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Election Circuses & State Repression

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A. Smeaton – Editor



May Day 2008 – Against Capitalism’s On- slaughts, International Class Struggle



We start here with our collective yearly May Day statement, published belatedly here.

This English language version is produced by the Internationalist Workers Group, the North American affiliate of the IBRP

Another May Day surrounded by conflict: imperialist wars between capitalist rivals and class war, with the world’s rulers united against the working class and the poorest people on the planet.

Peace, prosperity and freedom – heavy sacrifices are demanded for these objectives in the form of blood, sweat, and a reduced quality of life. Not only are these ideals more distant with every passing year, but time reveals them for what they are: a cynical deception. However, things cannot be otherwise since we are witnessing the effect of the crisis in the cycle of capital accumulation which has been with us now for more than thirty years. In fact the crisis is tightening its grip.

The financial cyclone unleashed by the collapse of sub-prime mortgages is one more demonstration, and the proof, that uncontrolled financial speculation – unleashed by capital to attempt to revive its accumulation process through the parasitic appropriation of surplus value extorted on a global scale – and the brutal plundering of entire sectors of the population (including small-scale capitalists), have done nothing but make the problem worse for the capitalist economy.

The intensification of exploitation, mounting job insecurity, declining wages, increased compulsory overtime and the return of forms of management over the workforce which remind us a great deal of the nineteenth century, allow individual capitalists to shamefully enrich themselves but they are not enough to secure a sufficiently high rate of profit to kick off a new cycle of accumulation. The bourgeoisie wants us to swallow all this with slogans like “the need for modernization”!

By shifting production abroad, where wages are dramatically lower than in the advanced countries and relocating huge masses of migrant workers a little fresh air is being pumped into a rate of profit, which certainly needs a bit of

oxygen, but in the end not a lot has changed. Nevertheless all these things, whilst incapable of reviving the capitalist economy, create competition amongst the wage laborers of the entire planet that tends to lower wages. Apart from a few significant episodes of class struggle, wars, increased exploitation, the destruction of the environment (to such an extent that it almost irreversibly threatens the biological basis of life on the planet), have yet to provoke an adequate response from workers.

The entire working class is paying for the process of break up and restructuring which began thirty years ago, and is still going on. Forced by the odious blackmail of job insecurity, the working class is struggling to recover from the disappointment of having seen its belief in what it thought was “another possible world” (the fake socialism of the USSR) shattered. In short, workers have no class identity and succumb to the ruling capitalist ideology in all its variants: the most narrow regional separatism, classical nationalism, religious fundamentalism to end up with more or less traditional reformism. It’s a dark picture but there is a way out. This demands a real class struggle outside of and against any compromise with capitalism, a class struggle which does not stick to the usual union logic.

But a working class fight back, even if it is more violent and radical, will only end up back inside the framework of the system if it does not have the political guidance of its class party. A party which is organized internationally and capable of politically unifying all the struggles of the various sectors of the world working class; which understands how to oppose capitalism’s permanent wars with the practice of revolutionary defeatism. To this end today’s scattered revolutionary activists need to concentrate their energies in preparing the ground for rebuilding the international party of the working class.

It is this task which inspires the activities of the IBRP and all its constituent organizations. As ever our slogan remains:
Workers of the world unite!

International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party

Obama and the Electoral Circus Sideshow

In the US left capitalism is using the rabidly militaristic Bush regime as a rallying cry to mobilize massive layers of the population behind a more articulate voice for American imperialism. Barack Obama, who is nothing more than a replacement hood ornament on the machine of American capitalism. One that is far more polished and palatable to the capitalist class than the current occupant of the White House, whose sole claim to enter into political life was based on the fact that he owned a baseball team and was well connected to his fellow capitalists.

The Democratic Party's pro-war record is undeniable. As is Obama's record in support of the war, through his votes in favor of massive war appropriations, for both the war in Iraq and the more nebulous "War on Terror". By giving his yes vote to Senate Congressional Resolution 70, House Resolution 4156, House Resolution 1591 and, House Resolution 4297, he has voted in favor of some \$3.8 trillion dollars in war spending. [1]

On April 27, on the Fox News Sunday program, Obama announced his support for General Petraeus continuing to lead the war in the event of Obama's election. Furthermore, Obama won't "rule out" the use of mercenaries in Iraq. Obama has proposed simply that they be accountable to US law. [2] As we have seen from military criminal prosecutions in cases such as the Haditha Massacre or the exposure of abuses at Abu Ghraib, accountability means the people on the bottom get punished while the officers and politicians order the crimes. No winner in this election will end the use of mercenaries in Iraq as this would require the recruiting and vetting of thousands of new government contractors. The US embassy in Baghdad is set to be the largest most heavily staffed embassy in the world and its security can't be maintained solely by the US armed forces. Nor would our capitalists want to do so. Groups like DynCorp, Triple Canopy, and Blackwater only stand to see their share of US military dollars increase in the event of withdrawals from Iraq of regular US military forces.

Barack Obama, the most likely future occupant of the White House, who writing in Foreign Affairs magazine, tells us:

“Throughout the Middle East, we must harness American power to reinvigorate American diplomacy. Tough-minded diplomacy, backed by the whole range of instruments of American power – political, economic, and military – could bring success even when dealing with long-standing adversaries such as Iran and Syria. Our policy of issuing threats and relying on intermediaries to curb Iran's nuclear program, sponsorship of terrorism, and regional aggression is failing. Although we must not rule out using military force, we should not hesitate to talk directly to Iran. Our diplomacy should aim to raise the cost for Iran of continuing its nuclear program by applying tougher sanctions and increasing pressure from its key trading partners. The world must work to stop Iran's uranium-enrichment program and prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. It is far too dangerous to have nuclear weapons in the hands of a radical theocracy. At the same time, we must show Iran – and especially the Iranian people – what could be gained from fundamental change: economic engagement, security assurances, and diplomatic relations. Diplomacy combined with pressure could also reorient Syria away from its radical agenda to a more moderate stance – which could, in turn, help stabilize Iraq, isolate Iran, free Lebanon from Damascus' grip, and better secure Israel.” [3]

With statements like these coming from one of the possible future leaders of the US republic, a war with Iran is inevitable, and so is the fact that the left will be the ones that help put the leaders who start this war in power, by participating in this electoral circus. In this context it is not surprising that Obama makes populist and nationalist statements against NAFTA while one of his handlers was assuring a nervous Canadian government that it was all just campaign rhetoric. Whether attempting to convince workers in front of the GM plant in Janesville, Wisconsin that he represents “Change we can believe in”, or the Hershey plant in Hershey, Pennsylvania, we are given a populist message, against NAFTA and “for” American jobs, in the nationalist protectionist sense that the Democratic Party loves playing to during election years.

“Workers have been subjected to their own political negation for far too long.”

A generation of young workers has grown up thinking, under the Bush regime and the internecine political warfare between Democratic and Republican factions of the bourgeoisie, that the Democrats are different and thus better than the Republicans. They have been taught to confuse their own class interests with the interests of a faction of the capitalist class. In doing so, they have been led into giving a mandate of support for imperialist conflict, issued by a more articulate capitalist voice for imperialist slaughter. What appeared first as a golden moment for the Democrats to take power in all branches of the government is shaping up to be like a rerun of the 1992 election, where Bill Clinton was groomed and picked for power in order to head a largely GOP controlled legislature and judiciary.

Workers have been subjected to their own political negation for far too long. These “progressive” democrats have presided over the destruction of public education in all major urban areas of the US. These same Democrats have been partners in turning the US into the most imprisoned society on earth, one that reserves the harshest criminal punishments for the poorest and most exploited layers of society, the result in large part from the underground capitalist drug economy. These same Democrats stood up and clapped when the “War on Terror” was initiated. Municipal Democratic Party administrations have overseen the monetary starvation of the US public schools. If capitalists in the US saw a financial purpose behind educating these children they would do so, they do not do so because working class children have no future outside of prisons and insecure low-wage labor. The task that presents itself most clearly to an articulate bourgeois like Obama, is to stabilize and preserve US capitalism and its imperialist power from the unprecedented debacle of what was a bi-partisan bourgeois war in Iraq and Afghanistan. There is no useful purpose in supporting or reforming this regime any longer, they are the butchers of Fallujah and Tal Afar. They are the racist bourgeois scum who left masses of proletarians to die in the flooding caused by Hurricane Katrina. A racist capitalist system will not change by putting a new face

on the administration. The options for workers in the US are to once again attempt to alter or reform the course of American capitalism, or to work towards its destruction. To avoid a repetition of the failures of the past necessitates a move beyond the tactics and ideas of the bourgeois left in the US as it progresses into a state of total senile infantilism dying in the belly of the Democratic Party – an animate corpse running anti-war organizations and unions with no more purpose or objective than to be good citizens and wait for the next election.

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[1] See Obama's voting record at Project Vote Smart http://www.votesmart.org/voting_category.php?can_id-9490

[2] Scahill, Jeremy. Obama's Mercenary Position. The Nation. Vol. 286. No. 10, March 17, 2008

[3] Obama, Barack. Renewing American Leadership. Foreign Affairs. Council on Foreign Relations July/August 2007
<http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20070701faessay86401/barack-obama/renewing-american-leadership.html>

Capitalists Get a Debt Injection

Since the Great Depression there have been eleven small to medium recessions, the most severe one lasting roughly from 1979 to 1982. Unlike these relatively small cyclical recessions the current foundations of the US economy are far less stable. Mortgage debt now exceeds home equity for the first time since 1945. Housing prices dropped 10 percent nationwide over the last year. So while the real economy is staggering, Wall Street finance houses are now pleased with Washington's intervention through the Federal Reserve.

Correspondingly the US dollar denominated share of world currency reserves has shrunk from 80 percent in the 1970s to its present level at 65 percent. The economic growth figures have for years been fuelled by debt paid for in credit or the sale of assets. As the dollar fell in value following the housing market collapse and subsequent credit crunch in finance, the focus of capitalist speculation shifted its ravenous attentions to those commodities seen as a safe risk – gambling on food because they know that whatever happens to the economy people will still need to eat. With the shift of capital from dollars into oil and other basic commodities, agricultural commodity prices in turn are also affected by high oil prices, impacted by increased transport costs and increased costs for fertilizer derived from natural gas. The rising prices for fuel then in turn force feed demand for bio-fuels which then increases prices for agricultural commodities. The social class responsible for this has no answer to this problem. In fact the crisis itself represents an enormous transfer of value that layers of the capitalist class benefit from at the expense of the losers in what for a capitalist is simply a competitive re-evaluation and an opportunity.

With the Bank of America announcing on April 17, that it would no longer offer private student loans, this further signified that this turmoil had also hit auction rate securities markets where capitalists gamble on student loan debt, hospital debt and municipal debt. [1]

The Federal Reserve Bank announcing its treasury securities swap of \$200 billion in 28-day loans to banks and financial houses, let it be known that it would be the lender of last resort



...and Workers' Respond to the Attack

by allowing JP Morgan to purchase Bear Stearns for two dollars a share with the backing of US Treasury securities provided by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. Two days after the Fed's announcement, the Carlyle Group announced the collapse of its Carlyle Capital Corporation LTD's investment fund. [2] Huge layers of workers now find themselves faced with financial ruin, homelessness and hunger while the capitalist state intervenes so that it may perpetuate the social suicide that is capitalism.

Correspondingly workers have shown continued willingness to fight back in the face of deals cut between unions and capitalists alike. In a refreshing and creative response to the casualization of labor, and "flexibility" Viacom "freelance" employees won victory in their struggle to retain health and retirement benefits. These permanent freelancers, self-dubbed as permalancers, responded to company plans to cut costs on the backs of their healthcare and 401k pension plans with two spontaneous walkouts, on December 11, 2007 and January 3, 2008. In order for these workers to gain the representation of a union they would have to prove first that they were misclassified as freelance employees, and thus had to resort to a more immediate and more organized movement characterized by a high degree of creativity. The Viacom freelancers went so far as to delegate representatives to go speak to then striking film and television writers.

As the wave of wage and benefits cuts continue to spread throughout the auto industry, workers at American Axle continued their strike in spite of the UAW's active negotiation of the worst contracts in fifty years. A union for those whom workers' reticence to support their own wages being cut in half is an obstacle to union control of their pensions and health benefits. Here again, the elementary response of workers to an attack on their wages and benefits, especially among young workers, finds no outlet in a politically castrated "progressive" left that is only animated in its support for the Democratic Party.

In Canada auto manufacturers have long exploited the advantage of an already reduced wage rate and reduced labor costs to employers, due to Canadian national health insurance.

Despite this the attack on workers wages and benefits will still be no less severe. With CAW negotiating huge contract concessions with Ford Canada, the attack on workers continues.

It can be easy to assign too much importance to the first signs of struggle in a process that can too easily be crushed or derailed, but there appears a dynamic towards the resumption of class struggle. Opposed to this are the unions, the two ruling parties and their leftist “progressive” followers – in short the entire political smorgasbord of the American bourgeoisie. It is a response that is slow in coming and represents a small start and a hopeful sign for future struggles.

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[1] Healy, Beth. Bank of America cuts back on loans. The Boston Globe. April 18, 2008

http://www.boston.com/business/personalfinance/articles/2008/04/18/bank_of_america_cuts_back_on_loans/

[2] Evan-Pritchard, Ambrose. Fed's rescue halted a derivatives Chernobyl. The Telegraph March 23, 2008

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/money/main.jhtml?view=DETAILS&grid=A1YourView&xml=/money/2008/03/23/ccfed123.xml>

Marines Invade Toledo! *US Militarism Plans for Repression*

Plans against urban uprisings and “domestic terrorism” are proceeding apace in the US with a Marine Corps exercise sending troops into Toledo, Ohio, for the purposes of anti-terrorism training. The object of such exercises is not military training, but political theater and intimidation of workers by the capitalist class.

200 Marines from Company A, 1st Battalion, 24th Marines, based out of Cedar Rapids were sent to Toledo, Ohio, to engage in military exercises related to the US military’s Northern Command contingencies for urban “terrorism” and unrest caused by natural disasters. Throughout 2008, Norcom will be conducting operations in Phoenix, Arizona, Portland, Oregon and the island of Guam in a series of similar exercises called “Vigilant Shield 2008”. [1] The irony of course is that the US government is preparing for crushing its own “citizens” and is not preparing for any sort of hypothetical “terrorist” attack. Defending US markets and maintaining imperialist power is hard work and a war machine can’t be built with private capital, thus capitalism uses the state to organize the flow of capital into the imperialist war machine.

What could be a greater indictment of bourgeois hypocrisy than the fact that the very capitalist class that constantly touts free enterprise, entrepreneurship and competition must have, as imperialist needs require, an organized state-capitalist apparatus to produce the goods and services needed to make the imperialist war machine run and help stabilize capitalist social relations. The health insurance industry, university systems, and a myriad of infamous corporate entities directly depend on the patronage of government tax dollars.

The US has the largest military apparatus ever organized in human history. The sheer size of the US military is staggering. Here again, state-capitalism organizes the slaughter of millions. Geographically the military has some 4,402 military installations within the US and 86 in its territorial possessions as well as some 823 installations abroad. The bulk of these installations, within the US, are considered to be small by the military, for which “small” means any installation that has \$875 million dollars replacement value or less. [2] Compare this to

“This is the military reflection of the economic dislocation faced by proletarians everywhere, autoworkers get plant closings and two-tier wage systems, and soldiers and their families get base closings and open-ended military deployments abroad.”

the year 2003 when the US military boasted 5,904 installations in the US, 96 installations in its territorial possessions and 702 foreign bases. [3] This is the result of the aggressive shift in US militarism, increasing the number of foreign military installations to 823. That is 121 new military installations abroad in the space of four years. This also shows again the effects of economic dislocation on communities that have undergone 1512 base closings and consolidations in the same period of time. In this case, unbridled military violence by the US state abroad is being matched domestically by the elimination of jobs and the destruction of whole working class communities that have become physically dependent on military state-capital for their survival. This is the military reflection of the economic dislocation faced by proletarians everywhere, autoworkers get plant closings and two-tier wage systems, and soldiers and their families get base closings and open-ended military deployments abroad. These military installations domestically distribute revenues from the Federal government to the states, which are as a whole either on the verge of fiscal bankruptcy or are actually bankrupt and are a financial lifeline that provides a steady stream of revenues into state coffers.

That the US ranks 27th in military spending in terms of GDP, which is a common refrain among capitalist media analysts, does not take into account the extraordinary relative size of US GDP compared to most nations other than the collective European Union. Rather this reflects a desperate attempt by capitalist states to catch up with US military spending. To put this in perspective, the US Department of Defense spending for the year 1945 was 223.1 billion dollars. In 2006 total US GDP stood at 13,246.6 billion dollars. In 1945 the DoD budget represented some 37.5% of GDP. In 2003 the DoD budget represented 3.7% of the US GDP. This represents almost twice the amount spent in 1945 for the US state to wage WWII. In actuality, military expenditures go much higher as massive military related spending occurs in agencies with entirely separate budgets. It is the US Department of Energy that oversees nuclear weapons, the Veterans Administration

that oversees medical and retirement benefits for Veterans and military families, NASA, which launches its space program from US military Air Force bases to put military satellites into orbit and, likewise, the US Army Corps of Engineers has its own separate budget. The US military's footprint on the US economy has been massive and has become all the more important as the profit rates from production have become harder to maintain.

Even in the field of health care in the US, state controlled capital carries enormous economic weight. In 2006 government health programs covered some 80.3 million people in the US. [4] While military based health insurance programs only cover some 3.6 percent of the insured population in the US, this insurance is key to the two major companies that do all the government health care claims processing, including the US military's Tricare program, and the government programs Medicare and Medicaid. The military contracts for health care are divided into three massive regions of the US, Tricare North, South, and West regions. The three massive health care corporations, Health Net, Humana and TriWest, which compete for these government contracts make up for, in a more permanent and reliable source of profits, what the private sector employer based health care contracts cannot. These corporations in turn contract out the actual processing of all these insurance claims to two companies the Palmetto Government Benefits Administration (PGBA – a subsidiary of Blue Cross/Blue Shield of South Carolina) that handles the north and south regions, and the Wisconsin Physicians Service Health Insurance Corporation which processes all US government claims for states west of the Mississippi River and all overseas military health claims. Companies that cannot get these key government contracts cannot compete and in the case of the loss of a key government health care contract the workers at these companies get faced with layoffs.

In the sciences the importance of US government funding is undisputed and its legacy is with us in everything from microwaves, to microprocessors. At the height of US power military funding consisted of 60% of all research

and development in the US. By 2006 US government funding for scientific research and development had decreased to 35% of scientific research funding. This reflects the increasing role of private corporations in funding research, often by military related defense contractors and corporations, by pseudo-private capitalist enterprises that in turn rely on the promise of funding by the government to recoup costs of research. Hence, as the role of the state-capital and particularly military related state capital, in funding of scientific research has decreased, the boundaries between private capital and state capital have been blurred and diminished even further still. [5]

The militarization of society under capitalism has as its target the control and exploitation the working class itself. It is only natural for the bourgeoisie to view its own exploited class as an enemy. Military exercises in US cities and on the Great Lakes are extraordinary indications of what the capitalists have in store for workers in the US, such that the US government is preparing for the contingency of major uprisings at a time when the working class population of the US is not even in a position to seriously consider such a thing. It is an indication of the extent and planning that the capitalist class has undertaken in its preparations for political repression.

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- [1] Bogle, Charles. Marine Exercise in Toledo, Ohio: an attack on democratic rights. World Socialist Website
<http://www.wsws.org/articles/2008/feb2008/tole-f29.shtml>
- [2] Department of Defense Base Structure Report Fiscal Year 2007 Baseline http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/BSR_2007_Baseline.pdf
- [3] Department of Defense Base Structure Report Fiscal Year 2003 Baseline
<http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Jun2003/basestructure2003.pdf>
- [4] "Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2006." U.S. Census Bureau. Issued August 2007.
<http://www.census.gov/prod/2007pubs/p60-233.pdf>
- [5] Washburn, Jennifer. "Science's Worst Enemy: Corporate Funding", DISCOVER Magazine, 2007-10-11.
<http://discovermagazine.com/2007/oct/sciences-worst-enemy-private-funding>

State-capitalism and American Stalinism

State-capitalism is a description of capitalist reality – not a theory. As we have seen with the course of events of the 20th Century that both “private” and “state” enterprises become victims of falling rates of profit. They become unprofitable as it becomes progressively harder to move an increasing mass of capital into circulation. That is as the constant element of capital, the “overhead” of production increases the variable element, the costs associated with labor and its reproduction tends to decrease. Falling rates of profit affect all capitalist enterprises. We have seen state-capital arise in the epoch of imperialism first as a means to build a military machine and then progressively, insidiously, as a means to prop up weak points in the national economy, nationalizing losses and privatizing gains. Thus as passenger rail in the US died, the state subsidized enterprise Amtrak was created. When US steel producers began complaining of the “dumping” of Russian and Japanese steel, the state again rushed to their protection with new tariffs. In states of the former Stalinist bloc, crises of state capital became more intractable in states with the highest concentrations of this form of capital that tended to progressively weaken economically unless they adopted a position of “reform”. This requires freeing capital from state restrictions so that its concentration and accumulation can proceed unhindered. So the economic crises in the Stalinist bloc broke out in the Soviet Union and became visible in the lack of production of necessary commodities and in an increasingly apparent and persistent level of poverty among the working classes. It is a bitter lesson to learn, but events show us that the bourgeoisie is bourgeois by virtue of its exploitation of wage laborers, not by its relative proximity to, or distance from, the state governing bodies of capitalism.

As it is most commonly understood capital isn't simply an accumulation of money wealth, but it is also a social relation as Marx tells us. It is a relationship of exploitation of a labor “market” on the one hand and control of the productive process, for the ends of capitalist accumulation, on the other hand. The modern capitalist republic arose as the form of rule of

the modern bourgeoisie, as the modern nation itself arose. It is the product of the collective needs and decision-making processes of the capitalist class as a whole, and not a tool that reformists would have us believe, can be picked up and put down like a mallet. As the necessary process of technological advance under capitalism, kept increasing exponentially, and mechanisms of spreading risk among capitalists became ever more complex during the course of the twentieth century, it fell to the state to fund those parts of the economy that had been hitherto neglected by the capitalist class. For American capitalism at the outbreak of WWI this meant state military production and a large and a yet larger and more permanent standing army. This wasn't an expression of the triumph of capitalism but a symptom of its adaptation to the crisis of capitalism and the first bloody flowering of the epoch of imperialism that opened with the First World War. Many intellectuals of the post WWII period fell for the thinking that their own contemporary conditions of capitalist society were permanent ones. Without realizing they were in the beginnings of a new cycle of accumulation that was signified by increasing reliance on debt mechanisms and state controls, they spoke as if state-capitalism in the USSR had overcome capitalist economic crises through direct party state control. While in the bourgeois democratic west many intellectuals believed that crises had been attenuated forever by the miraculous intervention of the democratic state through means of regulation of banks, through a system of labor laws and arbitration procedures to calm the turbulent working class, through an increasing complexity of mechanisms for speculation and use of credit that saw the advent of futures trading in a process eventually leading to such capital formations as hedge funds. It was thought by many that capitalism had finally stabilized permanently and that the working class no longer existed as a social class.

However, this turned out not to be the case. As the Soviet economy sputtered in the seventies and eighties and finally imploded, the "public" property of the state became something to be sold off and had never really been the property of the whole people but the property of the

“The answer for the bourgeoisie in the light of the outbreak of this current crisis of profit in the early seventies was simply an altered equation of state intervention, one that favored the military and the police and prison systems over the more benign application of state capital – the social wage received by the proletariat, in the form of state social services and infrastructure.”

state and its gangster bourgeoisie. The answer of Chinese state-capitalists to the crisis that opened in the 1970s was to start yet another phase in the hyper-exploitation of the young Chinese proletariat. It was the Chinese Stalinists that transformed the Chinese proletariat into the workhorse of our capitalist world, holding them down with miserable wages and the piteous violence of their bourgeois state that no crumbling set of state-capitalist reforms can possibly justify.

In western nations formerly sacrosanct state entities and heavily protected sectors of the economy came under attack as well. Britain saw the nationalization and the privatization of Rover and its ultimate collapse, while they also were treated to the disastrous privatization of the Royal Mail under the moniker of Consignia. More recently the bourgeoisie in Britain nationalized Northern Rock in the wake of its own collapse due to exposure to the credit crisis. The answer for the bourgeoisie in the light of the outbreak of this current crisis of profit in the early seventies was simply an altered equation of state intervention, one that favored the military and the police and prison systems over the more benign application of state capital – the social wage received by the proletariat, in the form of state social services and infrastructure.

State-capitalism as it was understood by the Bolshevik party of the period of the early NEP was regarded as a step forward and a first step in the transition to a socialist society. The Bolsheviks of 1918 understood that state-capitalism was a phenomenon that had arisen out of the drive towards the imperialist war.

At the same time they had all inherited the prejudice of the republic and the state as being an organization of the whole “people” and not a body of capitalists who increasingly, by virtue of their accumulation of wealth place themselves and their representatives far above the main body of their fellow “citizens”, who are in fact then simply their subjects; their labor force, their cannon fodder. The confusion of Social-democracy and Stalinism everywhere penetrated people with the intractable idea, that everything nationalized by the state represented a form of property that, if not socialist, had at least some

“progressive” characteristics.

The larger crumbs that fell to the tables of the working class of the capitalist metropolises during the twentieth century represented a temporary condition of capitalism necessitated by the needs of imperialist confrontation hiding behind the ideological masks of capitalist rule to tie workers into the apparatus of the state, to convince them that they need the very class of people who are exploiting them to continue their exploitation. Buried in all the fine phrases of Democratic, Stalinist, or Fascist republics, in the social welfare of the liberal democrats of the west and in the state control of the east is the assurance of an endless cycle of imperialist warfare and capitalist exploitation.

The political amnesia of defenders of state-capitalism set in over the course of decades. It progressed to the point where state-capitalism came to be considered a “theory” and abstract thesis not based in reality. Even where Mao once openly spoke of China as being a “state-capitalist economy of a new type”, state-capitalism came to be considered as the end in and of itself. [1] So nationalization became socialization and nationalism became socialism. After all nationalism, or “patriotism”, is the socialism of the capitalist class. China saw both stages of the Stalinist two-stage revolution – both of them capitalist.

Ygael Gluckstein (aka Tony Cliff), as Trotskyists will tell us, developed a unique theory of state-capitalism or that, according to his own autobiographical work, one day he just woke up and said to his wife that the USSR was state-capitalist. Any number of militants from both the Communist and Trotskyist Lefts had long been considering this basic question concerning the state and the nature of the capitalist class. Where the Trotskyist opposition rejected calling the USSR state-capitalist, the Communist Left did not.

Contained in Cliff’s conception of state capitalism are the twin ideas that state-capitalism represents a partial negation of capitalism and a transition to socialism an erroneous belief shared by much of the early communist movement at the time of the introduction of the NEP in the USSR and the “Bolshevization” of the parties of

***“What interests them is supporting
“progressive” Democratic Party
politicians and the capitalist
management of the labor force by
unions.”***

the Communist International. [2]

For the left of today, all state ownership is equated with being socialist or a step towards socialism. Hugo Chavez, in Venezuela’s re-nationalization of its oil industry and its anti-Washington populist rhetoric, with a handful of “drop-in-the-bucket” style government programs, yet another darling in a long line of heroic chieftains of state-capital who rise and fall from grace with an inevitable regularity. Thus placing himself as the successor to Khomeni, Qadaffi, Castro, Che, Mao, Tito, Stalin, and among the feted and fetid icons of the bourgeois left. It is this bourgeois left that has the tasks of shepherding the proletariat into supporting the capitalist state on the one hand and the task of finding a “great man” or leader to follow. For them Chavez has come as a lifeline, keeping alive their anti-working class, liberal-left nationalism.

It is more ironic that those on the left in the US today who still sing praises to the gains of economic progress under state-capitalism that is, under the leadership of the Stalins, Maos and Fidels of the world, rarely bother to waste a single breath on the struggles and problems faced by our fellow proletarians today in the republics they once ruled. Clearly a “Free Tibet” is a far sexier issue for today’s leftists who have little or nothing to say about workers struggles in other parts of China. What interests them is supporting “progressive” Democratic Party politicians and the capitalist management of the labor force by unions.

The left we see today was molded in the style of thinking evinced by one of the founders of US Stalinism, William Z. Foster, when he said, “The A.F. of L. is the American labor movement”. [3] Foster was able to simply dismiss the experience of a whole generation of leaders of the American working class who viewed the A.F of L. as Bill Haywood did, “that the A.F. of L. is nothing but a board of officials which strangles every sign of revolutionary life in the American labor movement. “ [4] For the political heirs of such leaders as William Foster and Earl Browder one could not be a proletarian outside a union and that workers who found themselves outside unions could organize along no other basis than

“There is a sterile, narrow and sectarian-centrist thinking among leftists that the unions are the final sole form of proletarian organization possible. The leaders of the left as a whole placed the interests of the whole of the working class in a dusty corner in their attic, as just another single-issue movement subordinated to a management contract negotiation apparatus.”

within these unions that view non-unionized workers as a threat.

It was this sterile, mechanistic and sectarian centrist thinking that lead early communists in the US to enter into the Farmer-Labor Party thinking that a “Labor Party” in the US was an inevitability and that to be outside this party meant not being with the working class at a time when the workers were supposedly about to flock to its banner. There is a sterile, narrow and sectarian-centrist thinking among leftists that the unions are the final sole form of proletarian organization possible. The leaders of the left as a whole placed the interests of the whole of the working class in a dusty corner in their attic, as just another single-issue movement subordinated to a management contract negotiation apparatus.

This opportunist and reformist approach is itself the very essence of a sectarian theoretical abstraction that is imposed on the much larger and more complex reality of the working class today. It wasn't until the Passaic Strike of 1926 that the Communists in the US actually took the leadership (specifically Albert Weisbord and Vera Buch) in a strike. This opportunistic approach to the A.F of L. then was based entirely on an abstract idea of what the A.F. of L represented and was not based on the experiences of working class militants in and around the union organization itself. There was a reason that generations of militants of the old Socialist Party, the Socialist Labor Party and the Industrial Workers of the World looked on the A.F. of L. union apparatus of their time as backstabbers and traitors.

The timeworn panacea that all problems can be solved by a successful struggle for the leadership of unions didn't work in the 1920s and won't work today because of their greater incorporation into a capitalist labor management apparatus, their diminishing overall strength in numbers and their greater representation of federal, state and municipal employees who by the nature of their jobs wont go on strike as often as workers in “private sector” unions do, and by the atomization and relocation of the industrial workforce into smaller concentrations of workers that are easier to control. These things have led to the diminishing use of the strike as a weapon.

Thus workers in the US today have largely lost this primary weapon of the defense of their own interests.

The US census figures on the historic decline in the use of strikes by workers, with practical considerations like a shrinking workforce taken into account, represent a huge historic collapse and cannibalization of what had started as a movement of labor. From bargaining agent for the labor aristocracy to a second tier of management – labor crisis management. Bureau of Labor Statistics data shows that 21 strikes occurred in 2007 and this was up from the current all time low point of strikes, in 2003, when only 14 strikes occurred, according to BLS criteria in workplaces with more than 1000 employees. Historically this decline in strike activity accelerated particularly rapidly after 1981. The year 1981 was a fateful year for unions in the US. It was the last year that more than 100 strikes were waged during the course of the year, with 145 strikes. By 1982 the numbers of strikes decreased to 96 during the course of the year. This was due in part to the chilling effect that the crushing of the PATCO air traffic controllers strike had on workers strikes. The current small upswing in strikes is not indicative of some huge surge in strike activity, nor is it a sign that the union has changed its nature as a class collaborationist management tool. [5]

Marx's injunction in his writings on the Paris Commune against the idea that one can simply take hold of the readymade machinery of the state stands out in stark contrast to such conceptions as the reform of the capitalist state or the conquest of union leadership by would-be revolutionaries. The idea that the state, or an institution operating within the confines of the capitalist nation-state, is simply a tool to be taken up and used by workers, that governments and unions can be made and remade until they represent workers, is patently false. Marx in his Third Address on the Paris Commune writes:

“During the subsequent regimes, the government, placed under parliamentary control — that is, under the direct control of the propertied classes — became not only a hotbed of huge national debts and crushing

taxes; with its irresistible allurements of place, pelf, and patronage, it became not only the bone of contention between the rival factions and adventurers of the ruling classes; but its political character changed simultaneously with the economic changes of society. At the same pace at which the progress of modern industry developed, widened, intensified the class antagonism between capital and labor, the state power assumed more and more the character of the national power of capital over labor, of a public force organized for social enslavement, of an engine of class despotism.

After every revolution marking a progressive phase in the class struggle, the purely repressive character of the state power stands out in bolder and bolder relief. The Revolution of 1830, resulting in the transfer of government from the landlords to the capitalists, transferred it from the more remote to the more direct antagonists of the working men. The bourgeois republicans, who, in the name of the February Revolution, took the state power, used it for the June [1848] massacres, in order to convince the working class that "social" republic means the republic entrusting their social subjection, and in order to convince the royalist bulk of the bourgeois and landlord class that they might safely leave the cares and emoluments of government to the bourgeois "republicans"." [6]

This increasing counterrevolutionary terror that took place after the collapse of every revolution since the French Revolution culminated in the greatest counterrevolutionary slaughter of all time – Stalinism. It was this same counterrevolutionary immune response of the capitalist class to the most far-reaching revolution ever attempted by the working class, the period of the first world revolution, 1917-1921. Today it is up to the tiniest of revolutionary minorities to reaffirm the very soul of revolutionary politics, that proletarians have no country and that they should unite to overthrow their exploiters.

**“Marxist-Leninism”
Opposes Revolutionary
Overthrow of the
Washington Regime**

As strange as this may sound to those not familiar with the perennial American Stalinist institution the CPUSA, their constitution actually forbids talk of revolution. In Section 2, Article VII of the Constitution of the Communist Party of the United States of America, amended at its national convention in Milwaukee in July 2001, we read:

“Subject to the provisions of this Article, any member shall be expelled from the Party who is a strikebreaker, a provocateur, engaged in espionage, an informer, or who advocates force and violence or terrorism, or who participates in the activities of any group which acts to undermine or overthrow any democratic institutions through which the majority of the American people can express their right to determine their destiny.”

Thus those who might even consider speaking of revolution are lumped together with scabs, provocateurs, informers and terrorists. The democratic institutions spoken of refer to the US government and the Democratic Party that the CPUSA has supported in every election since Roosevelt was president with the exception of the 1948 election. Even in those years, prior to 1984, when the party ran its own candidates as a protest vote, they were still advocating that workers vote for the DP. When would-be Social Democrats around Tony Mazzochi, attempted to form the Labor Party in the 1990s, the CPUSA was central in killing this attempt at reformism in order to swing them back into voting for the DP. Today, the CPUSA, gushes over Barack Obama, as much or more than any of the most mind-numbingly insipid “progressive” capitalist media. Contrary to ideas that workers can use this election to effect real change, this capitalist election intends to use workers to continue its mandate for continued war, austerity and repression. The real sectarianism on the left in the US emanates from the center that seeks to crush any manifestation of political independence on the left and suck into the orbit of the junior war party, whose leading candidates both assure us of the continuation of the permanent war.

For the IWG, we intend to be more than simply

a sterile sect with a platform divorced from present reality or that uses activism as a shield to hide support for capitalism. On the contrary our platform is based on our own experience as individual militants, in unions and in our attempts to break free from left-capitalism. Where unions became agents of capitalist management, we say so. Where national liberation movements lead to greater exploitation and oppression for proletarians, we say so. Where Stalinists and Maoists to this day attack us verbally in their press, they who once sought to physically exterminate our comrades all over the world, we feel perfectly justified in stating that they are enemies of the working class as well. Workers need to form their own organizations of struggle that fight in their interests and their interests alone. The IWG has as its aim the attempt to address this need when and where we are able. To this end we ask our readers and sympathizers for support.

AS

[1] Mao Tse-Tung. Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung. On State Capitalism. 1953-07-09
http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-5/mswv5_30.htm

[This came from a written comment on a document for the People's Republic of China National Conference on Financial and Economic Work held in 1953.]

"The present-day capitalist economy in China is a capitalist economy which for the most part is under the control of the People's Government and which is linked with the state-owned socialist economy in various forms and supervised by the workers. It is not an ordinary but a particular kind of capitalist economy, namely, a state-capitalist economy of a new type. It exists not chiefly to make profits for the capitalists but to meet the needs of the people and the state. True, a share of the profits produced by the workers goes to the capitalists, but that is only a small part, about one quarter, of the total. The remaining three quarters are produced for the workers (in the form of the welfare fund), for the state (in the form of income tax) and for expanding productive capacity (a small part of which produces profits

for the capitalists). Therefore, this state-capitalist economy of a new type takes on a socialist character to a very great extent and benefits the workers and the state.”

[2] Cliff, Tony. State Capitalism in Russia. 1955
<http://www.marxists.org/archive/cliff/works/1955/statecap/ch05.htm>

[3] Eastman, Max. Foster. The Liberator, April 1921.

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/eastman/1921/foster.htm>

[4] *ibid.*

“It is interesting to compare the attitudes of William D. Haywood and William Z. Foster on the matter of revolution and the A.F. of L. Haywood says – in an interview reported on another page – that the A.F. of L. is nothing but a board of officials which strangles every sign of revolutionary life in the American labor movement.

“The A.F. of L. is the American labor movement,” says Foster, “and you don’t gain anything by shouting as though that movement were any more revolutionary than it is.””

[5] Bureau of Labor Statistics, work stoppages 1947-2007

<http://www.bls.gov/news.release/wkstp.t01.htm>

[6] Marx, Karl. Civil War in France, March-May 1871

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1871/civil-war-france/ch05.htm>

With the Tibetan and Chinese Workers Against All Imperialisms and All Racial, Religious & Nationalist Traps

This comes from an Italian comrade who writes about the increasingly explosive situation in both Tibet and China and speaks against the knee-jerk leftist support of nationalism and national liberation movements, and against a left that ignores workers when they go on strike but cheers them when they wave flags and attack each other.

The recent violent explosions in Tibet have to be understood on different levels. This demands a deeper analysis than the clichés we have been offered, which either talk about the repression of popular demands for religious liberty and a return of an idyllic society based on the peaceful precepts of Buddhism, or about foreign maneuvers aimed at one of the principal bulwarks of anti-imperialism.

It is no secret that the protests, which began on the 49th anniversary of the 1959 revolt, [1] had been prepared a long time before. According to the <http://pahyul.com> website, a conference of the “Friends of Tibet”, held in June last year in New Delhi, with US diplomats participating, discussed how the Olympics might provide the only chance for Tibetans to come out and protest for independence. The march of monks and exiled Tibetans from India to Tibet was proposed at the same conference. In January, the same India-based organization announced the formation of a “Movement of Revolt of the Tibetan People” which would carry out actions on March 10th “in the spirit of the 1959 revolt”. It is no surprise that the revolt is part of a complex and multi-polar international rivalry. But we should also be aware that, the widespread nature and ferocity of the revolt is not simply due to the actions directed from abroad. It is moreover significant that the violent disorders in Lhasa had their origins, according to the few eye-witness accounts available, in a dispute between Tibetan and Han traders in a large market town. Films show numerous cars burning and big shopping centers destroyed and burnt. These targets are almost always the property of the ethnically Han Chinese. The violence widened to the Tibetan capital where there were 19 victims according to official figures but 140 according to the Tibetan government-in-exile. And in the neighboring

province of Sichuan it appears that the Chinese authorities were taken completely by surprise leading to a substantial debacle despite the fact that a year earlier it had re-hired 650,000 police paramilitaries. [2]

But faced with this violent explosion and the difficulties of the Government in controlling the situation the many international “friends of Tibet” have largely disappeared. Not one Head of state or government has called for serious sanctions against China. Even a purely symbolic gesture such as boycotting the Olympic Games is out of the question and the only debate has been about whether or not to take part in the opening ceremony. This simple fact leads us to ask why they have taken this clear step backwards.

The first of the “friends of Tibet”, as is well-known, is the US. But this same US, a few days before the brutal repression in Tibet crossed China off the black list of the worst states who violate human rights [3], and after the violence broke out, Bush has wasted no time in sidestepping any thought of action against China, confirming that he would be present in person in Beijing for the Olympic Games. Even faced with the launching of missiles into the sea from North Korea on March 8th, American diplomacy did not go beyond denouncing the episode as “non-constructive”. As Rampini of La Repubblica said “the State Department seems to have recently learned the art of understatement”.

In reality the situation has profoundly changed since last year when these events were being planned. Critically there has been above all the “sub-prime crisis” which has shaken the stock exchanges of the entire world, eating away at the financial heart of global capitalism. Next, the dollar is facing enormous difficulties and a loss of trust of every kind. [4] Its obvious therefore why the US has recently decided to keep a low profile in confronting its great enemy, China, which everything else notwithstanding, continues to finance the US debt by accumulating US government bonds to the value of \$1600 billion. [5]

Given the international rivalry what position should communists, or rather the international vanguard take on Tibet? If we look at the so-called “left” groups we can only identify complete

“The growth of heavy industry, claimed to be 14%, has to be understood in relation to the very low starting point, but even this modest development in real terms has created amongst the Tibetans – who can mainly be considered as an enormous “industrial reserve army” – hopes of an improvement in living and working conditions. Such expectations have however had to take account of capitalist reality which has offered them little.”

confusion with diametrically opposed positions even within the same regroupments. Bertinotti, for example, did not hesitate to line up alongside the Dalai Lama, the personification of a society that is obscurantist, reactionary and pseudo-feudal [6], supporting therefore the cause of the clerical gangs and local bourgeoisie which aim to become the ruling class in order to have the “freedom” to exploit their “own” working class. Others like Ciusani of the Central Committee of the PdCI [7] have announced that they “line up with the Chinese People’s Republic against the medievalism of the Dalai Lama and the aggressive threats of imperialism” [8], supporting the bloody repression of one of the most oppressive imperialist regimes today existing on the planet. This confusion is the inevitable outcome of a lack of a clear class analysis of reality, and of roots in models (Russian, Chinese, Cuban “communism” etc.) which have nothing to do with communism, socialism or the interests of the proletariat.

Living and working conditions are truly terrible in China but the situation in Tibet, one of the poorest regions in the country, are even worse. Figures provided by the central government are rare and difficult to check but there is no doubt that a great part of the population lives in a subsistence economy, made up of animal husbandry, herding and a little arable cultivation (mainly barley which grows abundantly). The important growing sectors of the economy are tourism and the extraction and working of minerals, principally copper. The growth of heavy industry, claimed to be 14%, has to be understood in relation to the very low starting point, but even this modest development in real terms has created amongst the Tibetans – who can mainly be considered as an enormous “industrial reserve army” – hopes of an improvement in living and working conditions. Such expectations have however had to take account of capitalist reality which has offered them little. To the continuing discrimination and ill-treatment is added their suffering in comparison with the numerous ethnically Han Chinese who have migrated into the area in the last few years. The Tibetans have a different language, a different and, on average

lower, level of education, and can only obtain permission for any type of economic activity with difficulty. This is the real condition of their very hard lives and the widespread social frustration has pushed many Tibetans to rebel, taking to the streets alongside the monks, but often with fundamentally different motives.

We therefore have to express all our class solidarity with the Tibetan workers who are demonstrating and struggling with great courage, moved by the material necessity to get better living and working conditions. But we need to clearly repeat that these aspirations can only be met if they can find a way to break from all nationalist, racist and clerical tendencies. On the contrary the struggles of the workers in Tibet need to identify above all with the proletarian protests which continually break out all over China. The power of the proletariat lies in its class unity, and the only viable road to reach it, even if it is long and difficult is the formation of networks of coordination and solidarity at regional and international levels which will unite the Tibetan workers with the Chinese and world working class for the creation of a real communist vanguard which knows how to guide the proletariat, and with it the widest layers of the poor of the region, towards emancipation through the destruction of all relations of exploitation and capitalist oppression. The internationalist slogan remains as always: "Workers of the world unite!"

Mic

[1] In a markedly different international situation compared with half a century ago it is useful to recall the role of the CIA on that occasion. It planned the actions together with Dalai Lama with the aim of weakening the opposing imperialist bloc which had China at the time lining up with the USSR. According to their own statements released in 1989 by the New York Times, the Dalai Lama was on the payroll of the American government agency, even if he took the decision some time ago to distance himself from those events and now proposes a more realistic "middle way" of autonomy for Tibet without questioning the rule of Beijing. In the re-run of March 10th in 1989 the same

Tibetan movements could be identified which would precede the protests in Tiananmen Square a few months later. The movements were suppressed at that time by Hu Jintao, the current President of the Chinese People's Republic, then local leader of the Party.

[2] The decision was however accompanied by a State Department report which was highly critical of China. The violation of the most elementary human rights in China is well known but it is on par with the organizers of Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib which hardly puts the US in a position to preach...

[3] In reality the iron control of Chinese society on the part of the CCP is largely a stereotype put forward by Western and Eastern media which, in one way or another, has every interest in covering up the mass protests which break out continually in Chinese society (see *Revolutionary Perspectives* 43). To this difficulty we can add the close scrutiny of the whole world on the events in the region as a result of the Olympic Games which forces the police to hold back as much as possible whilst they are being filmed and looked at preferring night-time actions against those elements who have been identified as the instigators of the protest.

[4] The dollar, amongst other factors, is forced down by the lowering of the discount rate imposed by the Fed in order to try to control the crisis. Various currencies, primarily the euro are trying to escape their subjection to the dollar, if not immediately rivaling it as the main international reserve currency. The important differential between the interest rates of Europe and the USA, justified by the European Central bank on the grounds that they fear a return of inflation and which the Fed has bitterly criticized many times has the further effect of depressing the value of the US currency. If we add to this the shift (either already in force or announced) from the dollar to the euro by oil sellers in countries like Iran and Venezuela we can understand why the greenback is in a difficult position.

[5] In reality the present rate of growth of the Chinese economy is in great part really due to its exports to the US and, therefore, in substance to the US debt. American indebtedness is therefore just the other side of the coin of the deficit in its

balance of trade.

[6] Numerous accounts of this can be read, as in Harrer's "Seven years in Tibet", on the abuses and corvées imposed by the Buddhist monks until the last century.

[7] Ciusani is a member of the Party of Italian Communists or PdCI (Partito dei Comunisti Italiani). They're a split from the former Stalinists of Communist Refoundation (Rifondazione Comunista), but they're now together in an electoral coalition with Rifondazione Comunista, the Green Federation (Federazione dei Verdi), and the Democratic Left (Sinistra Democratica) called the Rainbow Left ("Sinistra Arcobaleno"). Bertinotti of Rifondazione, is the "Sinistra Arcobaleno" candidate for Prime Minister.

[8] <http://pdcitorino.it/dettaglio-news.php?idnew=259>

**Review: Communicating
Vessels: Are We All Hamas and
Hezbollah? A Critical Look at
the Left's flirtation with Islamic
Fundamentalism. Issue 19,
Winter/Spring 2008.**

The latest issue of Communicating Vessels carries the article "Are We All Hamas and Hezbollah? A Critical Look at the Left's Flirtation with Islamic Fundamentalism". The publication in question is a zine with a focus on art and culture. Unlike a good many other publications, it proudly bears no ISSN or ISBN code and is still cut, pasted and copied together. Occasionally CV does pieces of a more overtly political nature. This latest is a good solid internationalist critique of the campus Trotskyist left, namely the International Socialist Organization and Left Turn, and their "critical support" for ultra-nationalist bourgeois religious fundamentalist gangs like Hamas and Hezbollah. It goes beyond this however into the origins and nature of these organizations that the issue-hoppers of the ISO and Left Turn so gladly support.

The article itself involves the personal experience of the author, and the involvement of the flirtation with the fundamentalists could have been gone into in greater detail, as could the connection and the left's demonizing of the pro-Israel lobby in the US. The author targets the shallow thinking that sought to externalize the source of the Afghan and Iraq wars making it the fault of our own bourgeoisie's Israeli client state and the equally shallow thinking of those who believe it is necessary to support a "side". Rather than finding revolutionary internationalists in these areas and supporting them it is easier for the left to support those who create the "facts on the ground", easier to support fundamentalist thugs simply because they are fighting a US backed state. For these "socialists" when they fail to defend their ideas and their actions they do not hesitate to fall back on how they are with the masses in their struggles and anyone who criticizes them is not in the traditional swaggering activist ruse.

His account of an anti-war protest in Portland in 2006 is typical of the state of what passes for being anti-war:

"The energy was unmistakably anti-Israel and anti-America. Don't get me wrong. I am no lover of Israel or America. But there seems to be a complete lack of proportion and balance. Voices of solid anti-nationalist, internationalist...were

absent. That was to be expected. It was about tolerance and multiculturalism. A respect for diversity. Valuing the differences of those present. I kept thinking that this respect for “diversity” only went so far. If I would’ve gotten up on the podium and denounced all organized religion and all nation-states, I got the sense that I would’ve been violently ejected from the stage or booed off of it for being intolerant of diversity. Similarly, if I would’ve denounced the state of Israel and Hezbollah from the podium, I suspect I would’ve experienced a large amount of hostility. So much for “diversity” and the airing of perspectives.”

What do the leftists of the ISO or Left Turn do when they are confronted by someone calling for genuine proletarian internationalism? The author continues relating his experiences:

“I was amazed at how many people there were willing to “side” with the right-wing and reactionary Hezbollah against the equally right-wing and reactionary government of Ehud Olmert. I spoke to two members of the International Socialist Organization and they both expressed support for Hamas and Hezbollah. According to them, we need to support those who are fighting the imperialists and Hamas and Hezbollah are doing that. They thought my perspective of internationalism and solidarity against all despots (not just the big visible ones like Israel and America) and organized religion was a cloudy and impractical idea. I tried explaining what happened during the Iranian revolution of 1979: sectors of the left and other radicals worked with Islamic fundamentalists to overthrow the shah. Once the mullahs took over they executed secularists, leftists and others who didn’t agree with their Islamic absolutism. I told them if a situation like that happened again, they as well as others would be some of the first to be hanged. They weren’t hearing any of it. I was wasting my breath. I talked to others and argued my viewpoint. Some maintained a stunned silence as I spoke. It was as if I was breaking a taboo by advocating against religious fundamentalism and nation-states as a whole. Other people repeated the nonsense about

having to support a force like Hezbollah in order to level the playing field in the area.”

Indeed such practical support for the forces “fighting” imperialism is in reality an abstraction divorced from reality, one in which the experiences of proletarians does not intrude, one that no amount of leftist posturing about the “real” movement can cover. Indeed, the Ayatollah was himself, once considered by leftists to be a champion of anti-imperialist struggle. This is why such leftists might talk socialism but in reality their activism and supposed “realism” are simply an elaborate means of covering up for their own meager existence as the Democratic Party’s own loyal left-wing voting bloc.

We look forward to hearing more from Communicating Vessels in the future.

ASm

Write to: Communicating Vessels. 3527 NE 15th Avenue #127, Portland, OR 97212 USA.
CV only does regular snail mail, no email or web.
A single copy is \$3 dollars, Six issues is \$16 dollars, \$25 for libraries and institutions, and is free to prisoners. The editor requests to send only cash or the cash equivalent in US postage stamps.

Communiqué

Auto Workers Force Production to Stop at FIAT Factory - Pomigliano Italy

We are publishing here, as received, a communiqué from our Italian comrades calling for support for workers at the FIAT factory of Pomigliano (NA). Workers at FIAT are experiencing the same attacks that workers in the auto industry worldwide are facing. An attack initiated by capitalists in the US will find its malevolent reflection as the auto industry itself scrambles to similarly shed itself of costs associated with labor.

TV, mass media and newspapers are saying nothing, because of FIAT opposition. Help us diffusing news to other workers. Publish on blogs, lists, and forums. Let's break this wall of silence!

Since 10.00 p.m. Thursday April 10th the Fiat Factory of Pomigliano has been forced to halt production

A workers committee formed independently of the trades union apparatus organized the mobilization. Until Sunday the workers' pickets had ensured that the strike was supported by 99% of the workforce. It was only decided on Monday April 14th to block the passage of goods, which would force the factory to shut down.

The dispute is about 316 workers claimed to be "awkward" by the firm which has decided to farm them out to the logistical centre at Nola which everyone knows is just a waiting room to redundancy. What's at stake is therefore the future if the entire workforce in the factory which has no guarantees of future employment.

The halting of trucks will continue until the 316 have been re-instated to the factory itself. It is essential that everyone supports and brings their solidarity to the workers who are picketing the firm around the clock.

To lose this battle in the biggest factory in the South would mean condemning thousands of families to poverty and unemployment. To win, on the other hand would be to strike a meaningful blow against progressive impoverishment, disorientation and job insecurity with which all workers are threatened today.

Battaglia Comunista

Capitalists and their Government Reinforce Anti-worker Attacks in Greece: Total War Against the Working Class

We are publishing here a letter, as received, from a young comrade in Greece. It gives an account of a renewed round of austerity measures and attacks on workers in Greece that may appear to our readers as an all too familiar reflection of similar attacks experience by workers in the west.

In the last few months the Greek capitalist government has carried out a great massive attack on the social security rights of the working class. The government party presented a bill, which effectively plans to reduce pensions, the prolongation of work to 68 years for working men and women, the reduction of the supplementary benefits and of wages. That's a terrible shock for the workers, especially the young and women. It's very important to remember that in Greece 25% of the population live below the poverty line. With this bill the capitalists and their government want to force the workers to work until they die.

The announcement of the government's plans provoked a considerable resistance from many sectors of the workers. During March many sectional strikes took place: transport workers, bank officers, teachers of the secondary education, dockers, employees in public services. The most important was the strikes of the electricity workers and the street cleaners. These sectors defended their welfare rights with lasting strikes. The government, the capitalist cadres of the direction of the "Public Electricity Enterprise" and the capitalist media accused the workers of an "antisocial and criminal attitude" and they started a campaign of calumny against them. But the management of the enterprise preferred to cut the electricity to homes and not to the factories and the industries. The bureaucrats of the union fractions of the right-wing government party, and of the center-left opposition Party (PASOK) with the union cadres of the capitalist Left, led to the strike. It was a trick to control the class struggle. Many times "right-wing unions" participate in the strikes against their own government; it's a proof of the weight of bourgeois ideology within the working class and of the bureaucratic erosion of the workers' consciousness. The strike of the street cleaners continued for a week. The streets were

full of rubbish and the laborers of this sector protested against the government. The media again used the weapon of calumny against the strikers; they made propaganda about the menace of epidemics.

The “general strike” organized by the trade unions on 19th March amassed 130.000 people and it was one of the biggest demonstrations in the last twenty years. The parties of the Capitalist Left (the Coalition of the Left and the “Communist” Party) demanded a referendum for the annulment of the bill and they didn’t call for a general political strike. The trade unions (General Labor Confederation) are in the hands of the center-left party and of the reformists, the “Communist” Party organized its own demonstration with the unions under its control and its fraction appealed for an “All-workers’ Militant Front”. This week the government voted the bill into law and that’s a heavy defeat for the class.

The Left has carried on demanding a plebiscite. And the bureaucrats, members of the capitalist and reformist parties control the strikes. The working class lost its last rights after the abolition of the historical right of the eight-hour workday in 2005. The trade unions are playing a total reactionary role as part of the capitalist parties and of the state. The influence of the reactionary and reformist tendencies in the workers’ movement make it all the more necessary to have an organized revolutionary communist perspective in the battles of the future.

B

Platform of the IWG/GIO

Who we are

In April of 2002 the publishers of Internationalist Notes (US) and Notes Internationalistes/ Internationalist Notes (Canada) decided to unify their efforts and constitute themselves as the Internationalist Worker's Group/Groupe Internationaliste Ouvrier. The IWG is currently the organizing committee of the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party in the US and Canada. This came as the result of years of contact and familiarization with the positions of the IBRP. The comrades of Battaglia Comunista (Partito Comunista Internazionalista) in Italy and the Communist Worker's Organisation in Britain came together in 1984 to form the IBRP and were joined by Bilan et Perspectives (France) in 2000.

What defines us as Internationalist Communists

We believe that the world revolutionary party is indispensable for the overthrow of the dictatorship of capital. This party must be the product of worker's struggles and represent the most conscious vanguard elements of the working class. This vanguard is not in any sense an elite group standing above and apart from the struggles of the class. It is not a party of generals giving orders rather it is on the frontlines of the class struggle. The party draws out the lessons of these struggles and points the way forward for the class. It has always been our position that the emancipation of the working class is the task of the workers themselves. It is a task that cannot be delegated, not even to the most conscious and prepared revolutionary party.

The foundations for this revolutionary party must be prepared for, before the revolution arises; when the revolutionary crisis arises it will be too late. History teaches us that there will be no successful revolution without a revolutionary party in the vanguard of class struggle. This revolutionary party will not arise spontaneously. It requires the conscious effort of the most conscious layers of the working class to bring it into being. Although the IWG-GIO supports laying the groundwork for a world revolutionary party of the proletariat it does not claim to be that party. We work, within the common framework of the IBRP, towards this goal.

Bourgeois Parties

All parties and groups that have claimed to be parties and organizations of the proletariat (Social Democrats, Stalinists, Maoists, Trotskyists, etc.) are enemies of the proletariat and today act as the left arm of the bourgeoisie. They pose as defenders of the working class when in fact they are precisely the opposite. All states that call themselves "socialist" or were once called "socialist" were in fact state-capitalist formations. The organizations that supported these states or cooperated with those that supported those states supported a highly centralized form of state-capitalism. However, the Russian Revolution of 1917-1918 still remains a brilliant inspiration to us. This revolution represents the only overthrow of the capitalist class that achieved any degree of success. This revolution was crushed through civil war (1918-1921) imposed from without and destroyed through counterrevolution from within. As yet there have been no socialist "states" in the world.

Imperialism

Capitalism is imperialism and imperialism means war. From its very outset, the rule of capital began to penetrate into every sphere of social life, into every corner of the globe. This process cannot be altered or reformed. Imperialism represents the most advanced stage of development reached by capitalism, it is not a political or military policy carried out by a government. The imperialist phase of capitalism opened with the outbreak of the First World War. This signified that the division of the world among the centers of imperialist power was finished. From this time onwards the bourgeoisie could only expand at the expense of their rival capitalists in a brutal struggle for the re-division of the planet. Hence, we as revolutionaries do not side with any imperialism great or small. We do not enter into united fronts with bourgeois parties nor do we mix the interests of the proletariat with any faction of the bourgeoisie.

National Liberation Movements

We do not call for the support of national liberation movements or for national self-defense because these movements mix the interests of the proletariat with the interests of their oppressors. Any calls for the support of movements of national liberation serve the capitalist class by mobilizing workers in the support of the re-division of the world in favor of one faction of the bourgeoisie or another.

Anti-fascism

Anti-fascism is an ideological tool the capitalists use to get workers to defend one faction of the bourgeoisie over another. Fascism is a form of the rule of the bourgeoisie, like Stalinism or Democratic Capitalism. The support for and defense of democratic capitalism will not help workers in their task of overthrowing the rule of capital regardless of the political cloak that the capitalist class wears. We fight capitalism in whatever form it takes.

Elections

Elections serve to suck workers into voting in a system created by the capitalists which gives their oppressors the appearance of a popular mandate. Elections cannot be used to win reforms on the behalf of workers nor can they be used as a platform for spreading revolutionary propaganda.

Unions

In the epoch of imperialism unions have been transformed from organizations for the defense of workers immediate interests into organizations for the control of workers by the bourgeoisie. They serve the interests of capital by disciplining workers and sabotaging their struggles at every turn. Unions cannot defend workers nor can they overthrow the capitalist class. They cannot be made revolutionary through a change of leadership nor can they be reborn as revolutionary unions.

Bourgeois Issue Movements

We stand against the petty sectionalism and self-absorbed narrow-minded focus of petty-bourgeois issue movements. The many facets of capitalist oppression must be understood in their proper historical-material context. We stand against all forms of exploitation and oppression but without the overthrow of the capitalist class the system that breeds exploitation and oppression will remain intact.

Our tasks

As Internationalist Communists our primary tasks are to agitate among workers wherever and whenever possible, to develop and spread the revolutionary press and to lay the groundwork for a theoretically prepared and centralized revolutionary organization. It is through debate and confrontation, the clarification of theory, that revolutionaries are defined from the left swamp.

Our theoretical positions arise from our historical experience as a political tendency. Organizationally we draw our experience from the Internationalists of the Italian Communist Left in its struggles against capitalist counterrevolution – Stalinism, fascism and democracy. This political tendency provides us with a theoretical perspective that is unique when compared to the sterile political tendencies that many of us are familiar with. In the pages of our press we shall attempt to clarify our positions. We ask that you support us in this work.

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Support Our Effort

Not only are we against capitalism, we don't have any. We are simply a group of internationalist workers seeking to build an Internationalist (Left-Communist) voice in North America. We are asking for your support, please send donations to our US address payable to IWG Publications.

IWG-GIO Pamphlet Series

#1 Holocaust & Hiroshima – Mass Murder and Imperialism in the Twentieth Century

#2 1921: Beginning of the Counter-revolution?

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