

US barbarism in Iraq

The way forward in the struggle against imperialist war

World, Socialist Equality Party
11 April 2003

The following statement is being distributed by supporters of the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party at antiwar demonstrations taking place this weekend in Washington, San Francisco and Los Angeles. It has been posted on the WSWS as a PDF file. We urge all of our readers to download this statement and distribute it at antiwar rallies and meetings, as well as at work locations and other public venues.

Having watched in horror the slaughter of Iraqi soldiers and civilians alike, people around the world are demonstrating this weekend to express their revulsion over the US-British war of aggression. In Washington, San Francisco and Los Angeles large numbers will march on April 12-13 to disassociate themselves from the murderous policies of the Bush administration and express their solidarity with the Iraqi people.

Those who march today are well aware that global antiwar protests by millions earlier this year—the largest in the history of the world—failed to halt the US invasion. All who are determined to fight against this and future acts of imperialist barbarism confront the need for a new political strategy to carry forward this fight.

An effective struggle against war must find firmer political foundations than moral outrage alone. It requires an understanding of the underlying causes of militarism and the development of a program capable of mobilizing the social forces that can put an end to war and the system that creates it.

The US-British conquest of Iraq is an atrocity of world-historic proportions. Confirmed civilian casualties already number in the thousands. Hospitals are admitting 100 patients an hour. They are awash in the blood of women and children hit by tank fire, cluster bombs and shrapnel from cruise missiles. Overworked surgeons are performing amputations without anesthesia and lack even water to clean wounds. Corpses are stacked like cords of wood.

The roads to Baghdad are littered with the burnt-out hulks of civilian vehicles, their passengers lying dead in the road beside them. These killings are calculated and premeditated. Once the US military encountered unexpected resistance from both Iraqi soldiers and civilians in the opening days of the invasion, the order was given to implement a policy of mass slaughter.

So-called “pockets of resistance”—snipers bullets and small arms fire—are being answered with air strikes and devastating artillery barrages. The infamous prescription of the Vietnam War era—“We had to destroy the village to save it”—is being applied in heavily populated urban areas.

The number of Iraqi soldiers killed remains unknown. Most of them draftees as young as 17, these troops have been incinerated in carpet bombing by B-52s, artillery barrages and strafing by attack helicopters. Those who survived have launched heroic attempts to stop the US and British invaders, only to be mowed down by fire from tanks and armored vehicles that have proven largely immune to the light arms of the Iraqi

defenders. In its first “drive-by” assault on the streets of the Iraqi capital, the US military claimed to have killed some 3,000 Iraqis, while suffering only one American casualty.

An entire generation of Iraqi young men is being exterminated. Not since the European rape of Africa or the Indian wars in the US has there been such an unequal conflict. With a population more than 10 times as large as Iraq’s and a military budget that is nearly 3,000 times greater, Washington launched its cowardly invasion of the Middle Eastern country only after first subjecting it to continuous bombardment and economic sanctions that starved it of the most basic resources over the course of a decade.

Those waging this war in the name of “freedom” and “democracy” have deliberately targeted journalists who dare to report the carnage and fail to toe the line of the Pentagon censors. Nothing could make more explicit the depravity of the American media than the attempt of many US commentators to justify the bombing of Al-Jazeera and shelling of journalists’ quarters.

While the US military has seized control of Baghdad, no one should be under any illusion. The carnage will continue. There are not enough troops to police a city of 5 million, much less the rest of the country, and those who are there will resort to overwhelming force and terror as they settle into an open-ended occupation of Iraq.

It is only a matter of time before the US soldiers and marines are ordered to fire upon the same cheering crowds of impoverished looters that have inspired such repellent triumphalism among the media and the right-wing supporters of the war.

Even as fighting continued in Iraq, a report came from Afghanistan that US warplanes had bombed a house, massacring 11 civilians, most of them women and children. More than 8,000 American troops remain there 18 months after the US invaded.

The warmongers in the Bush administration have already threatened that Iran and Syria will be “held accountable” for allegedly “interfering” with the US invasion. American forces attacked a clearly marked convoy of Russian diplomats leaving Iraq. The logic of imperialist conquest means that the next war of aggression is already well beyond the planning stage.

It is increasingly apparent to people all over the world that the greatest threat facing mankind is the global eruption of American militarism.

The US government—both the Republicans in the Bush administration and the Democrats in Congress—the major corporations and banks, the media and every other institution of the American establishment have blood on their hands. The war in Iraq is being waged for imperialist plunder. It is in flagrant violation of international law. Its aim is the seizure of the vast oil wealth of the country and its transformation into a colonial protectorate.

Behind the lies about Baghdad’s “weapons of mass destruction” and

alleged ties to terrorism, as well as the hypocritical denunciations of Saddam Hussein's tyranny, the gangsters in the White House decided they could steal an entire country and nobody could stop them. They are guilty of war crimes, including the most serious under the standards of the Nuremberg Trials of Nazi leaders: the planning and execution of a war of aggression.

The war cabal in Washington attempts to implicate the entire American people in this atrocity. But the war is being fought in the interests of the American financial oligarchy. The violent subjugation and colonization of Iraq in no way expresses the interests of American working people. On the contrary, this war crime only strengthens those forces most rabidly hostile to the social conditions and democratic rights of the working class.

While the young American soldiers sent to kill or be killed in Iraq will return home to find that jobs, money for education and benefits for veterans are all being slashed, those who have promoted the war—the oil companies, arms contractors, construction firms and their political stooges—hope to reap a windfall from the shattered country.

Behind the jingoism and cynical calls to "Support our troops," the US war fever is driven by a profound social crisis within the US, whose most essential feature is an historically unprecedented level of social inequality between the vast majority of working people and a thin layer of multimillionaires and billionaires who control the government, the media and the Pentagon.

The gangsterism in foreign policy, like the criminality in the corporate boardrooms and finance houses, is not simply the product of the twisted politics of the clique in Washington. Rather, their rise to power and their policies express the desperate attempt of America's ruling elite to defend its economic interests under conditions of a deepening crisis of American capitalism.

Hand-in-hand with war abroad, the administration is embarked upon the destruction of democratic rights at home. Its aim is to create an atmosphere of fear and intimidation in which all political opposition to the policies of the ruling elite can be silenced. The roundup of Arab and Muslim immigrants and the gutting of Constitutional protections have now been joined with violent repression against opponents of the war.

The use of wooden and rubber bullets, concussion grenades and other paramilitary weapons against demonstrators and dockworkers in Oakland, California April 7, as well as the mass arrest the same day of over 100 people engaged in legal protest in New York City, constitute a grave warning. The administration in Washington would welcome its own Kent State-style massacre.

Backed by the corporate-run mass media, the administration is attempting to mobilize its "base" among the police and the most backward and reactionary sections of the population. Contained within these dangerous developments are the seeds of a fascist movement.

Despite the campaign of government intimidation and the propaganda spewed out by the media, the majority of the American population does not share these views. No one should be fooled by the illusory claims of the opinion pollsters. Stunned by the eruption of violence and benumbed by the senseless cheerleading of the "embedded" journalists, broad layers of working people remain deeply disturbed and repelled by the slaughter being carried out in their name.

The same administration that cynically promises the "liberation" of Iraq and a new life of liberty and prosperity for its people pursues policies that condemn growing numbers of American working people to lives of privation. More than 2 million workers have lost their jobs since Bush took office, nearly half a million of them in the past two months alone.

Even an early end of the fighting in Iraq will not reverse the downward economic spiral, which is the product of a fundamental crisis within the capitalist economy, expressed most sharply in the protracted decline in the profit rates of manufacturing industries.

Just as it has backed Bush on the war in Iraq, the Democratic Party

provides the administration with the support it needs to carry out an oppressive social policy at home. On all essential questions, it stands with the Republicans in defending the profits and privileges of the American financial oligarchy.

Those who suggest that protest can push this party of big business into fighting the policies of Bush and claim that the election of a Democrat in 2004 will reverse the global rampage of American imperialism are engaging in either self-delusion or political charlatanry. The interests of the vast majority of the working people, those who depend upon a paycheck for their livelihood, can find no expression in the two-party system.

Similarly, the illusion that the United Nations or the European powers can serve as a bulwark against war has been thoroughly exposed. All of them are now seeking to make their accommodation with American imperialism, offering to legitimize the war and US occupation of Iraq in return for a share of the spoils.

The struggle against war requires the organization of the great mass of the American working population as an independent political force, fighting for its own interests against those of the financial oligarchy. It alone—allied with the working people internationally—has a potential power greater than that of the ruling elite with its smart bombs and cruise missiles.

The struggle against militarism and imperialist war can be carried forward only through the mobilization of the working class—independent of the Democrats and Republicans—against the entire capitalist system of class privilege and oppression.

Such a movement must be based on internationalism: the fundamental principle that working people in every country share common interests and a common oppressor and must unite in a struggle to harness the world economy to serve the interests of mankind as a whole.

The simultaneous eruption of antiwar mobilizations in every corner of the world foreshadows the emergence of an independent political movement of workers internationally on the basis of a common perspective of social equality, the defense of democratic rights, and peace.

The development of such a conscious world movement is the political goal of the *World Socialist Web Site*. Its aim, and that of the Socialist Equality Party, is not to organize more and bigger protests for their own sake. Rather, we strive to prepare working people all over the world to take political power and create the foundations of a socialist society that can put an end to war.

We call upon all those searching for a means to fight against this criminal war to participate in this historic task by actively working for the WSWS, building its readership, contributing articles and supporting it financially. We urge you to study the program and history of the Socialist Equality Party and make the decision to join and build it.



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