

## Country Report – USA – April 2004

By Ray O. Light Group

The main enemy of the world's people is imperialism, headed by US imperialism. The USA remains today the leading imperialist power, the lone "super-power", the number one terrorist. It has proven itself to be the most aggressive imperialist power with its launching of unprovoked, "preemptive and unending" wars, including the criminal invasion and occupation of the two sovereign states of Afghanistan and Iraq, its recent military occupation of Haiti, its increased military intervention in Colombia and the Philippines and the massive expansion of "permanent" military bases and strategic military foothold in the oil rich Middle East and Central Asia. US imperialism represents a powerful and lethal enemy of the world's people.

Contrary to the views of pacifists, social democrats and other opportunists, Leninism teaches "Imperialism means war". The US imperialist terrorist war on the workers and oppressed peoples of the world is not a deviation of the system or the outcome of a mad "lone ranger" in the White House. US imperialism's war on the world's people is the inevitable outcome of the imperialist economic system and its drive to maximize profit. US imperialism seeks to re-divide the world for the enrichment of US finance capital at the expense of its imperialist rivals and the oppressed peoples and toilers of the world.

However, US imperialism is neither monolithic, with divisions in its own ruling class, nor all-powerful, with increasing contradictions with its imperialist rivals, evident in the struggle over the oil riches of Iraq and the Middle East. It is vulnerable to strategic military overextension and to the resistance of the workers and oppressed peoples of the world. Imperialist war and occupation bring untold suffering and misery to the workers and toilers of the world. It also brings resistance, national liberation and socialist revolution.

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The United States is a multi-national state of some 280 million people formed on land taken by conquest and extermination of the native peoples (once 20 million strong) and built upon the 300 year long brutal slave trade. Nations are forged through life and are not mainly determined by imperialist state boundaries. The stolen nations and land of Puerto Rico, Hawaii and Alaska, and Aztlan (the Southwest United States) are imprisoned within the US state boundaries. The Afro-American people in the traditional black belt have forged a nation through life, oppression and struggle in the traditional black belt US South, as have the people of Appalachia living in the traditional coal mining mountain region of the United States.

In his brief but profound work, Imperialism and the Split in Socialism, more than 85 years ago, Lenin observed that "...[colonial] monopoly yields *superprofits*, i.e., a surplus of profits over and above the capitalist profits that are normal and customary all over the world. The capitalists *can* devote a part (and not a small one, at that!) of these superprofits to bribe *their own* workers, to create something like an alliance ... between the workers of the given nation and their capitalists *against* the other countries." It is this fact of life that explains why many of the oppressed and exploited in the USA today have acquiesced in or even endorse Bush's open-ended, multi-decade, declared, undeclared war on any and every country or people he and his wealthy patrons deem "terrorists." It explains the material basis for the extremely large, parasitic

and loyal US petty bourgeoisie, as well as for the political backwardness of the US working class, its great nation chauvinism, its lack of proletarian internationalism and the weaknesses of the working class and communist movement in the United States. But it would be erroneous to draw the conclusion that the relative privileged position that many US workers (particularly the white section of the working class in the US North) temporarily hold vis-à-vis the rest of the international working class means that capitalist exploitation of them has ceased. The ulcers and misery of capitalism based on the system of exploitation of man by man are all present in the USA: poverty, hunger, dangerous workplaces, low wages, unemployment, discrimination, homelessness, destruction of the environment, police brutality and repression, lack of health care and old age security. And this contradiction has intensified in the recent period.

### **The War at Home**

In our September, 2003 Newsletter, Revolutionary Workers Organization is Key, we wrote: "As we entered the new millennium, the economic system of monopoly capitalism and imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism, had been with us now for more than a century. The world capitalist economic crisis, the crisis of "over-production" from the system's point of view or "underconsumption" from the standpoint of the international working class and oppressed peoples, had been acute, leading to massive unemployment almost everywhere in the world outside the USA. This economic crisis finally began to hit home here at the beginning of 2001, right when George W. Bush was sworn in as the new (unelected) President of the USA. On the eve of 9-11, with massive lay-offs and an illegitimate presidency, George W's approval rating was already at a dangerously low 37%!

"After listing some of the most significant attacks of US imperialism on the workers and oppressed peoples within the United States carried out behind the smokescreen of the Bush "War Against Terrorism" in November 2001 we observed, "All these things, from the FTAA fast track to the plunder of the Social Security fund to the dampening of strike and union organizing activity, represent the desperate effort of US imperialism to use the political crisis as a vehicle for attempting to escape the economic crisis that over the past year had washed onto the shores of the USA from the rest of the world by placing its burden squarely on the shoulders of the working class and oppressed peoples." (*Bush's Global Terrorist War and the September 11th Events*)

***"Within the USA today, Bush's War Against the US working class and oppressed nationalities continues to grow.*** In May 2003 the US unemployment rate hit a 9-year high. Those workers still employed are in many cases working longer hours. In this setting the Bush Regime is formulating new federal rules to change the Fair Labor Standards Act enacted in 1938 requiring employers to pay one and one-half times a worker's pay for each hour worked in a week more than forty. No doubt Bush and his corporate pals are working toward elimination of overtime pay and the forty-hour work- week over the long run.

"With diversion of pension plans into stock market swindle 401K programs, last year over 4.5 million retirees over 60 years old returned to work---- up 50% from the year before! US government plunder of Social Security to help pay for Bush's unending war threatens to eliminate this basic benefit for future retirees. Within the past two years 75 million people (almost 30% of the US population) have had no health insurance coverage for a substantial

period. With the economic slowdown, the tax coffers at the federal, state and local levels have been seriously depleted leading to accelerating erosion of public school education, and other social benefits. Meanwhile, the wealthiest citizens of the USA are getting huge cuts in their capital gains and dividends taxes which will result in \$350 billion dollars less money flowing from them into government coffers. Who will make up this loss? The rich get richer and the poor get poorer, as Karl Marx so profoundly observed.

”In November 2002, the US Congress, with the Democrats controlling the Senate and the Republicans controlling the House, enacted the Homeland Security Act, at the insistence of the Bush Administration. With his establishment of the Homeland Security Department and placement of 170,000 (including many unionized) civil service government workers under the dictatorship of Homeland Security Chief Tom Ridge, George W. Bush, in the name of national security and labor flexibility, stripped these workers of all collective bargaining rights on the job. Another 700,000 workers are currently threatened with the same fate. This blow to the union movement weakens the general defense of the working class and the oppressed national minorities in their fight back efforts. Such job categories as airport baggage screeners became exclusively for US citizens, with 30,000 mainly national minority and immigrant workers fired and many former screeners deported, creating real animosity and hardship among workers. In this period the Bush Regime took an unusually aggressive stand against affirmative action plans aimed at uplifting the Afro-American people, a further attempt to fan the flames of chauvinism and division among workers of different backgrounds.

”In 2002, Homeland Security Chief Ridge, threatened the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) when they were in the midst of negotiations with the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA), saying that he would militarize the port, if they struck. Then the Bush Regime invoked the Taft-Hartley Act which was combined with the PMA’s lockout of the ILWU in an effort to intimidate the ILWU and its membership. The ILWU has been the most progressive and most internationalist of US unions throughout the entire post World War Two period. They refused to unload military ships during the Vietnam War. The ILWU struck in support of the anti-WTO protesters in Seattle in 1999.

”While most of the companies in the PMA wanted to settle with the ILWU, and they ultimately did settle, Stevedoring Services of America (SSA), the largest stevedoring company in the USA and one of the world’s largest, provided the main roadblock to settlement. They got their pay-off this year when SSA was the first company to be awarded an USAID contract for rebuilding Iraq--to manage and repair Iraqi ports, including the country’s major deep-water port in Umm Qasr--despite the fact that it had never before worked in a war zone. In June the US/British military administration at the Port transferred control of the port to SSA. This contract gives SSA a foot in the door in this region with so much oil wealth. This is one of many instances where the war of the monopoly capitalists against the working class at home is directly connected with the imperialist war against the oppressed peoples abroad.

”Finally, on the basis of the first USA Patriot Act, passed by Congress at a time of Bush-inspired mass hysteria, more than a thousand Muslim and South Asian men were rounded up in the aftermath of September 11th and held for months in violation of previous US law. Since then thousands more were ordered to report to the Immigration Service and were then deported en masse. The USA Patriot Act and its sequel represent a fundamental alteration of the bourgeois

democratic rule that has operated domestically at least since the [end of the] McCarthy Era. Even bourgeois media refer to these post 9-11 laws as totalitarian powers and witch hunting. These laws provide for secret arrest and imprisonment without charges, warrantless searches, wholesale invasion of privacy, increased police surveillance and vastly strengthened police powers over the citizenry. As we pointed out in November 2001, "the US working class and oppressed nationalities are facing a *rapid and intense militarization and fascisization of US society*." (Emphasis in original, "Bush's Global Terrorist War and the September 11th Events")

"The domestic war waged by the Bush Regime against the US population has been vital to the efforts of these thieves and cutthroats to keep such massive crimes as the multibillion dollar theft by Enron of California state energy funds from leading to the impeachment of President Bush, Vice President Cheney et al. Enron had been the biggest supporter of Bush's campaign for President of the USA. Prior to September 11th V.P. Cheney refused to turn over to Congressional Committees the records of his discussions with Enron executives regarding the new Bush Administration Energy Policy. As a result of his refusal, Cheney became the first top government leader ever charged with contempt of Congress by the General Accounting Office!

"Bush's War at Home has allowed corporate criminals such as Vice President Dick Cheney to move from the CEO position at Halliburton, the second largest provider of oil and gas pipeline services in the world, where they agreed to pay \$4 billion in cash and stock to settle more than 300,000 asbestos-related personal injury lawsuits to the top of the US government where he has been a drum major of death for the people of Afghanistan and now Iraq.

"Even more remarkable is the fact that while Cheney was Halliburton's CEO two Halliburton subsidiaries sold \$73 million worth of oil equipment and services to the Saddam Hussein Regime in Iraq!! Moreover, in violation of a 1995 Clinton Executive Order banning US trade and investment in Iran and in violation of the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act passed by Congress providing sanctions to foreign companies involved in Iran's oil industry, Halliburton provided oil equipment to Iran through its foreign subsidiaries with Cheney defending the company's actions. Even now, through this means, Halliburton continues to do business with Iran, one of Bush and Cheney's key members of the "Axis of Evil"!!! Despite similar US sanctions against doing business with Libya, another so-called "rogue state", since the US embargo against Libya was implemented in 1986, Halliburton has continued to the present day to perform work there, through its British office. In 1995 Halliburton was fined \$3.8 million for re-exporting US goods through a foreign subsidiary to Libya in violation of US sanctions.

"Yet it is the Bush-Cheney Regime that has sent the sons and daughters of the US working class to kill and be killed by citizens of these same countries in the name of national security!! The same "energy pirates" responsible for the California energy crisis of 2000-2001 and the recent blackout across much of the Northeast and Midwest in the USA (and in Canada) and in fact for the US government's energy policy (Enron, etc.) were the biggest backers of the Bush campaign in 2000. Key to the "(s)election" of George W. Bush in 2000 was the elimination of thousands of Black voters ineligible (or ruled ineligible) in Florida and elsewhere because of felony drug convictions. The opening round of Bush's global war of terror was against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan which had just carried out a successful campaign to eradicate a majority of the world's poppy production. Even before that war was declared over, as US and coalition troops moved into areas vacated by the retreating Taliban, poppy production was immediately resumed,

thus enabling the resumption of this key component in the international drug trade and ensuring that the record U.S. prison population would not be shrinking as the next US Presidential Election looms on the horizon.

”Is this not the very personification of a ”rogue regime”? ”Regime change” at home is on the order of the day. Clearly, such a regime and the system that has generated it cannot be replaced by ”the customary methods of the working class---trade unions and co-operatives, parliamentary parties and the parliamentary struggle” as Stalin described it.”

(See Revolutionary Workers Organization is Key, ROL Newsletter, Sept. 2003)

The manufacturing base in the United States continues to shrink as US finance capital, backed by military might, continues to scour the oppressed nations, semi-dependent countries and former socialist countries for cheap labor and maximum profit. Neo-liberal trade deals like NAFTA and computer technology accelerate the process. From 1979 to 2000 over 4.5 million manufacturing jobs were eliminated in the US. Since George W. Bush took office a little over three years ago, an additional 2.7 million manufacturing jobs have been lost. New jobs that are created are generally in the low wage service sector (now representing 80% of jobs) such as hotel, hospital, retail clerks and cashiers. While millions of people in the US live parasitically by clipping coupons (stocks, bonds, real estate, commodity investment, etc.), one-half of all workers live paycheck to paycheck. One area of job growth has been the prison industrial complex, a vast source of cheap labor where workers have no rights. US prison population is at an all time high with some 6.5 million people either in prison or on parole or probation, over triple the number 25 years ago.

The gap between rich and poor widens. The wealthiest 1% of the population owns the same amount of the wealth as the bottom 95%. CEO’s of the largest 500 corporations average over 500 times the salaries of their employees. (Ten times the gap between CEO’s and their workers in the other imperialist countries!)

Government regulatory agencies such as the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), established to enforce workplace safety, side more and more openly with big business and 10,000 workers are killed every year in workplace accidents.

### **Increased Repression and the Drive Toward Fascism**

The Bush forces, led by white supremacist Attorney General John Ashcroft, used the ”war fever” following 9-11 to pass draconian ”anti terrorism” laws that can be used against any force in the USA that resists any part of the corporate program for maximum profits of the wealthy, starting with the USA Patriot Act. With these new laws and other repressive measures and the active implementation of old laws such as the 1996 Clinton era ”Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act,” the US working class and oppressed nationalities are facing a rapid and intense militarization and fascisization of US society.

Bush created a new cabinet level position of Homeland Security headed by none other than former Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge who signed the execution order for Afro-American revolutionary political prisoner Mumia Abu Jamal. Congress voted a \$40 billion dollar down payment to upgrade and streamline the intelligence apparatus. This was followed by the

establishment of the new Homeland Security Department (shades of Nazi Germany) which coordinates police and enforcement agencies at the federal level. 14,000 US federal marshals have been added in the name of airline safety. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (now part of "Homeland Security") hired new agents and border patrols were beefed up. Tens of thousands of National Guard troops have been assigned to protect the "Homeland". Programs have been implemented to encourage workers to spy on workers, neighbors on neighbors, students on students.

There is currently underway a bipartisan Congressional commission conducting an investigation into the events of 9-11. This commission is thus far promoting the view that the intelligence "failures" leading up to 9-11 were both due to under-funding of the intelligence community and unnecessary legal impediments to conduct investigations. This bipartisan commission will likely serve up proposals to even further increase funding for the repressive state apparatus, and further erode civil rights by propping up and extending the process of the USA Patriot Act and the like.

The bourgeois democratic rights to protest, dissent and demonstrate within the confines of the system are being replaced by repressive martial law actions. Those who wish to demonstrate against the US President are forced into "free speech zones" out of sight of the public, or face arrest. Anti-globalization and anti-war protesters have been herded into caged areas and kept isolated from marching and demonstrating en masse. Last November (2003), 30,000 protesters, including 10,000 workers associated with the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) gathered in Miami Florida against the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA). They were met with fascistic police repression including rubber bullets, tear gas, incidents of violence set off by police provocateurs and arrests. This police response is now being promoted in law enforcement circles as "the Miami model". The fact that the brutal Miami police response was funded with \$7 million of the \$87 billion allocated to carry out the brutal occupation of Iraq is another of the many instances where the war of the monopoly capitalists against the working class at home is directly connected with the imperialist war against the working class and the oppressed peoples abroad.

### **Two Parties – One Master**

The US imperialist-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were overwhelmingly supported by representatives of both major US political parties, including Democratic Party Presidential contender John Kerry. Bush was granted full war powers with only one dissenting vote. There was overwhelming bipartisan support for the USA Patriot Act and for "Plan Colombia" with \$1.6 billion to fight against the liberation movement of Colombia and oppose the peoples in the Andean region of Latin America. With little debate and virtually no opposition, record "defense" budgets of over \$400 billion a year have been passed, as well as an additional \$87 billion allocated for the cost of the occupation and "reconstruction" of Iraq, a price tag that will continue to climb and will continue to be supported by both political parties. Both parties willingly provide billions of dollars of new funds for "homeland security".

There have been fissures within the ruling class leading up to and since the invasion and occupation of Iraq. Within the Republican Party and even within the Bush family, there were those who promoted a multilateral approach with UN participation. Key representatives of the first Bush administration like Brent Scowcroft and General Zinni promoted such a view to the

point that Bush was forced to go through the charade of seeking UN support. The Democratic Party was apparently a major force behind the formation of the pro-imperialist "Win Without War" coalition, promoting "diplomacy" in Iraq over war, while embracing the same goals of toppling the Hussein government and controlling the vast oil resources of Iraq. The differences within and between the two parties have been tactical: whether it is best for US imperialism to use multilateralism or unilateralism; whether the war in Iraq "detracted" from the "war on terror". There is full unity between the two parties on the objective of imperialist plunder and full support for the so-called "War on Terrorism".

### **Labor Lieutenants Fronting for Capital**

The AFL-CIO leadership continues to be locked in a long-standing embrace with the US imperialist government going back to its formation at the height of the anti-communist McCarthy period in 1955 following the driving out of the progressive "left" unions and leadership. AFL-CIO head John Sweeney offered full political support to George W. Bush and his "war on terror", serving up the sons and daughters of the working class to be cannon fodder on the altar of corporate profits. The Executive Council of the AFL-CIO, representing the top leadership of all the major unions in the USA, stated after the criminal invasion of Afghanistan was well underway, "We support the president in his decision to use military force...even as we recognize this struggle may well be long and difficult". Behind the scenes, the AFL-CIO leadership worked hand in glove with US imperialism's failed efforts to overthrow the popular Chavez Government of Venezuela funneling National Endowment for Democracy funds to the Chavez opposition. The AFL-CIO supports reactionary and right wing unions from Haiti to the Philippines against the genuine, class struggle oriented unions. And it was this same "social democratic" Sweeney and the AFL-CIO leadership that, after 9-11, cancelled long planned anti-IMF protests scheduled in Washington, D.C. as part of their efforts to line up the working class behind George W. Bush.

"Once they had put their prestige behind Bush it was impossible for these leaders to defend on the domestic front even the most immediate and partial interests of their own members against the Bush-led corporate pirates with their economic stimulus packages for tax breaks for the rich, massive corporate lay-offs, the Bush energy policy sponsored by Enron, the fast track vote on the FTAA, etc." (See The Social Props of Bush's Terrorist War, ROL Newsletter, March 2002)

The workers self-defense organization of trade unions is now at its lowest rate of membership since the early part of the last century with some 13% of workers in unions and less than 9% of the private sector. Factories are routinely closed with no organized resistance. Only a few unions do serious organizing and even this is on a "business unionist" basis. Such decline in the trade union movement has a direct correlation to the diminishing standard of living of the US working class. On the other hand the AFL-CIO withholds no resources when it comes to attempting to deliver votes to the Democratic Party, the so-called "friends of labor".

With a few notable exceptions such as the successful Teamsters strike against United Parcel Service a few years ago, organized labor in the USA has largely abandoned the weapon of strike, a reflection of its extremely defensive position. Nevertheless, there was a recent major four month strike/lockout of some 74,000 grocery store workers in California in response to company demands to increase worker health insurance costs, previously paid in full by the companies. The union leadership had not developed the necessary united front with other workers and the

community that they could rely on to defeat the united front of the employers, and the strike ended in defeat. However, the workers displayed some real readiness to struggle, a positive sign for the future.

Facing extinction, the AFL-CIO leadership now pays lip service to union organizing. It has reversed its decades long divide and conquer anti-immigrant worker position and is now calling for amnesty for undocumented workers in the US, a positive step toward unifying the working class. The AFL-CIO also called on unions to participate in the November demonstrations in Miami against the FTAA and well over 10,000 trade unionists responded. In spite of the efforts of the AFL-CIO bureaucracy to lead the workers down a path of social chauvinism since the "battle in Seattle", the worsening economic crisis and the anti-globalization movement continue to present real opportunities for mobilizing the US working class and oppressed nationalities in international solidarity against US imperialism. All these developments provide a wider opportunity for revolutionaries to work within the US trade union movement.

### **Media Organizes for War, Imperialist Culture Conditions the Masses**

The US monopoly capitalist controlled media joined in lockstep in justifying the march to war and becoming part of the propaganda machine of the US government. The disturbing events of 9-11 were shown thousands of times over, week after week, month after month in a mass media brainwashing -- planting the horrific images into the psyche of the masses. They created a frenzy for revenge and for the Bush terrorist war against humanity. TV reporters embedded with US troops during the invasion of Iraq, turned the war into a "sporting" event, cheering the home team. Dan Rather, the anchorman of CBS evening news, took to the talk show circuit as a drum major for war. In news reports, the corporate controlled media consistently labels resistance fighters in Iraq as "terrorists"; US mercenaries as "contractors". They create staged events such as the pulling down of the Saddam Hussein statue in Baghdad by the "masses" of the people, without showing either the US tank and soldiers that did it or the empty square devoid of the multitudes. Goebbels would have been proud of the US media.

The entire imperialist system is based on lies and corruption. The US government with the help of the compliant and bought off media covered up connections between the Bush and bin Laden families through the Carlyle Group, the 10<sup>th</sup> largest defense contractor. Likewise it buried the long standing CIA connections with bin Laden and the Taliban as well as with Saddam Hussein. What Bush and the administration knew before 9-11 was covered up, as were the economic reasons centering around oil for invading and occupying Afghanistan. The ramp up to war and the ensuing occupation of Iraq were based on lie heaped on lie—the alleged existence of weapons of mass destruction, the alleged Al-Qaida/Saddam Hussein connection, the alleged formulation of a nuclear program in Iraq, the alleged bringing of "democracy" and the projected jubilant response of the Iraqi people welcoming US troops as "liberators". Hidden initially was the fact that the Bush administration was already planning for war in Iraq prior to 9-11 and the fact that giant energy and construction firms of Halliburton and Bechtel were given contracts to "rebuild" Iraq prior to the actual invasion.

US imperialist culture, with which the media is interconnected, promotes the individualism, materialism, violence and decadence of US imperialist society. US youth average 35 hours a week in front of television sets. Clever ads, often sold with sexual themes, push crass

consumerism. The onslaught of "reality" TV shows like "Survivor", promote getting ahead at the expense of everyone else. The new hot "reality" TV show is "The Apprentice" where billionaire mogul Donald Trump fires the contestants who are trying to get a job. The slogan, "You're Fired!" has now become an accepted and "positive" part of the cultural landscape, helping to solidify the bosses' power over the working class. Rush Limbaugh, the rabidly white supremacist, anti-union, anti-worker, anti-immigrant pro-war right winger, is the highest paid radio talk show host "earning" \$31 million a year for spewing his poison!

"The Passion", the new controversial anti-Semitic movie depicting the Christ crucifixion is already one of the top grossing movies of all time. It not only pushes mysticism, but intolerance of other religions and people. This fits nicely into the Bush-led "war of terror" as US imperialism in its new Christian "crusade" invades majority Muslim countries and intimidates and rounds up Muslim people at home.

### **The Anti-War Movement**

Initially, in an orgy of national unity, fostered by mass propaganda and brain washing, the vast majority of the US people, including its working class, tragically supported the US imperialist so-called "war on terror". Bush's approval ratings soared to 90%. The one notable exception of opposition to the Bush policies was the majority of Afro-American people. This reaction was undoubtedly based on the Afro-American people's own experience of 400 years of US terror and the current experience of national oppression: "last hired, first fired"; lower pay and life expectancy; limited access to education and healthcare; Bush attacks on affirmative action programs; police brutality and murder; the highest incarceration and death penalty rates; stolen land and the stolen 2000 election based on the theft of Afro-American (and other) votes in Florida. While the Bush Administration has cleverly placed Secretary of State Colin Powell and National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice in high places, and this has undoubtedly played a role in keeping large masses of Afro-American people from joining in the anti-war protests in the streets and kept them serving in the military, it has nevertheless failed in winning the hearts and minds of the Afro-American people for war.

The Bush war drive and its lie machine did not go entirely unchallenged even in the "belly of the beast". New York City Labor Against the War (NYCLAW), formed by courageous trade unionists within two weeks after 9-11, provided an objectively anti-imperialist response within the trade union movement. At first a lone voice, they were joined in time by a number of local, state and even a few national unions opposing the Bush war drive, especially as the invasion of Iraq was being ramped up. A series of positive and large demonstrations were held in Washington and San Francisco and many other cities around the country culminating in massive demonstrations on February 15, 2003 where there were 500,000 people in NYC alone. In this latter protest there were with far more working class and national minority participants than at the previous anti-war demonstrations.

Lacking clear and decisive anti-imperialist and communist leadership, two glaring weaknesses developed in the movement even as it was growing large in early 2003. First was the view that the war in Iraq was "different" from the US imperialist war on Afghanistan, that is was separate from the Bush-led imperialist war of terror against the world's people. Even in most "leftist" circles by this time there was nary a mention of Afghanistan. Second was the view, pushed and

accepted by various shades of opportunists from Trotskyites, social democrats, revisionists, pacifists and anarchists (including the Workers World Party which nevertheless played an anti-imperialist role as the driving force behind the ANSWER coalition) that we could "stop the imperialist war in Iraq before it starts" without dealing with the imperialist system itself or acknowledging the US imperialist war against the Iraqi people had been waged for 10 years. After the actual military invasion of Iraq and the quick initial US military victory, both these opportunist tendencies helped lead to confusion and demoralization among the many new anti-war activists and an ebb in the growing anti-war movement internationally and especially within the USA.

On March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2004, the day of worldwide anti-war activities on the one-year anniversary of the open invasion of Iraq, there were once again positive anti-war actions in over 250 cities in the US. These included over 100,000 demonstrators in NYC, 50,000 in San Francisco and even a demonstration in Fayetteville, North Carolina, the home of Fort Bragg, one of the main US military bases used for aggression abroad. These included leaders, speakers and participants from the significant and growing US Military Families Against the War movement as well as Veterans for Peace. The March 20<sup>th</sup> actions, combined with the developing resistance of the Iraqi people against the increasing brutal U.S. occupation, should help reinvigorate the anti-imperialist war movement in the United States.

### **Quandary and Quagmire: At Home and Abroad**

The imperialist ruling class of the United States is in a deepening military and political quagmire in Iraq. They are over-extended militarily with two major invasions and occupations. (As always, the imperialists underestimate the ability of the masses of the people to make history.) They have had to invoke "stop loss" measures extending the tour of duty of units in combat and call up more and more National Guard and Reservists creating greater discontent among the soldiers themselves. The "lone ranger" Bush government is now begging the United Nations and international community to bail them out. After having successfully bullied and bribed almost every government in the world to join its worldwide terrorist coalition "against terror" in support of the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, US imperialism is successively more isolated from the world community in relation to the war in Iraq. Even the so-called "coalition of the willing" is breaking apart with the Spanish government withdrawing its troops, reflecting a mandate of Spain's populace, followed by the Dominican Republic and Honduras. Despite offering huge bribes, the US has never been able to utilize Turkish troops. It is very significant that the US imperialists have not yet succeeded in getting Muslims to fight Muslims.

The Bush administration and US imperialism are also in a deepening political quagmire right at home in the United States. They stand exposed as the corrupt liars they are. The economic basis for occupation of Iraq is more and more exposed. Vice President Cheney's Halliburton and subsidiary Brown and Root reap massive cost plus contracts in the so-called "reconstruction" of Iraq. On top of this, Halliburton has been caught with their "hands in the cookie jar", bilking the US government for artificially inflated fuel prices and other fraudulent charges.

As the resistance in Iraq grows, as unity between Sunni and Shiite Muslim communities increases, the working class of the US, who in their majority has supported the war, is left holding the body bags of their sons and daughters who had been forced into an economic draft.

US mercenaries who are now performing some 40% of military functions in Iraq are more and more facing the righteous wrath of the developing Iraqi resistance. While bourgeois polls showed 90% of the US population supported Bush in the aftermath of 9-11 and the invasion of Afghanistan, the same polls now show that one-half the US population opposes the current war in Iraq and George W. Bush's approval rating hovers around 50%. The orchestrated May 1, 2003 declaration of George W. Bush atop the aircraft carrier proclaiming "Mission Accomplished" and victory in Iraq is exposed as more ludicrous by the day.

Over the last three months the Bush administration has also been exposed from within. First, former Secretary of the Treasury Paul O'Neill exposed that Bush planned for war in Iraq starting a few days after he took office in January 2001. Then, David Kay, Bush's head weapons hunter in Iraq, quit his job saying there were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Now, Richard Clarke, former White House anti-terrorism chief, has exposed that Bush ignored warnings of a 9-11 type of attack and stayed fixated on Iraq even after 9-11.

The system reeks with corruption and scandal. Bush is an unelected president, the product of a stolen election. Massive corporate scandals from Enron (largest Bush donor), WorldCom, to Imclone involving insider trading and "cooking the books", left workers and investors high and dry, and represented multi-billion dollar thefts. Few of these robber barons have gone to jail. The big oil and energy administration in Washington (Bush and Cheney are both oilmen) turned to the industry (including Enron!) to set Bush's energy policy. Cheney is now the first top government official to be cited for contempt of Congress for refusing to supply his records of these discussions with energy companies. And Supreme Court Justice Scalia, who will eventually be ruling on Cheney's case and was part of the five unelected judges that placed Bush into the presidency, has just returned from a hunting trip with VP Cheney and refuses to reclusify himself!

Battered by political scandal and corruption, growing economic and social suffering of the US populace, and the military quagmire in the face of the Iraqi resistance and the difficulty in controlling its reactionary allies in Afghanistan, the Bush Administration and US imperialism may well create a "Reichstag Fire", a CIA manufactured incident, to provoke the masses of US people back into full support of the Bush Administration and its war of terror before the next election. Veteran bourgeois journalist Bob Woodward has revealed that the Bush Administration has already made a deal with Saudi Arabia to lower oil prices in order to lower gasoline prices in the USA later this year in an attempt to manipulate the public and the outcome of the November presidential election. Having used thuggery and skullduggery to wrest the US presidency in 2000, there is a good likelihood for a Bush cabal putsch in some form before the election is held, if it is held.

### **Conclusion**

In our September 2003 Newsletter, "To Stop the Bush-led War at Home and Abroad, Revolutionary Workers Organization is Key" we said, "Within the USA, genuine international working class solidarity by the US working class with the Iraqi working class involves fighting for an end to US military occupation of Iraq by any means necessary, including support for the Iraqi national liberation struggle. It involves working for the overthrow of the Bush Regime and the global system of imperialist exploitation and plunder."

”... in the USA today, ‘nothing could be more important’ than the establishment of a strong anti-imperialist movement composed of anti-war, anti-globalization and anti-fascist elements with the cutting edge demand to ”Bring the Troops Home Now!” as its key link to the rest of the international working class and the oppressed peoples. ... such a movement can only be consistently and effectively led by the US working class through its revolutionary party, a genuine Leninist Party, a party linked to the rest of the international working class and to the national liberation movements of the oppressed peoples of Arabia, Asia, Africa and Latin America.”

While there is today no Marxist-Leninist Party in the USA, the sharpening contradictions in the United States itself provide an impetus to the struggle of the workers and oppressed peoples within the state boundaries of the USA to organize and resist. Many US workers are questioning ”our” ruler’s imperialist conduct not only on the issue of imperialist war but on the issues of trade and globalization (remember the Battle in Seattle in 1999) and domestic policies as well. Well over one million US people have taken their opposition into the streets. Working class troops are returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, lied to by the government, and with eyes opened and questions unanswered. While the danger of fascism is growing, the opportunities for revolutionary work and activity amongst the masses are increasing as well.