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Saddam Hussein in U.S. clutches, but Iraqi resistance spreads

By Leslie Feinberg

The eye of the U.S. big business media was trained on GIs in Iraq eating their Christmas Eve meal, wearing Santa hats issued by the brass, as though the brutal Pentagon occupation could take a holiday. U.S. casualties that day were downplayed in the coverage.

But an apparently synchronized insurgent siege so rocked Baghdad on Dec. 25 that the offensive made it into the headlines. The rocket and mortar attacks were the largest since U.S. forces took custody of former President Saddam Hussein on Dec. 14.

Four rockets hammered the citadel-like central Pentagon compound. An oil ministry guard post was sprayed with bullets. Projectiles pounded the Sheraton Hotel—a main headquarters of the international media surrounded by a protective wall—for the second time in 12 hours. Three international embassies were hit. These and other bombardments took place on both the east and west banks of the Tigris River.

In fact, during that week, 10 U.S. troops were killed by the Iraqi resistance and many more wounded. Additional attacks followed within days.

Remember the 'rescue' of Jessica Lynch?

Degrading photographs of Saddam Hussein looking disheveled and disoriented, being handled and probed like a

slave on an auction block, were meant to demoralize Iraqi resistance to U.S. recolonization. So were reports that he surrendered to GIs without a fight. Gleeeful, widespread reports in the imperialist media that the president of Iraq, who had stood up to the Pentagon, was being "deloused" and had "hidden in a hole" dripped with racism.

Brilliant intelligence work and daring troops—that's what bragging, swaggering U.S. officials told journalists was responsible for Hussein's capture.

But remember how the coverage of the dramatic "rescue" of Pvt. Jessica Lynch started to disintegrate when the truth began to emerge, one fact at a time?

Even now reports are surfacing and circulating that Hussein had actually been captured earlier, not by U.S. forces, and that he was being held prisoner—possibly in a drugged condition—in that coffin-like underground cavity.

Like the Iraqi resistance, the truth about his capture will have to fight hard to be heard.

Behind the razor-wire coils of imperialist public relations, the former president of Iraq is being held incommunicado, in a secret location, under Pentagon control. That reality should be the lens through which all reports about Hussein are viewed.

Unquestionably the Bush administration had been buoyed by being able to boast that Saddam Hussein was finally their pris-

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HOLDING THE LINE AGAINST THE SUPERMARKET CHAINS



An important part of winning the key struggle for supermarket workers is gaining broad community support. Here, solidarity demonstration in Los Angeles, Dec. 16. Story on page 5.

WW PHOTO: PRESTON WOOD

Jackie Kiernan PRESENTE

By Brenda Sandburg and Keith Pavlik
San Francisco

Jackie Kiernan, a lifelong communist and beloved member of the San Francisco branch of Workers World Party for the past 12 years, died Dec. 23. She was 86.

Born the year of the Russian Revolution, Kiernan devoted her life to the struggle for socialism. Despite a degenerative muscle disease, she remained active until the very end, attending every major demonstration against the U.S. war on Iraq and the weekly branch meetings of Workers World Party. From her hospital bed, a few days before her death, she made clear she wanted to know about the party's political activities. Unable to talk, she raised her fist in solidarity with her comrades and the fight against imperialism.

Free-spirited, independent and fiercely non-conformist, Kiernan was a feminist decades before the women's movement evolved. She lived her life as she wished, taking risks and jumping into adventure. She began reading Marx and Engels as a young woman and became convinced that socialism was the only way to end oppression and injustice. She was active in all the major struggles over the last six decades, from the fight to save Julius and Ethel Rosenberg in the 1950s to the fight against the Vietnam War, U.S. intervention in El Salvador and Nicaragua, apartheid in South Africa, the U.S.-backed Israeli occupation of Palestine, and the U.S. wars against Iraq and Yugoslavia. Kiernan went on a coffee-picking brigade to Nicaragua in the 1980s to defend the Nicaraguan Revolution and helped challenge the U.S. blockade of Cuba.

Kiernan grew up in Folsom, Calif., where her father was a prison warden. Both her mother and sister died during the rigors of the Depression. When Kiernan was 20 she got an offer to work for the phone company, an extraordinary opportunity then. But she turned down the offer and instead moved to San Francisco. She joined an acting troupe in the city and got jobs posing at a local art school. A photo of Kiernan appeared in Life magazine in the 1940s.

San Francisco had strong political activism and the communist movement was flourishing. Kiernan spent a lot of time at the Black Cat, a Bohemian club where she met a Communist Party member who convinced her to join. Soon after that Kiernan read about a labor school in Arkansas set up by communists. She spent five weeks at the school, where she met and married her first husband.

Kiernan remained active in the CP during World War II, when the party supported the Roosevelt administration's call for a no-strike pledge from labor. When the mechanics' union went on strike for better wages, however, she and other union members were expelled from the Communist Party for joining the strike.

After the war, Kiernan joined the crew of a ship bound for China and the Philippines. At sea for a few months, she worked in the mess room, mopping floors and polishing brass. She was in Shanghai shortly before the Chinese Revolution. Kiernan often spoke of the immense poverty and suffering among the people and the clear need for a revolution.

In 1955 she moved to New York City, where she



WW PHOTO: BILL HACKWELL

Jackie Kiernan

learned the typesetting trade. It was the height of the McCarthy anti-communist witch hunt and she was fired when she refused to sign a document saying she had never belonged to any of a list of political parties. The FBI questioned her second husband, Jim Kiernan, and tried to get him fired from his job as a shipping broker. He had been a merchant seaman until the government pulled his Coast Guard passport.

After nine years in New York, Kiernan moved back to San Francisco. She said she was looking for a good communist party, and finally found one in Workers World Party, which she met during a mobilization against the 1991 Gulf War. Soon after joining the Party she went on the Second U.S.-Cuba Friendship Caravan led by Pastors for Peace. The Caravan challenged the U.S. blockade of Cuba by sending material aid. On that trip the government seized one of the school buses at the border in Laredo, Texas. The people on the bus held a 23-day hunger strike. Jackie helped organize support for the caravanistas until the bus was released.

Kiernan used to call herself a "Jimmy Higgins," someone who would do whatever was needed—leafleting, marching, phonebanking, distributing Workers World newspaper, the nuts and bolts of political work. She was an integral part of Workers World Party, a role model who remained optimistic and eager to fight against imperialism and oppression.

"Jackie always considered it her sacred duty to resist capitalist forces and do something, not be inactive," her son said in an interview last year when the San Francisco branch held an event in honor of Kiernan and other comrades. "She was an inspiration."

Comrade Jackie Kiernan, presente!

The San Francisco branch is planning a memorial service for Kiernan. The details will be reported in Workers World. □

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WW CALENDAR

BUFFALO, N.Y.

Sat., Jan. 17

The Coalition Against Police Abuse plans a noon march from NFTA Station at Main & Utica to MLK Park regardless of weather. Speak-out at 3 p.m. in commemoration of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday. For info (716) 479-3799 or www.CoalitionAgainstPoliceAbuse.com

LOS ANGELES

Every Friday

Workers World Party weekly meetings at 7:30 p.m. Dinner at 7. At 422 S. Western. Phone (213) 500-0529 for info.

NEW YORK

Fri., Jan. 2

Workers World Party meeting: Hear Pat Chin, co-editor of Haiti: A Slave Revolution, on the Haitian Revolution's impact after 200 years. 7 p.m. (Dinner at 6:30) 55 W. 17th St., 5th fl., Manhattan. For info (212) 627-2994.

Thu., Jan. 15

Rally to bring the troops home now and protest Bush's conven-

tion set for next summer. Sponsoring: ANSWER, 1199 Bread and Roses Cultural Project, House of the Lord Church, Harlem Tenants Council, and others. 4:30-7 p.m. At Madison Square Garden, 32nd & 7th Ave. For info (212) 633-6646, 316-2240, 603-1192 or (718) 596-1991.

Every Friday

Workers World Party weekly meeting. 7 p.m. (Dinner at 6:30) 55 W. 17th St., 5th fl., Manhattan. For info (212) 627-2994.

SAN FRANCISCO

Sat., Jan. 10

Int'l Action Center Forum: Resistance to Imperialism in Latin America. 3 p.m. Refreshments, childcare. Donation. At S.F. Women's Bldg, 3453 18th St, between Valencia & Guerrero. For info (415) 821-6545.

Every Sunday

Workers World Party weekly meetings. These educational meetings cover current events as well as struggles of peoples from all over the world. 5 p.m. At 2489 Mission St, room 28. For info (415) 826-4828.

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'Oppose Bush's convention'

Black and anti-war groups to rally on King's birthday

By Deirdre Griswold
New York

A coalition of progressive forces, drawing strength from New York's African American community as well as from the anti-war movement, has called a protest for Jan. 15 at the proposed site of this summer's Republican National Convention.

A major force in the coalition is the Rev. Herbert Daughtry of the House of the Lord Church in Brooklyn. Motivating the protest, he said, "If Dr. King were alive on his 75th birthday, I have no doubt that he'd be with us in front of Madison Square Garden on Jan. 15 to call on the president to bring the troops home from Iraq and spend the country's money on lifting workers and poor people out of poverty."

Three African American members of the New York City Council—Charles Barron, Larry Seabrook and Bill Perkins—are among the organizers of the King Day protest, which is also being supported by the Harlem Tenants Council, the anti-war coalition ANSWER (Act Now to Stop War and End Racism), 1199 Bread and Roses Cultural Project, the Center for Constitutional Rights, the NYC AIDS Housing Network, New York City Labor Against

the War, Queers for Peace and Justice, and other community and activist organizations.

The organizers express indignation that George W. Bush's party should come to New York for its convention when the vast majority in the city are so opposed to his war in Iraq and his reactionary domestic policies. They say the event is "in the spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.," who at the height of the Vietnam War, on April 4, 1967, told an audience at New York City's Riverside Church: "I knew that I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghettos without having first spoken clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today—my own government. For the sake of those boys, for the sake of this government, for the sake of hundreds of thousands trembling under our violence, I cannot be silent."

At the time King made that speech, Lyndon Johnson, a Democrat, was president. The forces organizing the current protest also make it clear that they are opposed to the pro-war policies of both Republicans and Democrats.

City Council Member Charles Barron, whose history as a militant fighter for the oppressed goes back to the Black Panther

Party, says, "We are rallying in front of the site of Bush's re-election campaign rally next summer because New Yorkers are angry about their city being used and abused by Bush. It's really shameful and a little bizarre that Bush is planning to occupy the city with his convention. New Yorkers hate the war, and they don't like anyone, Republican or Democrat, that chooses war over jobs, healthcare, schools and decent housing."

The ANSWER coalition is mobilizing among anti-war forces in the city and beyond. ANSWER organizer Larry Holmes says that "This protest will kick off a grass-roots mobilization to protest, not only the Republican National Convention, but the politicians of both parties that are waging war against the people of Iraq and against the poor and people of color here in the U.S."

The rally will be held in front of Madison Square Garden at 32nd St. and 7th Ave., from 4:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., and will demand "Bring the troops home now!" Nellie Bailey of the Harlem



Tenants Council says, "Nobody asked us if we wanted the convention; we don't like it and we don't want it. It's not true that the convention is going to bring all these jobs to the city, even temporary jobs. Last week's New York Newsday had an analytical piece debunking the notion that the convention is going to bring jobs and financial help to New York City. I'd like to tell Bush to send jobs, bring the troops home, and then stay home yourself, far away from New York City." □

After racist offensive

N.J. day laborers organize, fight back

By Deirdre Griswold

Immigrant workers in central New Jersey, faced with harassment by officials and a small group of white racists aimed at depriving the workers of jobs and housing, have organized and are taking their persecutors to court.

In early November, Mayor Michael Wilson of Freehold Borough in Monmouth County announced that, as of Jan. 1, the borough would close a hiring area—a strip of land between a road and railroad tracks—where day laborers gather to meet with prospective contractors and/or employers. There was an immediate response by the workers, who are almost all Latino, and by their supporters in the community.

On Dec. 23 the Committee of Workers for Progress and Social Welfare was formed at a large meeting in Freehold, a working-class borough in a county that has some very affluent areas. Supporting the immigrant workers were the Monmouth County Residents for Immigrant Rights, a group made up of Black, white and Latino residents that has passed out thousands of informational flyers, and the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund, which helped draw up the class action suit to be filed on Dec. 30. The National Day Laborers Network is also a plaintiff in the suit.

The suit charges that, even though the gatherings have caused no traffic jams or other problems in the area, the mayor has threatened the workers with 30 days in jail and up to \$500 fines if they continue to gather in the "muster area" for work after Jan. 1.

A flyer passed out by police to the workers also implies they are "security" threats, asserting that the borough will report them to the federal Homeland Security Agency if they "trespass" by gathering at the hiring area.

In a continuing campaign of harassment, Latino workers in the area have been ticketed and fined for such "violations" as walking through the parking lot of a convenience store where they bought coffee. According to the workers' suit, the violation charged on the tickets is "Officer's Discretion"—in other words, no specific infraction.

In a clear attempt to drive Latin American immigrants out of Freehold, the Borough has also been sending inspectors into the homes they rent at any hour of the day or night, checking on the number of occupants. This is not done in any other community.

At the Dec. 23 meeting, a Black church offered the workers the use of its premises as a temporary muster area. This important demonstration of solidarity by Rev. Andre McGuire of the Second Baptist Church was enthusiastically endorsed by the church's members at services the following Sunday. McGuire recalled that it was not long ago that Black workers in Freehold also had to stand on corners to get work.

There is rising consciousness around the U.S., as seen in the AFL-CIO sponsored Freedom Ride in October, that labor and progressives generally must get behind the struggle of immigrant workers for justice and civil rights. They are on the cutting edge of the fight for decent pay and working conditions in this country. □

Mayors Survey reveals U.S. Poverty 2003

By Heather Cottin

The economy is not booming for everybody. While Wall Street billionaires are slapping each other on the back and crowing over their profits, hunger and homelessness in the United States are spreading.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors released a report on Dec. 18 that gives the lie to George W. Bush's claim that the economy has turned around. There is no chicken in every pot. Prosperity is not around the corner—poverty is.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors-Sodexo Hunger and Homelessness Survey notes that prospects for millions of people in U.S. cities are bleak. The survey cites unemployment, low wages and the high cost of housing as factors in the 25 cities they surveyed.

Requests for emergency food assistance increased by an average of 17 percent over the past year, and requests for emergency shelter assistance increased by an average of 13 percent.

With money going to military spending, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and corporate welfare, there is less available for social services. All talk of "faith-based initiatives" and compassionate conservatism hasn't improved things for the urban poor in the U.S. The Bush administration, like the Clinton, Bush Sr. and Reagan administrations, has cut back welfare, food stamps, medical care and other spending for the poor.

In this land of plenty, people are suffering.

Over 9 million people in the U.S. are officially unemployed. Over 2 million manufacturing jobs have disappeared from the U.S. in the first three years of the 21st century. Now "white collar" information workers are losing their jobs. One IBM executive warbled cheerfully about "shifting a lot of jobs, opening a lot of locations in places we had never dreamt of before, going where there's low-cost labor,

low-cost competition, shifting jobs offshore." An executive at Microsoft exhorted his managers to "pick something to move offshore today." (Bob Herbert's column, New York Times, Dec. 29)

People are going hungry.

In 56 percent of U.S. cities the Homelessness and Hunger Survey reports that poor people's needs are outstripping available resources. Over 14 percent of the requests for emergency food assistance in the major cities of the U.S. were refused in 2003. Some 15 percent of the requests for assistance for families were turned down by the agencies responsible for them.

Just over half the cities surveyed indicated that emergency assistance facilities have provided fewer bags of food and diminished the number of times per month people can receive food. Of these cities, 48 percent have had to significantly limit food provided.

The survey reveals that 40 percent of those people seeking emergency food assistance are actually employed—a grim testament to the epidemic of low wages. Almost 60 percent of people applying for food at the churches and pantries that distribute this assistance are families with children.

The condition of homelessness is getting worse. Lack of affordable housing and low-paying jobs account for the homeless crisis in the majority of the cities surveyed. Some 84 percent of the cities in the U.S. are reporting that shelters are turning away people because of lack of resources.

Hunger and Homelessness Survey 2003 shows that in about 90 percent of U.S. cities hunger and homelessness are expected to increase in 2004. Meanwhile, on Wall Street at the end of 2003, the Dow Jones average of major stock prices was up over 10,000.

The rich are getting richer because the poor are growing poorer. As the contradiction between the capitalists and the workers becomes clearer, the need to organize grows stronger. □

ON THE PICKET LINE

SUE DAVIS

Unions unite for quality healthcare in California

The two biggest unions of healthcare workers in California announced a united front on Dec. 15 to defend healthcare services in the midst of the state's budget crisis.

Setting aside a decade of differences, the Service Employees International Union, which has 275,000 members in the state and 1.6 million nationally, and the California Nurses Association, which represents 55,000 registered nurses and is the largest independent RN union in the country, agreed to cooperate to confront the corporate healthcare industry and growing attacks on healthcare services from state and federal governments.

The coalition's top priorities will be to demand that California's landmark law requiring safe staffing ratios for registered nurses be implemented on schedule and also to oppose state cuts in healthcare services. The hospital industry is trying to delay and undermine the law mandating safe staffing ratios. This issue is of prime importance throughout the country and could have national implications.

"Today marks the opening of a new era," said CNA Executive Director Rose Ann DeMoro in a joint press release issued Dec. 15, "in which the state's two strongest healthcare organizations will use our collective voice and influence to protect patient safety and work to promote the highest quality of care for all Californians."

"We're sending a message to every public official, hospital CEO and HMO in the state," said Sal Rosselli, president of SEIU 250 in Oakland and co-chair of SEIU's national Health Care Division, in the same release. "Healthcare employees are standing united for the care our communities need."

Among the many initiatives SEIU and CNA plan are fighting for expanded healthcare coverage for the uninsured and access to quality healthcare for all Californians. As part of helping all hospital employees achieve union protection in the state, the SEIU will support campaigns by RNs to join CNA, and the CNA will support SEIU organizing campaigns among professional, licensed, certified and other healthcare workers.

CNN ends pact with union shop

Time Warner Inc.'s CNN notified Team Video Services that its six-year contract was terminated as of September. TVS's 220 technicians and camera crews in CNN's Washington and New York bureaus are members of the National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians. Workers have been invited to apply for nonunion jobs at CNN.

"It's union-busting," says Mark Peach, president of NABET Local 31, which represents the Washington workforce. Peach said without the union, workers will lose the right to be paid extra for such things as night shifts and short turnarounds, which for some workers amount to as much as \$12,000 a year. (Wall Street Journal, Dec. 16)

Notoriously anti-union, CNN has already hired 46 of 87 workers in the Washington bureau. Gene Garnes, secretary and director of organizing at NABET Local 51011, which represents 135 New York workers, said that if CNN ditches the union, "We're prepared to go in there and organize."

Borders cuts off negotiations

Borders Company representatives weren't in the Christmas spirit when it came to negotiating wage hikes on Dec. 23. Though they promised to discuss wages all day, the Borders attorney abruptly cut off talks and dashed into his chauffeured limousine when the topic turned to money.

"We were counting on management to make a good faith effort to settle this dispute before Christmas," says striker Luis Paez-Cano. "Instead they're trying to starve us out." (www.bordersunion.org) The national bookstore chain recorded \$125 million in net profits in 2002. Management received up to 32-percent raises while workers were given less than 3 percent.

"Classic bad-faith bargaining" is how Tom Reku, UFCW Local 876 organizer, characterized it. Reku plans to file a formal complaint with the National Labor Relations Board against Borders over the company's refusal to bargain. The NLRB has already issued a ruling charging Borders with bargaining misconduct and retaliatory actions against unionized workers since negotiations began over 12 months ago. Borders' refusal to bargain in good faith led to the strike.

According to the strikers, Borders' sales at the flagship store in Ann Arbor, Mich., have plummeted 75 percent since the strike began on Nov. 8. Union supporters can keep up the pressure by boycotting Borders' bookstores nationwide, as well as Waldenbooks and Amazon.com. Contact Borders at www.bordersstores.com or call the Ann Arbor store at (734) 668-7652 or the corporate headquarters at (734) 477-1100 to demand they bargain in good faith. For updates on the strike, visit www.bordersunion.org and sign the online petition. □



WASHINGTON, D.C.

WWW.PHOTO: SHARON BLACK

Community backs striking laundry workers

By Sharon Black
Washington, D.C.

The weather was freezing on Dec. 20 but spirits were high as Baltimore community activists from the All Peoples Congress arrived at the site of the Sterling Laundry workers' picket line in Washington, D.C., to bring donations of food and toys to strikers.

Workers expressed their affection and support as the group huddled in a makeshift tent to keep warm while sharing greetings. At the nearby Plymouth Congregational Church, senior minister Rev. Graylan Hagler welcomed and helped shelter UNITE organizers, strikers and supporters. As more picketers arrived, the group marched to the entrance of Sterling Laundry chanting, "Si se puede." (Yes, we can do it.)

The strike began on Sept. 8 and has continued for over three months. Conditions at the laundry have fueled both the resolve of strikers and the support of the community. Wages are currently \$6.15 an hour, less than the poverty level for a family with two children, according to U.S. Census Bureau statistics. Workers can-

not afford health care for themselves or their families.

Temperatures on the job soar to 104 degrees. Workers commonly report that hours they have worked are not credited on their paychecks and bosses often refuse to allow workers bathroom breaks.

A Washington Post article last Aug. 30 quoted Eugene Jacobsen, the owner of Sterling Laundry, as saying in response to the conditions and strike: "Believe me, the last thing I want is discontented employees. You get better milk from contented cows—you remember the old Borden's saying—not that I'm saying that the employees are cows."

The majority of the workers are immigrant or African American women.

Evelyn Thomas, a UNITE member and striking worker, also commented that "Jacobsen has threatened to sell it or burn it down before he allows a union."

Community activists from Baltimore have vowed to return with more aid in the coming winter months and are planning other support activities. They say people who want to help can reach their offices at (410) 235-7040. □



Hundreds of trade unionists and other supporters of 70,000 striking grocery store workers in Southern California rallied here on Dec. 20, signaling a broadening of support for the strike that has been going on since Oct. 11. All of labor is carefully following this struggle, in which supermarket giants have launched an attack on workers' healthcare benefits in one of the lowest-paid industries.

The rally was held at a large Safeway in the Castro district. At one point the demonstrators, led by courtesy clerks, marched around the store's parking lot while others picketed the doors, effectively stopping business for several hours. Workers represented by the United Food and

Commercial Workers Union are on strike at all Safeway-owned Vons supermarkets in Southern California.

The day after the strike began last October, Albertsons and Ralphs supermarkets, which negotiate their own labor contracts along with Safeway, locked their workers out. The union has targeted Safeway for selected picketing in the Northern California and Washington, D.C., areas because the chain's chief executive officer, Steve Burd, has been responsible for derailing contract talks and has led the slashing of health benefits. In conjunction with the UFCW, the San Francisco Labor Council sponsored today's action.

—Story and photo by Bill Hackwell

Third month of strike/lockout

Broad support needed in key supermarket struggle

By Sako Sefiani
Los Angeles

As the strike/lockout of 70,000 grocery workers in Southern and Central California entered its third month, the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW) organized a spirited march and rally Dec. 16 to tell the chain stores that the union will continue to “hold the line” against attacks on workers’ wages and healthcare benefits.

Present at this rally were members and representatives of Service Employees, Longshore, Teachers and other unions, in addition to the striking and locked-out workers. Community organizations such as Latino Movement USA; Hermandad Mexicana, an organization of immigrant workers; and Community Action Project to Support Labor (CAPSL), a project of ANSWER-L.A., and others were also present. Supporters of ANSWER held banners linking the healthcare crisis to the war on Iraq and demanding that the \$87 billion Congress approved for the war be spent on health care and jobs.

Shortly after the rally, the supermarket chains took out a full-page advertisement in the Los Angeles Times attacking the union, while sounding sympathetic to the individual employees. The bosses tried to make it seem like the union is the problem.

Much to the dismay of the supermarkets, however, community support for the workers and their struggle has been unprecedented. At a rally sponsored by the San Diego Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice, workers from over two dozen unions came out in full force to encourage the grocery workers to stay tough in their struggle.

Labor, religious, community support

The International Longshore Workers Union pulled 3,000 members off the San Pedro docks to hold a union meeting in front of an Albertson’s store.

Unionized janitors staged a three-day hunger strike over Thanksgiving, and the entertainment unions also held rallies.

Religious groups ranging from Baptists to Muslims have thrown in their support, initiating a week of walking prayer that brought religious leaders to the picket lines.

On Dec. 20, CAPSL held a militant rally and toy/food drive for the striking workers in front of a Vons market. Speakers included Tracy Cacho, a picket captain at a nearby Ralphs; Ely Orozco, a locked-out Ralphs employee; James Lafferty, director of the Los Angeles chapter of the National Lawyers Guild; Victoria Narro, coordinator of Sweat Shop Watch, which organized the recent Immigrant Freedom Ride; Adrian Garcia of United Teachers of Los Angeles; Young Hui Kim of Korean Immigrant Workers Advocate; and Ian Thompson and John Parker of CAPSL.

After the rally, John Parker led the participants, most of whom were striking workers, in a militant march around the store. Toys and food collected by CAPSL were later passed out to the workers and their families.

Along with the overwhelming public support, solidarity shown by other unions and locals has played a significant role as well. On Oct. 30, Service Employees President Andrew Stern, Machinists President

Thomas Buffenbarger, and Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco and Grain Millers President Frank Hurt all pledged to mobilize their members to assist in the fight for affordable healthcare for all working people.

Hundreds of Southern California, West Virginia, Ohio, and Kentucky workers set up lines in front of Safeway grocery stores in the Washington, D.C., area during the “Thanksgiving” weekend, urging customers to shop elsewhere in support of the workers’ fight for affordable healthcare. At a 300-strong rally announcing the pickets, local labor, religious and community leaders joined the workers in calling for solidarity from the Washington-area community.

And in an action with direct impact on the struggle, in November 8,000 members of the Teamsters stopped delivering food to the stores and set up picket lines in front of the chains’ warehouses. Although most of the Teamsters returned to work in late December, 2,000 still remain off their jobs in support of the grocery workers.

On Oct. 11, UFCW had struck Safeway, the parent of Vons and Pavilions, after the company demanded that employees pay for half of their healthcare cost now and pay for any increase in the future. Grocery workers make about \$19,000 a year. Many could not afford healthcare, especially those with existing medical conditions.

Amber Scott, a seven-year Vons employee, is the mother of a three-year-old who has cystic fibrosis. If they lose their health benefits, she said, it will cost her \$5,000 a month to keep her daughter alive. Greg Conger, president of Local 324 in Orange County, explains: “We have hundreds on dialysis or receiving chemo or whose children need certain prescriptions to stay alive.”

Christina Kersey, a Vons clerk from Garden Grove, said that, as a diabetic who wears her insulin pump around the clock, she can’t afford to lose her health benefits. “My life depends on this medicine,” she said.

The Dec. 18 Los Angeles Times reported that “any day now, the health fund for union supermarket workers in Southern and Central California could run out of money, jeopardizing medical coverage for about 200,000 people” because the super-



WW PHOTO: PRESTON WOOD

Grocery workers and supporters salute L.A. community’s solidarity, Dec. 16.

markets have not made their payments to the joint union-company fund—about \$40 million a month since the strike and lockout began.

The supermarkets, which are supposed to be rivals, have cooperated against the workers. Immediately after the announcement of the strike, Albertsons and Ralphs locked out their own workers. When it comes to waging class war on the working class, corporations sometimes temporarily set aside their competition. In an article titled “Wall Street is Chains’ Not-So-Silent Partner,” the Los Angeles Times reported on Dec. 22 that the investment banking industry has been “supporting the supermarkets’ effort to win wage-and-benefits savings from their union employees.”

Union and community solidarity is key

In this strike, institutional and large investors encouraged the corporations to move aggressively against workers’ wages and benefits in order to maximize profits. But such aggression does not come cheap and sometimes blows back in the face of the company trying it. The strike/lockout has cost the chains around \$1 billion and has spurred Smith Barney to issue a “sell”

recommendation on Safeway stock. (Los Angeles Times, Dec. 22)

While every working class struggle for living wages and healthcare is important and must be defended, this struggle represents a watershed—a trend-setting movement to eliminate employer-provided health benefits. Moreover, it is an attempt to break the union. Non-union companies such as Wal-Mart pay poverty wages and provide no benefits. Wal-Mart represents the model of what the supermarket chains want to be.

The assault on grocery workers’ living standards is not an isolated case. In recent years the corporations have used increasingly aggressive tactics to attack the hard-won gains of unions in the U.S. To the extent these corporations have been able to put the unions on the defensive and marginalize them, they have succeeded in taking their gains away.

This battle must be fought with all the might of the working class. The key lies in a new level of solidarity among workers’ unions and the community. This kind of solidarity is sprouting up in Southern California, with the power to come roaring back against these assaults and go all the way to Washington. □



WW PHOTO: PRESTON WOOD

As Lackawanna 6 sentenced

Group forms to fight police repression

By Beverly Hiestand
Buffalo, N.Y.

A new group, the Coalition Against Police Abuse, has been formed in response to a campaign of threats, repression and police violence that has targeted both the Yemeni and the African American communities in the Buffalo region since 9/11 and the so-called "war on terror." The group plans a protest rally on Jan. 17.

The first victims of this repression were six young Yemeni men from Lackawanna, N.Y. They were charged in September 2002 with having traveled to an Al Qaeda training camp in the spring of 2001, listening to an anti-U.S. speech and receiving small-weapons training for a very brief period.

Under tremendous pressure from their accusers, including the threat of being tried for treason, a capital crime, and being designated "enemy combatants" with no legal rights at all, all six separately pleaded guilty to providing material support or resources to Al Qaeda. In December each was sentenced to near-maximum prison terms of from seven to 10 years.

The original charges referred to provisions of a 1996 anti-terrorism law. In December the Ninth Circuit Court in California found this law to be unconstitutional. Many legal experts predict the U.S. Supreme Court will also find the law unconstitutional.

In a news article in the Dec. 1 Buffalo News, a reporter had to admit of the six, "They never built a bomb, never hijacked an airliner and, as far as the U.S. Justice Department can determine, never made any plans to commit an act of terrorism."

In the 15 months since their arrest, absolutely no evidence has surfaced against these young men that suggests in any way that they were doing anything other than traveling to a training camp in Afghanistan to learn how to fight for what they considered to be Muslim ideals and to renew their religious roots. They say they believed they might someday fight in Palestine or Chechnya.

This all occurred before Sept. 11, 2001, when it was still legal to travel to Afghanistan. At that time the U.S. had ties to the Taliban and Washington was attempting to facilitate a deal with a U.S. firm to build an oil pipeline across Afghanistan. There was also speculation that the U.S. was secretly involved with Chechen rebels against the Russian government.

Legal experts say this prosecution is an example of the U.S. government putting people in jail for thought crimes and represents guilt by association. According to Georgetown University law professor David Cole, "It is the first time in history that people are going to prison for going to a training camp." (Buffalo News, Dec. 1)

Racism, threats to liberties

Threats and violations against civil liberties continue to permeate the entire social fabric of the U.S., including in the city of Buffalo. The entire Yemeni community continues to be under siege; continuous roadblocks are set up around the area and police make searches and threats without any cause. Young Yemeni people are talking about having to leave their community because it has become so unbearable.

The FBI acknowledges the continuing harassment: "Long after the last sentencing, federal agents will be pursuing leads about Al Qaeda's recruiting efforts in Lackawanna, and those who financed the trip. Peter J. Ahearn, special agent in charge of the FBI office in Buffalo, says the investigation continues. One chapter closes and another opens." (Buffalo News, Dec. 17)

The same repressive atmosphere is present in other oppressed communities. City high schools are being regularly raided by paramilitary police agencies using guns and dogs to search and interrogate students for drugs and generally to gather information.

There have also been increased incidences of police brutality on the city transit system. One incident involved white transit police aggressively questioning a 14-year-old African American student who they decided had been sitting too long

on a bench at the station. When she ran in fear, they brutally attacked her.

An African American bus driver stopped and asked the police why they had to be so brutal to this young woman. The police boarded the bus and dragged off the driver, verbally and physically attacking her and arresting both women. The bus driver was fired from her job while the police received no discipline and are still on duty.

A coalition of individuals and organizations from the African American community and the anti-war movement has carried out three demonstrations at the Niagara Frontier Transit Police Station. These actions resulted in the formation of the Coalition Against Police Abuse.

Growing in size, the group plans a march, rally and speakout against police abuse on Jan. 17 in commemoration of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday.

At the meetings in preparation for this event, participants have spoken out and clearly expressed that they want to protest all police repression and violence, including the occupation of the Yemeni community. They are reaching out to assure the broadest participation in these efforts to stop the attacks on civil liberties.

Readers can contact www.CoalitionAgainstPoliceAbuse.com or call (716) 479-3799.

Hiestand is a member of Buffalo's Coalition Against Police Abuse.

Fighting repression while fighting against war

Based on a talk by Imani Henry at the Dec. 6-7 conference on socialism in New York.

In his book "Bolsheviks and War," Workers World Party founder Sam Marcy recounted a story of a Bolshevik leader who, when confronted by the media about his party's attitude towards World War I, said, "We are the real representatives of the working class. We will fight for the slogan 'war against war.' Our faction will fight against war with all the means at our disposal."

Or to quote Malcolm X: "By any means necessary."

We know that the class struggle is a cycle of ups and downs, victories and setbacks. This post-9/11 period has been difficult for the progressive movement. The Bush administration's drumbeat of endless war has brought increased state repression on oppressed communities, especially the Arab, Muslim and South Asian communities, as well as on the political movement. The development of the Office of Homeland Security has color-coded a heightened sense of paranoia. The Patriot Act is legalizing a new COINTEL-PRO in this period.

Throughout it all, we and others in the anti-war movement have organized. And despite the difficulties, millions of people have taken to the streets in the U.S. and worldwide to oppose this war. This is the kind of solidarity needed for the people of Iraq and throughout the Middle East.

As revolutionaries and socialists, we are

deeply committed to fighting this racist, colonial occupation—as an act of solidarity with the people of the Middle East and because of the economic devastation it brings to workers and oppressed here at home.

More and more we are seeing a resurgence in the working-class movement—the grocery workers' strike, the immigrant march on Oct. 4th, or uprisings against police brutality like in Benton Harbor, Mich.

In the late 1990s, the international anti-globalization movement was a tremendous force led by super-exploited workers and peasants from oppressed nations, and joined by communists, radical youth and the union movement. The tactics of mass protests, as well as civil disobedience and militant direct action, were the order of the day.

There was a higher consciousness about the racist role of the state and repression in this country.

The police killing of Amadou Diallo in early 1999 brought terms like racial profiling into the mass arena. Instead of being unknown and unreported, victims of police brutality had a face and a name. African American communities held mass campaigns of civil disobedience and marches and rallies in New York, California and Michigan. In the summer of 2001, Cincinnati police killed Timothy Thomas, sparking a rebellion; 2,000 activists, many from the anti-globalization movement, traveled to that city in solidarity with the Black community.

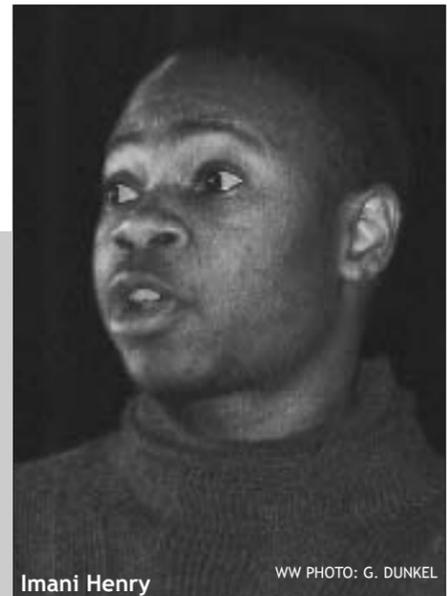
We are deeply committed to fighting this racist, colonial occupation—as an act of solidarity with the people of the Middle East and because of the economic devastation it brings to workers and oppressed here at home.

Governors and other elected officials called for moratoriums on the death penalty. The struggle to stop the execution of Shaka Sankofa took center stage in the capitalist media. And worldwide solidarity, historic mass demonstrations and rallies demanded freedom for death-row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Before Sept. 11, 2001, our party was able to play leading roles in both domestic and international struggles. It is our duty to take this current anti-war struggle further in this period, to show our class solidarity with all those fighting oppression and exploitation and to intervene and provide leadership where we can.

This is what the world's people are expecting from us in the U.S. This is what is needed in the struggle for socialism.

And as we build for national demonstrations, like the upcoming March 20 anti-war demonstrations and protests against the Republican and Democratic national conventions, we must continue to find ways to show our solidarity with



Imani Henry

WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

struggles here in the U.S. The way to this is to be in the streets, on the picket lines and on the campuses, fighting shoulder to shoulder with our class sisters and brothers.

One great example of this is the Nov. 15 trip to Marine Camp Lejeune—a solidarity effort between SNAFU, Queers for Peace and Justice and the International Action Center—to support imprisoned Marine Reservist Stephen Funk. Funk, an openly gay, Filipino war resister, is incarcerated for refusing to serve in Iraq. We had an anti-war demonstration in a military town, and a forum with military personnel on the effects of Pentagon depleted-uranium weapons.

In so many ways this trip to Camp Lejeune was a lesson in the importance of solidarity in the struggle. That's what we need to infuse into our organizing—the understanding that the struggle here in the U.S. and the struggle abroad is all one struggle—the class struggle. And that solidarity is decisive in the class struggle. □

Cuba's socialist revolution in perspective

Based on a talk by Gloria La Riva at the Dec. 6-7 conference on socialism in New York.

Almost 45 years ago, a relatively small number of revolutionary fighters, after several years of struggle, overthrew the U.S.-installed dictator Fulgencio Batista.

Cuba at that time was overwhelmingly the property of U.S. imperialism. It was typical of every Latin American or Caribbean country: poor and degraded socially by a corrupt, bankrupt ruling class that played a servile role to the U.S. rulers.

For the rich, life was good. Havana had more mansions than any other Latin American capital. For the poor there was homelessness, vast hunger, parasites in 90 percent of children in rural Cuba, and no electricity in almost the whole countryside.

What hope did the Cuban masses have for change? What hope did 400,000 sugarcane cutters have when, for four months of the year, they did backbreaking work cutting cane but for eight months they starved because there was no work?

There were always the elections, modeled after the U.S. elections in so many ways, with a gaggle of political parties, and one president after another, chosen every four years, just like here.

But even we who live in the richest capitalist country in the world know elections won't make life better.

Cuba, with the victory of the guerrilla movement on Jan. 1, 1959, led by Fidel Castro, made earthshaking, revolutionary history. Not only did the Cubans overthrow the dictatorship, they transformed society by eliminating private property in the means of production and placing all the wealth of society literally in the hands of those who produce it.

In the process of the revolutionary struggles over the years, a whole people of millions learned of their power, their ability to run society without individual owners.

Certainly the material and historical conditions existed in Cuba to make revolution. But a leadership that didn't compromise its principles was the essential ingredient, a leadership that understood that anything less than socialism was still capitalist exploitation. This is perhaps one of the most important lessons for any struggle we examine in any part of the world.

Look at Latin America. The people of Latin America are fighting for and demanding change, from Bolivian miners to the peasant farmers of Mexico to the 80 percent living in oil-rich Venezuela who

You will never see a Jerry Springer or Cristina show on Cuban TV, or a commercial. That alone proves socialism's superiority over capitalism.

are poor but today are inspired by what is known as the "Bolivarian Revolution."

There have been recent electoral victories of liberal candidates, even progressives, in Latin America. There have been inspiring revolts. But what is clear in Latin America and the rest of the world is the need for revolution, for a decisive battle that puts the workers in power.

That doesn't mean we don't defend all those popular struggles. But long gone is that short period of time in history, around the world, when reforms were won in people's struggles, allowing for some limited national economic development.

Cuba, a small, blockaded country that began its revolution at a disadvantage economically, underdeveloped by imperialism, has done what no capitalist country has been able to do.

Just look at a few facts: In the U.S., we just saw Congress pretend to provide drug coverage for seniors. But in reality it just worked out a great way to keep the pharmaceuticals rolling in multi-billion-dollar profits. There are 45 million people without healthcare here in the U.S.

In Cuba, every man, woman and child has a doctor and medical staff. They can walk into a clinic or hospital for free treatment. They don't have to reach in their pockets to pay a doctor or insurance company.

Yet, look at the 70,000 grocery workers in California on strike for eight weeks, losing thousands of dollars in income, just to assure health benefits for their next three- or four-year contract.

Cuban scientists just announced the development of a synthetically produced vaccine for prevention of bacterial meningitis—a disease that kills 400,000 to 600,000 people in the world every year, mostly children. That vaccine exists in the U.S., but it is much more expensive than the medicine Cuba will produce.

In the U.S., we have the latest "reality" and "survivor" shows, and our television screens are filled with so many sensationalist trials and crimes and alleged crimes that there's a serious scheduling problem on CNN. The real crimes—the U.S. occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan and the

U.S.-Israeli massacres of Palestinians—hardly get covered.

In Cuba, a third television station was added called the "University for All." Its programming includes English, French and Spanish lessons, mathematics, geography, history and culture. It is revolutionary mass media at work, educating and spreading culture that inspires solidarity, not cutthroat competition and demeaning behavior.

You will never see a Jerry Springer or Cristina show on Cuban television. Or a commercial, for that matter. That alone proves socialism's superiority over capitalism.

Cuba provides the essentials of life for every citizen of its country. It's a country free of landlords; imagine not having a landlord breathing down your neck. That's real freedom, that's workers' democracy.

And Cuba has extended its revolutionary gains beyond its borders, with 60,000 doctors who have served for free, providing care in almost every oppressed country.

Cuba played the key role of smashing South African apartheid invaders; 300,000 Cuban volunteers fought alongside their Angolan brothers to drive South Africa out of Angola.

This has all been accomplished while Cuba was under siege, under blockade, economic sabotage and terrorist attack from the U.S. Every time Cuba makes an economic trade agreement with a company or country, the U.S. tries to overturn it.

Every athlete, scientist and artist, who have achieved so much through Cuba's revolution, is offered standing bribes to



Gloria La Riva

WW PHOTO: DEIRDRE GRISWOLD

"defect" and come to America. Through the U.S. Cuban Adjustment Act, every Cuban is guaranteed special immigration privileges as inducement to come illegally to this country.

There are a thousand daggers aimed at Cuba. And yet the U.S. has been predicting its demise every year for 44 years.

Cuba is doing its part. What we need to do, sisters and brothers, is to defend Cuba, to support Cuba and extend our solidarity whenever we can.

Defend the Cuban Five

And one of the most urgent ways is to fight for the freedom, the release of the five Cuban heroes whom we have come to know as the Cuban Five. They are five Cuban revolutionaries who were working in the early 1990s in Miami to defend their country from anti-Cuba right-wing terrorists, terrorists funded and backed by the CIA against Cuba.

The five heroes are in separate U.S. prisons, and at a critical stage. Their appeals are presently before the 11th Circuit.

If Cuba could carry out a revolution right next to the most dangerous imperialist power in the world, we who live in this country must do no less than stand side-by-side with Cuba. □

Support progressive Atty. Lynne Stewart

Progressive attorney Lynne Stewart won an important round in a battle with the Ashcroft Justice Department last July when a federal judge dismissed government charges against her of "supporting terrorism" as unconstitutional.

On Nov. 22, however, Stewart received another blow. The U.S. government re-indicted her.

Stewart was charged with passing messages from her legal client Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman, a blind cleric convicted by the U.S. government of conspiracy to bomb the World Trade Center in 1993, to his followers. Attorney General John Ashcroft himself announced the indictment, accompanied by a tempest of publicity.

At her initial arraignment, Stewart pleaded "emphatically not guilty."

Now, as Stewart's attorneys prepare to file a pretrial motion on Jan. 23, the Lynne Stewart Defense Committee asks progressives to close ranks to win this case.

Stewart's lawyer Michael Tigar stresses that the government case against his client has at least three fundamental flaws. It's an attack on the First Amendment rights of free speech, free press and petition; an attack on the right to effective assistance of counsel; and the "evidence" was gathered by invasion of private conversations, private attorney-client meetings, faxes, letters and emails.

For information on how you can help support this important struggle, visit the defense committee website: www.lynnestewart.org.

—Leslie Feinberg



VENEZUELA

Snapshots from its history

By Dawn Gable
Caracas, Venezuela
(Guest article)

"No volveran! (They will not return!) No volveran!" This rallying cry heard throughout Venezuela embodies the response to the recall referendum that would subject Hugo Chávez's presidential mandate to yet another vote. The chant refers to the ruling class that held political power from 1958 until the election of Hugo Chávez.

According to the once-chic Venezuela Exceptionalism Theory of the international academic and business communities, in 1958 Venezuela established itself as a stable democracy, developing into a nation more closely resembling its two most northern American neighbors than any of those south of Texas.

Venezuela did make a break from its own past in 1958 regarding political stability. In the 150 years prior, Venezuela had no less than 100 changes of power and 23 constitutions. But the period from 1958 to 1998 was hardly peaceful. During Romulo Betancourt's first elected term (1959-1964) there were six military uprisings, a steady stream of terrorist attacks, strong guerrilla activity, one narrowly escaped presidential assassination attempt perpetrated by a foreign government and 916 political prisoners.

In 1967, nine years after Betancourt took office, Caracas was deemed the most expensive city in the world. The wealthy stashed their loot in foreign accounts as the poor suffered. The infant mortality rate was 56 percent and life expectancy was 65 years. During this period, Cuba and Brazil had each increased their public education budgets by over 60 percent, Venezuela only raised its by 7.2 percent; and while Venezuela boasted the highest population growth rate in the world, Cuba and Brazil's primary-school enrollment growth rate was more than 10 times higher than Venezuela's.

One well-respected author, who was a fan of Betancourt, described the economic gap of this decade as being "as wide as an alligator's yawn." A mere 1.7 percent of the

population owned 74 percent of the arable land. One fourth of all Caracas residents were prosperous enough to own a car, but an entire third of all Caraqueños lived in makeshift shantytowns called ranchos. What's worse, 40 percent of these rancho households had no immediate access to water, much less any other sanitation services.

Then came the black-gold years. The oil boom of 1970-78, the further raising of the government's oil revenue shares to 70 percent, and the nationalization of other natural resources provided the government with an unprecedented income. Wages increased, price controls were set, imports were subsidized, and land titles were given out—albeit in a disastrous manner.

But how did the government and the moneyed class use this short-lived windfall to secure the future? They didn't. By the early 1980s, corruption and mismanagement had created a huge deficit and the nation's GDP plummeted. The discontent of the 1980s culminated in street riots, deadly repression and political instability.

Like many other Latin American countries, Venezuela had suffered hard economic times in the 1980s and was being brought in line with the neoliberal desires of the World Bank, which included austerity measures. One such measure ignited the country. Although commonly referred to as "El Caracazo," the uprising of 1989 occurred throughout the nation.

The poor flooded into the city centers, rioting and looting for a couple of days before eliciting an official response. The response was brutal. In Caracas the military was ordered into the barrios. Within a few days the bodies piled up. Estimates range from a low of 372 to a high of 2,000 people killed—the accounts vary between official and independent sources. This repression left the poor as well as many in the military scared and seething.

In 1992, Hugo Chávez led a failed coup attempt. His televised surrender speech gave the people their mantra for the next six years: "Por ahora" (for now). These two words contained the will of the nation, just like today's "No volveran!" When this will

became reality, Hugo Chávez skated into the palace with a 56-percent vote count.

By 1998 the nation as a whole still had not noticeably moved forward from 1967 in terms of social development. In fact it was still at par with many other Latin American countries which had had significantly less resources. According to a United Nations Development Program Report in 2000, President Chávez was handed a leading oil-exporting nation where 18 percent of its population were classified in extreme poverty and an additional 26 percent were considered in critical poverty.

These poor included two-thirds of the nation's children under five years old. Forty-five percent of households still had no daily access to safe water and 27 percent had no sewage facilities. At least one person in 44 percent of all households had a chronic illness, and there was one hospital bed per 585 residents, although most of these beds were only accessible to the wealthy. Thirteen percent of the country's youth, nearly all of them from the poor sector, were not attending school at all. The drop-out rate among those who did enter school was 69 percent. In total, 44 percent of children in 1998 were excluded from the education system.

In the past few years since Chávez took office, the country has struggled forward despite crippling economic sabotage by the business community, an expensive failed coup, a constant media offensive, and international harassment and direct meddling. Twenty thousand new homes have been built and another 10,000 rebuilt by military programs called Avispa and Reviba. Three million people received potable water for the first time. One million received sewage services.

Two and a half million acres of productive land have been distributed along with credits, technical support and equipment, and 30,000 land titles were given to urban squatters. All titles contain a no-resale clause. The federal allotment to education at all levels more than doubled in Chávez's first two years and more than 1 million children were integrated into the educa-

tion system. Kindergarten enrollment tripled. Nearly 700 new schools were built, over 2,000 were reconstructed, and 36,000 new teachers were employed.

The Bolivarian school model was established in 3,000 schools, bringing two meals a day, art, sports and recreation to many children's daily lives. One million people are being taught to read and write under the Mission Robinson project. Under the project, drop-outs will get a second chance at finishing high school. Two new Bolivarian public universities will open by spring and others will follow shortly, offering tens of thousands of scholarships to the underprivileged.

Hundreds of thousands of poor are being attended by volunteer Cuban doctors through the Barrio Adentro Program that provides one doctor per 200 families in slums where no medical facilities had ever existed before. The number of doctors throughout the nation increased by 48 per 1,000 residents and life expectancy rose by nine months. The new Proyecto Simoncito gave support to women and infants from pregnancy to preschool, while infant mortality and under-nutrition dropped significantly.

The Women's Bank gave out 42,000 credits to small woman-owned businesses; another 30,000 micro credits were given out to farmers, fishers and transportation collectives. Thirty-nine reforestation projects were established and community nurseries produced 4.4 million plants. Laws pertaining to fishing have protected coastal waters from industrial fishing to the benefit of 200,000 community fishers and various coastal marine species.

Three new metro lines, three freeways, a railway line, a second bridge over the Orinoco river, the Caruachi dam, a giant aqueduct, and second heavy oil refineries are under construction, creating tens of thousands of jobs. Thirteen cultural centers were built around the nation and the Caracas Theater was re-opened. Two hundred and forty-three "Infocenters"—computer salons with high-speed internet—were installed in libraries, museums, city halls and NGO offices. □

North Korea: Beyond the DMZ

By Deirdre Griswold

At last a movie has been made by a U.S. film crew about North Korea that makes an effort to understand that country, not just demonize it.

"North Korea: Beyond the DMZ" is a Third World Newsreel release produced by J.T. Takagi and Hye Jung Park and edited by Dena Mermelstein. The one-hour film has been screened twice in New York theaters to capacity audiences, made up largely of young Koreans, and will be seen soon in Philadelphia and Los Angeles.

The film answers the Bush administration's charge that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is part of an "axis of evil" by following the experiences of a young Korean-American woman as she travels to the North in search of long-lost relatives.

Like many young Koreans born in the U.S., she didn't even know her father's family was from the North until recently. Long years of harsh dictatorships in the

U.S.-occupied South and anti-communist persecution here had silenced a whole generation.

Some 10 million Korean families were separated by the U.S. war of 1950-53 against North Korea. The U.S. has refused to sign a peace treaty ending the war, and nearly 40,000 U.S. troops have occupied South Korea ever since, making these separations permanent.

Most U.S. television and movie viewers, including South Koreans who have settled here, have never seen what the people of the North are like or heard their opinions about their country. They haven't heard before what North Koreans have to say in defense of their independent social system and their leaders, who have resisted both Japanese and U.S. imperialism.

Koreans here are particularly fascinated by the film's views of Pyongyang, the beautiful, modern city that is the capital of the North and was built up from the ashes of the war. Just to possess a picture postcard of Pyongyang has been illegal in

South Korea under its anti-communist laws.

But those laws are crumbling. In South Korea today, the sentiment for getting the U.S. troops out and reuniting the country is stronger than it has ever been. The last two presidents have had to pledge themselves to the goal of reunification. But it is the popular movement that is firmest in opposing Washington's threats to carry out military actions against the North—this time using the North's nuclear program as a pretext.

At this tense moment in Korean-U.S. relations, when many fear that the Bush administration may have North Korea in its gun sights next, this film is a welcome antidote to the ignorance and misinformation spread by the U.S. corporate media.

It opens many questions and will undoubtedly stir much discussion in the Korean and U.S. movements for justice. The film will be available for distribution as a video soon. Go to www.twn.org for details. □



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Saddam Hussein in U.S. clutches, but

Iraqi resistance spreads to the south

Continued from page 1

oner, nine months after the “shock and awe” invasion by the Pentagon.

In a bounty hunt reminiscent of the “Wild West,” the Commander in Chief and his generals are issuing wanted posters promising millions of dollars in rewards for the rest of the former leadership of Iraq—dead or alive.

And the White House is already humming with hope that having Hussein in custody will help the incumbent Bush on the hustings of the 2004 presidential campaign trail.

But in the long run, this imperial victory may be pyrrhic.

Iraqi people still fighting back

The Bush administration and its brass have used Hussein as a prisoner, not only to attempt to demoralize the Iraqi resistance, but to imply to the population of the U.S. that this war is almost over now.

Military officials are touting their plans to bring home all of the 125,000 U.S.

troops now serving in Iraq between January and April. But they are scheduled to be replaced with at least 100,000 fresh troops. And there may be an extended period of overlap, which in effect will almost double the troop strength.

Commercial airlines will rake in profits on this troop deployment while the GIs themselves will kill or be killed. The ailing airline industry is getting a shot in the arm from war spending. The Pentagon has already forked over about \$2.4 billion to commercial airlines and air-cargo carriers to haul troops and equipment to Iraq and Afghanistan in fiscal 2003.

“Although officials say it is too early to tell exactly how much the Pentagon will pay the commercial carriers in 2004, the military has budgeted a comparable amount to the \$2.4 billion spent in 2003.” (Wall Street Journal, Dec. 29)

The war is not winding down. The Iraqi population are not kneeling before their new emperors.

After the invasion of Iraq, when the rose petals failed to shower down on the foot

soldiers of imperialism, a media blitz explained that the people were afraid to express their public joy about the Pentagon-led military occupation because they harbored fears that Saddam Hussein would return to office.

Where are the rose petals now?

Another theme in Pentagon briefings was that Hussein himself was directing the resistance, which was being carried out by a small band of loyalists.

But even after the detention and attempts to publicly humiliate Hussein, it’s RPGs that are still raining down on occupation troops, not floral petals.

The weekend after the Dec. 25 insurgency pushed the Santa hats out of the headlines, the Iraqi resistance struck hard again.

A roadside bomb in Baghdad killed one GI and wounded five U.S. soldiers, an Iraqi interpreter and eight Iraqi civil defense corps members. A second bomb detonated next to a U.S. convoy near Fallujah, killing an 82nd Airborne trooper and wounding three others.

In Karbala, about 75 miles south of Baghdad, multiple mortar and car bomb attacks hit sites in a straight line across the city from the northwest to the southeast. They destroyed a Bulgarian troop base, smashed into a compound containing City Hall and Iraqi police headquarters, and hit a U.S.-run military base also housing Polish and Thai troops. Days after the attacks, the number of dead and wounded occupation troops and their Iraqi political and police collaborators was still being tallied upwards.

According to the Pentagon, more than 90 percent of all Iraqi resistance has been centered north and west of Karbala in areas with a majority of Sunni Muslims, where support for Saddam Hussein had been strongest.

But the explosions in Karbala, a city sacred to Iraq’s Shiite majority, shattered the relative calm in southern Iraq.

The character of Iraqi resistance has everything to do with the brutal colonial-style military occupation. □

San Francisco Labor Council salutes Haiti Revolution

Special to Workers World

The San Francisco Labor Council voted in early December to send “warm greetings of solidarity to the working people and government of Haiti on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the Haitian Revolution, which abolished slavery and ended colonial rule.”

The resolution by the council, introduced by delegate Dave Welsh and adopted unanimously, hailed the 13-year rebellion that threw off the yoke of slavery and French rule as “an earth-shattering development in the struggle for the emancipation of labor all over the world.”

The Labor Council represents over 80,000 members in 141 affiliated unions. It is part of the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations. Its resolution noted that the United Nations has declared 2004 the “Year of the Abolition of Slavery” on the occasion of Haiti’s bicentennial and “to honor the Haitian people as valiant pioneers in the struggle for the emancipation of labor.”

It was a general strike in 1791, by the enslaved labor force in Haiti, that set in motion the “armed rebellion that defeated the pro-slavery French army of Napoleon Bonaparte at a time when the trans-Atlantic slave trade was at its height,”

according to the Labor Council statement. “The Haitian people on Jan. 1, 1804, victoriously declared their independence; abolished the slave system; renamed the country Haiti in honor of the original indigenous population of the island; and declared Haiti as the first free republic in the Americas.”

The council, the voice of organized labor in San Francisco, had earlier passed a resolution calling for an end to the current U.S. government-led embargo on international financial aid to Haiti, and demanding release of the approximately \$500 million in blocked humanitarian and developmental aid.

The earlier resolution, “Let Haiti Live!” went on to be adopted last year by the 2-million-member California Labor Federation, as well as by the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement and A. Philip Randolph Institute, San Francisco chapters. The 2002 resolution noted that Secretary of State Colin Powell had vowed the U.S. would “continue to embargo these funds in order to leverage a ‘political outcome’ in Haiti,” adding: “It is appalling that the U.S. is using humanitarian aid as a political weapon.”

The heroic Haitian people deserve support and solidarity, not sabotage and interference. □

HAITI A SLAVE REVOLUTION

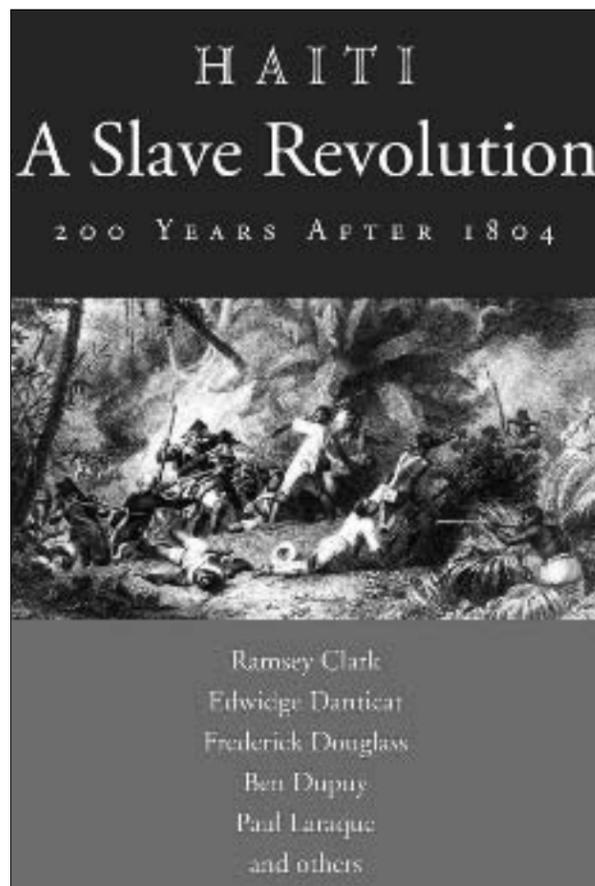
The Haitian Revolution is a singular event in history. Never before or since has an enslaved people risen up, broken their chains, and established a new state. Haiti was a beacon of hope and inspiration to the enslaved Africans of the United States.

Haiti’s history has been turbulent, but not for the reasons given by mainstream historians. Racism underlies their charges that the first Black Republic lacks “democratic traditions and is prone to violence.”

Drawing from a wide range of authors, experts, and historical texts, this book challenges these stereotypes and counters 200 years of cultural myths. It exposes disinformation about Haiti from the 18th century until today. Above all, it reveals the intertwined relationship between the U.S. and Haiti, and the untold stories of the Haitian people’s resistance to the U.S. aggressions and occupations.

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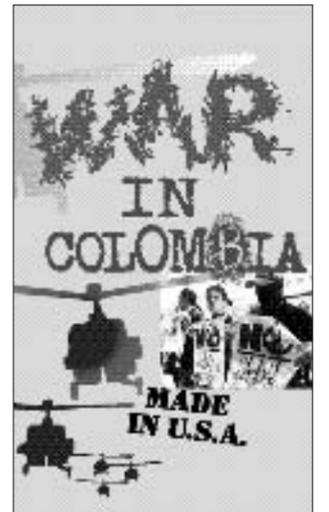
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Unnatural disaster

At first glance, the death toll in Iran's earthquake may seem inevitable. The ground shook badly for an hour, most of the buildings in the city of Bam fell down, and tens of thousands of people died. Within a few days, the casualties were rising as more perished for lack of food, water and shelter in winter temperatures. A similar disaster happened in Iran in 1990.

But in this day and age, the widespread suffering of the Iranian people should not be inevitable. Earthquakes strike all over the world. A quake of shorter duration but similar magnitude, 6.3 on the Richter scale, hit southern California just a few days earlier. Two people died. A much more severe tremor measuring 8.0 caused just 500 injuries and no deaths in Japan in September.

In the wealthier imperialist countries, the death toll from major earthquakes has been reduced by 90 percent since 1950. In poorer countries, there has been no improvement at all. (Washington Post, Dec. 30)

Again and again, as natural disasters strike, whether they be floods, fires, droughts or windstorms, it is clear that underdevelopment is the major factor in determining how many people die. And what is underdevelopment? It is the heritage of colonial and class oppression over many centuries.

The enormous gap between rich and poor nations that exists today, and that perpetuates underdevelopment, is a modern capitalist phenomenon. Iran and other parts of the world that are now in a constant battle to defend their national sovereignty and resources against the profit-lust of imperialist corporations were once prosperous centers of world civilization, home to the leading thinkers of their day.

Today, there is an unmistakable air of superiority in the imperialist countries when they report on disasters in what used to be called the Third World. They will spend some money on disaster relief, send a few planes with sniffer dogs, rations and blankets, and pat themselves on the back for their great humanitarianism. But in fact it is only a drop in the bucket, nothing compared to the billions spent by the major imperialist powers on weapons of mass destruction to keep the oppressed countries in line—meaning in a dependent position, having to sell off their material and human resources cheap to sustain the endless line of credit from banks that suck them dry.

Iran knows well what horrors imperialist domination brings. The people suffered terribly under Washington's man in Tehran, the Shah, for many years before they finally overthrew him in 1979 in a massive rebellion. There have been no diplomatic relations between the two countries since then. When George W. Bush added Iran to his list of "evil" countries two years ago, it was another indication that U.S. imperialism has never given up its ambition to own the country and its oil lock, stock and barrel, just like Iraq.

As Washington now assumes the role of humanitarian and sends aid to Iran, there must be many in that country who remember July 3, 1988, when a civilian Iranian airliner with 290 people aboard was shot down by the USS Vincennes. The U.S. claimed it was an accident, of course, but former CIA head Admiral Stansfield Turner, asked how the U.S. should respond to conciliatory gestures from Tehran, replied: "Hit 'em while they're down."

Iran's president, Mohammad Khatami, may have been thinking of all this when he thanked the U.S. for its aid, but added: "Humanitarian issues should not be intertwined with deep and chronic political problems. If we see change both in tone and behavior of the U.S. administration, then a new situation will develop in our relations." □

PHILIPPINES

Unionized health workers save mental health center

By Hillel Cohen

Unionized health workers in Manila, the Philippines, have won a major victory against privatization and cutbacks of health services. Members of the Alliance of Health Workers (AHW) joined with community residents and progressive organizations to freeze the sale of the only major mental health facility in the country.

Although the struggle continues to make the freeze permanent, the government's attempt to quickly push through a sale has been blocked.

The National Center for Mental Health (NCMH) celebrated its 75th anniversary this past December. With more than 4,000 in-patients and 300 out-patients each day, the center services patients from Metro Manila and from provinces throughout the Philippines that don't have adequate local facilities. Patients are primarily from poor, working class families who cannot afford private services.

Over the years, this public institution has raised fees in response to government cutbacks. Even at the

subsidized rates, many people cannot afford to use it. Nonetheless, it is one of the few places where poor people with mental health problems can go.

The National Center sits on a large parcel of land in Mandaluyong City, a jurisdiction within the greater Manila area. Using the excuse of a bankrupt treasury, the national government planned to sell the property to private developers. The developers would replace almost all of the mental health center with shopping malls, condominiums and other commercial ventures.

The plan would have used some money to build a new facility that would house only 1,000 of the 4,000 current in-patients. Other patients would be distributed to local hospitals or encouraged to go back to family residences.

The AHW countered that there was no guarantee the new facility would ever be built; that local hospitals did not have either the space or the money; and that families cannot cope with these patients, which is why they came to the NCMH in the first place. The union organized rallies, protests and peti-

tions to stop the closing.

As a result of the worker-community campaign, the government of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo announced on Dec. 12 a freeze on the plan to sell the center.

Philippine Congressperson Satur C. Ocampo, a member of the House committee on health, has introduced legislation to permanently halt the sale. Ocampo is a leader of the Bayan Muna Party List and a legendary figure in the Philippine anti-imperialist movement.

While not yet complete, the struggle to stop the sale of NCMH is an important victory over the privatization of healthcare, which in turn is part of the twin challenges of globalization and war. The victory will inspire other workers to join in a united struggle against government cutbacks and war, which the Filipino health workers see as part of a larger, global struggle against imperialism.

In November 2003, while visiting Manila as part of a Conference on Challenges in Health Work Amidst Globalization and War, Cohen toured the NCMH and met with union leaders and NCMH workers planning the protests. □

Serbia's voters defy U.S., NATO and Hague tribunal

By John Catalinotto

In the largest turnout in three years, voters in Serbia's national elections on Dec. 28 rejected the U.S.-NATO definition of who was good and who was bad for them. They voted into parliament two party leaders now behind bars in Scheveningen prison in The Hague facing war-crimes charges.

An election by itself can only indicate changes in the mood and consciousness of the population. This one indicated that 36 percent of the Serbian population would rather vote for an alleged war criminal, vilified and demonized, than for those who have been giving their country away to the imperialist monopolies for the past three years. They cast that vote even though they know it may mean more attacks from the West.

Voters in Serbia were also rejecting the efforts of NATO's tribunal at The Hague to blame Serb leaders and Serbia itself for the 10 years of civil war in the Balkans, which in fact were fomented by the U.S., Germany and other NATO powers.

Vojislav Seselj led the ticket of the Serbian Radical Party (SRP), a Serb nationalist party and the big electoral winner with 28 percent of the votes and 81 of 250 seats in parliament. Former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic led the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) ticket. With 8 percent of the vote and 22 members seated, it made the best showing since Milosevic was driven from office in 2000.

The servile pro-Western, pro-globalization parties that have been running Serbia into the ground took a big hit, but will probably remain in

office. Four of these parties got enough votes to be in the parliament, winning a total of 147 seats. These include three major parties that promote capitalist globalization—the U.S. and European Union call them "democratic." They would have to form a bloc with Vuk Draskovic's monarchist party, which got 23 seats, in order to form a government.

The imperialists are already pressuring these parties to overcome their differences with each other and unite to keep the Socialists and Radicals from forming a government. It was imperialist intervention in 2000 that forced these pro-imperialists and 14 other small parties to unite to defeat Milosevic in the 2000 presidential election. But many observers say they expect only a very unstable government to emerge, one that will soon have to call new elections.

Both Milosevic and Seselj are in Scheveningen prison in The Hague, facing serious war-crimes charges. With this election, both are now in a position where their parties can choose to give them seats in Parliament. The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) will not allow them to take those seats. Still, they have shown that being put on trial by this NATO court is actually a plus for a candidate in Serbia. And that's even though the ICTY issued a 30-day gag order to stop the two from communicating with Serbia during the entire election period, going so far as to prevent Milosevic from seeing his grandson.

Milosevic has won respect back in Serbia by his strong legal and political self-defense during almost two

years of his trial, during which he showed how the U.S. and NATO powers provoked civil wars and then attacked Yugoslavia. His own role was to attempt to defend Yugoslavia, a multinational state.

After the war, he was replaced by governments like the one that just offered to send Serbia's army to Afghanistan and even Iraq to help the U.S. occupy those countries. Disagreements between Vojislav Kostunica's party and the other even more openly pro-imperialist forces broke up the last government.

In 2000 U.S. agents pressured the 18 anti-Milosevic parties to join together and run Kostunica for president against Milosevic, as Kostunica was the only candidate available who wasn't already compromised either by corruption or by close entanglements with the imperialist powers.

Since the ouster of the SPS and the SRP in 2000, Serbia's economy has been globalized and taken over, mainly by U.S. and German transnational firms and by local collaborators. The broader federation of Yugoslavia has been completely dismantled. Unemployment is now at 30 percent with many factories closed, prices have risen much faster than wages, and Serbia is now considered one of the poorest countries in Europe.

Whatever government emerges from the bargaining among parties following this election, the vote has shown that the promise to integrate Serbia with the imperialist West has steadily lost support among the population there. The ICTY is completely discredited inside Serbia and is seen as an imperialist tool. □

WW editor in Taiwan

'Sex, gender, sexuality & socialism'

By Minnie Bruce Pratt
Taipei, Taiwan

Transgender lesbian author and activist Leslie Feinberg recently spoke in Taiwan on the interconnections between issues of gender, sex, sexuality and socialism. Feinberg is also a managing editor of Workers World newspaper.

The Center for the Study of Sexualities of the National Central University organized a series of events featuring Feinberg. They ran from Dec. 11 to Dec. 14 at the university in the town of Jungli and in the capital, Taipei.

Feinberg's appearance coincided with the center's publication of "Trans," the first Chinese-language anthology on transgender. Two chapters from her non-fiction Marxist analysis of the roots of gender and sex oppression, "Transgender Warriors" (Beacon), were part of the anthology.

Feinberg's novel "Stone Butch Blues"—a ground-breaking look at working-class lesbian, gay, bi and trans oppression—is known by many on the island because it was serialized three years ago in Chinese in a leading Taiwanese daily newspaper. Subsequently, it was published as a book, was required as summer reading for all high school students, and was selected as one of the 25 books of the year in Taiwan.

Feinberg wrote a special preface for the Taiwanese edition of "Stone Butch Blues" for Chinese readers, with comments on how the McCarthy-era anti-communist witch hunts, which stepped up attacks on gay and trans people, were linked in part to U.S. ruling class rage at the successful revolution in China.

Breaking the taboo

In Jungli Feinberg keyed the fifth international conference on the Politics of Gender/Sexuality: The Age of Transgender. Her talk was titled: "Sex and Gender Oppression: Finding the Path to Liberation."

Conference organizers had hoped for 150 participants. Instead, the auditorium was packed with almost double that number of students, faculty, activists from anti-war, labor, feminist and other struggles, and members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans communities. Many had traveled on two standing-room-only buses from Taipei, an hour north. Participants also came from mainland China, Hong Kong, Japan, New Zealand and Australia.

Feinberg opened her speech urging strong support for center director Dr. Josephine Ho, who is currently under attack by right-wing forces in Taiwan for her consistent support and educational efforts around issues of gender and sexuality. (To sign a petition in support of Dr. Ho, go to <http://www.gsrat.org/eng/eindex.html>.)

She then described how the momentous revolution of Chinese workers and peasants had impacted on the United States in the 1950s. She showed how the anti-communist, anti-worker witch hunts of the Cold War period were linked to anti-gay and anti-trans persecution.

Feinberg explained how she later based her research about the origins of sex and gender oppression, including transgender issues, on the analysis of women's oppression begun by Karl Marx's closest collaborator, Frederick Engels, and on the Marxist analysis of lesbian and gay oppression developed by Bob McCubbin, a leader in Workers World Party.

She discussed how diversity of sex, gender and sexuality was part of the earliest

communal societies, but that oppression became institutionally codified with the division of society into classes.

Feinberg's thesis is that liberation from oppression based on sex, gender and sexuality can come through transformation of the economic basis of society. Her work reinforces the historical materialist position that different forms of economic organization have produced very different social relations; therefore, prejudices and oppression are not intrinsic to human nature.

She pointed out that oppression based on sex, gender and sexuality, which has been built into the structures of class societies for centuries, continues today in divisiveness perpetuated by capitalism. Feinberg linked this to other forms of oppression generated by the capitalist drive for profit.

She also focused on the racist U.S. war drive in the Middle East, emphasizing that U.S. imperialism is attacking and threatening those nations that since World War II have tried to break free of imperialist rule—the reason Iran and Syria are now in the cross-hairs of U.S. military threats.

She called for support for the revolutions in China, North Korea and Cuba. She stressed, "It is no secret that U.S. finance capital is hungry to re-enslave one-fifth of the world's population—the Chinese people."

'Socialism—the word we're not even supposed to whisper'

Feinberg then said to the audience, "I'm talking about supporting socialism—a word I know I'm not supposed to even whisper here. So let's talk about it loudly. We have to take our destinies into our own hands."

She urged everyone to stand up against red-baiting, even those who are not socialists, "because if you don't, every time you ask for a nickel raise or new books for your school, you'll be accused of being a communist and be pushed back."

Feinberg pointed out that the argument that "socialism isn't perfect and therefore doesn't work" is actually the message that Wall Street wants people to believe. Imperialism has militarily surrounded, financially penetrated and economically undermined every country attempting to build socialism. Nevertheless, revolutions in these formerly poor countries have done what the richest capitalist countries have not done: fed, clothed, housed and provided free education and health care for their populations.

These actions lay the basis for reducing social tensions, she said, but left-wing elements must deepen the revolutionary process, including addressing issues of sex, gender and sexuality. "Unweaving the strands of prejudice from the tapestry of social relations is painstaking work," she explained, "and this is made more difficult when a country trying to build socialism is surrounded by the cannons of imperialism."

"But revolutionaries don't sweep problems under the rug. We study the problems—not to help imperialism tear down socialism but to build socialism even stronger," she concluded.

According to local activists, such a public discussion of socialism and defense of the mainland Chinese revolution has been



Leslie Feinberg, front left, with readers in Taipei.

PHOTO: GSRAT

virtually taboo since the Feb. 28, 1947, massacre of up to 30,000 people by the U.S.-supported dictator Chiang Kai-shek, which crushed an uprising by communists and other progressives in Taiwan.

One student commented that, in his entire life in Taiwan, he had never before heard anyone defend socialism.

Feinberg later spoke on a panel about sex and gender diversity together with Dr. Junko Mitsuhashi, a Japanese transgender activist from the Institute of Social Sciences of Chuo University.

Feinberg also met with a range of people during her visit, including taking tea with the president of National Central University, Dr. Chuang Shen Liu; addressing a class of English majors; and reading at Jing Jing Bookstore. Taipei's only LGBT bookstore, it was recently raided by police, who confiscated over 500 gay journals.

At Eslite bookstore, the most famous mainstream bookstore in Taiwan, Feinberg spoke to a standing-room-only crowd of almost 200. Many shoppers passing the event at the indoor courtyard stopped to listen. Feinberg stressed that repression sparks resistance, pointing out that the liberation movements in the 1960s and 1970s in the U.S. rose in part as a response to repressive 1950s anti-communist witch hunts.

During the long question-and-answer period, Feinberg responded to one query by emphasizing the importance of the ties between women's liberation and transgender liberation. "We need all sexes, genders and sexualities—we need everyone—to make these movements strong."

Movements supporting each other

The solidarity that Feinberg referred to was in evidence at a twilight party given in her honor at the TG Butterfly Garden in Taipei. One of the many eloquent performances was a dramatic skit with original music that highlighted social problems confronting transgender people in Taiwan, such as sex classification on documents and access to bathrooms.

Performers and attendees included local transgender activists, staff from AIDS organizations and the Gay and Lesbian and Bisexual Hotline, and members of a local lesbian writers' group. Also present were representatives from the independent labor movement organizations, the Information Center for Labor Education, the Solidarity Front of Women Workers, and the Collective of Sex Workers and Supporters (COSWAS).

Hosting the event was GSRAT (Gender/Sexuality Rights Alliance, Taiwan), which has organized in support of COSWAS, par-

ticipated in demonstrations in Taiwan against the U.S. war in Iraq, protested anti-gay policies at Taiwanese military installations, organized self-defense response to police raids on gay bars, and regularly done educational work on the situation of gays and lesbians in Taiwan, including participation in a local Lesbian Girls' Camp.

As part of the evening's performances, Feinberg narrated the events of the 1969 Stonewall Rebellion in New York City that set in motion the modern LGBT mass movement. She related the fighting presence there of lesbian, gay and transgender people, sex workers, homeless people and draft resisters, emphasizing the leadership of young African Americans and Latinas. She concluded that it was their unity that enabled these oppressed people to make history.

The following day Feinberg met with COSWAS sex workers and other labor activists at a former government-licensed brothel, now converted to an organizing and re-training center. When government licensing was abolished by the current ruling party of Taiwan, the women organized more than 300 militant demonstrations to protest this re-criminalization of their livelihood. These women, who had worked in this brothel for most of their lives, are now part of the independent labor movement of Taiwan, which defended them on the frontlines at the protests and supports them with organizing staff.

All the mainstream daily newspapers of Taiwan gave prominent coverage to Feinberg's appearances.

The China Times Sunday book review ran a front-page profile of Feinberg's literary and activist work. The Taipei Times devoted an entire page to Feinberg's visit, featuring it above the masthead on the front page.

"I was heartened by the many conversations I had with workers, activists, students and faculty during my visit," Feinberg said at the end of the trip. "My visit coincided with stepped-up political attacks on China and an announcement of an 'independence from China' referendum by President Chen Shui-bian."

"I came here as a revolutionary from the United States—the imperialist power that has kept China divided and is the greatest enemy of workers and oppressed peoples of the world. I spoke out as a communist. And in response, many individuals thanked me for doing so, said my support for China and for socialism as a whole strengthened them, and called me comrade."

Pratt participated as a panelist in the conference and spoke at Eslite Bookstore. The introduction to her creative non-fiction work on gender boundary crossing, "S/HE," appears in "TRANS," the first Chinese-language anthology on transgender. □

La captura de Saddam Husein, la resistencia en Iraq y el imperialismo estadounidense

Declaración del Partido Mundo Obrero (Workers World Party)

La afirmación de la Administración Bush acerca de que la captura de Saddam Husein constituye un gran paso para llevar la democracia y la libertad a Iraq debe ser denunciada por todos los que se opusieron la guerra, por los que se oponen a la ocupación y por los que están en contra de la empresa global del imperialismo estadounidense en Iraq.

La captura de Saddam Husein por las fuerzas militares estadounidenses es un acto ejecutado exclusivamente en beneficio del reforzamiento de la criminal ocupación colonial y del debilitamiento de la resistencia iraquí. Sea cual sea el resultado inmediato de esa captura, sin embargo, no podrá alterar en ningún aspecto significativo el histórico sentimiento anticolonial del pueblo iraquí ni su determinación de luchar por la independencia.

La única “democracia y libertad” que Washington pretende para Iraq es la libertad de vender todas las empresas estatales y privadas a las explotadoras y poderosas compañías multinacionales; la de permitir la propiedad imperialista al cien por cien; la de permitir a los imperialistas hacerse con los 110 mil millones de barriles de petróleo de las reservas iraquíes y la de repatriar los beneficios expoliados al pueblo iraquí; la de instalar bases [militares] para el Pentágono [en Iraq]; y la de crear un gobierno títere mantenido por Washington.

Fue por estos objetivos por lo que Washington lanzó su ilegal y agresiva “Guerra preventiva” contra Iraq; estos son los motivos que yacen tras las fraudulentas acusaciones de la Administración [Bush] sobre las armas de destrucción masiva, el terrorismo, etc.; es por estos objetivos puramente imperialistas por lo que las fuerzas de EEUU se han desmandado a lo largo y ancho de Iraq para intentar aplastar a la resistencia—invadiendo casas, encarcelando a miles de sospechosos, haciendo rehenes y acorralando dirigentes; ha sido por todos esos objetivos por lo que Washington ha perseguido a Saddam Husein.

El mensaje: doblegarse al Imperio

El jactancioso triunfalismo de la Administración Bush, sus intentos sistemáticos de humillar al ex presidente del Estado de Iraq y sus preparativos para el show de un juicio guiado por el imperialismo pretenden enviar un mensaje a todo el que rechace doblegarse a los dictados del imperialismo de EEUU: “Si

resistes, te cogemos”, un mensaje que trae a la memoria a los ejércitos imperiales de Roma que encadenaban a los dirigentes rebeldes o ponían sus cabezas en picas, y a la caballería de EEUU que exhibía los cuerpos de los dirigentes nativos [indios] que oponían resistencia [a la colonización].

Para consternación de Bush, de Bremer y del ejército la respuesta inicial a la captura de Saddam Husein ha venido de la mano de coches—bomba, de ataques con granadas y de manifestaciones de protesta. El propio Bush ha sido cauto en pregonar este suceso como una victoria definitiva.

Sin duda, tanto él [Bush] como sus asesores no son conscientes de la historia más reciente. Poco después de la toma de Bagdad, los generales estadounidenses se instalaron en el recién capturado Palacio de la República y se jactaron de su “extraordinaria victoria”, afirmando prácticamente que Iraq era suyo. Luego vendría la foto de Bush en el portaaviones [Lincoln el 1 de mayo] declarando que la guerra había acabado. Y de nuevo, tras la ejecución de

los hijos de Saddam Husein, Qusay y Uday, se difundieron por todo el mundo las fotos de sus cuerpos con heridas de bala. Cada uno de esos momentos de triunfo fue seguido de nuevos actos de resistencia por parte del pueblo iraquí.

Las Administraciones en Washington, tanto republicanas como demócratas, han focalizado su ira contra Iraq durante 12 años, incluyendo dos guerras, un régimen de sanciones genocidas y ahora una sangrienta ocupación. Durante este tiempo más de un millón de iraquíes han sido asesinados y muchos más han sido heridos o incapacitados. Nadie debe olvidar lo que la secretaria de Estado de la Administración Clinton, Madelene Albright, admitió en el programa 60 Minutes de la CBS de 12 de mayo de 1996. Leslie Stahl preguntó a Albright sobre las sanciones: “Hemos escuchado que medio millón de niños han muerto. Esto quiere decir que se han producido más muertes de niños de las que se produjeron en Hiroshima. ¿Usted cree que merece la

pena este alto precio?”. Albright contestó: “Creo que es una elección muy dura, pero el precio . . . creemos que merece la pena que se pague”.

¿Puede alguien imaginar que la captura ilegal de Saddam Husein por las fuerzas estadounidenses tenga algo que ver con la preocupación por el pueblo iraquí? De hecho, una Administración estadounidense tras otra ha torturado a este pueblo. La invasión de Iraq por parte de Washington fue ilegal. Su ocupación es ilegal. Y cualquier juicio de Saddam Husein o de cualquier otro dirigente iraquí que establezcan Bush, Rumsfeld, Bremer, Wolfowitz y compañía, será ilegal y calculado para extender la opresión y la explotación del pueblo iraquí.

Un pueblo ultrajado

El pueblo iraquí se siente ultrajado por la captura de Saddam Husein. Ello se refleja en el hecho de que, aun habiéndolo intentado tanto como han podido, los canales de TV estadounidenses no han podido producir ninguna instantánea de manifestaciones masivas celebrando su captura, ni siquiera por parte de sus más enérgicos oponentes. Todas las tomas de video reflejan estrechas instantáneas de pequeños grupos. Mientras los periodistas a sueldo de la prensa escrita y los comentaristas de la televisión fantasean sobre las manifestaciones de celebración por todas partes, las cámaras son incapaces de hallarlas. Por contra, las tropas estadounidenses están disparando y asesinando a los manifestantes que protestan contra la captura de Saddam Husein.

Si alguien tiene alguna duda sobre el carácter reaccionario de esta operación, basta con escuchar las proclamaciones de otros gobiernos imperialistas. Los antiguos colonizadores del mundo, de Londres a París, a Berlín, a Roma, a Madrid, a Tokio, han saludado el suceso. ¿Pueden esos ladrones—promotores de la globalización de las corporaciones y de los esquemas neoliberales que pisotean la soberanía de los gobiernos y saquean las economías nacionales de los pueblos oprimidos de Asia, África, Latinoamérica y el Mundo Árabe—alegrarse repentinamente porque la democracia y la libertad estén de camino hacia Iraq?

Dentro del marco de la revolución nacional iraquí—que comenzó con la

expulsión de la colonización británica en 1958—Saddam Husein ha jugado un papel contradictorio y a veces reaccionario. Entre otras cosas, él y los baasistas ilegalizaron al Partido Comunista de Iraq (durante el período mas temprano de la revolución cuando el PCI fue antiimperialista y una fuerza progresista) y lanzaron una guerra burguesa y reaccionaria de conquista contra Iran aceptando incluso el apoyo de Washington para esa tarea.

Por otra parte, a diferencia de las petromonarquías feudales del Golfo, que se han convertido en clientes absolutos del imperialismo petrolífero, Saddam Husein utilizó los beneficios del petróleo de Iraq para construir la infraestructura económica del país desde una base burguesa y amplia bajo el capitalismo de estado. Durante su régimen, Iraq se convirtió en uno de los países más desarrollados de Oriente Medio. Aumentaron de manera importante los beneficios sociales para el pueblo incluidos la atención sanitaria gratuita, la extensión de la educación y la alfabetización, los derechos de las mujeres y la red de la seguridad social. Pero sobre todo, sin embargo, el presidente iraquí rechazó que el imperialismo tomase el control del país.

Los sectores más agresivos de la clase dominante de EEUU, particularmente las compañías de petróleo, hace tiempo que decidieron la destrucción de Saddam Husein y del Estado nacional de Iraq exactamente por esas mismas razones: porque mantenían la independencia nacional y el control sobre el petróleo, conquistas fundamentales de la revolución anticolonial de 1958. Con la llegada al poder de Bush, esos elementos han galvanizado a toda la clase dominante de EEUU que ha apoyado con determinación su programa de conquista.

La captura de Saddam Husein solo puede ser evaluada en el contexto de la lucha de EEUU y Gran Bretaña por un lado, y por el otro del pueblo iraquí que lucha por socavar la ocupación. Bajo estas condiciones, todo el que se opone al imperialismo debe rechazar el derecho de EEUU a encarcelarlo y a que el Consejo Gubernativo [iraquí] de Washington sirva para llevarle a juicio.

Sea cual sea el papel que Saddam Husein haya jugado en la resistencia, si es que ha jugado alguno, es una ilusión de los hacedores del Imperio de Washington pensar que el pueblo iraquí vaya a acomodarse alguna vez con la esclavitud colonial, sea bajo el control directo, a través de una ocupación, o indirecto, a través de un gobierno títere. La justicia para el pueblo iraquí comenzará el día en que los criminales de guerra de Washington sean llevados a juicio. □

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