

Greetings from David North to Australian SEP:

A devastating blow to the myth of American invincibility

12 April 2004

The following greetings were sent by David North, chairman of the International Editorial Board of the World Socialist Web Site and national secretary of the Socialist Equality Party (US), to a membership meeting of the Socialist Equality Party in Australia on April 10-11.

Dear comrades,

Please accept the warmest greetings of your comrades and co-thinkers in the United States as you begin your weekend meeting in Sydney.

The events of the past week represent a powerful confirmation of the essential premise of Marxism that the struggle of the oppressed masses represents the mightiest factor in the historical process. On the first anniversary of its entry into Baghdad, the American military forces are under siege as they confront an uprising of the Iraqi people. Whatever the immediate outcome of this stage of the fighting, the myth of American invincibility has been shattered. More concretely, the uprising has dealt a devastating blow to the Bush administration's strategy for the reduction of Iraq to the status of a colonial protectorate of the United States.

A basic assumption of Washington has been that it could exploit and manipulate divisions between Sunni and Shia communities in a manner that would render both incapable of effectively resisting American domination. The United States also believed that potential opposition within the Shia community could be neutralized merely on the basis of agreements worked out with a small layer of elite elements grouped around the Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani. When Mr. L. Paul Bremer made his fateful decision two weeks ago to provoke a confrontation with Moqtada al-Sadr, he was confident that crushing the movement grouped around

this young cleric would be a relatively simple matter.

The spontaneous uprising that arose in defense of al-Sadr took Bremer entirely by surprise, and exposed not only the political bankruptcy of the Bush administration's occupation strategy but also the fragility of its military position. As Stratfor warns in yesterday's commentary on the present situation:

"If the current trends accelerate, the United States faces a serious military challenge that could lead to disaster. The United States does not have the forces necessary to put down a broad-based Shiite rising and crush the Sunni rebellion as well. Even the current geography of the rising is beyond the capabilities of existing deployments or any practicable number of additional forces that might be made available. The United States is already withdrawing from some cities. The logical outcome of all of this would be an enclave strategy, in which the United States concentrates its forces—in a series of fortified locations—perhaps excluding Iraqi nationals—and leaves the rest of the country to the guerrillas. That, of course, would raise the question of why the United States should bother to remain in Iraq, since those forces would not be able to exert effective force either inside the country or beyond its borders."

Having invested so much of its prestige in its invasion and occupation of Iraq, American imperialism will not shrink from employing the most barbaric methods to suppress the uprising. Indeed, the entire political establishment of the ruling elite cannot contemplate the withdrawal of American forces from Iraq. The Democratic Party's main criticism of the Bush administration is that the latter has failed to commit sufficient resources to the occupation. However, notwithstanding the conviction of the

American ruling elite that—to use the words of the Wall Street Journal—“force works,” the turn of events in Iraq has demonstrated quite dramatically the limitations of that perspective.

The heroic resistance of the Iraqi masses to the imperialist invaders deserves the support and merits the sincere respect of the international working class. But admiration for the courage of the Iraqi people in the face of overwhelming odds does not blind us to the fact that the basic problems of political leadership in the working class—upon which the defeat of imperialism depends—remain unsolved. Herein lies the immense historical significance of the work of the International Committee and the *World Socialist Web Site*.

We have taken serious note of the appeal issued by al-Sadr to the people of the United States. This appeal must reflect a new awareness among the Iraqi masses that American imperialism is not a monolithic force, and that the United States is torn by internal social divisions. It also expresses a realization that the Iraqi people must seek support beyond the borders of their own country. This development in consciousness was already anticipated in the mass international anti-war demonstrations of February 2003, and provides fresh substantiation of the emergence of new and more favorable conditions for the building of the World Party of Socialist Revolution.

With the fall of the Soviet Union—the result of decades of betrayals by the Stalinist bureaucracy—American imperialism convinced itself that it could somehow erase the entire historical record and socio-political legacy of the twentieth century. It imagined that the twenty-first century would witness the triumph of a new and irresistible American imperialism.

Instead, imperialism is now witnessing the very first stages of the emergence of a new revolutionary movement of the working class. The fate of this movement, which derives its objective impulse from the insoluble economic political and social contradictions of the world capitalist system, is inextricably dependent upon the assimilation of the lessons of the historical struggles of the last century. Ours is the only party that can make these lessons accessible to the working class. This awareness constitutes the foundation of our recognition of the overriding importance of the work of our international

movement.

With warmest regards,

David North,

For the Political Committee of the SEP of the United States



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