

One year since the US invasion of Iraq

Statement of the World Socialist Web Site and Socialist Equality Party

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One year after the US invasion of Iraq, the lies upon which the war was based have been completely exposed.

There were no Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. There were no ties between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda—although Islamic fundamentalist terrorists may now be active in US-occupied Iraq. The Iraqi people did not welcome the American military as their liberators. Many resisted with arms in hand, and the vast majority looked upon the occupation authority as a colonial regime to be expelled as quickly as possible.

The lie that the war was waged to bring democracy to Iraq and the Middle East has been thoroughly exposed by US actions in Iraq and elsewhere. In Iraq, the US occupation authority has ruled out elections and instead plans to declare its stooge governing council the “sovereign” government—one that will sanction the indefinite continuation of the US military presence and the exploitation of the country’s oil wealth by US and British companies.

In Haiti, Washington engineered an armed coup against an elected government in order to install a regime of murderers and political thugs directly beholden to the Haitian elite—one that will be more subservient to US dictates.

The first anniversary of the war has been marked by a major turning point in the world political situation—the popular upsurge in Spain that brought down the right-wing government headed by Bush’s accomplice, José Maria Aznar. The intensely felt and widespread opposition to the war internationally—which took the form of mass demonstrations mobilizing more than 20 million people worldwide in February 2003—found renewed expression in the election results of March 14. Aznar’s Popular Party was thrown out of office and replaced by the social-democratic PSOE, which had pledged to withdraw Spanish troops from Iraq.

The Spanish election sent shudders through every imperialist government—not only the direct participants in the assault on Iraq, Bush and Blair, and those who joined the occupation, like Italy’s Berlusconi and Australia’s Howard, but also the leaders of the powers that opposed the invasion, such as Chirac in France and Schröder in Germany. All of them are aghast at the prospect of the direct intervention of masses of working people to effect a change in imperialist foreign policy.

The defeat of Aznar has provoked an especially frenzied reaction in the American political and media establishment. Bush administration spokesmen, congressional Democrats as

well as Republicans, and countless media pundits have denounced the Spanish people for “capitulating to terrorism” in the wake of the Madrid train station bombings that occurred three days before the election.

There is a deeply anti-democratic component to these slanders against the Spanish people. The underlying premise—stated or unstated—is that major questions of government policy such as war cannot be left to the people to decide. The implication is that elections themselves are a luxury that should be discarded if they interfere with the pursuit of the global economic and geo-political interests of the American ruling elite.

It has been widely reported in the Spanish media and on the Internet that the Popular Party, feeling the ground shifting beneath its feet the day before the election, approached King Juan Carlos with a proposal for a royal decree postponing the election. The king declined, saying this would amount to a coup d’etat.

The US reaction to the Spanish vote poses very directly the question of what the response of the Bush administration would be to a terrorist attack in the run-up to the US election. As the *World Socialist Web Site* has warned, there is every possibility that such an attack would become the pretext either for canceling the presidential election outright, or holding it under such conditions of police-military mobilization that it would amount to an exercise in mass intimidation.

The electoral upset in Spain has shattered any pretense that the Democratic Party opposes the war in Iraq. Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry responded to the threats of the Spanish prime minister-elect to withdraw his country’s troops from Iraq by declaring: “In my judgment, the new prime minister should not have decided that he was going to pull out of Iraq. He should have said this increases our determination to get the job done.”

Kerry repudiated the comments of Howard Dean, who suggested that Bush’s decision to go to war in Iraq “apparently had been a factor in the death of 200 Spaniards over the weekend.”

In the weeks since he clinched the nomination, Kerry has been at pains to reassure the ruling elite that he will not challenge the rationale for the conquest of Iraq, but will confine his criticisms of the Bush administration to tactical prescriptions on how to wage war more effectively by enlisting international support. He is telling the corporate and political establishment that his election is necessary to change the

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international climate and provide a political cover for the European powers, acting under the umbrella of the United Nations, to buttress the US occupation by sending their own military forces into Iraq.

Kerry's position was summed up by "liberal" *New York Times* foreign policy columnist Thomas Friedman, who published a March 18 attack on the Spanish electorate under the headline "Axis of Appeasement," in which he called for sending more US troops into Iraq.

These developments underscore the significance of the orchestrated drive to scuttle Dean's bid for the Democratic nomination. Despite the former Vermont governor's assurances that he too supported the so-called "war on terror" and was opposed to the withdrawal of US troops from Iraq, he was considered too closely associated with the mass anti-war sentiment to be permitted to run as the Democratic candidate.

The ruling elite, utilizing the media, intervened to take the issue of the war out of the presidential campaign and ensure that any potential replacement for Bush could be relied on to continue the basic thrust of the current administration's policies. At the same time, the political and media establishment provided a platform for left-talking candidates Al Sharpton and Dennis Kucinich, who performed the critical service of fostering the illusion that the Democratic Party can serve as a vehicle for seriously improving the conditions of working people.

The overwhelming consensus of the American political and corporate elite—Democratic as well as Republican—is that the war in Iraq must be continued and the repression of the Iraqi people intensified. It is a misnomer to call this illegal and predatory enterprise "Bush's war." Both parties are committed to a policy of using military force to establish the global hegemony of US imperialism.

For all the mud-slinging between Kerry and Bush, the Democrats represent no genuine alternative for working people, and this applies to jobs, health care, education, housing and the defense of democratic rights, no less than militarism and war. The Iraq war is a bipartisan undertaking of the two-party system—the long-standing instrument of the American ruling elite to insure its political monopoly and deprive the working class of any means for effecting fundamental change.

Basic lessons have to be drawn from such fundamental political experiences as the war in Iraq, the Spanish election, and Democratic Party's embrace of the continued US occupation. There can be no viable anti-war movement so long

as it remains tied to the Democratic Party. The struggle against war requires something more than a protest movement that seeks to pressure the parties and institutions of the ruling elite. It requires a complete break with the Democrats and the implementation of a new strategy—based on the independent political mobilization of working people, in the United States and internationally, against imperialism.

The Socialist Equality Party is intervening in the 2004 elections to present before the widest possible audience the socialist alternative to war, social reaction and the assault on democratic rights. Our presidential and vice presidential candidates, Bill Van Auken and Jim Lawrence, as well as SEP congressional candidates, will utilize the elections to fight for the development of an independent political movement of working people on the basis of a socialist and internationalist program.

We reject the position of those who oppose a socialist alternative on the grounds that the only issue is the defeat of Bush. Such a position ignores the real roots of militarism, war and social reaction—the crisis of American and world capitalism. It is an illusion and a trap, which only reinforces the political monopoly of the financial oligarchy exercised through the two-party system. A vote for Kerry is not a vote against the Iraq war. It is a vote for a trusted representative of American imperialism pledged to continue the occupation of Iraq and the overall colonialist policy of the US ruling elite.

The central issue in the 2004 election is the need to establish the political independence of the working class from all of the political representatives of American imperialism.

The Socialist Equality Party election campaign aims to create a genuine anti-war movement that will link the fight against militarism with all of the social issues facing working people—jobs, living standards, health care, education and the defense of democratic rights.

We are placing at the center of our campaign the demand for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of American military forces from Iraq, Afghanistan and the entire Middle East and Central Asia.

We call on all those who oppose imperialist war and the colonialist occupation of Iraq to support the SEP election campaign. Read our election statement, which is posted on the *World Socialist Web Site*. Contact the WSWS editorial board and the SEP and join in the campaign to place our candidates on the ballot. Join the Socialist Equality Party and help make it the mass socialist party of the working class.

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