetrating in Iraq. *We demand the right of students and leftists to protest on 2 April! Drop all action and penalties against high-school student activists! Drop the charges against all anti-war student protesters!*

more reactionary assaults at home on trade unions, the poor, Aborigines and immigrant minorities. Indeed it was in the midst of the onslaught against Iraq that the federal Howard government announced the "findings" of the union-busting Cole Royal Commission, which recommends criminal prosecution of members of the CFMEU construction union. *Defend the CFMEU!*

Now elements in the Bush administration have been further encouraged to push for anti-communist "regime change" in North Korea. The strategic goal of the imperialists is the reconquest of North Korea, Vietnam, Cuba and especially China for capitalist exploitation by smashing the collectivised property forms that these states, despite bureaucratic deformations, are based on. *For the unconditional military defence of the Chinese, North Korean, Vietnamese and Cuban deformed workers states! For the right of North Korea to develop nuclear weapons to defend itself from the imperialist nuclear maniacs!*

With the seizure of Iraq, the U.S. imperialists appear to be training their gun sights on Syria. *Imperialist hands off Syria!* Meanwhile, as we warned, the Zionist rulers have taken full advantage of the war on Iraq to intensify their murderous attacks on the Palestinian people. *Defend the Palestinians! All Israeli troops, settlers out of all the Occupied Territories!*

The refusal of groups like the DSP and ISO to call for the defence of Iraq during the conflict belies their claims to be champions of the Palestinian people and opponents of "third world" exploitation. The Socialist Alternative (SA) group had before the war stated that "socialists can not remain neutral.... An American (and Australian) victory makes future conflicts infinitely more likely, with the 'war on terror' moving on to any number of other countries. Socialists therefore welcome whatever military successes are achieved by Iraq's soldiers as part of weakening US power in the region" (*No War on Iraq!*, October 2002). But this was just rhetoric designed to give them credibility with left-wing youth. For on the ground SA were building the Victorian Peace



ASp photo

**SL/SYC at 16 February anti-war rally in Sydney.**

Network, which stood for the disarmament of Iraq, and whose main constituents, the Laborite VTHC bureaucrats and the bourgeois Greens, were openly for solidarity with the bloody Australian imperialist military. And as the war heated up, SA simply dropped any expression of siding with Iraq!

By embracing supporters of "our troops" and rejecting the struggle to instill in the working class defence of a semicolonial country against imperialist assault, SA served to reinforce, in the workers movement, illusions in imperialist "democracy" and the dominance of the Laborite bureaucrats who spew this nationalist ideology. And this is completely counterposed to union action against imperialist war, no matter how loudly SA may call for such action.

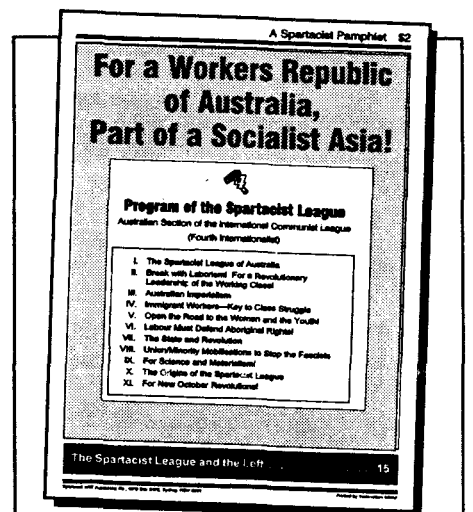
One group that, in words, took a side with Iraq both before and during the imperialist invasion was the right-centrist Workers Power (WP), which proclaimed "Victory to Iraq" and called for a "global general strike" against the war. However WP's pretensions to defend Iraq were exposed by the fact that they remained members of the Socialist Alliance, which refused to stand on the side of Iraq. For Workers Power however, this was but a small problem in that "so far the Socialist Alliance has been prepared to only go part of the way." And it didn't stop Workers Power from enthusing about the possibility of "a leadership role" for the Socialist Alliance in the anti-war

movement, "to cut through the confused ideas of pacifists and trade union leaders willing to make concessions to nationalism" ("Australia: union leaders against the war but support troops," Internet posting, 23 March). The fact is that in 1999 all the organisations arrayed in the Socialist Alliance marched, together with the Laborite trade-union misleaders, in the social-chauvinist mobilisations screaming for Australian imperialist troops to East Timor.

Ritually calling for a vote to the ALP in parliamentary elections, Workers Power's pandering to Laborism exposes the thoroughly bogus nature of their call for a general strike which they demanded "will not end till the war does." Posing the question of which class rules, a general strike necessarily confronts the need for a revolutionary leadership of the working class if the question is to be resolved in the interest of the proletariat. However, devoid of any perspective to oust the current Laborite misleaders of the working class, WP's indefinite general strike call was in effect a call on the thoroughly pro-capitalist union bureaucracy to lead a "direct challenge" to capitalist rule in wartime. To the extent that this call is not dismissed as hot air, it can only serve to undercut the necessity for a political struggle against the Laborite obstacles to class struggle.

While today posturing as anti-imperialists, most of the fake-socialist groups lined up behind George Bush senior,

Labor's Bob Hawke and the Murdoch and Packer media empires in supporting the counterrevolutionary forces that destroyed the former Soviet degenerated workers state in 1991-92. Capitalist restoration has not only brought terrible immiseration to working people in the ex-USSR, but by destroying the non-capitalist superpower, has allowed the now unchallenged U.S. imperialists to run amok. It has also led to a world of dangerously heightened interimperialist rivalries—rivalries that went up a notch in the lead-up to this war and are going up another in the scramble for a share of the imperialist looting of Iraq. It is desperately necessary for Leninist-Trotskyist parties to be built that can lead the socialist revolutions that alone can save humanity from being plunged into a third world war. A modest but important step towards building such a party will be through the recruitment of the most thoughtful and militant layers of workers and youth who, having grappled with the lessons from the failure of the anti-war movement, are won to a revolutionary, internationalist program. ■



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# Berkeley Students Say: Military Recruiters Off Campus!



Young Spartacus

**U.S. SYC-led united-front protest against military cadets and recruiters on University of California, Berkeley campus, 12 April.**

As the U.S. imperialist troops tightened their stranglehold on Iraq, some 70 people came out to a united-front protest initiated by the Spartacus Youth Club against Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) cadets and recruiters at UC [University of California] Berkeley on April 12. Thousands were on hand for "Cal Day 2003,"

## U.S. Protest

UC Berkeley's annual open house for prospective students, where ROTC every year tries to seduce these youth into becoming officers for the next imperialist slaughter with scholarships and job training. As rain came pouring down, the protesters set up a picket line and demanded: *ROTC off campus! All U.S. troops out of the Near East now!*

A group of Berkeley students called the Twisted Sister cluster, who are involved with Direct Action to Stop the War, commendably came out in full force for the united front. The youth in Twisted Sister, some donning anarchy symbols, chanted "R-O-T-C off campus now!" We carried signs with slogans including calls for "Open Admissions!" and "Free, Quality Education for All!" A popular chant was "Saddam, Bin Laden and Pinochet—all created by the CIA!" Many passers-by

applauded our efforts, and some joined the protest.

At the protest, one SYC'er spoke on the war against Iraq, "This war isn't about 'liberation' of the Iraqi people, it is about the colonization of a strategically located oil-rich nation. The U.S. also wants to send a message to their imperialist rivals." A member of the Labor Black League for Social Defense, which is fraternally allied with the Spartacist League and endorsed the demonstration, said in a speech: "The best way to defend the victims of imperialist war abroad as well as blacks, immigrants and working people from the war on them at home is through class struggle against America's capitalist rulers. We in the Labor Black League stand for a fighting labor movement!"

The protest was an opportunity for students to stand against the horrors of the blitzkrieg in Iraq by striking a blow against the U.S. imperialist military appendage on campus. The SYC built for this action all across the Bay Area, including a trip to Santa Cruz to participate in a protest against military recruiters called by the Resource Center for Non-Violence. Although not at the protest, endorsers of the rally included the Freedom Socialist Party, Standing United for Peace, the Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgender Resource Center from

Santa Cruz and Ann Robertson, a lecturer at San Francisco State.

Many of the fake socialists who claim to be building the antiwar movement were nowhere to be found, although we asked for their support. Antiwar coalitions built by these groups, like International ANSWER and Not In Our Name (NION), also failed to give even a paper endorsement.

Anyone who opposes the war against Iraq should want to struggle against militarism on campus by obstructing the recruitment of officers for the U.S. armed forces. Yet at its March 22 meeting, the Berkeley Stop the War Coalition rejected our call for such a protest, with many members seeing ROTC's presence on campus as harmless or even a good thing because they provide scholarships and a liberal education for cadets! Individual International Socialist Organization (ISO) members voted in favor of the anti-ROTC protest at the coalition meeting, but when SYC members went to an ISO meeting to motivate united-front action, all they said was, "We're not interested."

The Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), accusing us of "sectarianism," refused to attend or endorse the demonstration because it was initiated by us. The RCP, through its NION coalition, endorsed a demonstration on April 5 led by Democratic Party liberals but refused to appear at a united front against ROTC! For its part, ANSWER, which was set up by the Workers World Party, held a rally two hours after the ROTC action, echoing the patriotic call to "Support our troops" with their slogan, "Bring the troops home now."

The self-styled "communists" of the Progressive Labor Party (PL) report in *Challenge* (30 April) that at the ANSWER rally they "distributed widely" a leaflet calling for "closing ROTC" and "ending Defense Department research on campuses." That's nice...but we approached PL about participating in the anti-ROTC protest, and they emphatically refused! What kind of "communists" would rather wax eloquent about skipping socialism and jumping straight to communism than struggle against the direct agencies of the bosses' war machine? The same people who refuse to defend oppressed neocolonial countries (Afghanistan, Iraq) against bloody military assault by *their own* ruling class!

In the last few months, it has become increasingly evident that these groups' moans for the "broadest possible unity" are in actuality an appeal to unite with a section of the ruling class that isn't satisfied with the way the war is being conducted. These peace marches always end with black Democrats like Barbara Lee or Jesse Jackson telling people about "Bush's war" and spreading the illusion that somehow the capitalist production system can be rewired to better serve our interests. Capitalism is not open to reform, and the groups that say otherwise help strengthen the control of the capitalists. Only socialist revolution can end imperialist war!

These limp appeals to the government have been met by some disillusioned

youth with a turn toward "direct action" and anarchoid breakaway marches. Thoroughly dismayed by this subjectively leftward shift, the ISO wrote a polemic against direct action (*Socialist Worker*, 2 April), in which the ISO insists that "we need to keep organizing the widest possible expressions of antiwar opposition—and make sure that the movement speaks not only for the already committed, but for everyone who wants to say no to Bush's war." The ISO snarls at youth partaking in direct action for "isolating themselves from a wider audience." As thousands of protesters are being arrested in San Francisco under a Democratic administration and youth and workers are being shot at by the police at the Port of Oakland, these "socialists" shout out "unity!" ever louder in an attempt to draw outraged youth back into the arms of the Democrats!

Since the very first arrests, we have fought for workers and unions to come to the defense of those involved in direct action protests. We participate in some of them: four SYC'ers were arrested at a March 15 breakaway march and two of our comrades were wounded at the port on April 7. But in the absence of a program for workers revolution, these attempts to "stop business as usual until the war stops" remain within the framework of pressuring the capitalists. Militant antiwar youth must be won to recognizing that as a *strategy*, civil disobedience and direct actions are a dead end born out of their frustration that protest by millions of people around the world did nothing to stop the war.

At the April 12 action against ROTC, our "What do we want—Class war!" chant was met by many youth in Twisted Sister with counter-chants substituting the words "peace" and "justice" for "class war." Some said they are in favor of "class war," but they don't have an orientation toward the social class necessary for this "class war" to be successful. In order to "shut down the warmakers" you have to mobilize the social power of the working class to shut down the means of production (i.e., factories—not roads or office complexes) and reorganize society through a socialist revolution.

There is plenty of discontent at the base of American society, but the pro-capitalist labor misleaders sell out the unions and deceive the membership with the lie that workers and their exploiters have common interests. What these workers need is a revolutionary leadership! As opposed to the organizers of the antiwar demonstrations who seek to corral a new generation of youth into the arms of the Democratic Party, we bring our Marxist perspective to anti-capitalist youth who are looking for answers. The young communists in the SYCs know what it means to be real fighters against capitalism, racism and war. It means to fight for the perspective of building a revolutionary vanguard party capable of leading the working class, radical youth and all the oppressed in the fight for a socialist world! Join us!

Reprinted from *Workers Vanguard No. 802, 25 April 2003.*

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# No Illusions in the Capitalist State!

## Police Attack Anti-War, Anti-Racist Protesters

The brutal terror by ALP state governments' cops at the Baxter pro-refugee convergence and at earlier student strikes in Sydney against the Iraq war have prompted some youth involved in these protests to wonder about the true nature of the Australian capitalist state. On 26 March, NSW Labor premier Bob Carr's cops carried out a brutal attack on students, targeting especially youth from minority backgrounds (see page five).

Over the weekend of 18-20 April, the South Australian state Labor government of Rann turned its full police arsenal this time on anti-racist protesters, more than 500 of whom converged in the South Australian desert at the Baxter concentration camp with the central demand of: "Free the Refugees." Over 300 South Australian police, including the STAR group police officers, mobilised to prevent protesters camping anywhere within two kilometres of the detention centre. On 20 April, a group of police toting semi-automatic weapons stormed into the area where protesters were camped. These cops, with the taste of blood on the tongue and the finger on the trigger, later defended this gross action by claiming it was in response to a threat of a "weapon in the camp" which was later proven to be a camera tripod! The cops chose to retreat when 30 or so protesters, including a Spartacist supporter, gathered around them chanting "cops out of

the oppression of one class by another."

These racist cop attacks against anti-war and anti-racist protesters were carried out by Labor governments. While the right-wing Liberals are an openly bourgeois party, the social-democratic ALP are the agents of the bourgeoisie in the workers movement. The supposedly "lesser evil" ALP being in power simply means it is they who administer the capitalist state in the interest of the bourgeoisie. Like Lenin said, bourgeois democracy is what allows you to vote who gets to repress you for the next three or six years.

Many youth at Baxter were justly furious at the police brutality but do not comprehend the nature of the capitalist police. They sought to appeal to the cops' consciences by screaming at them: "How do you sleep at night?" while their friends and comrades were being dragged off and arrested. Cop terror is not individual, arbitrary acts of violence, but part of the everyday enforcement of the rule of the bourgeoisie. The cops' consciousness has been shaped by their daily work: brutal attacks on leftists, attacking union picket lines, murdering Aborigines in custody.

The lesson that should be drawn from Baxter and the student strike is that the capitalist state cannot be reformed or pressured into serving the working class or oppressed. To open up the road to an



Luther Blissat



Campbell Brodie

Above: Police charge protesters outside Baxter immigrant detention centre during Easter demonstration. Left: Cops armed with semi-automatic weapons provocatively invaded protesters' campsite.

calling for defence of the Chinese, North Korean, Cuban and Vietnamese deformed workers states against imperialist attack and capitalist counterrevolution. We sold our newspaper calling for the defence of Iraq against imperialist attack during the war and demanding "not one person, not one cent" for the Australian military.

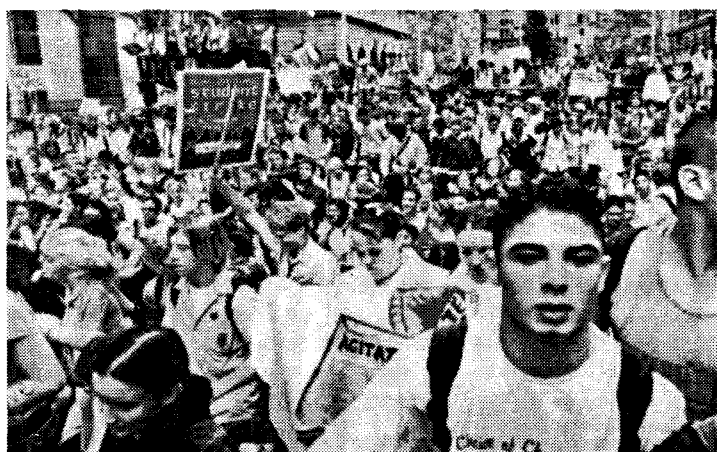
### "Workers in Uniform"?

All manner of groups who claim to be socialist or revolutionaries assist the ALP in pushing illusions in capitalist "democracy" and the lie that the capitalist state apparatus can be made to act in the interest of the masses. So, in its "What we say" column in the March/April issue of *The Socialist*, the Taaffeite Socialist Party (SP), who were active at Baxter, calls for "Community control of the police." The capitalist state apparatus was created, its armed thugs recruited, trained and indoctrinated, for the purpose of defending capitalist rule over the working class. But the SP thinks the capitalist police force can be "controlled" to act in the interest of the masses.

In the 22 January 1999 issue of *Socialist Worker*, newspaper of the International Socialist Organisation, an article entitled "The day police went on strike" glorifies a "strike" by Victorian cops in 1923. Not only does it uncritically support the "strike," but also it hails the Police Asso-

ciation (which still exists today) as "the closest thing the police had to a union." By supporting the demands of the Police Association, the ISO supports a more effective, better-equipped and better-fed—and therefore more deadly—fist of the ruling class. Indeed this is in keeping with the line of the ISO's British counterparts that the police are "workers in uniform." The SYCs call for all cops, screws, security guards out of the unions!

The dead-end program of seeking to reform the capitalist state has led to the betrayal and defeat of numerous struggles of the working people, from small local battles to international revolutionary upheavals. It is urgently necessary to build a party that can lead the inevitable, convulsive class struggles of the proletariat to victory. Such a party would be armed with the Leninist understanding of the class nature of the state, which was key to the Bolsheviks leading the only successful workers revolution in history—the 1917 October Revolution. In this country such a party will be built in a struggle to break the working-class base of the ALP away from the pro-capitalist tops. The SYCs fight to win to the building of a Leninist vanguard party the best of the youth who have been galvanised into political activity by revulsion at the imperialist slaughter in Iraq and rampant racist reaction at home. ■



Rick Stevens

Sydney, 26 March: Thousands of striking students protest war on Iraq. At behest of Carr Labor government students were attacked by police.

the camp!" Throughout the three-day demonstration, cops beat and arrested protesters outside the electrified fencing of the concentration camp. Thirty-three people were arrested on charges of assaulting a police officer, trespassing, carrying an offensive weapon, property damage and flying a kite in a prohibited area! **Drop the charges now against all Baxter and student anti-war protesters!**

The viciousness of the cop attacks on young anti-war and anti-racist protesters underscores the determination of the capitalist rulers to intimidate and regiment youth. The exploiting class fear inquiring, independent spirit in youth. They want working-class youth to be their future robotic and passive wage slaves and cannon fodder for imperialist wars.

The capitalist state—the cops, the military and the prisons—is not a neutral arbiter, but the armed fist of the capitalist ruling class. As V. I. Lenin, leader of the 1917 Russian Revolution, said in *State and Revolution*: "According to Marx, the state is an organ of class rule, an organ for

egalitarian socialist society, the capitalist state needs to be smashed, by the class with the power and the interest to overturn capitalism—the working class. Such a workers revolution would lead to the creation of a workers state that would defend the conquests of the proletariat. As part of the fight to build the revolutionary party necessary to lead such a revolution, the Spartacist League and Spartacus Youth Clubs (SYCs) seek to bring this understanding of the capitalist state to every struggle we intervene in. Our newspaper wall at the Baxter protest declared:

"The capitalist state exists to dispossess and murder Aborigines, lock up refugees, beat and arrest leftist protesters, make war for profit and attack the unions to keep the working class down. Your future under capitalism? More of the same. To end the system of war and profits, it is necessary to overthrow capitalism."

Our slogans called for "Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants" and "For Union/Minority Action to Defend Refugees and Immigrants." We had a placard

### Spartacus Youth Club Events

- 3 June Women's Liberation & the Struggle Against Imperialist Subjugation
- 17 June Reform vs. Revolution: The Marxist View of the State
- 8 July Defend the Gains of the 1949 Chinese Revolution!

SYDNEY

Tuesdays 5.30 p.m., Upstairs at The e Lounge  
92 Glebe Point Rd (corner Mitchell St), Glebe

Readings are available from the SYC. For more information phone (02) 9281 2181, e-mail [spartacist@bigpond.com](mailto:spartacist@bigpond.com) or write to GPO Box 3473, Sydney NSW 2001.

- 10 June Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!  
University Function Room, RMIT Building 8, Level 2 (next to Kaleide Theatre)
- 25 June Marxism: Scientific vs. Utopian Socialism  
Meeting Rooms C & D, RMIT Building 8, Level 3 (behind Union Shop)
- 17 July Defend the Palestinians: The Fight Against National Oppression  
University Function Room, RMIT Building 8, Level 2 (next to Kaleide Theatre)

MELBOURNE

All meetings begin at 6 p.m. and are held on the RMIT city campus in Swanston Street.

For readings phone (03) 9654 4315 or write to GPO Box 2339, Melbourne Vic 3001.

# France...

(continued from page 3)

**hours: 30 hours work for 40 hours pay!** To combat the "divide and conquer" schemes which pit older workers against youth and French-born against immigrant, we must **organize the unorganized and the unemployed into the unions!** The cutting edge of the government's attempt to fracture the unity of the working class is the toxic anti-immigrant campaign. It is imperative that the union movement take up the defense of its most vulnerable sector, the immigrant workers. We demand: **Stop the deportations! Vigipirate means racist state terror against immigrants! Down with Vigipirate! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!**

The power of the French proletariat is demonstrated in these massive strikes which have brought France to a halt, paralyzing transportation and disrupting the flow of profits into the bosses' coffers. Our class brothers and sisters in Italy, Greece, Spain, Germany and Britain have also engaged in powerful strikes to defend themselves from ruin. If militancy and self-sacrifice alone were sufficient to combat the injustices of the capitalist system, then all of Europe and indeed the whole world would be a society of justice and equality. Instead it's a world of imperialist war, racism, sexism and attacks on the living standards of the working people by profit-gouging capitalists. The



Young women of Muslim origin march in Paris against anti-immigrant repression and for women's rights on International Women's Day, 8 March.

system. This is an ominous threat against women's rights like co-education, abortion and divorce, which were gained in the turbulent years of class struggle that followed the May '68 general strike. The sellout then by the French CP of the pre-revolutionary situation created by that strike immeasurably contributed to restabilizing the bourgeois order in West Europe in the early '70s. This in turn helped open the way to the new cold war of the 1980s against the Soviet degenerated workers state, unleashing the forces of capitalist counterrevolution which finally destroyed the USSR in 1991-92. This catastrophic defeat for the world

exemplary actions in defense of immigrants. In a statement protesting the deportations, we warned that "this 'war on terror' is designed to marginalize the most vulnerable workers, to weaken the working class by dividing it between European and immigrant, the better to carry out assaults on the *entire* workers movement and its gains wrested through decades of class struggle." We said that the government

"counts on the time-worn 'divide and conquer' scheme of racism. We better prove them wrong! The powerful trade unions across Europe should stand by their most vulnerable class brothers and sisters. Give every man and woman in the hellish detention centers and squats a union membership card and mobilize the power of the organized working class in their defense!"

Left groups like the LCR who were busy saluting the "antiwar" credentials of the Chirac government did nothing to mobilize against these deportations. Today they are cynically yelling "general strike." A general strike, bringing the country to a grinding halt, poses the question of who shall rule: the workers or the capitalists. With their support for the Gaullist government these treacherous "leftists" have already cast their vote. In contrast, we have fought down the line against the reactionary "national unity" front. During the war we argued for mobilizing the working class in class struggle against the French imperialist rulers as the way to defend Iraq against the neocolonial U.S. imperialist slaughter. We fight to organize the workers movement in this country against the predatory imperialist schemes of this ruling class abroad. **French troops out of Africa! U.S. and allied troops out of the Near East!**

Workers must beware of their present struggles being derailed again into a new popular front. This is the political perspective of the LCR. Behind its calls for a general strike stand the LCR's repeated statements that it is ready to be part of a so-called "government of the left," i.e., a new bourgeois popular front. (Indeed their comrades in Brazil have already done so with their own minister in the Lula popular-front government—an alliance with the arch-capitalist and racist party of textile magnate José Alencar Gomes da Silva.) The LCR, which mobi-

lized a goon squad to defend Chevènement against the indignation of undocumented immigrants and anarchists in the March 5 Paris antiwar demonstration, has already shown in action that they are willing to do the dirty work necessary for such governmental positions.

In contrast to the rest of the left, Lutte Ouvrière stood out for its refusal to call for a vote to Chirac during last year's elections and also again during the war for not signing its name to chauvinist appeals to the Chirac government. But, as we noted during last year's elections, LO's opposition to both Jospin's "plural left" and later to voting for Chirac was vitiated by its refusal to oppose Vigipirate and its explicit support for reactionary cop mobilizations in November 2001. Today, LO has a strong implantation among the teachers in the Seine Saint-Denis district, which is heavily immigrant. These teachers have been waging strike action for weeks against the government's attacks on education, which if implemented would be particularly devastating for immigrant and minority youth. While LO argues that teachers must be mobilized against these attacks, it echoes the government as well as the SP and CP in their campaign to forcibly "assimilate" youth of immigrant origin by expelling young girls for wearing the *hijab* [Muslim headscarf] in public schools. One can hardly "assimilate" into a society that offers no jobs and only police repression!

The indifference of the French left and trade-union bureaucrats to racial oppression flows directly from their program of class collaboration. Despite its statements that workers' emancipation will be the work of the workers themselves, LO, far from offering a program for the workers to emancipate themselves from their traitorous misleaders, simply calls on the workers to be more militant in order to make the bureaucrats fight, arguing that "if part of the workers who were mobilized on May 13 continued the next day, it would put pressure on the union federations to continue" (editorial in LO's factory bulletins, 5 May).

Appealing to the justified anger of many workers against the reformist trade-union misleaders and their "far-left" supporters, the Confédération Nationale du Travail (CNT) claims to be building a new, "revolutionary" trade union. To substitute the idea of a "revolutionary union" or a "syndicalist party" only further fractures the labor movement. We need big, powerful, industry-wide unions which embrace the majority of the proletariat as a class. But to move beyond the framework of economic struggle at the shop-floor, to politically mobilize for the overturn of the inherently unjust capitalist order and to build a society where the workers rule requires forging a new and authentically communist party. The LTF is dedicated to building this party as a revolutionary *tribune of the people* which will fight every injustice, every act of discrimination, as part of a revolutionary internationalist struggle to bring the workers to power. Join us! ■



Paris: LTF at 15 February anti-war march with banner reading: "Down With Campaign of Racist Terror! For Class Struggle Against the French Capitalists! Defend Iraq Against Imperialist Attack!"

problem is essentially one of leadership. Even to secure the minimal needs of the workers posed by the strike (pensions, wages, employment), the point of departure is a clear understanding that the workers must stand politically independent from and in opposition to their class enemy. This demands a break from the treacherous misleaders who subordinate the workers' interests to the French bourgeoisie, from the misleaders who exploited the unions as their springboard to support Jospin and Chirac. We need to forge a new, revolutionary, internationalist workers party. This is what we stand for, as the French section of the International Communist League.

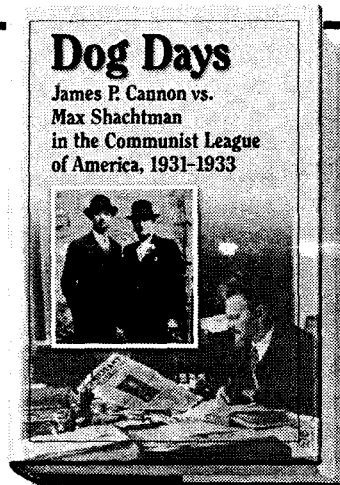
It is not only the spectre of the December 1995 strikes which brought down the Juppé government that haunts the Chirac government. In its wholesale assaults against the teachers unions, the government and its minister of education, Ferry, have been on a rampage to eradicate the "spirit of May '68" in the educational

working class ushered in a new world order of inter-imperialist rivalries and neocolonial wars of depredation, in which the capitalist governments no longer feel constrained to maintain the "welfare state," centrally pensions and health care. To sweep away this capitalist system and to eliminate racism and war, a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party must be built to link together all forms of resistance to immiseration and oppression and to create an egalitarian socialist society here and internationally.

It is notable that in contrast to the December 1995 strikes contingents from the private sector have already come out in protest. However, the strike has remained concentrated in the public sector where the workers have citizenship rights and more protection against layoffs and victimization. This underscores that to bring out the private sector it is vital for the whole proletariat to take up the defense of its more vulnerable class brothers and sisters and their children. That means opposing the racist cops who daily terrorize the ghettos, not having police "unions" obscenely parade in workers demonstrations, as they did on May 13. The cops are not workers but the guard dogs of capitalist private property against any encroachment by the workers on the capitalists' rights to exploit us and oppress minorities. **Cops, prison and security guards, out of the unions!**

Although presently a small organization, the LTF has shown the way in

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# Women and Revolution



## Iraq Women...

(continued from page 12)

the family as the main source of women's oppression in class society, and we understand that the family as an institution functions according to the needs of the ruling class in any given society.

Institutionalized religion plays a crucial role in reinforcing this oppression, but it is not its origin. Islam is no different from Christianity or any other religion—they all reinforce the family, authority and the particular sexual and moral codes of their respective societies. Certainly Islam has no corner on savagery and anti-woman bigotry for the glory of god. Just one graphic example now in the news: a nine-year-old girl in Nicaragua was made pregnant as a result of rape. Her parents arranged an abortion for her—and they went through hell to get it. Now the Catholic church has launched a crusade against abortion across Central America to prevent things like this from happening again.

It's a truism to refer to the great Muslim civilization of the eighth and ninth centuries, when Baghdad was the Paris of the world and Europe was in the Dark Ages. They gave us algebra, Arabic numbers and many other key inventions. But do you know about the role of the Spanish crown and the Inquisition in destroying the civilization of Andalus in southern Spain in the later Middle Ages? Not only did they brutally massacre Muslims and Jews of all classes, but they burned thousands upon thousands of books of mathematics, astronomy, medicine, poetry. The Christians also destroyed the public baths because bathing was considered a sign of Muslim faith. Only heretics took baths. Now you know why the Spanish queen Isabella never washed.

The Spanish soldiers went on to become the conquistadors that instigated the genocide of the native peoples of the New World. (The Muslims and Jews were driven out of Andalus in the same year that Columbus discovered America.) Christianity, however, had to adapt with the advent of capitalism in Europe and the development of a modern industrial society—that was basically the reason for the Protestant Reformation and the breaking of the dominance of the Catholic

of exchange through the bride price and were their husband's chattel. The polygamous family became the mechanism by which inheritance and property was organized. For inheritance to mean anything, of course, the chief has got to be able to be sure it's really his child. The subordination of women through polygamy, the bride price, the veil—these are not "bad ideas" thought up by bossy men or even the result of religious ideology,



Woman doctor in Iraqi clinic. Right: In U.S.-backed Saudi Arabia, women remain imprisoned in head-to-toe veil.



but a means of enforcing property rights in a very backward rural society. As long as the poverty and backwardness remained, the status of women was not going to improve.

### Iraq: Uneven and Combined Development

If anything, it tended to get worse in Iraq into the 20th century, including after the British took over after World War I. As ancient tribal social relations eroded along with the nomadic way of life, they were replaced with virtual serfdom. Tribal communal lands became the private fiefdoms of sheiks who became landlords. The former nomadic warriors were subjected to forced labor on the sheik's land. Peasant women were in certain areas little more than chattel; they could be awarded in *fasl*, a way of settling a tribal dispute by giving away a girl or woman instead of drawing blood. This is only one example of women's subordinate status. Relying upon the

chants; however, the peasants, unable to afford the costs of modern agricultural techniques, remained as poor as ever.

But side by side with this rural poverty was a developing modern industry—oil. Oil production went from 4.6 million tons in 1946 to 35.8 million tons in 1958. However, the enormous profits from oil went to the British-controlled Iraq Petroleum Company—straight into the imperialists' pockets. In 1972, the Iraqi regime nationalized the oil industry, bringing enormous wealth to the country and enabling it to embark on rapid industrialization and the construction of a modern infrastructure (see Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958: From Revolution to Dictatorship* [2001]).

This could not have happened without massive Soviet aid. Such Soviet government aid in technology, funding and military might enabled Third World countries like Iraq to have some room to maneuver against the imperialist powers. The result of Iraq's modernization was the emergence and expansion of a broad middle class and urbanization of nearly 70 percent of the population by 1980. The growth of the labor force impacted the status of women in a big way, because their labor was needed in Iraq, which, along with Iran, is unique in the Gulf states in having an indigenous working class.

In the late 1970s and 1980s, massive campaigns eradicated illiteracy among both men and women. Schooling was made compulsory for children. As an Arabic adage puts it, "Books are written in Cairo, published in Beirut and read in Baghdad." Iraq produced more doctors, engineers and scientists than any other country in the Near East. All university graduates, men and women, were granted automatic employment. By law women had equal rights to employment. The percentage of women in the workforce reached over 40 percent; in professions like teaching and the pharmaceutical industry, it was well over 50 percent. Laws were passed to enable women to work closer to home and they were provided with free transportation.

Health care and contraception were free and housing was subsidized. A working woman could take a maternity leave of one year, six months with full pay and six months at half pay. Workplaces had free or heavily subsidized day-care centers and nursing mothers were

allowed two hours a day to breast-feed their babies. Polygamy was illegal. Iraq had the first and probably the only women's soccer team in the region. Women's sports were regularly broadcast on television where women appeared in shorts and swimsuits, a phenomenon unheard of in the rest of the region, except in Israel.

However, as real as these gains were, they were limited to the urban centers,

necessarily partial and highly contradictory. Most fundamentally, their impact rose and fell with the needs of the labor market and the economy. For example, the eight-year war with Iran had a huge impact on the status of women. With hundreds of thousands of men in the armed forces, women joined the labor force in large numbers. But at the same time, the regime banned the use of contraceptives to force women to "produce" more future citizens to make up for the loss of lives during the war. The end of the war in 1988 and the demobilization of men and their return to the workforce marked the end of Iraqi women's heyday. Employment for women shrank sharply.

The bourgeois Ba'ath Party espouses a populist-nationalist ideology as it crushes all workers resistance. Its opposition to the U.S.-backed Zionist state of Israel and its drive to wrest its oil industry from the imperialists resulted in a certain empty anti-imperialist rhetoric. So, for example, the Iraqi government declared fulsome support for the Palestinian cause. During the 1970 massacre of Palestinians by the Jordanian army, known as Black September, Iraq pledged aid for the Palestinians. But this did not happen.

The regime that postured as "progressive" also espoused rhetoric about the liberation of women. Saddam Hussein called for "the complete emancipation of women from the ties which held them back in the past" (quoted in Doreen Ingrams, *The Awakened: Women in Iraq* [1983]). While it's hard to imagine George W. Bush even saying that, Hussein didn't mean it. The Ba'ath declared Islam the state religion in 1969. Countries of the Near East, Israel included, never realized the ideal of separation between established religion and state. Centuries of decay under Ottoman rule effectively sealed the region from the effects of the Reformation and the European bourgeois revolutions that broke the hold of the old feudal social relations there. The imperialist rule that followed arrested the development of the Near East and reinforced the existing backward precapitalist order. After independence these countries co-opted religion and incorporated it into the state apparatus. With no exception, Muslim countries in the region inscribe in their constitution that "Islamic law is the principal source of all legislation."

Family law in Iraq is largely drawn from the Islamic code of the *sharia*. By

continued on page 10



1997: Baghdad soup kitchen. UN starvation sanctions have led to deaths of some 1.5 million Iraqis.

church over much of Europe. Its ideology therefore became more compliant to capitalist social relations, as opposed to pre-feudal or medieval.

In the precapitalist society where Islam first developed (seventh-century Arabia), there was a strategic relationship between the institution of the family, the subordination of women and primitive agricultural production, herding, land and water rights. Women were their father's means

backing of the sheiks and landlords, British policies strengthened these oppressive customs and sought to reverse the erosion of the tribes. For example, they instituted two separate legal codes in Iraq, one for the countryside based on tribal law and another for the cities (see Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq* [1978]). This is a clear example of the Marxist point that imperialism will

# Iraq Women...

(continued from page 9)

law, as of 1983 a woman could inherit only half of what her brother or other male relative inherits (this is straight from the Koran), and she could not divorce her husband unless this right was recognized in the marriage contract before the marriage. While Muslim men can legally marry non-Muslims, Muslim women cannot. Abortion is illegal. The General Federation of Iraqi Women, the Ba'ath Party's women's wing, defends Islam as providing "equality for both sexes." Its president, considered to be the First Lady of Iraq, wears the veil.

Even in the cities, the modern existed side by side with holdovers from the ancient ways. Khairallah Tulfah, Saddam Hussein's uncle, who was appointed mayor of Baghdad shortly after the Ba'athists came to power, is best known in the West for his bigoted government pamphlet called "Three Whom God Should Not Have Created: Persians, Jews, and Flies." Baghdad women grew to fear his legion of employed vigilantes who pounced on them in public to paint their legs black if they were considered to be showing too much leg. Finally he got to be too much even for Hussein, who had to remove him.

## Women and the UN Sanctions

Under the sanctions, with widespread unemployment and the disappearance of public services such as free transportation and childcare facilities, women were driven back into the home. With over 50 percent of the schools destroyed and the lack of instructional materials (computers and writing materials are not allowed under the sanctions), the literacy rate among women plummeted to 45 percent. Many children no longer attend school; in 1997-98, for example, the dropout rate was 53 percent. And many children work to supplement family income. Many men have either died in the military slaughter of the Iran-Iraq War and the 1991 Gulf War or left the country to escape the bleak economic conditions. This results in a high number of female-headed households, putting the brunt of the sanctions on women. A reported 95 percent of pregnant Iraqi women are anemic. The maternal death rate, 37 per 1,000 in 1990, more than tripled in the next 18 months to over 140 per 1,000. An estimated 4,000 to 5,000 children die every month. And this is before the UN's "food for oil" program was suspended with the beginning of the war.

A country that used to import 75 to 80 percent of its food has been forced to resort to local production, meaning a massive deurbanization of a wide section of the population with attendant conservatizing effects and restrictions that target women. The fathomless misery and fear have driven the population into such despair that, as Nuha Al-Radi writes in



Mass demonstration in Baghdad, July 1958. Revolutionary upsurge brought Iraqi proletariat to the brink of power. New York Times

*Baghdad Diaries* (2003), a father, no longer able to provide for his family, fed them a poisoned fish and they all died together. She tells stories of parents beating their children so that they would be hospitalized, because the hospital was the only place where they could get fed. The people of Iraq have sought solace in the comfort of religion, what Marx called "the opiate of the people."

In the last decade, the country has seen a surge in religious sentiment that is encouraged by the regime. To appease local and regional reactionary religious forces, Hussein launched a mosque-building spree and adopted the habit of frequently peppering his speeches with religious maxims. He added the words "god is great" to the national flag on the eve of the '91 war. Unable to patch together a national front of rival ethnic groups, Hussein was attempting to rally them under a religious banner. Preachers at Friday prayers invoke historic Islamic battles and urge worshippers to fight the "infidel" invaders. Superstitious beliefs of all kinds are on the increase as people turn to witchcraft and exorcism, or *zar*.

With the surge in religiosity comes an increase in conservative practices that target women. According to the newspaper *Al-Hayat* (15 June 2000), Hussein declared that women should no longer work outside the home—and gave as the reason that they bought dresses and shoes when they did! A Baghdad mullah decreed that the solution to the food crisis included telling girls to fast every other day—until one teenager fainted in her class. In a country where Johnnie Walker whisky once enjoyed a state subsidy, women are now pushed into wearing the veil. Hussein, who once told a congress of the General Federation of Iraqi Women that "polygamy ought to be condemned in every corner of our society," has taken a second wife. Polygamy and forced and arranged marriages, once confined to the rural south, are now common in the urban centers. Nadje Al-Ali, an Iraqi historian who is a professor at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies in Exeter, Britain, describes in "Women, Gender Relations and Sanctions in Iraq" ([www.acttogether.org](http://www.acttogether.org)) how her aunts and cousins, who had never worn the *hijab* in the past, were now veiled and prayed regularly. And this is the educated, elite layer.

The so-called "honor" killings of women are on the rise across the country and they are sanctioned by the regime. Under recent laws, men who kill female relatives for "immoral deeds" (which include not only having sex outside marriage or getting pregnant but also running away from home or even being suspected of doing these things) are considered innocent, since the murders are committed for the sake of "honor." In December 1991 in a TV broadcast, Hussein told Iraqis, "If you see a woman or her daughters flirting on the street, or if you suspect misconduct, you are a people's council. You are allowed to kick that family out of the neighborhood and confiscate their

house" (quoted in Jan Goodwin, *Price of Honor: Muslim Women Lift the Veil of Silence on the Islamic World* [2003]).

What makes this horror even worse is that, as you would expect, prostitution is on the increase among Iraqi women. So they have to endure not only the degradation of prostitution but the threat of murder from their own families. Most of the female prostitutes in Jordan, for example, are Iraqis. When the Jordanian government complained about this, Iraq imposed the *mahram* escort for women under the age of 45 who travel abroad. A *mahram* is a close relative who acts as a male chaperon.

## The Iraqi Communist Party

The country of Iraq was artificially carved up by the victorious imperialist powers out of the remnants of the Ottoman Empire after World War I. In fact, anticipating the demise of the Ottomans, France and Britain negotiated a secret treaty, Sykes-Picot, sketching out areas of domination in the Near East. Britain got the three former Ottoman provinces that became Iraq, more or less randomly cobbled together out of a part of mountainous Kurdistan to the north, bits of the territories of the Assyrians and Turkomans, and the Arabic-speaking lands to the south. The country was 97 percent Muslim, with 65 percent Shi'ites, concentrated in the south and historically linked to neighboring Persia (Iran).

Kuwait was carved out of the Ottoman province of Basra as a separate country. In the words of the British War Office, the purpose was "to limit [Iraq's] influence in the gulf and keep it dependent on Britain." The wealthier classes and the traditional rulers of the society were primarily Sunni Muslim, as had been the old Ottoman overlords. The British continued this tradition, making the Sunnis their agents and exacerbating ethnic and religious tensions. The so-called king of Iraq was a Hashemite tribal chief—not even from the area—elevated to the throne by his majesty's troops. In 1932 Iraq became formally independent, but Britain continued to dominate the country in every way.

Trotsky's program of permanent revolution teaches:

"With regard to countries with a belated bourgeois development, especially the colonial and semi-colonial countries, the theory of the permanent revolution signifies that the complete and genuine solution of their tasks of achieving *democracy and national emancipation* is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat as the leaders of the subjugated nation, above all of its peasant masses."

The Iraqi Communist Party (ICP), once the largest and most proletarian Communist party in the Arab world, was based in all sectors of the working class. In 1958-59, the party had probably the best chance at seizing power and overturning the capitalist system of any such party in the Near East, ever. Why this opportunity did not result in a new October Revolution in Iraq is a crucial question, one whose lessons must be assimilated by all revolutionaries

seeking to forge genuine Leninist parties in the Near East.

Founded in 1935, by 1948 the ICP was the dominant force in a nationwide upsurge against the presence of British military bases—an example of the necessary leading role of the proletariat. There were mass mobilizations and strikes such as the Communist-led strike of oil workers near Hidatha. The extent to which the government would go to defend British interests was shown by the crackdown that brought the upsurge to an end. Hundreds of Communists were arrested and ICP leader Fahd and two other members of the Political Bureau were publicly hanged. Their bodies were left on public display for several days as a warning.

The ICP was able to organize across national, religious and ethnic lines and to address the woman question in Iraq. The League for the Defense of Women's Rights, founded in 1952, had 40,000 members at its height, and a Communist women's weekly, *14 July*, was published from 1958 to 1963. The party sought to recruit Kurdish workers and published a Kurdish newspaper. By the early 1950s, one-third of the party's leadership were Kurds. From its inception, the ICP called for the Kurds' right to independence. But this principled position was abandoned in the mid 1950s. Pressured by the Kremlin, Stalinists throughout the Near East courted the Arab nationalist regimes like Nasser's Egypt. The ICP criticized its previous stance "that there exist two main national groups in Iraq," declaring that "the fraternal Kurdish people has no interests which are incompatible with the interests of any of the Arab countries."

## Lessons of 1958

After World War II, the support of Britain and the U.S. for the Zionist state of Israel contributed to an upsurge of Arab nationalism across the region. When Britain, France and Israel invaded Egypt in 1956 in response to Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal, the ICP launched a campaign against the government that triggered mass uprisings in the Communist strongholds of Najaf and Hayy. Two years later in July 1958, the Free Officers movement overthrew the monarchy. Upon hearing the news, hundreds of thousands of Baghdad's dispossessed poured into the streets screaming their joy and their hatred of the British and the royal family. But the ICP threw its support behind the government headed by Brigadier Abd al-Karim Qassim (Kassem) and called for "a democratic federal republic" with unity of all the Arab peoples "of all classes." Qassim tried to play off the ICP against the pan-Arab nationalists in the officer corps as well as the Ba'ath Party, who were clamoring for Iraq to merge into Nasser's newly formed United Arab Republic. The drive for unity with Egypt was motivated by the desire of the Ba'ath and other Arab nationalists to use Nasser's authority and Egypt's anti-Communist laws to break the growing power of the Communists.

The imperialist overlords in Washington and London were quite alarmed by the downfall of the king and the ensuing revolutionary upsurge, which removed a main pillar of the Anglo-American anti-Soviet alliance in the Near East and threatened capitalist rule itself. American Marines were landed in Lebanon and British paratroopers were flown into Jordan in a menacing move aimed at the Iraqi masses.

By late summer, a peasant insurrection was sweeping across the agricultural plains of Iraq as peasants burned landlords' estates, destroyed the account ledgers and seized the land. The forces of reaction were frantically organizing to crush the revolutionary wave. In March 1959, nationalist officers and the Ba'ath, backed by the large landowners and tribal chiefs, prepared to launch a counterrevolutionary coup starting from the city of Mosul. The ICP wrecked this scheme by organizing a demonstration of 250,000

**Women and Revolution**

Journal of the Women's Committee of the Spartacist League

Down With Islamic Reaction!

For Workers Revolution in Iran!

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people, triggering an upsurge that swept the reactionaries from the streets.

The Communists dominated the labor unions, the peasants organizations and the union of students. But with the question of proletarian state power posed, all the ICP demanded was representation in the capitalist government.

Marxist historian Isaac Deutscher describes what happened next. Soviet Stalinist chief Khrushchev was about to meet with imperialist chief Eisenhower at Camp David.

"Most Western observers on the spot agreed that Kassem could hardly hold his ground against an all-out communist offensive. His own following was small, and he refused to try and rally the anti-communist forces which were intimidated and disorganized and for whose support Nasser made a bid when he attacked Kassem as a 'communist stooge.'

"Then, in the summer, the communist offensive was suddenly called off—on urgent demands from Moscow. In Moscow reports about the rising revolutionary temperature of Iraq had caused alarm. Khrushchev refused to countenance a communist upheaval in Baghdad, afraid that this would provoke renewed Western intervention in the Eastern Mediterranean, set the Middle East aflame, and wreck his policy of peaceful coexistence.

"A bill of indictment against the Iraqi communist leaders was drawn up in Moscow and the Iraqi Party was ordered not merely to make its peace with Kassem, but to surrender to him unconditionally with only a minimum of face-saving."

Qassim and the anti-Communist-nationalists now took the offensive. Bloody encounters took place between Ba'athist gangs and Communists in Baghdad; Communist trade-union leaders were killed, removed from their posts or rounded up by the police.

This attempt to make a deal with the ruling class did not gain the Communists any good will—it only allowed the ruling class a breathing space to reassemble their forces. When the Ba'ath came to power briefly in 1963 in a CIA-backed coup, it unleashed the counterrevolutionary furies.

The intervention of even a relatively small Trotskyist party could have split the Communist organizations, winning revolutionary-minded workers and intellectuals away from their Stalinist misleaders. This is the road to forging authentic Leninist vanguard parties in the region.

olution and intransigent opposition to every form of oppression—of women, of national, ethnic and religious minorities, as well as of homosexuals and others.

Today the war brings the question of Kurdistan once more to the fore. Defense of the right of self-determination for the Kurdish people is a crucial obligation for would-be communists in Turkey and Iraq as well as Iran and Syria.



Petrograd, March 1917: Women's demonstration with banner reading "As Long As the Woman Is a Slave There Can't Be Freedom—Long Live Women's Equality." October Revolution opened the road to women's emancipation.

road be opened for joint struggle among the workers against their common capitalist oppressors. The rights of the Kurdish people can only be guaranteed by proletarian-socialist revolutions to smash the capitalist states that oppress them—Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria.

The Rise of Political Islam

The betrayal of socialist revolution, such as happened in Iraq in 1958-59, is the backdrop to the rise of Islamic fundamentalism as a mass movement in the last two decades. With the bankruptcy of the nationalist governments and in the absence of a viable communist alternative, political Islam feeds off the despair and anger of the masses.

Imperialism has sought to drown in blood every movement for emancipation from the centuries-old chains of tradition and the exploitation of the landlords and the capitalists. In this aim, institutionalized religion has been one of its main tools and the rights of women one of the main casualties.

of the East" against "Communist atheism and materialism."

While there are many examples of this, probably the most glaring is Afghanistan. In 1979, a civil war between the modernizing Kabul regime and the tribal mujahedin broke out. In dispute was the government's move to introduce a few rather minor reforms—like reducing the bride price, not even abolishing it.

read and throwing acid in the faces of unveiled women. And on their side was the United States, arming and funding them in what was the largest CIA operation in history.

We said, "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" and called on the Soviets to extend the gains of October to the people of Afghanistan. What were those gains? Just across the border, Central Asia had once been exactly like Afghanistan—a miserably backward, desolate and benighted place.

The planned economy is a tremendous force for revolutionary change. Because its central dynamic is to maximize the socially productive labor of all citizens, women are a necessary part of the workforce. Stalin—no champion of the liberation of women—nevertheless saw no reason why women should not be drawn into industry.

Upon coming to power in 1917, the Bolsheviks put into practice a number of crucial measures to begin the liberation of women. They made marriage and divorce simple matters of civil registration, entirely independent of the reactionary Russian Orthodox church, as part of an early decree giving women equal rights with men.

For Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

Upon coming to power in 1917, the Bolsheviks put into practice a number of crucial measures to begin the liberation of women. They made marriage and divorce simple matters of civil registration, entirely independent of the reactionary Russian Orthodox church, as part of an early decree giving women equal rights with men.

communal kitchens, laundries and child-care centers to free women from the drudgery of housework—measures which sought to bring women into the workforce and into political life and lay the basis for replacing the family with socialized alternatives.

They abolished all laws regarding consensual sexual relations (laws against sodomy, fornication, homosexuality) because they thought the state had no business interfering in private sexual matters. In 1919, the Communist Party created the Department of Working Women and Peasant Women, or Zhenotdel, to organize special work among women, which included building over 25,000 literacy schools and donning the veil to reach the women of the Muslim East.

The gains made by women in the Soviet Union are one of the reasons why Trotskyists stood for unconditional military defense of the USSR against imperialist threats and internal counterrevolution. Stalin turned back the clock on many of the gains of women—for example, abortion was made illegal in 1936—but the enormous power of the planned economy remained, however deformed it was by the Stalinist bureaucracy.

In Iraq today, the task is to fully mobilize the workers and rural toilers against American imperialism. A Leninist-Trotskyist party in Iraq today would seek to combine the struggle for national independence against the U.S. with a social revolution against the Iraqi capitalists and landlords.

Trotsky stressed that "the subsequent fate of the [proletarian] dictatorship and socialism depends in the last analysis not only and not so much upon the national productive forces as upon the development of the international socialist revolution." Today in the Near East, the struggle against imperialism cannot be resolved within the confines of a single country.

These struggles must be linked to the fight for socialist revolution in the advanced capitalist countries of Europe, North America and Japan. Throughout the imperialist centers, immigrant workers and their children represent a living bridge with the former colonies and link oppressed immigrants to the power of the proletariat as a whole.

Farsi Translation section containing a translated version of the Spartacist League of Australia's text, including the title 'Iran 1979: Proletarian Revolution or Islamic Reaction'.

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## Iraq

# Women's Liberation and the Struggle Against Imperialist Subjugation

The following, in edited form, is a presentation by Spartacist League/U.S. speaker and former Women and Revolution editor Amy Rath at a forum in New York City. The speech was given on 29 March, during the imperialist invasion of Iraq. This piece is reprinted from Workers Vanguard (No. 802, 25 April), newspaper of the Spartacist League/U.S.

### Women and Revolution

As we meet here today, American and British forces are moving north toward Baghdad and bombs rain down on the city. In the war against Iraq, the International Communist League clearly takes a side. We stand for the military defense of Iraq without giving an ounce of political support to the Saddam Hussein regime. Hussein is a bloody oppressor of Iraqi workers, leftists, Shi'ite Muslims and the Kurdish people. His Ba'ath Party regime defends the existing social relations in Iraq and perpetuates the enslavement of women.

I'm speaking here today in honor of International Women's Day. In 2003, the women of Iraq illustrate the status of most of the world's women, caught between the domination of imperialism and the oppression of stifling ancient "customs" like the veil, holdovers from a more backward era. For the past 12 years, American imperialism, under the guise of the United Nations, has imposed death and disease on Iraq through the starvation blockade. Out of a population of some 23 or 24 million, one and a half million Iraqis have already died from the



Iraqi women at Baghdad protest against imperialist war threats in January. AP

effects of the sanctions—from starvation and lack of medical supplies. Between the blockade and the bombing, the economic infrastructure of the country has been damaged or destroyed—including power, sewage and water plants, food processing plants, irrigation facilities, pharmaceutical plants and hospitals. And Iraqi women have suffered more than

their share of this misery. The imperialist vendetta against Iraq has thrown the country backward, reviving and reinforcing conservative and patriarchal practices that oppress women.

The history of the Near East shows over and over again the bankruptcy of reform schemes, of deals with the imperialists, of relying on the so-called "progressive" Arab nationalist bourgeoisie to break the chains of imperialism. The idea that the working class and the oppressed can move forward by pressuring the rulers to make reforms, or by joining with them in administering their state, has led to one bloody defeat after another. The imperialists and bourgeois nationalists are utterly hostile to women's emancipation, which can only be achieved through a thoroughgoing socialist revolution that shatters capitalist property relations and all associated social institutions.

The war on Iraq is the shape of the "New World Order" emerging from the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991-92. That counterrevolution, which restored the capitalist profit system, was a huge defeat for the world's working class that has defined the past period. In 1917 the October Revolution, the world's first and to date only victorious workers revolution, marked the seizure of power by the working class. It was a beacon of hope for

the millions of oppressed and exploited.

Upon coming to power as the leadership of the working class, the Bolsheviks proclaimed the goal of the full political and social participation of women. Insofar as they were able, the Bolsheviks instituted concrete measures to make this possible, such as day-care centers and cafeterias. Activists in the Bolsheviks' women's bureau donned the veil to work among the oppressed women of the Muslim East in Soviet Central Asia.

Despite its Stalinist degeneration beginning in 1924, the Soviet Union represented the industrial and military powerhouse for every state that overthrew capitalist rule, from Vietnam to Cuba. Today, without Soviet military might to stay its hand, U.S. imperialism is expanding its military presence on every continent.

What force can act against this lone superpower? We need class struggle in the imperialist centers. Every strike, every labor mobilization against the war, every mass protest against attacks on workers and minorities, every struggle against domestic repression puts a dent in the imperialists' war drive. To put an end to imperialist war once and for all, the capitalist system that breeds war must be swept away through a series of workers revolutions. We must establish a planned socialist economy on a world scale in which the great wealth and technology of the imperialist centers can be deployed to wipe out the poverty of the Third World.

### Women and Religion

In Iraq, many women, especially in the rural areas, live under the hideous oppression of a backward, tradition-bound society. They are subjected to tribal practices of forced and arranged marriages, polygamy, the "bride price" where women and girls are bought and sold, and the head-to-toe black *abaya*, the Iraqi form of *hijab*, or veil. But Iraq is not Afghanistan. Side by side with these ancient "customs" is a modern oil industry and a powerful working class with a history of revolutionary struggle. And not coincidentally, in the last 30 years many women in the cities have gained an education, held professional jobs and benefited from what used to be the Near East's best medical system.

What accounts for the higher status of women in Iraq compared to most other countries of the Near East? Is it because Islam has less of a hold over the population? In fact, liberals and nationalists often describe Iraq as a secular state. Well, that is a misleading way to pose the question. In any society, the relationship between the classes is the starting point for understanding what is happening there. We Marxists see the institution of

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Development of oil industry in Iraq gave rise to powerful proletariat. Getty