

Public meetings of the World Socialist Web Site and Socialist Equality Party

Lessons of the Iraq War: the tasks of the European working class

17 May 2003

Berlin

Sunday, 1 June, 3:00 p.m.
Berlin-Mitte
Dietrich-Bonhoeffer-Haus
Hotel und Tagungszentrum
Ziegelstraße 30 (near S-Bahnhof Friedrichstr.)

London

Sunday, 22 June, 2:00 p.m.
University of London Union
Malet Street
London
WC1E 7HY
Room 3A
(Nearest Underground Stations: Euston Square & Goodge Street)

The war against Iraq represents a turning point in international politics. The US has made clear that it is no longer prepared to recognise international institutions or abide by international laws, and intends to rely instead on its military strength to further its interests. Other countries are left with the choice of either siding with the US and receiving a few crumbs in the way of compensation, or being ignored, punished ... or bombed. "Either you are with us or you are against us," as President Bush put it.

Iraq is just the first step. The ultimate aim of US imperialism is the reorganisation of the entire region and the establishment of a new world order. What is the content of this world order? It is the submission of the entire planet to the needs of American big business and the most naked forms of colonial-style looting and capitalist exploitation. The shattering of Iraq, the slaughter of its people, the destruction of thousands of

years of Iraqi culture while oil wells and ministries are carefully protected as prelude to their privatisation—this is operation "Iraqi Freedom" in a nutshell.

Bourgeois Europe has demonstrated its complete inability to oppose this course of events. Under American pressure, the Continent's much vaunted common foreign policy collapsed like a house of cards. The US has deliberately used its influence to split the European powers and pit them against one another.

Even those governments that rejected the war restricted their resistance to verbal and diplomatic gestures. The decision by the German Social Democratic-Green Party government to open German air space for the war and allow the free functioning of US bases on German territory was of far more practical consequence than its rejection of a United Nations resolution in favour of the war.

After Washington's military success against a near-defenceless opponent, declarations of loyalty to the American government are piling up. The inability of European governments to provide any serious alternative to the threat arising from American imperialism is rooted in their own social character and programme. German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder's "Agenda 2010" is aimed at introducing American-style "free market" conditions in Germany and is arousing the opposition of broad layers of the population.

Millions across Europe and all over the world took to the streets to express their opposition to the Iraq war. But the outcome confronts all those opposed to imperialist war with tasks that cannot be resolved by movements limited to the issue of peace. The struggle against war must be bound up with the fight for a

different form of society. The only means by which Europe can be united in a progressive and harmonious fashion and made a counter pole to American imperialism is a unification from below, effected by the European working class in unity with its class brothers and sisters in the US and internationally, and in struggle against its own capitalist ruling elites. The alternative to a fractured Europe of the big banks and corporations is the United Socialist States of Europe.

Speakers in Berlin are:

David North: chairman of the International Editorial Board of the WSW and national secretary of the Socialist Equality Party of the US

Chris Marsden: member of the WSW International Editorial Board and national secretary of the Socialist Equality Party of Great Britain

Peter Schwarz: member of the WSW International Editorial Board and member of the executive of the Partei für Soziale Gleichheit of Germany

Speakers in London are Peter Schwarz and Chris Marsden.



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