

BLACK LABOR & REPARATIONS

The profits of slavery live on in the fortunes of today's biggest capitalists. Now the demand for reparations—a small measure of justice too long delayed—is growing stronger. **3**

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TURMOIL

Stocks yo-yo as markets reveal \$7 trillion loss

By Deirdre Griswold

The connection of the banking system to the meltdown on Wall Street has at last been dragged into the open with the revelation that Citigroup and J.P. Morgan Chase made secret deals with Enron to help cook its books.

These deals, in which the giant banks helped cover up Enron's losses, were not undertaken out of compassion or even a buddy-buddy mentality among the CEOs. They are evidence that the biggest banks resorted to criminal conduct in order to keep investors and the public at large from knowing how shaky the entire structure of monopoly capitalism was becoming.

Will the disaster now unfolding on Wall Street end in a grimly familiar scene: the twin towers of U.S. capitalism, the stock markets and the banks, swiftly crumbling right before the eyes of a horrified public?

\$7 trillion up in smoke

In just 10 trading days in mid-July, beginning with the day President George W. Bush went to Wall Street to "calm investors' fears," the Dow Jones Industrial Average lost nearly 1,500 points, or 16 percent. The carnage in New York is now dragging down global markets as well.

More than two years of decline in the U.S. stock markets have already evaporated \$7 TRILLION worth of paper wealth. This is nearly a year's worth of goods and services produced by the workers of this country.

How could this unimaginable volume of wealth just disappear?

In this chaotic economic system, the stock markets anticipate future production.

It is true that they can move upward because of pure speculation, producing what is called a bubble. The easy credit of the last decade helped inflate stock prices. Eventually, prices rise far above the earnings of the companies, and the bubble can burst. This happens

periodically.

But this is not the decisive factor in the current sell-off, which has vaporized so much wealth, including the retirement funds of tens of millions of workers. It is a crisis of overproduction.

In a general way, it is the expansion of production that drives up the price of stocks. Had the capitalist economy continued to grow, the future wealth represented by high stock prices would have been realized.

However, the prices have dropped like a stone, especially over the last three months. Some \$7 trillion in

WORLDCOM BANKRUPT

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anticipated value has disappeared—not only because trend-setting big investors now expect production to decline, but also because they know that a depression will actually destroy a great deal of what value has already been produced.

The dreaded D-word

Depression! Is that an appropriate word to describe the current crash and its effects?

Investor's Business Daily seems to think so. On July 3 the New York financial newspaper published a graph on its front page showing an uncanny resemblance between the movements of the Nasdaq high-tech market over the period 1992-2002 and the Dow Jones Industrial Average for 1921-32, the years of boom and bust that ushered in the Great Depression.

CBS MarketWatch on July 23 also referred to a depression. It reported that "Analysts at research and money management firm Bridgewater Associates point out that this is the first time since 1930 that the stock market has fallen in the face of aggressive Fed easing [the lowering of interest rates by the Federal Reserve

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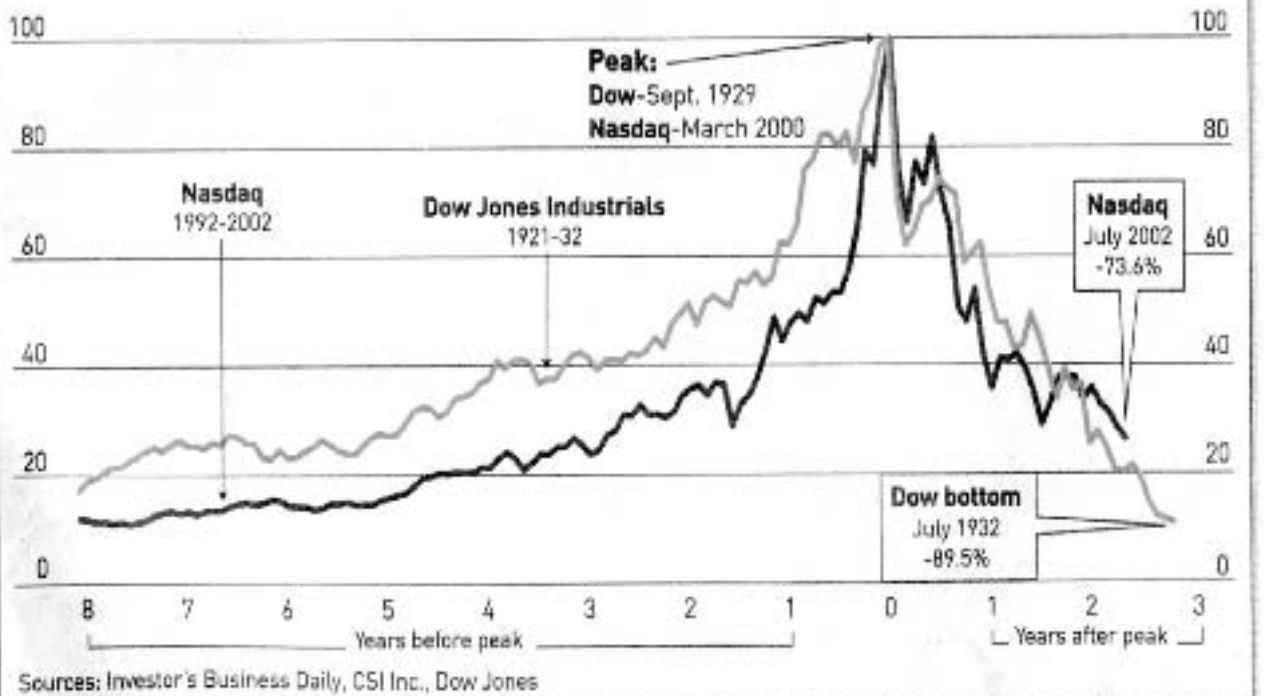
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THEN AND NOW

Stock markets go up and down, but over the long-term they reflect the underlying health of the capitalist economy. Here, an uncanny resemblance can be seen between the Dow Jones Industrial Average in the boom-bust years of 1921-32 and the Nasdaq high-tech market of 1992-2002.



What youths think of the 'pledge'

By Matthew L. Schwartz

There has been a right-wing uproar over a California judge's ruling on June 26 that the Pledge of Allegiance is unconstitutional because of the phrase "under god." Yet few are asking how the ruling affects youth—those who the pledge of allegiance was, and still is, aimed at.

First printed in the Sept. 8, 1892, issue of "The Youth's Companion," the pledge was aimed at youth for many reasons, in what was and is a two-fold manifestation of the bourgeois ideals of controlling the people.

The pledge aimed to "indoctrinate" or more adequately brainwash youth. It was also a tool for ostracizing those who politically dissented from the prevailing views. Putting in the section "under god" pushed it even further to the right.

Someone analyzing the section of the pledge that reads "and to the Republic for which it stands" will find that it means "I pledge my loyalty to the government." Youth do not always feel loyalty toward the government, and certainly not toward the current administration. Forcing school children to repeat

this on a daily basis can and does have a damaging effect on their ability to say no and to protest for changes that they deem necessary.

In whole, the pledge has gone through four revisions—in 1892, 1923, 1924 and 1954. With each revision came a more right-wing slant to the original pledge, which read "I pledge allegiance to my Flag, and to the Republic for which it stands: one Nation indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

The phrase "one Nation indivisible" was originally meant to underscore the defeat of the slavocracy South in its attempt to secede before the Civil War. Today, however, it conceals the fact that institutionalized racism in the U.S. leaves African Americans and other nationally oppressed peoples held like domestic colonies by the oppressor nation.

It should be noted that the words "under god" were not added until Flag Day was established on June 14, 1954. According to then-President Dwight D. Eisenhower, this was to reaffirm "the transcendence of religious faith in America's heritage and future; in this way we shall constantly strengthen those spiritual weapons which forever will be our country's

most powerful resource in peace and war."

What often happens with religion is that it eventually is used as a way to oppress people. Eisenhower put it right when he called it "spiritual weapons." Whether used against the lesbian, gay, bi and transgender communities or immigrants who believe in different or multiple deities, religion in the United States has been a consistent way of oppressing the people, threatening them with eternal damnation and worse.

To find out how youth feel about the ruling, Workers World asked Ben Mayer, a Long Island student, how he felt about the pledge ruling. He said, "I'm actually glad that the ruling was made. As an atheist, I've always felt that the 'under god' part did go against the First Amendment, as it does encourage people to believe in the same religion as the people who wrote the pledge.

"A big problem," continued Mayer, "is the fact that while the U.S. Bill of Rights does say that the government cannot establish an official religion, many of the laws and ideals on which this nation was founded come almost directly from organized religion. Even though an official religion is not being established, it does make a more blurry line between religion and government than most people will admit."

It is becoming apparent that youth, many previously nonpolitical, will be coming out to support the pledge ruling and, with that, bring a new life to the movement of young and vital people who can think for themselves—which is a danger to the ruling class.

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WW CALENDAR

AUBURN-ALBANY, NY

Thu., July 18-Fri., July 26
March from Auburn to Albany to demand release of New Afrikan prisoner Jalil Muntaqim (Anthony Bottom) of the New York 3. In Albany July 25. For info phone Albany Jericho Committee (518) 436-0929 or www.the-jerichomovement.com. For Mid-Hudson carpool July 26 (845) 255-5779.

Jackie Kiernan, Hilda Roberts, and Ricardo Leon, long-time activists in the struggle. The celebration will be held in the spirit of the Cuban Revolution to commemorate July 26 and raise funds for the campaign to free the five Cubans imprisoned in the United States. 2 p.m. At the Women's Building, 3543 18th St. For info (415) 826-4828.

WINDSOR, CANADA

Fri.-Sun., July 26-28
Cuba Labor Conference. With leaders of the Cuban Workers Federation (CTC), featuring Pedro Ross Leal, CTC General Secretary. Includes update on the situation in Cuba, role of Cuba's unions in Cuba's recovery. Sponsored jointly by U.S.-Canada labor unions. To register contact: U.S.-Cuba Labor Exchange at phone/fax: (313) 561-8330 or laborexchange@aol.com.

BALTIMORE

Sat., July 27
"Labor for Reparations." Why all workers should demand reparations for the victims of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. Hear Fred Mason, president, Maryland State & D.C. AFL-CIO, and others. 3 p.m. At Unity United Methodist Church, 1433 Edmondson Ave. For info (410) 235-7040 or apcbaltimore@pipeline.com.

SAN FRANCISCO

Sun., Aug. 4
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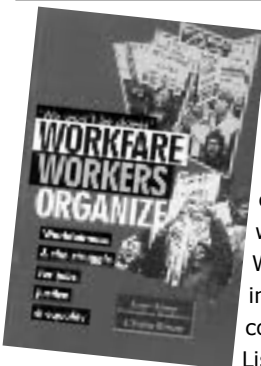
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The profits of slavery continue

Black labor and the fight for reparations

By Bill Cecil

"Probably every slave imported represented, on the average, five corpses in Africa or on the high seas. The American slave trade meant, therefore, the elimination of 60 million Africans."

—Armet Francis,
The Black Triangle

"As valuable a family as was ever offered for sale, consisting of a cook about 35 years of age, and her daughter about 14, and son about 8. The whole will be sold together or a part of them, as may suit a purchaser."

—Ad in The Charleston
(South Carolina) Courier
April 12, 1828

The bones of enslaved Africans lie in unmarked graves on both sides of the Atlantic and beneath its gray waters. But the wealth slave labor created is not gone with the wind. It lives on as capital in the huge fortunes of "great" capitalist families—Rockefellers, Morgans, Mellons, DuPonts and others—who have invested it again and again. It is in the skyscrapers of Manhattan and New England's Ivy League universities. It is in railroads, airlines, steel mills, auto plants, oilfields, hotels, dot-coms and telecoms. It lies in bank vaults beneath Wall Street and is traded on the New York Stock Exchange.

Those who "own" this wealth have power over those whose ancestors created it—and over working people in every country. When bankers "red line" a Black community, they exercise that power. So does a corporation when it shuts a plant in South Carolina or the South Bronx to seek still cheaper labor in Haiti or Mexico. It is on display when plant shutdowns devastate Black and other working-class communities. It is in action when the World Bank forces an African country to "open" its public sector to Western investors in order to eventually privatize it.

Profits from the slave trade "provided one of the main streams of capital accumulation in England that financed the Industrial Revolution," wrote Eric Williams, the first prime minister of Trinidad and Tobago.

Malachi Postlethwayt, an 18th-century slavery apologist, called the British Empire a "magnificent superstructure of American commerce and naval power built on an African foundation." Britain's North American colonies that rose on that foundation became the United States. Ports like Boston, New York City, Baltimore and Charleston were built on the "triangular trade" that brought enslaved Africans to Caribbean sugar plantations. The New York Stock Exchange now stands on what was once an auction block for slaves.

For much of the 19th century, cotton grown by slaves made up 60 to 80 per-

cent of U.S. exports. Slave-grown tobacco and rice comprised much of the rest. Slave-grown cotton also fed New England's textile mills, which gave birth to U.S. industrial production.

The wealth of many top U.S. corporations can be traced directly to slavery. FleetBoston Bank, once Providence Bank, was founded by Rhode Island slave merchant James Brown, who also endowed Brown University.

Yale and the University of Virginia are also among the universities endowed by slave merchants and slave owners. Yet in the United States today there are more Black men in prison than in college.

Slave owners who got rich in the cotton trade started Lehman Brothers investment bank. Alex Brown and Sons, which merged with the German giant Deutsche Bank in 1999, financed the cotton trade.

Brown Brothers Harriman made a fortune loaning plantation owners money to buy slaves. When the planters could not meet their debt, Brown seized and worked their assets, including the slaves. A one-time partner was Prescott Walker Bush, whose grandson lives in the slave-built White House, thanks to an electoral-college system created to give slave owners political power. Prescott Bush continued the firm's tradition by doing business with the Nazis.

The second-largest banking group in the United States is J.P. Morgan Chase. In 2001 it made \$15 billion in profits on assets of \$600 billion. Among the banks now merged into it are two that insured slave ships in the 1850s. J.P. Morgan Chase is now deep in financial scandal. It poured money into Enron, WorldCom and other fraudulent schemes. Have any of these banks been as generous putting money into Black communities?

The slave trade could not survive without insurance due to slave rebellions and escapes. Lloyds of London, the giant shipping broker, made a fortune insuring slave ships. U.S. insurance giants Aetna, New York Life and AIG acquired companies that insured slaves as "property." Today these same insurance firms are pushing doctors and employers to cut health costs while millions of African Americans are without health insurance.

Before the Civil War, "the backbone of the South's railway labor force of track repairmen, station helpers, brakemen, firemen and sometimes even engineers" was slaves, wrote University of Pennsylvania historian Walter Licht in "Working on the Railroad." After emancipation, the rail bosses forced Black workers out of most of these jobs. It wasn't until the 1960s that Black railroad employment rose again.

Slaves, usually "rented" from their owners, built 94 rail lines in the Old South. Today Norfolk Southern, CSX, Union Pacific and Canadian National

own these lines. The big railroad companies have eliminated nearly 800,000 jobs over the past four decades, striking hard at Black communities.

The Capitol was also built by slave labor. A freed Black architect designed much of Washington. George Washington, a wealthy slave owner, had the city built between Virginia and Maryland to take advantage of slave labor.

Today you will find many descendants of slave owners in the millionaires' club called the U.S. Senate, but you will not find a single descendant of slaves. And every occupant of the White House has been white and male. The majority of Washington's population is of African descent, however. To this day they are denied congressional representation.

Today these corporations still benefit from the legacy of slavery, lynch law and "Jim Crow." Witness the lucrative modern slavery of the prison-industrial complex, the lower average wages paid to Black workers and the union organizing drives broken by racist division.

Ever since 1865, when President Andrew Johnson revoked Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman's Order 1815 that promised freed slave families 40 acres and a mule, the fight for reparations has been part of the Black freedom movement. In the 1890s, after bloody massacres overturned Reconstruction in the South, the Mutual Ex-Slaves Relief Bounty and Pension Association was formed to fight for it. Between 1890 and 1910 at least five bills for reparations were introduced in

Congress.

This year Daedra Farmer-Paelman, whose research has uncovered many corporate ties to slavery, launched a class-action suit against Aetna Life Insurance, FleetBoston Bank and CSX Railroads on behalf of all the descendants of slaves.

Millions for Reparations, a coalition of Black activists, has called for a rally in Washington on Aug. 17, the anniversary of the birth of Black leader Marcus Garvey. A multinational group of labor activists has formed Labor for Reparations to support the rally.

Andre Powell is an executive board member of AFSCME Local 112 who attended the United Nations World Conference against Racism in Durban, South Africa, last August, where reparations gained worldwide attention. Powell told WW: "The fight to be paid for work performed is a basic trade union demand. But it goes beyond that. It exposes the fact that profits are nothing but unpaid labor and that idea terrifies Corporate America.

"Karl Marx said that 'capital is dead labor that lives anew by the hand of the living.' Corporate America owes its wealth and power over us to the dead labor of generations of Black people who were literally worked to death. The fight for reparations can turn this whole country around."

Sources for this article include Daedra Farmer-Paelman, "Capitalism and Slavery" by Eric Williams and "How Europe Underdeveloped Africa" by Walter Rodney.

Why are people dying during heat wave in world's richest country?

By the WW Baltimore bureau

Why have 25 people in this state died from heat-related causes—in the richest country in the world? This is what community activists here with the All Peoples Congress are asking. And the organization is already scheduling protests to demand answers as well as solutions.

The majority of the deaths have been elderly people in Baltimore City.

Edward Eades found his companion, Gloria Turner, 67, trembling in her 104-degree rowhouse in East Baltimore. He called an ambulance but she was already too close to death to be saved. He misses her and still cannot believe what happened.

Haden Skinner, an 86-year-old former railroad worker, lived in the downstairs apartment of a flat-roof row house. He was found dead in his recliner as the indoor temperature soared to 95 degrees. His neighbors recall him as a strong and robust man.

Sharon Ceci, a volunteer community organizer with the APC, told Workers World, "This is outrageous. I am a home-care nurse. Many of my patients live in public housing managed by the City Housing Authority. This is where the most vulnerable live—the elderly, sick and poor. Not one unit is air-conditioned. These concrete units are like brick ovens."

Ceci continued, "Just recently Baltimore Gas & Electric Company was cited for overcharging the city of Baltimore \$200,000

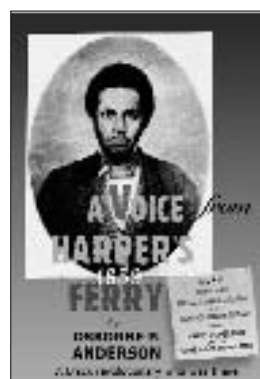
on its utility bill. BGE had charged for unoccupied city buildings where gas and electric had already been turned off. This alone could pay for 2,000 air-conditioning units. Shouldn't BGE be forced to pay something back to the community?" she demanded.

"The City Housing Authority, Health Department and the mayor must develop a comprehensive program to protect all of the people," she concluded. "This means free air-conditioning to everyone in need—especially our seniors and those with health problems. The banks and big businesses have the money. They must be made to pay. Everyone has the right to live in comfort with dignity."

Renee Washington, a state employee and member of the public employees' union AFSCME, is helping to spearhead this campaign. She vowed, "We will organize block by block for justice. This is the richest country in the world. But workers and the poor are forced to live in the worst possible conditions. We are planning to protest on July 30, 5 p.m. at City Hall, 100 Holiday St.

"We will also be attending the City Council meeting on Aug. 12 at 5 p.m. to call for special hearings on this issue as we develop a comprehensive program to meet people's needs."

For more information contact the All Peoples Congress at 426 E. 31st Street at (410) 235-7040. The group meets every Thursday at 7 p.m.



By Osborne P. Anderson, a Black revolutionary who was there. With an essay on 'The Unfinished Revolution' by Vince Copeland & new prefaces by Mumia Abu-Jamal and Monica Moorehead. 128 pp, photographs. \$12 available at www.leftbooks.com

A VOICE from HARPER'S FERRY 1859

Study after 40 years of hormone replacement therapy proves

Profits are hazardous to women's health

By Bev Hiestand, R.N.

The Women's Health Initiative has stopped its clinical trial on the risks and benefits of the most widely used hormone replacement therapy (HRT), known as Prempro, for menopausal women. The proposed eight-year study was halted after only five years when statistically significant evidence of the dangers of HRT became evident. The findings are published in the July issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

The WHI study of 16,000 participants found significantly serious risks for those who received HRT compared to those who received placebos.

The study revealed that women receiving HRT had 29 percent more heart attacks, 26 percent more cases of breast cancers, 41 percent more strokes and 112 percent more blood clots in the lungs than those assigned the placebo, according to the July 9 National Institutes of Health News Release.

Study directors had told participating women twice before—in 2000 and 2001—that those taking the drugs seemed to face slightly more health risks, but claimed it was not serious enough to stop the research.

However, in May researchers decided that the dangers to women taking these drugs outweighed the benefits of slight reduction in the risk of bone fracture and colorectal cancers. The study reported that 1 out of 1,000 of those who took HRT faced hip fractures as opposed to 1.5 out of 1,000 per year who did not.

Of approximately 50 million postmenopausal women in the United States, about 14 million are taking hormone treatment. (Washington Post, July 10) For years, women have been told that HRT could keep them young, keep their skin youthful, prevent heart disease, prevent brittle bones and maintain their mental acuity.

It has been known for some time that women in their 30s and 40s are less likely to have heart attacks and strokes than men the same age. While this led some to believe that declining estrogen levels during menopause may be a contributing factor, this was never proven. Nor was it proved that HRT would prevent heart attacks.

The findings from the WHI support recent American Heart Association recommendations that postmenopausal women should not take hormone therapy to lower their risk of heart disease. (Reuters Health Information, July 2) Investigators in an earlier trial reported as early as 1998 that there was a higher risk of heart attack and death during the first year of therapy. Later analysis of that study showed there was also increased risk of blood clots that could cause heart attacks and strokes.

In addition to the WHI study, the June 27 Reuters Health reported an Italian study has found a link between HRT and increased gallbladder cancer risk.

Earlier observational studies had indicated that women who took HRT were healthier than those who did not. But in the early 1990s, women's groups—including the National Women's Health Network—pointed out that the problem with observational studies is that women who choose to take hormones may start out healthier than women who choose not to. They also pointed out that since observational trials don't include dead people, they would not have included data about women who died as a result of hormone use.

Women's groups and some physicians

became increasingly aware that there were no definitive scientific studies in scientific literature and they pressed to focus more attention on women's health issues. The efforts of these activists led to the Women's Health Initiative study, which enrolled more than 160,000 U.S. women to investigate strategies for preventing diseases associated with aging—including heart disease, cancer and osteoporosis.

One of these studies was the HRT research, which is the only prospective, randomized controlled trial of the effect of hormone replacement on disease incidence in healthy women.

'Vapid cow' theory: A lot of bull!

How did menopause become a "disease" automatically requiring drug treatment, rather than a natural life transition? An article entitled "The Truth About Hormones" in the July 14 *Time* magazine provides a little medical history on the question.

"About 40 years ago, attention was focused on just one female hormone, estrogen. Its greatest popularizer was a gynecologist named Robert Wilson, who thought the hormone could serve as an all-purpose rejuvenator for women of a certain age.

"In his hugely successful book, 'Feminine Forever,' published in 1966, Wilson wrote of menopause as a 'living decay' in which women descended into a 'vapid cow-like' state. Supplemental estrogen, Wilson insisted, would almost magically transform the dull cow into a supple, younger-looking wife and mother. She would not only feel better but also make those around her feel better—especially, it was implied, her partner in bed."

Over the years, these arguments for HRT were updated. "The vapid cow-like state was gone, and there was very scientific language about bone density and heart disease," explains Cynthia Pearson, executive director of the National Women's Health Network, and a long-time skeptic of HRT.

However, the main message was always sexist and ageist, says Pearson. It had a constant refrain: "Stay young. Stay healthy. Stay sexually vital. Be less of a pain to your husband." (New York Times, July 10)

After Dr. Wilson died in 1981, his son Ronald Wilson revealed that pharmaceutical giant Wyeth-Ayerst had paid all the expenses of writing "Feminine Forever" and financed his father's organization—the Wilson Research Foundation—that had offices on Park Avenue in Manhattan. (New York Times, July 10)

Prempro is made by Wyeth Pharmaceuticals. Wyeth earned about \$900 million in sales of this drug last year. (New York Times, July 17)

By 1975, Wyeth's product Premarin had become the fifth-leading prescription drug in the U.S., reports Nadine Marks, an associate professor at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. "Even textbooks for gynecologists and obstetricians in the 1960s would explain how a woman's life could be destroyed if she didn't have estrogen in her body." (New York Times, July 10)

In the 1970s, studies indicated that estrogen replacement by itself promoted uterine cancers. The drug companies found a way around that by combining progesterin with estrogen.

In the 1980s, sales soared with the

promise that hormone replacement could prevent osteoporosis.

Hormone replacement drugs continue to bring in huge profits for the pharmaceutical companies and these businesses do everything they can to protect those profits.

A survey by Impact Rx to determine how Wyeth and makers of competing products were reacting to the WHI study showed that sales representative visits to doctors tripled in the week of the study result's announcement. Some of its competitors jumped at the opportunity to gain sales of similar products. But while the hormonal products that compete with Prempro contain chemically different forms of estrogen and progesterin, there is no evidence yet that they are safer. (New York Times, July 17)

Merck & Company ran a full-page ad promoting Fosamax, another drug that treats osteoporosis, in the July 14 *New York Times*. The practice of promoting drugs directly to the consumer is banned throughout the world except in the United States and New Zealand. (www.policyalternatives.ca)

Pearson stresses, "Pharmaceutical companies have used statistical smoke and mirrors to tout unproven benefits, minimize risks and mislead physicians into being an unsuspecting marketing force for a regimen that harms healthy women. There was never one single clinical trial that showed that HRT prevented cardiovascular disease or stroke. This is not a story of science moving sedately forward, carefully adding pieces to a puzzle before making recommendations to patients. This is a story of the corruption of the medical and scientific community. The belief that hormones are good preventive medicine has been a triumph of marketing over science." (www.womenshealthnetwork.org)

The National Women's Health Network's book, "The Truth About Hormone Replacement Therapy," documents how drug companies entice physicians with free cruises and expensive dinners. Pharmaceutical presentations at scientific conferences, articles in eminent medical journals and continuing medical education programs influence doctors.

And, the book notes, "Pharmaceutical companies control what studies get funded, who gets paid for doing them, where (and whether or not) those studies are published, and how the studies are interpreted. Drug companies, who provide beautiful slides along with a prefab perspective, often pay the physicians and researchers invited to give talks at scientific conferences."

On average, pharmaceutical companies spend \$10,000 to \$15,000 per physician per year on marketing. (Family Therapy Networker, March 2000) A July 12, 2001, report issued by Families USA, a Washington, D.C.-based healthcare consumers' group, says that leading pharmaceutical companies spend more than twice as much on advertising and marketing as they do on research. (www.gayhealth.com)

And it pays off, richly. From 1990 to the year 2000, per capita spending on prescription drugs in the U.S. increased by more than 206 percent. (Family Therapy Networker, March 2000)

Capitalism: Hazardous to health

How can women find objective, truth-

How did menopause become a 'disease' automatically requiring drug treatments rather than a natural life transition?

ful, scientific information about drugs?

A survey of some of the following accounts of pharmaceutical company criminal activity in the pursuit of super profits can be found on the Public Citizen Health Research Group website www.citizen.org.

Abbott Laboratories illegally withheld information concerning eight deaths and other adverse effects of the drug Meridia.

Schering-Plough knowingly shipped millions of asthma drug inhalers that did not contain any active ingredients; inactive medication could be fatal to an asthmatic.

Editors of the most prestigious medical journals—such as the *New England Journal of Medicine*, the *Lancet*, the *Annals of Internal Medicine* and the *American Medical Association Journal*—found a large number of published articles fail to disclose ties to drug companies. The editors have adopted a uniform policy that reserves the right to refuse to publish drug-company-sponsored studies unless the researchers involved are guaranteed scientific independence. The editors acted after recent charges that drug companies tried to withhold negative research results or present them in the most favorable way. (www.mercola.com)

New statistics reveal that 96 percent of studies sponsored by the pharmaceutical industry find the drug under investigation helpful, while only 37 percent of government-funded studies do. (Family Therapy Networker, March 2000).

No wonder polls are finding women scared and angry about the WHI results. Millions of women are left to wonder what can be done to protect them from the unscrupulous practices of the drug-for-profit industry.

Many of these women have taken hormone replacement therapy because their physicians told them it would prevent heart disease—the biggest killer of women. Now, they are learning that HRT can CAUSE heart disease.

How can any patients trust their doctors when it has been shown that the greatest influence on physicians' prescribing practices is the visit from pharmaceutical reps? (Family Therapy Networker, March 2000)

Cynthia Person concludes, "The lesson we need to learn for the future is that we need unbiased research. We need to remove drug company influence from all medical education. And pharmaceutical interventions should not be inflicted on healthy people until these interventions are proven safe and effective in randomized controlled trials." (www.womenshealthnetwork.org)

There also needs to be a thoroughgoing struggle against sexism in the deliv-

WorldCom bankruptcy

Echoes of 1873 railroad industry collapse

By Gary Wilson

The bankruptcy of WorldCom has nothing to do with the crooks that run it. That fact may surprise many who have relied on media reports that leave the impression the failure is due to a few “bad apples,” as President George W. Bush put it.

Yet, that is the most important fact to know about the WorldCom bankruptcy.

WorldCom is one of the biggest telecommunications companies in the United States. It is the second-largest long-distance telephone service provider in the country, carrying over 70 percent of Internet traffic, about 30 percent of consumer long-distance phone service and 50 percent of all corporate communications in the U.S.

Picking through the heap of reports on the bankruptcy, none seem to get to the root of the matter. One report had something a little different. It was a short item on National Public Radio's Morning Edition July 23, interviewing a specialist on the telecommunications industry, Scott Cleland.

Cleland said, “People look at WorldCom as a story of huge corporate fraud, because it is a record-breaking amount of fraud. But WorldCom was a one-dollar stock before the fraud was discovered and it was going bankrupt before that.”

Yes, WorldCom has been heading for bankruptcy for at least a year.

Overproduction in fiber optics

More than a year ago, reports started to appear in the business press about a “glut” in the telecommunications industry. In particular, there was clearly overcapacity in fiber optics.

By the beginning of 2002, telecommunications giants were crumbling. The Feb. 17 New York Times reported:

“As an element of the telecommunications meltdown that has come to light only recently, the market for fiber network access seems to have been an important common ingredient in the epidemic of accounting fiascos bursting out all over. Certainly, it played a major role in the unraveling of Global Crossing, which filed for bankruptcy protection last month. Fiber swapshurt other big communications companies, like Qwest Communications International and Cable and Wireless. And they played roles in the cascading problems of Enron and Tyco International.”

Actually, five of the 10 biggest bankruptcies in U.S. history have all been within the last year and all are related to the so-

called overcapacity in telecommunications.

The five are:

(source: *BankruptcyData.Com*)

- WorldCom, with \$103.9 billion in assets, bankrupt July 21
- Enron, with \$63.3 billion in assets, bankrupt Dec. 2
- Global Crossing, with \$25.5 billion in assets, bankrupt Jan. 28
- Adelphia Communications, with \$24.4 billion in assets, bankrupt June 25
- NTL, with \$16.8 billion in assets, bankrupt May 8

What happened?

A report in the Aug. 31, 2001, Business Week on “The Fiber-Optic Glut” said:

“Since the 1980s, telecommunications companies have deposited 283 million miles of optical cable into the ground, according to fiber-optic consultancy KMI Corp. That cable powers phone networks and the Internet, enabling most of the high-speed communications of the Wired Age. Strung together, those cables would circle the earth 11,320 times.”

This glut was spurred on by high-level speculation among the telecommunications giants, which began “swapping” capacity—that is, selling future shares of capacity among themselves.

This led to a speculative bubble that some have compared to the tulip mania that gripped 17th-century Holland. Speculators at that time drove the price of tulip bulbs up to the point where a single bulb would cost several hundred dollars. That's 17th century dollars; the figure would be much higher today. So of course everyone started planting tulips until suddenly the market imploded.

That tulip mania was one of history's first capitalist crises of overproduction.

1873 railroad glut led to depression

The Feb. 17 New York Times offers a different example for today's crisis, though it too is an example of a capitalist crisis of overproduction:

“One clue may lie in the history of the nation's railroads, which are often compared to relatively young fiber optic systems. Some fiber optic operators, like Qwest, even got their start by laying fiber along existing rail lines,” the Times concluded.

“By now it is almost forgotten that rail-

road companies expanded with ferocity in a post-Civil War boom that resulted in a spectacular financial collapse called the Panic of 1873. Many small investors were burned by the scandalous activities of concerns like Union Pacific Railroad, which, like Global Crossing, stretched the boundaries of corporate behavior in its day.”

Is that the only similarity? 1873 marks the beginning of one of the worst capitalist depressions in history.

“In 1873, another economic crisis devastated the nation,” writes Howard Zinn in “A People's History of the United States.” It was a depression that lasted for seven years, until 1880.

Zinn also notes that, “Crisis was built into a system which was chaotic in its nature, in which only the very rich were secure. It was a system of periodic crisis—1837, 1857, 1873 (and later: 1893, 1907, 1919, 1929)—that wiped out small businesses and brought cold, hunger, and death to working people while the fortunes of the Astors, Vanderbilts, Rockefellers, Morgans, kept growing through war and peace, crisis and recovery. During the 1873 crisis, Carnegie was capturing the steel market, Rockefeller was wiping out his competitors in oil.”

These periodic crises, which the media calls overcapacity, or a glut, are what Marx called overproduction.

Overproduction is a phenomenon unknown in history before capitalism. Overproduction has nothing to do with needs or wants of people. The crisis in telecommunications is not because they can't find enough people who want access to high-speed Internet connections and voice communications systems.

There is no excess capacity, if you look at it from the point of view of people's needs or wants. In fact, more broadband Internet and telecommunications like that marketed by WorldCom are being sold to more businesses and individuals today than ever before. The demand has never been higher.

However, it is a crisis of overproduction. The crisis comes from the fact that the telecommunications access can no longer be sold for the rate of profit that the big owners of the companies' stock are demanding. A few years ago, profit rates were astronomical; now the profits are smaller. When the profit margins start to decline, the rich withdraw and move their money elsewhere to the higher profit rate that they expect.

That is the source of the crisis in the telecommunications industry—a crisis of overproduction.

The MBA-in-chief and the business interests who control Congress are busy making sure the interests of the rich are protected. Who's looking after the interests of the working class?

Falling rate of profit

This crisis is compounded, though, by a wider crisis in capitalism, a crisis brought on by a generalized fall in the rate of profit. This is the crisis that is being played out on the stock market.

While a big capitalist will quickly move assets out of an industry entering a crisis of overproduction into a different industry altogether where profit rates are rising, not declining, that is not so easily done when all businesses are hit with a falling rate of profit. And falling profits are what have forced the CEOs of so many corporations and banks to “cook the books” in order to conceal the true situation they are facing.

This is a crisis that looks similar to the Panic of 1873 and the other periodic capitalist crises that occurred regularly in the 1800s and the first half of the 1900s.

These periodic crises were the result of capitalist crises of overproduction and a falling rate of profit. They plagued the big capitalist countries until the end of World War II. Only the socialist economy of the Soviet Union had managed to break this cycle. In the struggle to overthrow Soviet socialism, the capitalist powers used government spending to lessen the impact of the continuing boom and bust cycle so there was not the appearance of a steep recession or depression.

It was a system of welfare for the rich as well as the working class. But the system of welfare for the working class has been dismantled in the post-Soviet period.

The MBA-in-chief and the business interests who control the Congress are busy making sure that the interests of the rich are protected. Bush and the Congress are writing laws to introduce accounting reform. But there is no talk of protecting the jobs or the retirement savings of the working people who are losing everything to the crooks in big business and the big banks.

Clearly, only independent intervention by the working class will be able to protect their interests as this crisis deepens.

ery of medical care—as well as ongoing battles against racism, homophobia and other barriers to treatment, like lack of health insurance and poverty.

“The idea that our bodies fail us at menopause is ludicrous, extremely sexist and just plain wrong,” says Vicki Meyer, founder of a cybercommunity called the International Organization to Reclaim Menopause. (Time, July 14)

But ultimately, the answer is to remove health care—and all other forms of capitalist industry—out of the hands of private ownership by a wealthy handful and into the hands of the vast laboring class that built it with their toil. Under a planned economy—even in the

poorest countries trying to build socialism, like Cuba—health care is free for everyone.

Removing the capitalist profit motive—the insatiable drive that is so hazardous to health—lays the basis to explore numerous ways that society can support physical, emotional and mental healthy living through the entire life spectrum from infancy to old age.

Hiestand is chief steward of CWA 1168 in Buffalo. She is also a women's rights activist who, during a right-wing mobilization in Buffalo in the 1990s, helped organize coalition defense of women's clinics that performed abortions.

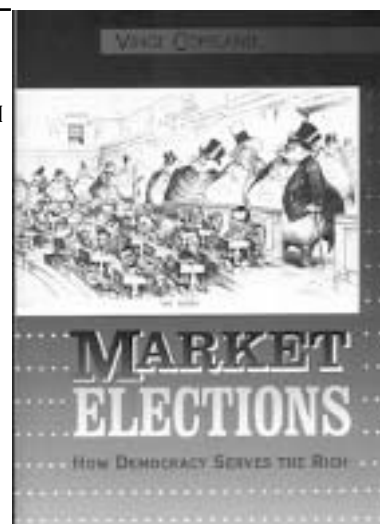
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Continued from page 1

Bank—DG].

“In that sense, we are in uncharted waters. Clinically speaking, a recession is an economic contraction brought on by tightening and ended by easing. A depression is a self-reinforcing economic contraction, perpetuated by debt liquidation in which central bank easing is impotent to reverse the contraction. Recent market action is symptomatic of depression,” Bridgewater pointed out.”

Actually, these turbulent waters are not completely uncharted. This country has been in a depression before.

Massive destruction of wealth

In a depression, factories and offices stand idle, sometimes abandoned. The equipment in them grows obsolete or rots away. Even brand-new goods, like today's computers and their software, sit on the shelves only to finally be thrown away, outmoded long before they could have been sold.

In the Great Depression of the 1930s, this destruction of goods and the equipment and facilities used to produce them led to outrageous scenes of oranges being dumped in the sea and wheat plowed under, even as hungry people lined up for a bowl of thin soup and a crust of bread. Agriculture had become very productive, but this bounty of nature could not be sold—not at a profit, anyway. The bosses preferred to have it destroyed than give it to hungry people.

The capitalist market could not meet people's most basic needs. Almost 30 percent of the workers were unemployed—human beings cast out just like the machines that were no longer needed. Without jobs, millions couldn't afford food, clothing or shelter.

A generalized capitalist crisis can also bring on an even greater destruction of the wealth produced over generations by the working class: it can lead to war.

Directly after the Great Depression came World War II. In addition to the tens of millions of lives lost, there was widespread destruction of the means of production. Intense competition for markets and resources among the huge corporations and banks of different capitalist countries had led to the war. This competition was resolved in the most horrible way, through wholesale destruction of factories, farms and infrastructure.

TURMOIL

Stocks yo-yo as markets reveal \$7 trillion loss

The countries being fought over as the spoils of that war—the colonized nations of Africa and Asia—had nothing to gain and everything to lose. Their people were left starving and their territories in ruins after the armies of the competing exploiters swept through.

Collapse not psychological

Everyone in the capitalist establishment, from CEOs to analysts and politicians, is treating the market collapse as a psychological phenomenon. If only investor “confidence” could be turned around, they say, the market rebound would make everything all right.

They point hopefully to signs that consumers are still buying homes and other items. What they are ignoring, however, is that depressions don't start because consumers suddenly, inexplicably lose “confidence.”

They start because of overproduction, which is brought on by the overbuilding of the means of production by the huge corporations. They are all trying to undercut each other by using the latest technology in order to produce cheaper than their competitors. This investment in technology expands the means of production at a breakneck pace that sooner or later ends in a catastrophe.

Fed chair Alan Greenspan himself, in testimony to Congress on July 16, confirmed that it was overproduction in the area of capital goods like fiber-optic cables and computers that was pulling the market down.

Once the markets starts to plunge, then layoffs of workers and caution among consumers can have a snowballing effect as they stop buying. But, as Karl Marx pointed out long ago, the crisis begins not in consumption but in production itself.

What can the working class do to stop the super-rich ruling class from dumping this crisis on their heads?

How banks hid Enron's troubles

The latest phase of this tumultuous market contraction started when the role of the banks in Enron's dirty deals became public.

Examiners for the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations and shareholders' lawyers say that the banks structured billions of dollars of transactions for Enron in a way that hid the company's growing indebtedness.

The latest revelation involved a “handshake” deal between Citigroup and Enron code-named Roosevelt that allowed the energy company to conceal a \$500-million loan it got from the bank by listing it as a commodity transaction.

Senate investigator Robert Roach told a hearing of the investigative panel of the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee on July 23 that, “The evidence indicates that Enron would not have been able to engage in the extent of the accounting deceptions it did, involving billions of dollars, were it not for the active participation of major financial institutions willing to go along with and even expand upon Enron's activities.”

Roach said there also is evidence that some of the banks “knowingly allowed investors” to rely on Enron financial statements they knew were misleading.

According to the July 23 Associated Press, “The banks used complex financial schemes to boost Enron's anemic cash flow to match its profit growth on paper, according to lawmakers. The energy-trading company recorded the money from the bank loans as prepaid trades of natural gas and other commodities with an entity based in the Channel Islands off Britain.”

Besides Citigroup and J.P. Morgan Chase, the shareholders' suit named Credit Suisse First Boston USA Inc., Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, Bank of America Corp., Merrill Lynch & Co., Lehman Brothers Holding Inc., Britain's Barclays Bank PLC and Germany's Deutsche Bank AG.

The AP story added, “Houston-based Enron, which filed for bankruptcy in December, taking the investments of millions of people with it, used a web of thousands of off-balance-sheet partnerships to hide some \$1 billion in debt from investors and federal regulators.”

All this crooked finagling was to hide another feature that Marx showed triggers a capitalist crisis: a falling rate of profit.

What can be done?

What can the working class and all those whose lives are ripped up by an economic crisis do to stop the super-rich ruling class from dumping this one

on their heads?

In the 1930s, the first reaction of stunned shock gave way to anger and eventually mass action. It soon became clear that all the promises made by the great captains of industry and finance that the crisis would be short-lived were just deceptions. They were trying to cover themselves while they worked feverishly to make sure their own fortunes were secure—in the same way the Enron executives and the others have been doing.

The working class became more organized, militant and cohesive as the depression deepened. They organized as the unemployed, as tenants, as farm workers, and in the factories. Huge crowds stopped evictions by putting people's furniture back in their homes. Workers went on strike and eventually sat in the factories to demand higher wages and union recognition.

They also put demands on the government to provide jobs as well as food, shelter and clothing for the unemployed. The capitalist government responded with different tactics, first using repression, then some concessions. The objective was the same: to divert the workers from taking over what they had built and running it for the good of all, not the profits of a few.

The working class movement of the 1930s, powerful as it was, with a long-lasting impact through such programs as Social Security, welfare and unemployment insurance, did not unseat the ruling class from its positions of economic and political power. It did not liberate the means of production from the hands of the privileged super-rich few, whose wealth had been amassed directly from the labor of the workers.

The inability of the working class—not just in the United States but in Europe and other centers of world imperialism—to overturn capitalist rule allowed the exploiting class to resolve the depression through the most horrendous war the world had ever seen.

The present deepening crisis is sure to arouse the workers in the U.S. and around the world, at first in a defensive struggle against the miseries inflicted on them by the capitalist system. It carries within it the potential, however, of making such a crack in this rotten system that the workers and all humanity will be able to widen it and pour through.

Capitalism must be replaced by its opposite: a society based on social ownership of the means of production, administered democratically by the masses of workers themselves and not by a tiny elite who have shown that they will do anything, no matter how heinous, in the pursuit of profit.

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LOS ANGELES

Forum calls for Pentagon bases out of Korea

By Scott Scheffer
Los Angeles

At a July 20 public forum here about U.S. war crimes during the Korean War, two long-time Korea activists from New York City spoke about the growing movement for justice in south Korea and the current role of U.S. occupying forces there. The audience consisted of anti-war activists and many people from Koreatown in Los Angeles—the largest Korean community outside of Asia.

Both speakers—Yoomi Jeong and Deirdre Griswold—have visited north and south Korea as part of teams investigating the many massacres of civilians carried out on orders from the U.S. military brass during the 1950-53 war. They were also both participants in an International War Crimes Tribunal on Korea held in New York two years ago.

The event was co-chaired by John Parker of the International Action Center and Hyongchong Kim of One Korea L.A. Forum. These two organizations sponsored the meeting. One Korea L.A. Forum organizes for justice, peace and reunification of Korea among first-

generation immigrants in Koreatown. Kim also simultaneously translated the entire meeting into Korean.

Yoomi Jeong, deputy secretary general of the Korea Truth Commission, chronicled the re-emergence of anti-U.S. troop sentiment in south Korea that has been re-invigorated, in part, by the investigation of these atrocities.

Jeong cited recent outrage about the case of Shin Hyo-sun and Shim Mi-sun, two 13-year-old south Korean schoolgirls who were killed by a U.S. military vehicle on June 13. Jeong said that there have been huge daily demonstrations demanding justice for their deaths. She called on the Los Angeles crowd to organize demonstrations to support that struggle when organizers come from south Korea to tour U.S. cities later this year.

Deirdre Griswold, editor of Workers World and a long-time activist in support of Korean self-determination, visited north Korea in April. She debunked the myth that the U.S. military occupation of south Korea is for the purpose of protecting the south from the north. "That is a total fairy tale that no one who

knows the facts can accept. It would be naïve indeed to think that the U.S. occupation is motivated by anything other than the naked pursuit of profits."

Yong-bin Yuk also spoke at the July 20 meeting. He represents an organization of Korean-American youth in Los Angeles called Mindullae that builds solidarity with the struggle of Koreans, people of color, and workers in Los Angeles and around the world as part of the broader movement for peace and justice. Yuk denounced the continuing occupation of south Korea by 37,000 U.S. troops. He called for reunification of Korea, still divided by the Pentagon 50 years after the U.S. war.

Parker talked about the case of Donovan Jackson-Chavis. A recently aired videotape brought the beating of this African-American teenager by racist police in nearby Inglewood, Calif., to people across the U.S. Like the beating of Rodney King by the LAPD, it has prompted large demonstrations. Parker pointed to the similarity between the treatment of oppressed youths in the United States and the role of the U.S. military around the world.



Yoomi Jeong



Deirdre Griswold

SOUTH KOREA

Killings of young girls by U.S. troops ignites rage

By Sharon Ayling

Koreans have mounted nearly daily protests for the past five weeks demanding that the U.S. military hand over two U.S. soldiers whose armored vehicle killed two south Korean teenage girls on June 13.

On July 14, 1,000 activists and students rallied near the U.S. Army's 2nd Infantry Division base in Uijongbu, on the northern outskirts of Seoul, chanting, "We oppose the U.S. military!" They burned a giant U.S. flag. Protesters called for withdrawal of Pentagon troops from south Korea and for President George W. Bush to apologize for the deaths. The demonstrators briefly scuffled with south Korean riot police who stopped them from entering the base to deliver a protest letter.

On July 17, about 500 south Korean high school students, some in their school uniforms, sang anti-U.S. songs and tossed dozens of red paper planes over the base's 10-foot wire fence that carried the message, "U.S. troops out of Korea! Give up jurisdiction!"

Many thousands have signed a petition to the commander of the U.S. 2nd Infantry Division that reads in part, "At about 10:40 a.m. on June 13, an armored vehicle belonging to your U.S. 2nd Infantry Division crushed dead two innocent young girls, Shin Hyo Soon and Shim Mi Sun. We believe this incident was not an accident caused by a driver mistake. It was caused by your long-standing practice of safeguarding American vehicles at any costs with little respect for the lives of the Korean peo-

ple. ... Let the Korean court prosecute not only the guilty driver but also his superiors."

The vehicle was a 60-ton AVLM, used to clear mines. It was part of a convoy traveling to a training exercise on Highway 56, a two-lane road winding past rice fields and small farms. The road, which has no sidewalk or shoulder, is a main pathway for pedestrians in the area.

At 12-foot wide, the AVLM was wider than the lane it was in and so it extended about 30 inches off the road. At the time that the girls were crushed, another convoy of U.S. military vehicles was coming in the opposite direction.

Military officials said that they are not pulling AVLMs off the road in Korea and declared Highway 56 a critical link for their troops. The exercise was not canceled as a result of the accident.

The outraged community is demanding that the U.S. military take measures to prevent similar accidents, compensate the victims' families, stop holding training operations near civilians and revise the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA).

Under SOFA, the Korean authorities cannot investigate the tragedy because the 37,000 U.S. soldiers stationed there are immune from prosecution if they commit crimes against the Korean people.

Following days of protest demonstrations, the U.S. military announced on July 5 it had filed negligent homicide charges against the two soldiers in the vehicle, reversing an earlier decision not to court-martial the GIs. However, on July 10 south Korea's Justice Ministry

requested that the U.S. military give up jurisdiction over the two soldiers. The Pentagon has yet to respond.

The Korean movement is asking for international solidarity actions, including a letter-writing campaign to President Bush and joint demonstrations in front of U.S. embassies and consulates on July 31. More information about this campaign can be found on the web sites www.koreatruthcommission.org and www.iacenter.org.

Angry south Koreans pour into streets, burn U.S. flag.



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Israel bombs Gaza City

By Richard Becker

A U.S.-supplied Israeli F-16 dropped a 2,000-pound bomb in the center of densely populated Gaza City at midnight on July 22, killing 15 people, nine of them children ranging in age from two months to 14 years, and wounding at least 176 others. The laser-guided bomb destroyed four residential buildings.

Among the dead were Sheik Salah Shehadeh, senior military commander of Izzedine Al-Qassam, the military wing of Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement), his wife Layla and one of their daughters.

The next day more than 100,000 Palestinians joined in a massive and militant three-mile-long funeral march for the victims. Survivors painted on the sides of the devastated buildings: "This is the American weapon" and "This is the Israeli peace."

Marchers chanted "Death to Israel, death to America," and called for avenging the killings. Many of the speeches and slogans at the rally reportedly focused on the role of the U.S. in arming Israel. The Pentagon has provided the Israeli military with F-16s, attack helicopters and other high-tech weaponry that has been extensively used to attack Palestinian civilian areas.

In the 22-month-long Intifada (Uprising), more than 1,900 Palestinians have been killed, tens of thousands wounded and immense destruction done to Palestinian society. The U.S. government and corporate media have overwhelmingly focused attention on the 575 Israelis killed in the same period.

Worldwide condemnation

Numerous governments and organizations issued statements condemning the Israeli bombing and the heavy civilian toll.

Palestinian women in refugee camp in southern Lebanon protest July 22 airstrike in Gaza by Israelis.

After 15 hours of silence, the White House issued a statement criticizing Israel in moderate language.

"This heavy handed action does not contribute to peace," said Press Secretary Ari Fleischer. No reference to "terrorism," the label that Washington hangs on every act of Palestinian resistance to the harsh and illegal Israeli occupation.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, repeatedly praised by President George W. Bush as "a man of peace" despite his blood-drenched history, hailed the Gaza attack as "one of our greatest successes."

Timing of attack

The timing of the Gaza massacre must be seen as part of a pattern of similar operations carried out by the Sharon government. Time after time over the past two years, Sharon has ordered the most provocative actions, including numerous assassinations, in order to derail the "threat" of negotiations.

Only a few hours before the Gaza bombing, Hamas was reported to have offered to suspend operations against



Israel if Israeli troops were withdrawn from recently reoccupied Palestinian cities and towns in the West Bank.

According to the Washington Post, quoting an unidentified U.S. source "involved in the negotiations," all the Palestinian political parties had agreed to "a cessation of attacks on Israeli civilians in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Israel," at 10 p.m. on July 22, just two hours before the Gaza attack.

"Many people believe that probably Sharon knew about this, and [the attack] was a provocation," designed to undercut the agreement, said the Post.

Galia Golan, of the Israeli Peace Now movement, said that the attack came "when there was progress for a cease-fire, even with Hamas," and that this "was an indication that Sharon is

not interested in negotiations."

Hafez Barghouthi, editor of the al-Hayat al-Jadida newspaper, said: "The purpose of this operation was to stop the contacts between Palestinians and some Israeli ministers. Sharon wants there to be a Palestinian response, he wants more violence because he has no political solution."

Why would Sharon, the Bush-designated "man of peace," want more violence? The answer to the question—the obvious question never asked by the U.S. big business media—is quite simple.

Sharon's entire political and military career has been dedicated to conquering and absorbing all of historic Palestine into the Israeli state. To achieve this goal, Sharon has shown that he is willing to shed unlimited Israeli as well as Palestinian blood.



The 2,000-pound bomb Israelis dropped on a Palestinian neighborhood in Gaza City killed 15—nine of them children—and wounded at least 176 others.

Alliance is also a leader of the Chicago Coalition Against War and Racism. He spoke about the movement demanding divestment from Israel that is growing on campuses across the country.

Ahmad pointed out the similarities between this divestment campaign and the earlier one waged against the apartheid regime in South Africa. He drew parallels between the two settler

states and pointed out the historically regressive and reactionary character of both.

Alderman Atty. Lionel Baptiste of Evanston, Ill., spoke about the upcoming August 17 Millions for Reparations Rally in Washington, D.C.

Jihan Diab and Jill Hill—both from Chicago ANSWER—chaired the meeting.

CHICAGO

Solidarity with Palestine

By Beth Semmer
Chicago

More than 80 people attended an Eye-witness Palestine meeting at DePaul University in Chicago on July 11. The meeting, jointly sponsored by the International Action Center and the Free Palestine Alliance, featured Richard Becker, West Coast director of the IAC, and Mahmud Ahmad of the FPA.

Becker, who has traveled extensively in the Middle East over the past 30 years, was in Palestine from May 17-25 with the International ANSWER coalition's fact-finding delegation to Occupied Palestine. He brought a video to the July 11 event produced from footage the delegation shot in Gaza as well as Ramallah, Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Jenin in the West Bank.

Chicago held the premier showing of this video, entitled "Palestine Fights for Freedom." It included graphic footage of the wholesale destruction of homes and buildings by the Israeli military in these towns. The video also included interviews with lawyers, teachers, students, activists, healthcare workers and residents of refugee camps about the human devastation caused by the recent invasion of the U.S.-backed Israeli forces

into the occupied territories.

Becker reminded the audience that this footage was shot back in May and did not include any of the most recent incursions.

Becker stressed that the U.S. government bears the chief responsibility for allowing the Israelis to carry out their monstrous blitzkrieg against the Palestinian people. While noting the tremendous suffering that the people of Palestine are experiencing, he expressed admiration for their tenacity, which has given inspiration to the struggles of all oppressed humanity. Pointing out the number of times the Palestinians had fought back and endured, Becker expressed confidence that they would not only survive, but would be victorious.

While in Chicago, Richard Becker was interviewed by Ifti Nasim, editor of the Weekly Pakistan Express. Pakistan Express is a national newspaper written in the Urdu language for the Pakistani community here in the U.S.

Nasim is a widely published poet, writer and activist. He is the co-founder of Sangat/Chicago, a South Asian lesbian/bisexual/gay/transgender organization and support group, and he was inducted into the Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame in 1996.

Mahmud Ahmad of the Free Palestine

As poverty deepens

Nigerian women take over Chevron Texaco

By Monica Moorehead

The quest for reparations by nationally oppressed peoples worldwide takes many forms. But the basis for this fundamental right is universal: just compensation to help bring about long overdue economic and political rights. Bold, heroic actions initiated by a group of African women in recent weeks must be viewed within this context and will certainly inspire the most oppressed everywhere to take similar actions as capitalist greed allows the rich to get richer as the poor get poorer.

Hundreds of Nigerian women staged two separate dramatic takeovers of a U.S.-owned Chevron Texaco oil subsidiary called Escravos west of Lagos, Nigeria's capitol. Escravos is a former slave pickup site, and the name itself means slave in Portuguese. What a tragic irony.

This takeover included taking a couple of thousand employees and managers hostage. In two separate takeovers, these indigent women virtually brought oil production to a halt. This subsidiary normally produces half a million barrels daily. Nigeria as a whole produces 1.8 million barrels of oil a day, creating billions in profits for Big Oil.

Why have these women risked their lives to carry out these actions? They simply wanted to force a written agreement from Chevron Texaco, a multibillion-dollar global conglomerate, that it would provide their communities with electricity, schools, water systems, health clinics and other infrastructure to raise the level of their living standards. The women are also demanding that jobs be provided, including to their unemployed sons, and that pensions be provided for people over the age of 60.

The women protesters also decided to take these actions because, when their male counterparts attempted similar actions, they faced a greater risk of being arrested or physically harmed by police.

This protest took place in the heart of the Niger Delta. Like so much of the African continent, this region is super abundant in natural resources—in this case oil—but super underdeveloped because of the legacy of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, colonialism and neocolonialism. It is considered one of the poorest regions in Africa.

Any commodity production within the developing economies exists mainly for export on the world capitalist market and not to serve the interests of the indigenous population. For instance, Nigeria is the world's sixth-largest exporter of oil and the fifth-largest supplier of oil to the U.S.

'Why do they treat us like animals?'

The first stage of the takeover took place on July 8 when an estimated 150 women took over four stations at the refinery. One of the brilliant tactics the women used was to occupy the aircraft runway, helipad and dock at the facility. No roads lead to this plant—only swamps and rivers. This technological underdevelopment, rooted in imperialist plunder, is the root cause of this protest.

An engineer among the hostages told Agence France-Presse that the women "are complaining that their children have not been given employment. They are not

armed or violent. Most of them are women over 45 and there is no way we would lay a finger on them." The majority of the workers in this plant are from the U.S., Canada and England. There are some Nigerian workers as well.

This particular phase of the protest ended on July 17 when protesters won a verbal agreement from Chevron Texaco that their demands would be met.

Another takeover occurred on July 18 by women at four more Chevron Texaco facilities, 50 miles east of the first protest. Their demands were similar to the ones that inspired the first takeover.

These women demanded that the Chevron officials visit their village to see firsthand the unspeakable poverty they have been forced to endure compared to the state-of-the-art hospital, cafeteria, satellite television and other modern conveniences provided for the Chevron employees.

Athonia Okuro, a 28-year-old protester, suffered the loss of her husband from an unknown disease. Her children are chronically sick from mosquito bites



Above, women occupying oil flow station in Makaraba, Nigeria. Below, women occupying oil export terminal in Escravos care for their children.

that are the main transmission route of malaria. She commented, "I don't know

how [Chevron Texaco] can allow other human beings to live like this. Why do they treat us like animals?" (Associated Press, July 18)

The protesters also charged Chevron Texaco with environmental damage, especially the destruction of fish and cassava crops, both main staples of the Nigerian people, by the flaring up of natural gas.

Anunu Uwawah, a leader of the first takeover, stated, "I give one piece of advice to all women in all countries: they shouldn't let any company cheat them." (Salon, July 19)



South African municipal workers win living wage battle

By Gery Armsby

Striking municipal workers in South Africa reached an important wage agreement with the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) on July 19, ending a three-week nationwide strike.

The agreement signaled a victory for workers who were struggling against a bitter and obstinate management to raise the minimum salary for municipal workers from the present \$190 per month to \$220.

To end the strike—which hindered many crucial services throughout the country, affecting millions—the South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU) made concessions, which it had prepared its members for if the course of the strike required them. Yet overall the standing agreement represents a step forward for all workers in the service sector and all of South Africa's lowest paid.

SAMWU wrested from management a minimum wage increase to \$210 and wage increases for other workers of 8 to 9 percent. The union had demanded an across-the-board 10-percent increase. Among the other gains for the workers will be a built-

in inflationary increase of one percent for 2003 and 2004 and 1.5 percent for 2005.

"Just last week SALGA was refusing to talk to us," said SAMWU negotiator Dale Forbes. "By Monday they forgot their stance as the continued pressure of our members began to take its toll.

"Not only did they come to the bargaining table but they were also prepared to consider SAMWU's demands for a minimum wage and for a higher increase for lower-paid workers. Previously these demands were rejected out of hand.

"In the agreement SAMWU has secured our key demands of a minimum wage and a higher percentage increase for lower-paid workers. This continues our campaign to reduce the unacceptable wage gap between the highest and the lowest paid worker," Forbes said.

The victory was not easy. Picket lines and rallies in several cities and towns were met with repression. One picketer was killed and another seriously wounded by police gunfire July 15. Police in another city opened fire with rubber bullets against picketers who were holding a street demonstration. And hundreds were arrested during the strike, including the chairperson of a SAMWU



Workers and their supporters at a SAMWU rally.

PHOTO: SAMWU

local and other strike leaders.

Yet the support of the majority of people from the communities, even those most affected by service interruptions, seemed to be with the workers. Added to that was an incredible outpouring of working-class solidarity from many unions and labor federations in South Africa. Together, the 100,000 striking municipal workers and their millions of allies could not be held back.

Workers returned to work July 22 as SAMWU continued additional negotiations concerning broadening economic inequities between municipal managers and workers.



Casualties of U.S. war: truth & civilians

After poor reviews and reactions to his talks on the economy, Bush was happier giving his recent “make war first” speech in front of 2,000 soldiers from the 10th Mountain Division at Fort Drum in New York. They had recently returned from U.S.-occupied Afghanistan, where the Pentagon will now even guard the U.S. puppet president, Hamid Karzai.

Everyone cheered, whether they wanted to or not. But Bush, the Pentagon and the officers leading the cheers had butchered the Afghans just as Ken Lay and Bush’s other corporate cronies pillaged the workers at home. Even Washington’s own assessment of the Afghan war, made July 20, shows that the Pentagon occupation is ruthless and brutal.

By their own confession, U.S. bombing from a distance, false information and a cavalier attitude toward civilians have killed at least 400 civilians in the Afghan campaign. This is a conservative, minimum figure. A New Hampshire professor who has made an independent investigation of the U.S. bombing campaign now says the U.S. has killed between 3,115 and 3,557 civilians, many of them children.

These numerous civilian deaths grow straight out of the character of U.S. imperialism and the Pentagon.

First of all, the White House and the top Pentagon generals have nothing but contempt for civilians in their line

of fire. They have killed civilians from Iraq to Panama to Yugoslavia—and even more in Vietnam and Korea—and dubbed it “collateral damage.”

Second, the average U.S. soldier has no real political interest in risking life and limb for U.S. imperialism. Why should working-class youths want to risk their life so that Ken Lay can rip off millions, or the owners of oil monopolies can rip off billions?

That reasonable attitude has forced the Pentagon generals since Vietnam to try to limit U.S. casualties. Not because they love their troops. They simply fear that U.S. casualties will arouse mass opposition to the war, including from the troops themselves.

This means military strikes are from great distances and with big bombs. Often the Pentagon purposely hits civilian targets to try to demoralize the “enemy.” But even when the Pentagon is not purposely killing civilians, indiscriminate rockets and bombs kill them anyway.

The day following this Afghan revelation, we learned that Tom Ridge wanted to consider using the Pentagon to “fight terrorism” inside the United States. He didn’t mention the Afghan model for Pentagon activity, but it was right there in front of us.

It brings home the need to fight against Pentagon involvement anywhere, and everywhere, in the world.

Solidarity with Cuban Revolution

It was impossible. Rank adventurism. Divorced from the working-class organizations. Led by middle-class students with fuzzy bourgeois democratic ideals and ideology. Destined for failure. And finally crushed in blood.

It was enormously courageous. A challenge to despotism. A blow for freedom that was exactly in tune with the mood of the oppressed workers and peasants of the island. A bold stroke that inspired a continent, a hemisphere, the world.

Which version best describes the July 26, 1953, attack on the Moncada Barracks?

True, the group of young Cubans led by Fidel Castro had been poorly armed. But their bold assault on the army bastion eventually led—with lots of courage and intelligence and more than a little luck—to the first successful socialist revolution in the Americas. Dictator Fulgencio Batista’s army killed most of the young people in the attack, and the rest were jailed. But Fidel Castro survived to lead a guerrilla war and then a wonderful transformation of Cuba from a nation of rich casinos and impoverished sugar cane cutters to a country with the best social indices—health, education, equality—in Latin America.

It’s not that just any courageous armed attack will move history along.

But when it comes to evaluating a heroic struggle aimed at social progress, any real revolutionary has to think “out of the box.”

By thinking “out of the box” while still aiming for socialism, Fidel Castro and his comrades have survived 40-plus years of hostility from the neighboring imperialist superpower. In addition, they have helped create a society that puts solidarity, education, health care and the happiness of its children before the greedy quest for wealth and power.

They have built a strong party. A powerful labor movement involves millions of workers in political life. An active dialogue between the leaders and the vast majority of the 11 million citizens takes place in the many mass organizations.

They have compatriots who will risk their lives and freedom to defend the island from its reactionary, terrorist enemies in Miami. Five of them, known as the Cuban 5, are now unjustly in federal prison in the United States for just that reason.

They are willing to make this sacrifice. But that doesn’t mean that the progressive movement in the U.S. should let them continue to suffer. In thanks for July 26 and the Cuban Revolution, join the fight to win freedom for the Cuban 5!

Good news in hard times

Lesbian, gay, bi, trans movement wins

By Leslie Feinberg

The lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans movement, through its dynamism and tenacity, is continuing to score gains in the U.S. and around the globe. And these hard-won victories taste even sweeter and inspire greater valor at a time when capitalist democracy is slipping the velvet glove off its iron fist.

In the early 1960s in this country, less than a decade before the birth of the modern l/g/b/t mass movement in the heat of a 1969 rebellion against police repression, all 50 states had some form of “sodomy” legislation—anti-gay laws that criminalize oral and anal sex.

Since a recent legal victory in Arkansas struck down that state’s statute, only three remaining states now have anti-gay laws on their books targeting sexual relations between consenting same-sex adults. Nine others technically criminalize anal and oral sex for both gay or straight consenting adults: Alabama, Florida, Idaho, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Utah and Virginia.

Although police seldom break down people’s bedroom doors to enforce these bigoted decrees, they are sometimes used to back up police sting operations in “solicitation” arrests of gay men. In Texas, Georgia and Florida the laws have been used to bar gay applicants from state jobs. And they have bolstered the denial of custody and visitation rights to lesbian and gay parents in North Carolina and Virginia.

The Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund won the Arkansas decision on July 5 after a court fight. Lambda had filed a lawsuit in 1998 on behalf of seven gay residents of the state. None of them had been prosecuted under the law. But each of them courageously declared in public that they have engaged in “illegal” sexual activity in private and will continue to do so.

On that basis, they argued, the sword of prosecution hung over their heads and left them in danger of stigmatization and discrimination as well.

Justice Annabelle Clinton Imber agreed, saying that as long as the law remained on the books the defendants were stigmatized as criminals and could suffer discrimination by the state in such areas as employment and parental rights.

The 5 to 2 ruling by the Arkansas State Supreme Court threw out the draconian law based on two provisions of the state’s constitution: protection of individual privacy and the guarantee of equal protection of the laws.

Now all attention turns to the last states to retain these reactionary statutes. The last three with spelled out anti-gay laws are Kansas, Oklahoma and—surprise, surprise—Bush’s home-on-the-range state of Texas.

Lambda is vowing to take the Lone Star state’s “Homosexual Conduct Law” to the U.S. Supreme Court. After a widely publicized case of two Houston men who were arrested for having sex in one of their homes, the state’s “sodomy” law was upheld by a state court of appeals in a ruling that the State Supreme Court declined to reverse.

Lest anyone put their faith in the nine robed justices that make up the Court of Last Resort, it’s worth recalling that in 1986, the Supremes upheld Georgia’s sodomy law in the notorious *Bowers v.*

Hardwick decision.

However, the l/g/b/t movement has defeated the Georgia law since then. And the Supreme Court would do well to remember that the rotten 1986 ruling sparked militant street protests and mass civil disobedience.

CANADA: Same-sex marriage clears another hurdle

Denial of the right of same-sex couples to marry violates the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, a three-judge panel of the Ontario Superior Court ruled unanimously on July 12.

The Supreme Court of Canada had already interpreted the Charter to mean that anti-gay discrimination by the government violated the letter of that law. The Canadian Charter spells out the rights to equal protection and benefits, barring discrimination on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, religion, sex, age and disability.

Several years ago the Supreme Court ruled that discrimination based on “sexual orientation” violates the spirit of the Charter.

The July 12 decision is a victory for the plaintiffs, who took their case to the Ontario Supreme Court, and for the national l/g/b/t organization EGALE, which backed them with an amicus brief.

Several of the plaintiffs immediately turned up at Toronto City Hall demanding marriage licenses, but were told the documents wouldn’t be issued until officials could be apprised by their legal counsel.

The Ontario ruling flew in the face of a decision by a single justice of the British Columbia Supreme Court last October, now on appeal in that province’s court of appeals.

And a decision on same-sex marriage is also anticipated in the near future from a Quebec court. Quebec officials, awaiting the ruling, agreed to a new law in June that recognizes same-sex unions and bestows equal parental rights on same-sex couples.

These three cases, spanning three provinces, make it likely that the question will soon make its way up to the Supreme Court of Canada.

BRITAIN: Transsexual wins right to marry

In a momentous victory for the legal rights of transsexual women and men, the European Court of Human Rights ruled on July 11 that Britain violates two articles of the European Convention on Human Rights in its treatment of transsexuals. The Court ordered the British government to issue new birth certificates to transsexuals and to allow them to marry.

The decision resulted from two cases filed by transsexual women with the court in 1994 and 1995. Christine Goodwin, a 65-year-old bus driver, filed one; the other was anonymous.

Britain is one of four countries in the Council of Europe that refuses to recognize the legal validity of sex change.

While the decision does not automatically supersede British law, it sets a stunning legal precedent. Goodwin’s attorney, Robin Lewis, said the ruling would mean that the British government would eventually be forced to change its laws.

Lewis concluded, “Christine Goodwin’s victory will be seen as a milestone on the road to change.”

ENGLAND, WALES, NORTHERN IRELAND

One million workers walk off their jobs

By G. Dunkel

The class struggle is roiling.

One million low-paid municipal workers held a militant one-day strike in England, Wales and northern Ireland on July 17. They want a 12-percent wage hike over two years. Their bosses' joint council is offering only 6 percent.

The unions explain that their members are worse off than they were in 1975-76 during the Winter of Discontent, the last time they held major strikes. They are planning another one-day strike in August, followed by unlimited strikes in key areas in September. They vow to spend whatever it takes from their strike fund to win financial justice for their members.

The next day, workers in London's subway system held a one-day strike to demand that they be consulted about the safety issues caused by privatizing parts of

the system. This strike basically shut down London. If these consultations do not take place, subway union leaders are considering a series of one-day strikes.

Firefighters are demanding a 40-percent raise and are formally considering a nationwide strike in September.

Airport workers held a series of two-hour strikes to press their grievances, which disrupted summer vacation travel, according to the July 20 Independent.

To top it off, Sir Ken Jackson—Tony Blair's favorite trade unionist who was knighted for his service to the government—came under intense pressure to admit his defeat by Derek Simpson. Sir Ken heads Amicus, Great Britain's second-largest union. Simpson, a former member of the Communist Party, is still a trade-union militant. After four recounts, Simpson's lead held and Sir Ken's challenges were unlikely to stand up in court; some ob-

Public sector workers protest in York, England, on July 17.



servers called them "laughable." This loss indicates that Tony Blair's pushing of the Labor Party to the right is losing its grip on England's unions.

The Trades Union Congress, meeting in London, called for an expansion in unions' right to strike and a prohibition on using privatization to break union representation.

The U.S. big business press apparently

found news about these class battles unfit to print. Fifty of the largest daily U.S. newspapers did not cover these labor struggles, based on a Lexis-Nexis web search. The New York Times finally broke its silence July 23, after it became absolutely clear that Britain's capitalists were facing a summer of discontent.

Are U.S. bosses afraid the class struggle will prove to be contagious?

International news in brief

PERU

Demonstrations stop utility sale to Belgian firm

In the region of Cuzco and Arequipa in Peru in June, hundreds of thousands of people came out with the support of a number of local mayors to fight the privatization and sale of two state-owned electrical generators to a Belgian company. Though limited geographically, the struggle had the character of an uprising. All who had an anti-imperialist attitude joined with the workers, farmers and the poor of the region. This mass outpouring stopped the pro-privatization government of Alejandro Toledo from going through with the sale.

"We privatized and we do not have less poverty, less unemployment," said Juan Manuel Guillén, the mayor of Arequipa. "On the contrary. We have more poverty and unemployment. We are not debating theoretically here. We are looking at reality."

PARAGUAY

Left protests state of emergency

The government of Luis González Macchi declared a state of emergency on July 17, following mass struggles in the streets. Militant protests in June blocked the \$400-million sale of the state phone company. Similar demonstrations protesting privatization also occurred in Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador.

The government of Paraguay tried to blame the protests on the fascist-like movement led by Gen. Lino Oviedo, now in exile in Brazil. Oviedo was involved in the overthrow of the dictatorship of Gen. Alfredo Stroessner, who ruled Paraguay with U.S. backing from 1956 to 1989.

Three left-wing organizations—the Free Fatherland Movement, the Paraguayan Communist Party and the Revolutionary Socialist Nucleus—released a statement that repudiated the state of emergency and the Oviedo movement: "The State of Emergency declared by the corrupt government of González Macchi is only a pretext to

carry out his policy of state terrorism and repression of the citizens who are struggling for their concrete interests, against hunger, corruption, insecurity in the cities. ... [It is] like the State of Siege in the times of the Stroessner dictatorship, with its elimination of human rights of the people."

And they add, "We will defend a democratic power of the people and we call on the people to struggle in its genuine social and political organizations that defend in an authentic manner their interests."

BOLIVIA & BRAZIL

Opposition to 'privatization' in the voting box

While the outcomes of the final elections are still in doubt, the trend is clear. In two major elections—in Bolivia and Brazil—voters are putting their support behind candidates who promise to fight the so-called neoliberal policies pushed by Washington and the International Monetary Fund.

In Bolivia on June 30, Evo Morales Ayma, an indigenous leader who promised to nationalize industries, finished second among 11 candidates for president with 21 percent of the vote. The more right-wing candidate who finished first received only a few hundred more votes than Morales. The runoff election is Aug. 4.

The U.S. ambassador to Bolivia, Manuel Rocha, said during the election that if Morales's party won, the U.S. would stop all aid to Bolivia. In an interview with the German daily Junge Welt on July 23, Morales said that while the upper-middle class grew worried about the U.S. opposition, this very intervention from the U.S. attracted supporters to his party from other sectors of society.

Morales ended the interview by saying, "It is important that we work together with the movements that throughout the world struggle against injustice and inequality and neoliberalism and to defend the environment. In case we take over the regime, U.S. economic blockade against us is completely likely. That won't stop us from carrying out our political program, but we will be looking for support from these areas."

In Brazil the candidate of the

Workers Party, Luis Ignacio da Silva—known as Lula—is leading in the polls for that country's presidential election. While Lula, who has always drawn the firm opposition of the Brazilian ruling class and U.S. imperialism, has attempted to make alliances with openly pro-capitalist parties, he is still considered an anti-privatization candidate.

VENEZUELA

Gov't identifies who killed marchers in April coup

Last April 11 the reactionary forces that overthrew the progressive Hugo Chávez government for two days used the shooting deaths of anti-Chávez demonstrators as the excuse for their coup. At the time both anti-Chávez and pro-Chávez people were shot while marching in opposition to each other.

On July 17, the Venezuelan government identified seven snipers who carried out the shootings. They included five Venezuelans, a U.S. citizen and a Colombian who fired at both demonstrations from the Hotel Asconia, in the city center. The snipers killed a total of 18 people from both marches. This revelation contradicts the media campaign unleashed by the anti-Chávez forces that has been trying to blame the president for the deaths.

At that time, members of a military unit stationed at the Presidential Palace took the snipers into custody. But the reactionary coup leaders immediately liberated the killers and got them out of the country.

MILOSOVIC TRIAL

Yugoslav ex-president reported ill

The trial of former President Slobodan Milosevic of Yugoslavia in the pro-NATO International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia at The Hague, Netherlands, has been postponed again due to health problems of the defendant. The ex-president's supporters in Serbia, including many medical doctors, have demanded that the tribunal allow him access to medical care of his choice. Milosevic's blood

pressure has registered at 200 over 120, putting him at risk for cardiovascular diseases and stroke if he does not receive proper care.

Milosevic has been representing himself at the trial. From all reports—even those in the pro-NATO media—Milosevic has been successfully conducting cross-examinations of witnesses and breaking down the case against him. An article in the July 20 New York Times described the former president's success. Some say Milosevic has been able to turn the tables on NATO by exposing aggressive U.S. and German actions leading up to the 1999 imperialist war against the former socialist country.

FRANCE

Investigation opens on Gulf War Syndrome

Following two years of struggle by the organization Avigolfe, made up of French Gulf War veterans suffering from medical symptoms and those who support them, the French courts decided July 19 to open a judicial investigation of the ailments. An earlier parliamentary commission in June 2000 had dismissed the possibility that there is such a thing as "Gulf War Syndrome," but the legal challenge by Avigolfe reopens the case.

Organizers for Avigolfe—including its founder, writer Christine Abdelkrim-Delanne, and its current president and Gulf War veteran Hervé Desplat—believe that it is important that Judge Marie-Odile Bertella-Geffroy handle the investigation. The judge has also handled judicial inquiries into HIV blood contamination and "mad cow" disease.

Gulf War veterans in France, Britain, Canada, the U.S.—and of course in Iraq—have experienced an apparently disproportionate number of illnesses that result in symptoms including weakness, memory loss and cancers. No comprehensive studies have been done as each government tries to avoid any responsibility for the soldiers it sent into battle. Many suspect that the main cause of these illnesses is the exposure to depleted uranium that occurred when hundreds of thousands of rounds of DU-coated weapons were fired by Pentagon troops at Iraqi tanks.

—John Catalinotto

¡PROLETARIOS Y OPRIMIDOS DE TODOS LOS PAÍSES, UNÍOS!

MUNDO★OBRERO

CUBA

Fidel se dirige a la Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular

A continuación ofrecemos la segunda parte del discurso pronunciado por el Presidente de la República de Cuba Fidel Castro Ruz, en la sesión extraordinaria de la Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular en el Palacio de las Convenciones, 26 de junio del 2002.

Segunda parte

Los que conocen a fondo nuestra Patria y su larga y azarosa historia saben que los principios éticos de la Revolución, algo que explica su extraordinaria fuerza y capacidad de resistencia, no son en absoluto los principios del señor Bush.

En los incongruentes discursos que pronunció el 20 de mayo anunció: “Mi Administración también trabajará en busca de vías para la modernización de radio y televisión ‘Martí’”.

Como puede apreciarse, mientras Cuba dedica un mayor número de horas cada día en la televisión a los programas escolares y de Universidad para Todos e invierte recursos en la ampliación a todo el país de un Canal Educativo que cuenta con creciente prestigio y apoyo en el pueblo, el gobierno de Estados Unidos, aparte de la ofensa de utilizar el nombre de nuestra más sagrada figura histórica, promete invertir más dinero en la modernización de emisoras radiales y televisivas para agredir nuestra cultura y sembrar desinformación, mentiras, veneno y subversión en nuestro país.

En un rapto que pareciera delirante, se confiesa atónito por haber leído -sin que nadie sepa dónde lo leyó- que en esta era moderna el régimen cubano prohíbe la venta de computadoras al público. Nos trata como si fuésemos un país desarrollado y rico. A nadie se le ha ocurrido decirle que, sin embargo, Cuba es en este momento el único país de este hemisferio, incluido posiblemente Estados Unidos, en que el ciento por ciento de las escuelas y centros de enseñanza, desde preescolar hasta el último curso universitario, cuentan con laboratorios y profesores de computación, a pesar del férreo y cruel bloqueo económico y tecnológico impuesto a nuestro pueblo para impedirle cualquier tipo de avance en cualquier terreno.

El señor Bush podría quedar justificadamente atónito si fuese capaz de creer que nuestro país es hoy posiblemente el único del planeta que lucha por una cultura general integral, donde quien posea sólo los conocimientos de una carrera universitaria será considerado dentro de breves años analfabeto funcional. Entonces podremos competir con los ciudadanos de Estados Unidos y otros países desarrollados no sólo en posibilidades de comunicarse por Internet en varios idiomas, sino también en niveles de educación y cultura. Más le valdría preparar a los niños y jóvenes de su país para ese futuro no lejano, y sobre todo protegerlos del efecto destructor y enajenante de la publicidad comercial y consumista.

Algo más vergonzoso e inadmisibile: el señor Bush afirmó que “si Cuba comienza a adoptar reformas básicas importantes orientadas al mercado” —es decir, al capitalismo—, “entonces y sólo entonces trabajaría con el Congreso de Estados Unidos para flexibilizar las restricciones a los viajes y al comercio entre nuestros dos países.”

“Seguiremos prohibiendo el financiamiento norteamericano a las compras cubanas de productos agrícolas norteamericanos porque eso no sería más que un programa de ayuda extranjera disfrazada, que beneficiaría sólo al régimen actual.”

“Si el señor Castro rechaza nuestro ofrecimiento, estará protegiendo a sus secuaces a expensas de su pueblo y al final pese a todos esos instrumentos de opresión, tendrá que responder ante su pueblo.” Eso es precisamente lo que estoy haciendo, señor Bush: respondiendo ante el pueblo, dándole cuenta de mi vida y mi conducta revolucionaria, para elaborar junto a él la respuesta que debemos dar a las exigencias y amenazas que usted no debió ni tiene derecho a plantear a un pueblo con la dignidad y el decoro del pueblo cubano.

Con ingenua o insolente osadía, el presidente Bush declara que “ofrecerá becas en ese país a estudiantes y profesionales cubanos que intentan crear instituciones civiles independientes dentro de Cuba, y a los familiares de los presos políticos”.

En Cuba nuestros adolescentes y jóvenes disfrutaban de casi medio millón de becas para todas las enseñanzas. Esas becas se otorgan por rendimiento académico o por necesidades de nuestros estudiantes, de acuerdo a las instituciones de que se trate. Ninguno de los niños y jóvenes es discriminado. La idea de que tal cosa pueda hacerse por razones de carácter político es insultante e inadmisibile.

El señor Bush ofrece becas que el país no necesita en absoluto, y lo hace con otros fines. No debe imaginarse que vamos a cooperar con un plan tendiente a crear algo parecido a un tipo de Escuela de las Américas para formar agentes subversivos y desestabilizadores al servicio de sus planes injerencistas e imperiales.

En Cuba, adicionalmente, se otorgan cada año miles de becas a jóvenes extranjeros y no discriminamos a nadie por razones étnicas o ideológicas. Sería preferible que el señor Bush concediera esas becas a jóvenes negros, indios o de origen latinoamericano en Estados Unidos que no pueden estudiar.

Comete igualmente un error el Gobierno de Estados Unidos si cuenta de antemano con la impunidad de ciudadanos que trabajen a sueldo de una potencia extranjera—un delito que es castigado severamente por las leyes norteamericanas—o cree que recibirán facilidades los que visiten Cuba disfrazados de cualquier forma para transportar fondos y conspirar abiertamente contra la Revolución, o que los funcionarios de su Oficina de Intereses tengan derecho a recorrer el país a su antojo organizando redes y conspiraciones, violando normas

que rigen la conducta de los diplomáticos, con el pretexto de verificar la situación de los emigrantes ilegales que son devueltos a Cuba. No estamos dispuestos a permitir violaciones de nuestra soberanía, ni humillantes descatos a las normas que rigen las conductas de los diplomáticos. Tampoco es admisible el contrabando de mercancías a través de las valijas diplomáticas. Será responsabilidad del Gobierno de Estados Unidos si la insistencia en tales prácticas conduce a la anulación del acuerdo migratorio, e incluso la retirada de la Oficina de Intereses en La Habana. Es algo que no deseamos, ya que significaría un lamentable retroceso en las pocas cosas en que se han logrado avances en las relaciones entre ambos países. Pero estamos dispuestos a prescindir de cualquier cosa, incluso la vida, menos la dignidad y la soberanía de nuestro país. No somos nosotros los que agredimos, hostilizamos o bloqueamos a Estados Unidos. No exigimos que su constitución y su sistema económico y político sean cambiados. Respetamos rigurosamente los derechos de los demás países. Los nuestros deben ser también respetados.

Hemos dado sobradas pruebas de un sincero espíritu de cooperación en cuestiones de interés común. De nuestra parte surgieron tres proyectos de acuerdos bilaterales para la lucha contra el tráfico de drogas, el tráfico de personas y el terrorismo.

Otro ejemplo: frente a la ilegal utilización de la Base Naval de Guantánamo para convertirla en campamento de prisioneros extranjeros, adoptamos las medidas pertinentes y ofrecimos facilidades en aquel terreno irregular y montañoso para evitar accidentes que afectaran tanto al personal militar norteamericano como a los prisioneros.

En su discurso el señor Bush habla de presos políticos en Cuba, pero no menciona para nada a los héroes cubanos prisioneros del imperio condenados injustamente en Estados Unidos a decenas de años de cárcel y varias cadenas perpetuas. De este modo, ellos hablan de espías allá y de presos políticos aquí; nosotros hablamos de presos políticos allá y de presos contrarrevolucionarios y espías aquí.

Finalmente, un punto que no podemos omitir: el insulto y la ofensa cuando afirmó en Miami que “el comercio con Cuba no haría otra cosa que llenar los bolsillos de Fidel Castro y sus secuaces”.

Señor Bush, yo no me parezco absolutamente en nada a los corruptos personajes que usted honra con su amistad en el mundo, o a aquellos que, siguiendo recetas capitalistas y neoliberales, confiscaron al Estado y trasladaron al exterior cientos de miles de millones de dólares, lavados gran parte de ellos por prestigiosos e influyentes bancos norteamericanos. Usted, tan apegado a las grandes fortunas como millonario e hijo de millonario, tal vez no pueda comprender jamás que existan personas insobornables e indiferentes al dinero.

No nací totalmente pobre. Mi padre poseía miles de hectáreas de tierra. Al triunfo de la Revolución, esas tierras fueron entregadas a obreros y campesinos. Tengo el honor de poder decir que no poseo ni cuento en mi haber con un solo dólar. Toda mi fortuna, señor Bush, cabe en el bolsillo de su camisa. Si algún día lo necesitara para guardarla en un lugar bien protegido de ataques preventivos y sorpresivos, le rogaría que me lo prestase, y si es mucha se la dono de antemano como pago de alquiler.

Es curioso observar que en el ambidestro discurso del Presidente Bush el 20 de mayo, pronunciado dos veces el mismo día, hay una sutil diferencia. El de la Casa Blanca no menciona la palabra tortura ni la frase grosera sobre los bolsillos de Castro y sus secuaces. Estas las incluyó en el del Centro “James L. Knight” para el pleno disfrute de sus amiguitos de Miami, los mismos que, al regreso de Elián a su hogar y su familia, pisotearon con furia e incendiaron banderas norteamericanas, algo que jamás ha ocurrido en Cuba desde el triunfo de la Revolución. De su discurso en West Point ya hablé en Santiago de Cuba. Hoy no son pocos en el mundo, e incluso en su propio país, los que comparten la preocupación por la filosofía que usted expresó allí. No añadiré más en esta ocasión. Sólo me complace informarle que en este oscuro rincón del mundo nadie teme a sus amenazas de ataque repentino y sorpresivo. Todo hombre vive una cuenta regresiva. Hace mucho tiempo que hemos entregado a nuestra causa cada minuto de vida que nos reste.

Usted, por su parte, pierde autoridad. En teoría posee el poder de ordenar la muerte de una gran parte del mundo, pero no puede hacerlo solo. Para matar al resto del mundo, necesita mucha gente que lo ayude. Entre los jefes militares y civiles que manejan las estructuras de poder en su país, hay muchas personas capacitadas y cultas. No basta una orden. Necesitan ser persuadidas y lo estarán cada vez menos en la medida en que asesores políticos suyos sin capacidad y experiencia militar, y ni siquiera política, cometan errores tras errores. No bastan mentiras truculentas o inventos de ocasión para lanzar ataques preventivos y sorpresivos contra cualquiera entre 60 o más países, o contra varios de ellos, o contra todos.

En su país hay igualmente millones de científicos, intelectuales, profesionales de las más variadas disciplinas que saben distinguir entre el bien y el mal, conocen de historia y de las terribles realidades del mundo actual, tienen opiniones y forman opiniones. Existe también el resto del mundo que no olvida fácilmente las tragedias a que pueden conducir las ideas y los conceptos que usted está sosteniendo. Se lo dice, sin agravio personal ni propósito de ofenderlo, quien sólo posee el modesto poder de meditar fríamente y ha perdido hace mucho rato, junto a todo un pueblo valiente y heroico, la noción del miedo.

¡Viva el Socialismo!