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Revolutionary Organization of Labor

From the U.S. Gulf to Afghanistan: U.S.-led Capitalism Gives a Wake-up Call to Us All!

July-August 2010

Introduction:

On April 20, 2010, the Deepwater Horizon, a rare \$600 million dollar oil rig, exploded off of the Gulf Coast of the USA. More than two months later, the extent of the British Petroleum (BP)-made disaster is not even close to being determined; more importantly, it is not yet contained and may never be! The current estimate of the amount of oil pouring into the Gulf waters is the equivalent of one Exxon Valdez-size catastrophe every five days! Rob Kall, the head of OpEdNews.com, referring to this disaster, stated: “It may not destroy the world, but it could destroy the world as we know it.”

Ray O’Light Newsletter #60 placed special emphasis on the “Appalachian Wake-up Call” represented by the clearly preventable explosion at the Massey Energy Company Upper Big Branch Mine in West Virginia which cost 29 coal miners their lives. That tragedy focused attention on the unabashed greed of Massey Energy and its CEO, Don Blankenship, and on the U.S. government’s repeated failure to stop Massey Energy’s ongoing destruction of Appalachia and its people.

The current newsletter similarly focuses on the BP oil rig disaster and the compliant and complicit U.S. government which paved BP’s path to massive destruction barely two weeks after the West Virginia mine explosion. The magnitude of this BP disaster makes it a wake-up call for the working people and communists *of the entire world*. For, clearly, the monopoly capitalist and imperialist world system, driven by pursuit of maximum private profit based on the exploitation of the international working class and the subjugation of the oppressed peoples, is bringing humanity to the verge of extinction.

A recent court decision in India underscores how deeply *systemic* this problem is: In December 1984, a U.S.-owned (Union Carbide) chemical plant in Bhopal, India leaked a

plume of toxic gas that killed three thousand people almost instantly, followed soon thereafter by another two thousand deaths, and with over a half million people ultimately affected. A few weeks ago, in early June, more than 25 years later, eight former executives of the company's Indian subsidiary (all Indians) were convicted of negligence; and the seven surviving defendants were sentenced to two years in prison and fined the equivalent of \$2,100 each. An advocate for the victims characterized the verdict as "the world's worst industrial disaster reduced to a traffic accident." (*New York Times*, 6-8-10) The Indian authorities were not even capable of mounting a legal prosecution against Warren Anderson, who was the chairman of Union Carbide at the time of the Bhopal disaster. Furthermore, in 2001, Union Carbide was purchased by Dow Chemical and the Indian government has been trying, without success, to get Dow to clean up the now 25 year old mess ever since.

With the monopoly capitalists and imperialists riding roughshod over the rest of us, as in Bhopal, it is no wonder that BP's CEO, Tony Hayward, shortly after the oil rig disaster on the U.S. Gulf that has destroyed and is still destroying the lives and livelihood of so many people on the Gulf Coast, felt entitled to complain that he wants to "get his life back."

With the BP disaster as its starting point (Part I), this Newsletter goes on to examine the status of the Obama/Biden-led imperialist war against Afghanistan and Pakistan, etc. (Part II), including the implications of the resignation of Commanding U.S. General Stanley McChrystal and his replacement by General Petraeus. And, finally, Part III of the Newsletter addresses the significance for the world communist movement and the international working class of the Call for a "Fifth International" by Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, in the context of the increasingly urgent need to defeat the main enemy of humanity, imperialism, headed by U.S. imperialism.

I. British Petroleum Spews Forth Capitalist Poison

"Drill, baby, drill!"

— Mob cheer led by Sarah Palin,

Vice-Presidential Candidate, 2008 Republican Party National Convention

-BP's Greed Unchecked by U.S. "Republicrat" Government-

When the \$600 million dollar Deepwater Horizon oil rig exploded, killing eleven workers, on April 20, 2010, the British Petroleum Corporation ("BP plc"), was unable to dodge its responsibility for the disaster. Unashamedly, however, BP, the United Kingdom's largest company and the third largest energy company and the fourth largest company in the world (according to Wikipedia), deliberately concealed vital information; it covered up the extent of the damage to its well along with the true massive amount of oil and gas actually pouring out into the Gulf, and thus the potential extent of the catastrophe. In this way, BP *sabotaged* all early efforts to restrict, contain and mitigate the subsequent massive oil spill.

Despite a multimillion dollar public relations propaganda assault by BP, it is crystal clear that single-minded and shameless pursuit of maximum private profit, the very motivation which drove BP and its partners in crime, including Halliburton Inc., to "cut corners" on

safety, to ignore “best industry practices,” etc. continued to dominate its conduct in the disaster’s aftermath. In its ruthless effort to minimize its criminal liability, *BP continued (and still continues!!) to fuel the hellhole it had created.*

Thus, when Texas Republican Congressman Joe Barton revealed his total subservience to his capitalist masters by “apologizing” to BP (!) for President Obama’s insistence that the thoroughly exposed BP fund a Gulf Coast relief effort, the outrage of the people of the Gulf Coast, in particular, forced Barton to apologize for his apology!

It is not surprising that it was another Texas Republican, President George W. Bush, who, in 2008, had lifted the two decades-old ban on offshore oil drilling which paved the way for London-based BP, whose U.S. headquarters are in Houston, to inflict the current catastrophe on us all. Nor is it surprising that “W.” would have the enthusiastic support of his Vice President, since Dick Cheney had come to the Bush II Administration from his job as CEO of Halliburton, Inc., which became BP’s corporate partner in crime in the Deepwater Horizon disaster. Subcontractor Halliburton’s job in BP’s Deepwater Horizon project was to seal the three plus miles of the initial drilling hole, the well casing, so that the four inch pipe was surrounded in concrete and protected from gas leaks. BP made decisions to cut costs, including the use of inadequate components and skipping tests of the integrity of the seal. Such decisions led Gordon Aaker, a failure analysis consultant with Engineering Services LLP in Houston to characterize one such decision as “unheard of,” calling BP “horribly negligent.” While BP rejected the recommendations of Halliburton, seriously reducing the safety of the job Halliburton did, Halliburton went along with BP and took the money. And the Department of the Interior’s Mineral Management Service (MMS), instead of being more strict in its enforcement of existing safety regulations in dealing with deepwater oil drilling, became even more lax the deeper the well!*

*NOTE: [Former Halliburton CEO and U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney, one of the most outspoken promoters of the U.S. war against Iraq, certainly helped BP, still today the top energy supplier for the U.S. military under the Obama Regime. Indeed, despite the fact that BP’s responsibility for the Gulf Coast catastrophe is undeniable, it continues to retain its \$2 billion plus dollars in annual contracts with the Pentagon *uninterrupted*. Of course, Halliburton itself has been the biggest recipient from the U.S. military of infrastructure contracts in Iraq, just as its current subsidiary, Kellogg Brown and Root had been during the period of the U.S. war in Vietnam. The BP/Halliburton corporate connection and the complicity of its U.S. government stooges in the Gulf Coast disaster underscore the deep truth contained in the phrase “the U.S. imperialist war at home and abroad.”]

More surprising for those who retain illusions about the Democratic Party and/or about alleged U.S. “democracy” is the fact that the Democratic-controlled Congress did not extend its own ban of offshore oil drilling in 2008, when Bush-Cheney lifted the presidential moratorium. Such people will be even more surprised to learn that, in March 2010, *President Barack Obama went a step further than Bush* when he announced his readiness to consider leases for *new* deepwater oil exploration!

Even *after* the catastrophic BP oil rig disaster, despite Obama’s promise of better safeguards for offshore drilling, his Department of Interior’s Minerals Management Service (MMS) has signed off on at least five new offshore drilling projects since June 2, when the agency’s acting director announced tougher regulations for drilling in the Gulf.

Three of the approved projects were provided the same “categorical exclusions,” exempting them from detailed studies of their environmental impact, just like the waiver given to BP for the well that has been poisoning the Gulf and beyond for the past two months. Furthermore, in mid June, environmental groups filed a lawsuit in Alabama challenging the MMS approval of 198 new deepwater leases in the central Gulf since the BP spill began!

Such lease sales, a step prior to the oil companies’ submission of their drilling plans, line the corporations up to immediately launch their projects when moratoria are lifted. Furthermore, the 198 new lease approvals have already made the U.S. taxpayers liable for compensation payment to the oil companies, in case the projects are ultimately blocked! So business-as-usual continues between the Obama Administration and BP which owns at least 10 of these 198 new leases.

Furthermore, the Democratic Party’s own strategist James Carville, CNN’s Anderson Cooper and other representatives of the monopoly capitalist ruling class have themselves expressed shock and outrage that, more than two months after the fact, *the Obama/Biden Regime has continued to allow BP to remain in control of the clean-up effort* of the disaster this profit-mad corporation created and which it has strong motivation to cover up rather than clean up!!

As we write these lines, *Boston Globe* columnist, Derrick Z. Jackson, an enlightened Afro-American writer, exposes President Obama’s duplicitous “two-faced” treatment of BP. (“The harder they should fall,” *Boston Globe*, 6-29-10) Jackson points out, “In his June 15 national address, President Obama declared BP’s oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico to be ‘the worst environmental disaster America has ever faced’ ... The very next day, he ... extracted a commitment of \$20 billion from BP to settle damage claims. However, Obama also affirmed his confidence that ‘BP will be able to meet its obligations to the Gulf Coast and to the American people. BP is a strong and viable company and it is in all of our interests that it remains so.’” Jackson observes that “Obama’s advance blessing to BP... amounts to *a political bailout*.” (ROL emphasis)

Why is the Obama Administration so kind and deferential to BP? Remember that Obama/Biden and McCain/Palin, the candidates of the two monopoly capitalist and imperialist political parties in the USA, *both* received their largest campaign contributions from JPMorgan Chase and the other Wall Street giants. Accordingly, during the campaign, both Obama and McCain agreed with Republican President George W. Bush and his Secretary of the Treasury Henry Paulson as well as Democratic Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi on the initial \$700 billion dollar bailout for the banking and financial giants of Wall Street. JPMorgan Chase was one of the bailout’s chief beneficiaries. *JPMorgan Chase is the No. 1 holder of stock in BP*. According to BP’s ownership stats, “Chase holds 27.74% of total ordinary issued shared capital.”

“**Drill, baby, drill!**” had been the loudest and most energetic rallying cry at the *Republican Party’s* 2008 National Convention. From the above, we can see that this “Republican” platform has been implemented by the current *Democratic* Administration. Also, despite its markedly different rhetoric from that of the Bush/Cheney regime, the Obama/Biden Regime has continued its predecessor’s policies on most of the major issues of our time — from ongoing war in Iraq and expanded war in Afghanistan and Pakistan and increased militarization of the U.S. government, to diminished civil liberties and rights of U.S. citizens as well as immigrants; from protection of the bankrupt private

corporate U.S. healthcare “system,” to the continual federal government bailout of the Wall Street and international finance capitalists principally responsible for the world capitalist economic crisis.

The “Republicrat Party” is clearly the two headed political representative of the U.S. monopoly capitalist and imperialist ruling class. So where can the people of the USA turn for political relief?

-Sarah Palin and the Tea Party Movement-

Sarah Palin emerged as a major political voice immediately upon her selection to be John McCain’s vice presidential running mate. And her first message of substance had been to promote the oil companies’ agenda for unchecked and widespread drilling for offshore oil all along the coastline of the USA. While the Republican duo of McCain/Palin lost the election, their campaign effort on behalf of the oil companies to unleash a new round of offshore oil drilling has been successfully realized with the Democratic Obama/Biden Administration.

It is not the U.S. government that has changed under Obama, only the *perception* about the government and its intentions. In the year and one-half since the election, the right-wing Tea Party Movement has emerged, with Sarah Palin as its political darling, as a key player in the effort to keep mass democratic illusions about the Obama/Biden Administration alive in the face of the overwhelming evidence that it represents merely a more clever and effective steward (than the Republicans) on behalf of the interests of U.S. monopoly capitalism and imperialism in the midst of this capitalist economic crisis. Even more importantly, Palin and the Tea Party movement provide a “safe” pro-imperialist, semi-fascist and white supremacist channel for the frustrations of a large sector of the U.S. population that is now experiencing a sharp decline in its standard of living and diminished prospects for the future.*

*NOTE: [The Tea Party Movement and the Republican Party are not identical. In fact, there has been a conscious effort by clever forces such as Karl Rove, George W. Bush’s chief presidential adviser, to keep a degree of separation between them. In this way each can support the other while providing each other the opportunity to advance without each other’s baggage.]

With all the diverse streams of the tea party movement, Sarah Palin is one of a few people almost universally recognized as their leader. Palin’s outright lies and deceit cover up a lot. But “drill, baby, drill” is a classic example of where Palin is leading the masses of the people of the USA and the world, that is, to *catastrophe*.

In this light, the April 20th BP oil rig disaster on the Gulf Coast provides a strong context for evaluating other major pronouncements of Sarah Palin. In particular, Palin has repeatedly declared that “*Obama is a Socialist*,” and that “*Now is no time to be experimenting with Socialism*.”

Palin’s assertion that “*Obama is a Socialist*” taps into two cornerstones of U.S. imperialist culture: white supremacy and anti-communism. It is exposed as a “Big Lie” by Obama’s role as *the savior of Wall Street, BP, the medical-industrial complex, etc.*, as the skillful chief helmsman of U.S. monopoly capitalism and imperialism at this time when the USA and the world capitalist system are in serious crisis. Nevertheless, Palin’s lie has proved effective thus far in building mass resistance to “socialism,” at a time when

it would be logical for the people of the USA to demand socialism in health care, on Wall Street, etc.

Thus, Palin's lie about Obama complements her other slogan: "***Now is no time to be experimenting with Socialism.***" With millions of workers forced into unemployment and millions of families losing their homes to bank foreclosure, while the banking industry itself has been bailed out by the capitalist government, using the tax monies of the working class, this entire period of acute capitalist economic crisis and collapse, cries out for "experimenting with socialism." Now, the criminal conduct of BP and its CEO, Tony Hayward, with the criminal collaboration of the U.S. government, both in the lead-up to the oil rig disaster and in its aftermath, makes clear that "***experimenting with (fighting for) Socialism***" is an increasingly urgent task for the international working class to take up in defense of the survival of the human species!!

-Revolutionary Strategy and Tactics in the Current U.S. Crisis-

Strategically, the fight in the U.S. (North) is for socialism. However, *tactically*, the Revolutionary Organization of Labor (USA) and the proletarian revolutionary movement in the USA need to unite those who retain illusions about Obama and the Democratic Party with those who have no illusions about the current chieftain of U.S. imperialism to *demand*, in opposition to the government's current conduct, that the Obama government meet the needs of the U.S. working people, including organized labor, and the Afro-American and documented and undocumented Latino masses. Such a tactical approach enables the proletarian revolutionary movement to win, on the basis of their own experience, these currently non-revolutionary masses away from the Obama/Democratic Party forces to the socialist banner.

This tactical approach also enables the proletarian revolutionary movement to win to the socialist banner some frustrated white working people, including a section of organized labor and others, away from the white supremacist, great nation chauvinist tea party movement, whose "Republicrat" leaders, including Sarah Palin, remain, along with the Obama/Biden Administration, an integral part of the strategic defense of the capitalist system in crisis in the USA.

The tactical demand for the Obama Administration to compel BP to fully indemnify all current and future victims of this massive oil spill and to ***nationalize all offshore oil wells*** is on the order of the day. As the oil spill continues to pour into the Gulf and despoil our land, let's get behind this effort!

II. The War in Afghanistan Revisited

BP's catastrophic conduct with regard to offshore oil drilling along the coast of the USA points up the obvious fact that, in their pursuit of maximum private profit, Morgan-Chase and BP and their U.S. imperialist government do not care about human and other life in the Gulf of Mexico. This realization should help us to understand, more clearly and deeply, the ongoing U.S. imperialist war *of terror** on the peoples of Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Philippines, Colombia, Mexico and much of the rest of the world. It is in this context that we are revisiting the war in Afghanistan.

*NOTE: [This war of terror was deliberately mislabeled by George W. Bush as the "War on Terror."]

Of the many explicit and implicit campaign promises made by Barack Obama in his run to the Presidency, the one promise he has kept thus far has been to expand the war in

Afghanistan as well as expanding it into neighboring Pakistan. Obama now has taken ownership of this war; it is now “Obama’s War.” Thus, revisiting the U.S.-NATO war on Afghanistan helps, at the same time, to expose any remaining bourgeois democratic illusions about the Obama Regime.

The U.S. war in Afghanistan now rivals the Vietnam War as the *longest war in U.S. history*. In addition, June 2010 has now become *the deadliest month for NATO forces* in the almost nine years since the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan began in October 2001. These facts reflect the strength of the Afghani resistance and the reality that U.S.-led imperialism is incapable of achieving a military triumph in Afghanistan.

Currently, the U.S.-led military campaigns in Marjah and elsewhere are not making any progress, as Obama’s 2011 date for the beginning of the U.S. troop withdrawal from Afghanistan is drawing ever closer. But, connected to its military setbacks, U.S. imperialism is encountering other difficulties in Afghanistan as well.

This military quagmire is taking place in the context of the farcical “re-election” of Hamid Karzai, the former U.S. oil company (UNOCAL) employee.* Karzai was “re-elected” in an election that was so undeniably rigged in his favor that the U.S. authorities compelled Karzai to agree to a second election. When his chief rival “refused” to participate in the second election, the U.S. imperialists simply declared Karzai the victor and U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton declared that this was democracy in action!!! The notoriously corrupt Karzai Regime has shown no signs of reform since then and his government’s popularity among the Afghani people has not grown either.

*NOTE: [In 2001, we exposed the fact that, “U.S. imperialist support for the Taliban Regime only began to cool when the Taliban decided to award the key oil and natural gas pipeline project from these Central Asian Republics through Afghanistan to the Arabian Sea and the Indian Subcontinent to an *Argentinean* company (Brindas Oil) instead of to the *United States* oil company, Unocal, in 1998.” (“Bush’s Global Terrorist War and the September 11th Events,” *Ray O’ Light Newsletter Special Edition #3*, November 2001) In this same Newsletter, we exposed the economic, political and military strategic motives for the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan.]

- General McChrystal’s Removal and the Threat of A U.S. Military Coup -

At the same time, Karzai has increasingly threatened to abandon his U.S. sponsors, entertaining Iran’s President Ahmadinejad among others. Commanding General Stanley McChrystal’s close relationship with Karzai, may well have become a problem for the dominant wing of U.S. imperialism, in attempting to keep Karzai in line. McChrystal’s replacement, General David Petraeus, even before his confirmation by the U.S. Senate, has already obtained a more compliant cooperation from Karzai.

The discovery by “senior American government officials” of “nearly \$1 trillion in untapped mineral deposits in Afghanistan, far beyond any previously known reserves and enough to fundamentally alter the Afghan economy and perhaps the Afghan war itself” (*Boston Globe*, 6-14-10) may also have threatened to make the McChrystal-Karzai cabal too powerful for the Obama Regime to control. As reported by *New York Times* writer, James Risen, “The previously unknown deposits — including huge veins of iron, copper, cobalt, gold, and lithium — are so big and include so many minerals that are essential to

modern industry that Afghanistan could eventually be transformed into one of the most important mining centers in the world, the U.S. officials believe.” (ibid.) The timing of the “discovery” also raises the question of whether this vast mineral wealth is meant to make the people of the USA more willing to extend the U.S. military commitment in Afghanistan. Or, was it already known and a real motivation for U.S. occupation of Afghanistan in the first place?!

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, President Obama’s decision to dismiss Commanding General Stanley McChrystal for remarks he and his inner circle were quoted as saying in a current *Rolling Stone Magazine* article was not based on any sense of personal insult or policy disagreement but because McChrystal’s “callous bravado,” reflected in the article, “undermines the civilian control of the military that is at the core of our democratic system.” (ROL Emphasis, Obama quote from *Wall Street Journal*, 6-24-10)

President Obama has tried to play down this incident, including by appointing McChrystal’s popular boss, General Petraeus, the overall Commander in both the Afghanistan and Iraq theaters of war, to replace McChrystal as Commanding General in Afghanistan. Nonetheless, the threat of a military coup d’etat in the USA, after so many years of uninterrupted war, remains a real danger. And it is reflected in McChrystal’s “callous bravado” toward the civilian leaders of the U.S. government, as Obama described it.

Recall our warning issued several months ago in “The Tea Party Movement, the Obama Regime and the Growing Fascist Danger in the USA” (*Ray O’Light Newsletter #59*):

“After more than eight years of unending ‘war on terror’ and ‘homeland security’ which has continued seamlessly from Bush-Cheney to Obama-Biden, unending war is leaving its military stamp on every aspect of U.S. society. There is now a real question about whether there is a civilian or military government running the country on behalf of U.S. finance capital.

“In response to President-elect Obama’s selection of retired four-star Marine General James Jones to be his National Security Adviser and the apparent choice of retired Navy Admiral Dennis Blair* to be his Director of Intelligence, Thomas Schweich who had served the Bush Regime in several high-level jobs, including deputy assistant secretary of state for international law enforcement affairs, wrote an article in the *Washington Post* (“The Pentagon is muscling in everywhere,” *Washington Post*, 12-21-08) expressing alarm at the ‘silent military coup d’etat’ that he had witnessed firsthand in several senior capacities at the Bush State Department over the previous four years.” (*Ray O’Light Newsletter #59*, March-April 2010) With remarkable candor, Schweich observes: “We no longer have a civilian-led government.”

*NOTE: [Blair was appointed and has recently been replaced by a Lieutenant General.]

Even more recently, in a major policy article, U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates made the following shocking admission: “I ... warned publicly of a ‘creeping militarization’ of aspects of U.S. foreign policy if imbalances within the national security system were not addressed. As a career CIA officer who watched the military’s role in intelligence grow ever larger, I am keenly aware that the Defense Department, because of its sheer size, is not only the 800-pound gorilla of the U.S. government but one with a sometimes very active pituitary gland.” (“Helping Others Defend Themselves,” *Foreign Affairs*, May-June 2010)

All of the above serves to underscore the fact that General McChrystal's "callous bravado" toward the U.S. civilian government represents a natural political development in a USA in a state of permanent war.

Finally, U.S.-led imperialism in Afghanistan cares no more for the Afghani people, U.S. imperialism's NATO allies, or the soldiers and people of the USA than BP/Halliburton/Morgan-Chase cares for the people of the Gulf Coast. Clearly, the international working class and the oppressed peoples of Afghanistan, Iraq, and the rest of the world, are going to have a bitter struggle to defeat our ruthless main enemy: imperialism, headed by U.S. imperialism.

III. The Positive and Negative Significance of Hugo Chavez' Call for a Fifth International

From all of the above, it is clear that international capitalism, headed by U.S. imperialism, is rapidly rendering "mother earth" inhospitable to human habitation. The depth and scope of the problems continually being raised up by imperialism, by capitalism in its death throes, from global warming to oceanic pollution to a global war of terror, are too great for nationally-oriented communist parties to address systematically and decisively.

Serious scientific socialists in Leninist Parties and organizations around the world urgently need to reject a narrow, bourgeois nationalist perspective and reassert proletarian internationalism as the cornerstone of our work. For the bourgeois nationalist orientation undermines any sustained effort to re-establish a viable, vibrant international communist movement capable of grasping the magnitude of our tasks and of rallying the proletariat of each country and all countries to lead the revolutionary forces to decisive victories over international capital in this moment of great danger — and great opportunity.

The bourgeois nationalist perspective focuses on "my country" or "my people" or even "my working class" rather than on the situation of the international working class, the situation of the world as a whole. In the name of gaining advantage for "my own section of the international working class," it inevitably leads to the reduction of our revolutionary goals and aspirations to mere reformist demands, to seeking rapprochement with the imperialist enemy at the expense of some or all sections of our class. Certainly, the world-wide "democratic illusions" among socialists about U.S. imperialism in the Obama Era, even Hugo Chavez himself around the Honduran Coup, are a manifestation of this problem.

It is in this context that we evaluate the call by Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez for a Fifth International. President Chavez hosted "the Left Encounter of Left Parties" from November 19 to 21 of 2009. Addressing the delegates from 55 parties from more than 30 countries representing nominally communist and social democratic parties from Asia and Europe, national liberation forces from Africa and the Middle East, radical and new left parties from Europe and Latin America, President Chavez stated: "the time has come for us to convoke the Fifth International."

Immediately following the Left Encounter, on November 21, the First Extraordinary Congress of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) began. In his opening remarks to the 772 elected delegates, PSUV President Chavez reiterated his call for a Fifth International and asked the Congress to make this issue a subject of serious debate

during the five months that the PSUV Congress was slated to last — until April 2010, when the founding congress of “the Fifth International” was projected “to become an instrument of unification and coordination of the struggle of peoples to save this planet.” There are substantial positive and negative aspects of this initiative from the standpoint of the international proletariat, from the standpoint of revolutionary Marxism.

As reflected in both the discussions and the Declaration of the Left Parties, this new effort at international political coordination is largely a positive response to the new aggressive actions of United States imperialism in Latin America undertaken under the Obama/Biden Regime. Great emphasis was placed on the successful coup against President Zelaya in Honduras as well as the seven new U.S. military bases in Colombia. Chavez and others recognize correctly that much of the U.S. imperialist impetus for sponsoring and sustaining the overthrow of Zelaya was to undermine, push back and destroy ALBA and other regional economic initiatives and to reverse the growing political independence of Latin America from U.S. imperialist domination. And the practical program outlined in the Declaration makes clear that national sovereignty of oppressed nations, especially in Latin America and especially against U.S. imperialism, is at the heart of this “international” initiative.

Another positive is that this call for a “Fifth International” represents a recognition by significant *non-proletarian* anti-imperialist forces that imperialist oppression and terror in our time requires international co-ordination and solidarity. In this light, the Chavez call for a Fifth International should serve as a wake-up call to the genuine communist parties and organizations around the world that the international proletariat and oppressed peoples need a new Communist International.*

*NOTE: [The small united front coalition of communists, socialists, and socialist sympathizers, workers, intellectuals, etc. associated with the *non-communist Northstar Compass* and the International Council for Friendship and Solidarity with Soviet People have also recognized the deep need for the re-establishment of a more organized and integrated international movement in order to advance the cause of national liberation and socialism against international capitalism. The small gathering of the International Council Conference in Toronto, Canada in October 2008 unanimously passed a resolution entitled, “The Workers and Oppressed Peoples of the World Need a New Communist International!” Unlike the Chavez Call, the *Northstar Compass* folks, recognizing their own limitations, *called upon the communist movement* to undertake the task of building a new *communist* international. As the author of this resolution (at the request of NSC Editor and Chairman Michael Lucas), the leader of the *Revolutionary Organization of Labor, USA* was acutely aware that it was a demand from a “mass” organization on the proletarian vanguard to take up this serious and urgent task.]

However, there are a number of negative features of the Chavez call that need to be exposed.

In the first place, Chavez, reflecting a strong Trotskyite current in the Latin American Left, shows positive respect for Trotsky’s so-called Fourth International, which never built a strong revolutionary movement anywhere in the world. At the same time he slanders Stalin and the Communist (Third) International and slights the role of Lenin and the Soviet Union. While the Stalin and Soviet-led defeat of world fascism did not have as profound and immediate an impact on the independence movements in Latin America

that it did in Asia and Africa, there can be no question that the upsurge of the national liberation struggles in Latin America also owed much to the heroic Soviet-led victory.

The Cuban Revolution, which Chavez praises to the skies, would have been impossible to sustain over these decades without the immortal accomplishments of the Soviet Bolshevik Party and people under the leadership of Lenin and Stalin, as well as the victory of the Communist Party-led Chinese national democratic revolution, the heroic Communist Party-led struggle of the Vietnamese people, etc. *The leadership for all these struggles helped produce and/or were produced by the Third International.* Chavez' ignorance of history allows him to confuse the present Soviet revisionist era, the dissolution of the socialist camp, etc. with the earlier period of proletarian revolution and proletarian internationalism.

Chavez' profound distortion of history leads to other problems.

As the great Filipino revolutionary leader Jose Maria Sison has observed, *opportunism* (from the Right or the "Left") promotes the illusion that the struggle is easier than it actually is. Along these lines, Chavez and other supporters of the Fifth International initiative, disparage and attack the democratic centralist organization and discipline that enabled the comrades of the Communist (Third) International to lead the masses of humanity from one victory to another over international capital.

Failure to recognize the world-historic role of the Russian Revolution, the Chinese Revolution, and the Vietnamese Revolution, among other significant twentieth century revolutions, of the Soviet-led defeat of the Fascist Axis powers in World War II and the tremendous contribution of the Communist (Third) International to the historic advances of the proletarian revolutionary cause including the creation of a socialist camp, and the flowering of newly independent states in Asia, Africa and Latin America leads to *a serious underestimation of the tremendous sacrifices and struggle that are necessary in order to achieve decisive victories over imperialism.* It leads to a failure to appreciate the necessity for proletarian organization and discipline, for Leninist Party organization.

The recent upsurge of popular movements and governments throughout much of Latin America, in opposition to U.S. imperialism, in particular, has been a great source of inspiration to all conscious anti-imperialist fighters around the world. And Cuban-Venezuelan anti-imperialist unity has been the core around which significant political and economic advances have been made. Certainly, this phenomenon is the basis of strength from which the Chavez call for a Fifth International has been made. However, it is a *pipe dream* to expect that, simply by calling on bourgeois and petty bourgeois parties in state power, and petty bourgeois social-democratic and anarchist parties from other countries to unite, one can form an international capable of withstanding the terrible political, economic and military pressures of imperialism.

At best, the Chavez-led call for a Fifth International is a petty bourgeois projection of the idealist conception of party-building. It attempts to forge "the unity of the socialists," of the "great men" and the "thinkers," on the basis of their commitment to the "socialist idea" in general rather than forge the unity of the international working class in the crucible of the class struggle for socialism. The Chavez call is a radical departure from the first, second and third internationals, all of which were aimed at the unity of the international working class in the struggle against capital. Such a petty bourgeois idealist constructed international can only be quickly smashed on the rocks of the reality of imperialist bribery, oppression and violence.

Not surprisingly, on the day after Chavez first presented his proposal, when it was still at the very beginning of its talking stage, there was already as much opposition as there was unity. Representatives of the Ecuadorian and Bolivian governments and of the Honduran resistance pledged their support. But the experienced and battle-tested Cuban Communist Party, while expressing agreement with the general notion of international coordination, did not express a formal position at all. Valtar Pomar, international relations secretary of the Workers Party of Brazil (PT), opposed as “divisive” making socialism the common denominator for unity and stated that the PT would continue to make the (openly reformist) World Social Forum its priority. The vice president of El Salvador, FMLN leader Salvador Sanchez Ceren, spoke in favor. However, immediately thereafter, Salvadoran president Mauricio Funes, an independent elected on the FMLN slate, distanced himself and the government from any support for “21st Century Socialism.” Since then the FMLN government has recognized the reactionary and illegitimate Honduran coup-“elected” government!

Since the November 2009 Chavez initiative around this call, it appears that little or nothing of substance has been achieved. Meanwhile, U.S. imperialism continues to re-penetrate Latin America, to make new political, military and economic inroads there.

CONCLUSION:

There are two main lessons of this Newsletter.

One, *utter ruthlessness and disdain for all life, including human life, in pursuit of maximum private profit, characterize the present day monopoly capitalist and imperialist system, currently still led by U.S. imperialism.* This is the lesson of the U.S.-led NATO War on the people of Afghanistan. It is the lesson of the West Virginia coal mine disaster, the Bhopal Union Carbide disaster and the ongoing BP oil spill still spreading its poisonous death as you read these lines.

Second, *to defeat the imperialist enemy and destroy the capitalist system before it destroys our human habitat, a new communist international needs to be built.* The communists need to provide *critical support* for the efforts at coordination of the petty bourgeois and bourgeois nationalist anti-imperialist forces in and around the so-called “fifth international” led by Hugo Chavez. At the same time, the communists must fight for proletarian leadership of the national liberation struggles in the oppressed nations and of the revolutionary struggle for socialism throughout the world.

The mobilizing effort around a petty-bourgeois dominated “fifth international” that tells “plausible, respectable petty bourgeois lies” about and buries the outstanding heroic role of the Communist International and its member parties in the past can serve to discourage and undermine instead of inspire the proletarian vanguard. In opposition to this petty bourgeois deceit, the communists need to undertake the difficult task of leading the international working class and the oppressed masses in the building of a new communist international on a *materialist* basis, that is, on the basis of their own experience in the class struggle for national liberation, socialism and communism.

In order to *successfully* carry out all the many and various revolutionary tasks in the struggle against international capital, headed by U.S. imperialism, a new genuine communist international is *required*.

