

# **MARCHES AND RALLIES ARE NOT ENOUGH!**

## **FOR LABOR ACTIONS TO STOP THE WARS AND DEFEND WORKERS' RIGHTS!**

### **WHOSE WAR? OBAMA'S WAR! • WHOSE CRISIS? CAPITALISM'S CRISIS!**

October 17, 2009 has been chosen by a broad "anti-war" coalition (see <http://oct17awc.wordpress.com>) as a "national day of action" against the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan, and in favor of increased funding for jobs, social services, and education. Humanist Workers for Revolutionary Socialism (HWRS) echoes the call for an end to these imperialist wars, and agrees that society's resources should be used to meet the human needs of working people, instead of bailing out Wall Street and waging wars in the interest of the multinational corporations so they can continue their parasitic existence.

From Greenspan to Chomsky, the gurus of the right and left agree that these wars are about control of oil. The Bush-Cheney Oil War has become the Obama Oil War. Despite Obama's "green face," his regime is actually dedicated to petrodollars, not to a new era of clean energy. Meanwhile, the global economic crisis threatens to ripen into a major depression, the burden of which falls on the backs of the working class. The crisis is also an economic/financial reflection of the increasing tension between the US and its global imperialist rivals – a rivalry that ultimately will explode into further wars for control of markets and resources.

To end these wars, US, NATO, and other imperialist forces in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan must be defeated. The anti-war movement needs to facilitate defeat by initiating massive labor actions at the point of production of war materials as well as interfere with their distribution. To stop the wars, the heroic ILWU must be encouraged to, and supported in, the initiation of open-ended hot cargo actions against war materials and launch expanded dock strikes. We must help reignite the million worker immigrants' rights strikers to step into the vanguard of the movement to stop imperialist wars. Immigrant workers know first hand the role of imperialism in their countries of origin. In contrast to the liberal-bourgeois peace movement, a working class anti-war movement must be built which unabashedly calls for the **defeat of the US imperialist forces and their allies in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan!**

Workers can have no faith that re-launching endless cycles of "peace marches," which the anti-war organizations abandoned during the Obama campaign, will by themselves force an end to the wars or to the cause of war, monopoly capitalism. HWRS members originally made this point during the first US war on Iraq, almost 20 years ago. Here is what we wrote in February 1991:

"American workers can and must stop the monstrous killings of the Iraqi workers and poor by imperialism. The first few weeks of the war brought hundreds of thousands of demonstrators out into the streets. These demonstrations showed the spontaneous outrage of the American people and the labor movement. In San Francisco, thousands of trade unionists marched in the January 19 and January 26 mobilizations. Demonstrations alone, however, cannot stop the war or even slow the imperialist attacks against Iraq. While they are a good way to show spontaneous outrage, more is needed to dismantle the imperialist war machine. In order to win, the workers must bring the war home. They alone have the power *to turn the war into a class war against the ruling classes at home.*

"Workers can bring the ruling class to its knees. They can cut the economic arteries of the capitalist system. There is

no other way out if the American workers and people are serious about stopping the imperialist war machine. They can start the process of dismantling the war machine by refusing to handle shipments of supplies and equipment headed for the Gulf. Unfortunately, the self-proclaimed 'leaders' of the anti-war movement refuse to consider the idea of labor actions against the war."

In 1991, we argued, both in our press and at the planning meetings of antiwar coalitions, that marches and rallies under the banner of pacifist slogans such as "bring the troops home" and "money for human needs not war" can not end the war, unless they were coupled with direct labor actions. We predicted that "as long as the antiwar movement continues to be dominated by petty-bourgeois pacifism, and as long as the so-called socialists in that movement continue to capitulate to the pacifist elements instead of relentlessly pushing the movement in the direction of anti-imperialism and international working class solidarity, we will continue to experience the frustration and futility that characterized the movement against the [first] Gulf war. And, more importantly, we will miss the chance to work towards the day when worldwide socialism – not pacifism – will put an end to war for once and for all."

What we said in 1991 has been proven true. Eighteen years later, not only does the United States still have troops in Iraq, but the fighting has now expanded to Afghanistan and Pakistan, and Obama threatens to extend it into Iran as well.

All the rallies and marches the progressive left organizes will amount to naught, if they are not coupled with militant direct action by workers to stop the war at the points of production and distribution. To bring the war home, a workers' anti-war movement must explain the intrinsic connection between the capitalist system's imperialist military adventures and its attacks on the living standard of workers at home. *The logic of a workers' anti-war movement is that rather than limiting itself to a struggle to end the current war alone, it fights to end the cause of war itself, which is nothing other than capitalism, by*

*turning the imperialist war abroad into a class war at home.* For unlike the pacifist moralists who eternally dominate the American peace movements, the workers' anti-war movement fosters no illusions in a benign and benevolent or enlightened peaceful capitalism.

In the years since 1991, under Republican and Democratic administrations alike, the gap between rich and poor in the US and worldwide has widened to obscene dimensions. Millions have lost their homes and forty million live in poverty. High unemployment rates and shrinking state and local government budgets trigger vicious attacks on workers' wages and benefits. Those who still have jobs are told to be grateful they "only suffer" furloughs and wage cuts instead of layoffs. Health care costs are beyond the reach of the fifty million not insured through their employer, and despite demagogic pandering during the campaign the Obama administration is incapable of delivering health care as promised.

How can we effectively fight these economic conditions as well as the current imperialist wars? As we urged in 1991, "we must direct our tactics and propaganda toward educating the workers and students, not toward appeasing the liberal representatives of the capitalist class. We must draw out, in the consciousness of the masses, the organic connection between imperialist war abroad and capitalist oppression at home. We must demonstrate to the workers that their real interests lie in solidarity with the exploited workers and peasants of the semi-colonial countries, not in chauvinistic support for their imperialist oppressors. We must show the working class how its own experiences prove that marching in the streets under the slogan 'Stop the War' not only will not stop any particular war, but more importantly, cannot possibly do anything whatsoever to stop the next war from starting. We must work to build up labor activism through calls for proletarian methods of struggle to defeat imperialism's war machine."

**Today, as in 1991, what is needed is a working class anti-war movement that is anti-imperialist, anti-interventionist, and anti-capitalist in character, and that fights for the following actions:**

- **American workers: Turn the imperialist war abroad into a class war at home! Only by defeating the bosses of Wall Street and the corporate elite can you end imperialist wars abroad.**
- **Transportation and logistics workers: Organize with or despite your union leadership to "hot cargo" (refuse to handle) munitions and other supplies destined for use in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan or for distribution to the other 130 US military bases abroad! For the Oakland dock workers and million workers' strikes to starve the war machine!**
- **Soldiers in the U.S. and on overseas bases: Refuse deployment to Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan – and all other areas that US imperialism seeks to control!**
- **Soldiers already deployed: Hold mass meetings to discuss and prepare for refusal of criminal orders! Build a "let's go home" movement to lead strikes against these criminal wars! Turn your officers and arms over to the resistance fighters! Fraternize with the resistance troops!**
- **Workers internationally: Support these actions! Organize and lead mass protests demanding immediate, unconditional and total military withdrawal from Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan! Demand the withdrawal of mercenary contractors, trainers and covert special operations forces from Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan! Demand massive reparations for the destruction caused by the invasions!**

## **Humanist Workers for Revolutionary Socialism**

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Articles from 1991 quoted on this leaflet are available on our website at:  
[http://www.humanistsforrevolutionarysocialism.org/IT\\_Archive/Labor\\_Actions\\_cover.html](http://www.humanistsforrevolutionarysocialism.org/IT_Archive/Labor_Actions_cover.html) and  
[http://www.humanistsforrevolutionarysocialism.org/IT\\_Archive/Class\\_Struggle\\_cover.html](http://www.humanistsforrevolutionarysocialism.org/IT_Archive/Class_Struggle_cover.html)

**Humanist Workers for Revolutionary Socialism is committed to re-founding the Fourth International as a fraternal member organization of the International Leninist Trotskyist Fraction (ILTF)**