

HAITIAN LEADER CHARGES:

White House behind coup

Solidarity delegation wins access to Aristide



PVN PHOTO: JOHNNIE STEVENS

U.S. delegation with Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in Central African Republic.

By Sara Flounders and Johnnie Stevens
Bangui, Central African Republic

March 9—U.S. agents abducted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide of Haiti over a week ago and flew him to this intensely poor former French colony in the heart of Africa in an attempt to isolate him and keep him from telling the truth about what has happened in his Caribbean country.

It didn't work. Through his own efforts, and with assistance from a solidarity delegation that quickly flew in from the United States, Aristide has been able to tell the world that he did not resign, as the Bush administration has been claiming, but was forced to leave Haiti after being threatened by the U.S. ambassador with death—his own, his family's and thousands of his supporters. At the same time, U.S. troops were taking up key positions in the capital and convicted murderers known to collaborate with Washington were advancing on Port-au-Prince in command of heavily armed troops.

This gangster-style operation to uproot Haiti's democratically elected president and install a government under the heel of U.S. and French imperialism has involved a full-court press—in Haiti and here in the Central African Republic.

The U.S. delegation that succeeded in breaking the blockade around Aristide included three people representing former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark: Kim Ives of Haiti Support Network and the newspaper *Haiti Progrès*, Sara Flounders of the International Action Center, and Johnnie Stevens of People's Video Network. Also in the delegation were attorney Brian Concannon of Aristide's U.S. legal team and filmmaker Katherine Kean.

At first we were denied access to the Haitian president and his wife, Mildred Trouillot Aristide. We went to the Palace of the Renaissance but were told we couldn't give him a message or send him our phone number, we could not go in and he could not come out to meet with us.

Aristide replaced by 'U.S. regime of occupation'

But after a release entitled "Aristide under lock and key" was circulated around the world in a massive Internet and media campaign by the International Action Center and the International ANSWER Coalition, the blockade was forced open. The CAR authorities acknowledged to us that they had been taking direction from the U.S. State Department and the French Foreign Ministry.

By the next morning everything was different.

Foreign Minister Charles Wenezouï, who had refused to return our calls, set up a meeting with our delegation, told us we could meet privately with President Aristide, and said that afterwards Aristide would hold a press conference.

At the meeting with the foreign minister, he told us that the decision to send Aristide to the CAR was made by the U.S. and France. Not one Haitian had any part in this decision. The CAR minister was told he must be in daily contact with Washington and Paris about Aristide, and his government could not comment on the situation in Haiti.

We then met with President Aristide and Mildred Trouillot Aristide, who greeted us warmly. Later we attended a luncheon with them and officials of the CAR, followed by another meeting with President Aristide. The

Continued on page 8

END THE OCCUPATIONS!

- **Bring the troops home** 6-7
- **All out for March 20** 10
- **Iraq puppet gov't already in trouble** 10

SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

Tidal wave for equality 2

UNITY & FIGHTBACK

International Women's Day 3

CASINO CAPITALISM

Risk but no jobs 4

FREE THE CUBAN FIVE

Millions hear about case 5

VENEZUELA

U.S. hands off 7

MEL GIBSON'S GOSPEL

Anti-Semitic to the core 11

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Despite bipartisan resistance

Same-sex couples win marriage rights

By Leslie Feinberg

President George W. Bush's opening shot in his Feb. 24 televised speech targeting same-sex marriage rights may actually have been the sound of political backfiring. It triggered a tidal wave of mass civil disobedience by the lesbian, gay, bi and trans movement, drawing strong support in its wake, that is still rolling across the United States. Activists from coast to coast and South to North are confidently, exuberantly and inexorably pressing their demand that the government end its official discrimination against same-sex couples once and for all.

This wave of opposition to Bush's proposed constitutional ban on same-sex marriage rights included strong testimony by the NAACP at a March 3 Senate subcommittee hearing. A significant number of Black and Latino elected officials—from Georgia to Massachusetts—have also taken a stand against amending the Constitution to codify discrimination.

The Democratic Party's national leadership has been unable to co-opt this movement in a critical presidential election year. It's a tough sell. Can they really go to the community with: "Vote for Kerry! He wants to ban same-sex marriage with state constitutional amend-



Chicago, right.
CHRISGEOVANIS/CHICAGO INDYMEDIA

New York City, below
WW PHOTO: BEV HIESTAND



ments, like the one he backs in Massachusetts, instead of a federal amendment."

The fact is, both parties of big business oppose the basic democratic demand to ratify same-sex marriage. This has forced the LGBT movement to take the independent high road, not waiting for politicians and judges in this election year.

Virtually every day, another city or county, town or village is the proud and celebratory site of a new victory in this political battle.

By March 8 some 7,200 lesbian, gay, bi and trans people had been officially married in San Francisco City Hall.

Marriages between people of all sexes are scheduled to become a legal reality for residents of the state of Massachusetts on May 17. But on March 11, state legislators will debate a state constitutional amendment that would block this progressive move. Thousands of people will be at the state Capitol building in Boston on March 10 and 11 to exert popular pressure on the legislators.

Presidential hopeful John Kerry endorses the discriminatory state ban. This could add to the momentum and size of protests already scheduled to confront the Democratic Party national convention in Boston this summer.

Winning hearts and minds

There are too many fronts in this battle to list them all. A deputy city clerk in Asbury Park, N.J., issued the first marriage license to a same-sex couple in that Atlantic beach town on March 8. Six other applications were reportedly pending. The city also issued a "proposed statement for municipal officials regarding same-sex marriages" which stresses that this is "a matter of fundamental civil and constitutional rights." The state is one of 12 whose laws do not specifically ban same-sex marriage.

The same day, six same-sex couples who were denied marriage licenses in Seattle filed a lawsuit charging that, in doing so, the King County Clerk violated the state constitution's guarantee of "equality, liberty and privacy." Similar lawsuits in Vermont and Massachusetts led to legal victories. However, this suit differs in that the state



San Francisco.

WW PHOTO: BILL HACKWELL

This week ...



★ National

- Same-sex couples win marriage rights 2
- International Women's Day conference 3
- Jobs disappear in election year. 4
- On the picket line 4
- Campaign for Cuban Five. 5
- Colombian union leader in Cleveland. 5
- UMass Amherst anti-war teach-in 6
- Bush dodges protesters 6
- Los Angeles to Bush: Get out of Haiti 6
- The Gospel according to Gibson 11
- Kautsky on Christianity. 11

★ International

- White House behind Haiti coup. 1
- Venezuela: Don't try it on us 7
- Caribbean women support Aristide 8
- ANC denounces U.S. and France. 8
- Marines kill Haitians as struggle grows 9
- Iraq puppet regime in trouble. 10

★ Editorials

- All out for March 20 10
- Bring the troops home. 10
- Mercenaries and oil 10

★ Noticias En Español

- Dos perfiles de la opresión de la mujer 12

WW CALENDAR

LOS ANGELES

Fri., March 12
IAC Forum: Women Resist Around the World. 7 p.m. At CARECEN 2845 W. 7th St. For info (213) 487-2368.

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.

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Fri., March 12
Workers World Party meeting celebrating International Women's Day with the theme of "Women & Socialism." Featuring a delegation of Cuban women and special guest speakers. 7 p.m. (Dinner at 6:30) 55 W. 17 St., 5th Fl., Manhattan. For info (212) 627-2994.

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Continued on page 3

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International Women's Day conference

Promoting spirit of unity and fightback

By Minnie Bruce Pratt
New York

March 8 marks International Women's Day. In celebration of this struggle-oriented date, a spirited Women's Fightback Conference against Economic Oppression was held in New York on March 6. The conference was organized by an IWD Committee initiated by the International Action Center and was attended by women and men of many nationalities, ages and genders in support of women's rights.

There were First Nation and Indigenous women, women from Buffalo, Baltimore, Boston and the Bronx, from Harlem and Jamaica, women from Algeria, Canada, the former Yugoslavia and Somalia, from India, Korea and the Philippines, and those seeking the right to return to Palestine. There were teenagers and grandmothers and same-sex lovers; there were students, unionists, poets, house cleaners, lawyers, organizers for the movement, filmmakers, teachers and health care workers.

Marriage rights

Continued from page 2

of Washington is one of 38 with laws that explicitly prohibit same-sex marriage.

Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels threw his weight behind the suit on March 8. While he said he lacks the authority to issue same-sex marriage licenses, he publicly issued an executive order that would compel the city to recognize the weddings of municipal employees who have been married elsewhere. He added that he also wants a Seattle ordinance to improve protections for same-sex married couples.

In Nebraska, an Omaha group is planning to rally on May 16 against Nebraska's ban on same-sex unions. The following day, 200 same-sex couples will converge on the Douglas County Courthouse to apply for marriage licenses.

In New York on March 4, 72 people were turned away by the City Clerk's office, based on 19th-century laws, as activists there vowed to continue to turn up the heat on City Hall.

Hundreds converged on the Georgia State Capitol building on March 1.

Officials from Sandoval County, a rural area southwest of Sante Fe, N.M., that is home to a huge Intel Corp. semiconductor manufacturing facility, have already issued 10 licenses to same-sex couples.

Ithaca and Nyack, N.Y., have become flash points in the struggle. Mayor Jason West of New Paltz, N.Y., is battling 19 criminal counts and facing possible jail time for marrying couples in his village.

Four hundred gathered at the Cook County Clerk's office in Chicago demanding marriage licenses. County Clerk David Orr said couples would have to wait for the law to change. He offered to meet with a small delegation in his office, but demonstrators demanded he meet with them all. Mayor Richard Daley claims he supports same-sex marriage, but says he lacks the power to make it happen. Protesters chanted, "Talk is cheap—we want our rights!" □

A welcoming talk from conference co-organizer Ojette Brundage made the connections between women's lives and the depth of oppression they suffer under capitalism. She spoke of the current 49-percent rate of unemployment for Black women in New York—and the 70-percent unemployment for women in Palestine—and described how women in so many communities are living under economic and military or police occupation by the U.S. She challenged the participants: "The corporations want us to see only our differences, but today we take down the walls."

The opening plenary deepened these connections as Mahtowin Munro, co-leader of United American Indians of New England, highlighted the dispossession of Indigenous women from their land as a central issue in struggles against globalization. She spoke of the racist treatment of Native and other women of color in the U.S. military.

Other speakers detailed how racism, the vicious stereotyping of Arab, Southeast Asian and Muslim people, and other national oppressions double and triple the difficulties of women's daily struggle for survival. They gave the brutal statistics of how capital's drive for profit has driven women from subsistence peasant farming all over the world, imprisoning them in sweatshops, prostitution, poverty and war zones.

Among the speakers were Dr. Andrée Nicola McLaughlin, Medgar Evers College; Dr. Asha Samad-Matias, SAFRAD-Somali Association; Randa Jamal, Al-Awda Palestine Right to Return Coalition; Pat Chin, co-editor of "Haiti: A Slave Revolution"; Dr. Celesti Colds Fechter, Assistant Dean, Academic Affairs, the New School; and Monami Maulik and Supriya David from the South Asian group, Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM).

Cuban women defend their gains

Dora Carcano of the Cuban Democratic Federation of Women and Alicia Gonzales of the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) spoke of women's dramatic gains since Cuba's socialist revolution. The "feminization of justice" has meant that women now make up 36 percent of parliament, 49 percent of judges, and 47 percent of the Cuban Supreme Court. They stressed that, from its inception, revolutionary Cuba launched a campaign against rigid traditional roles for men and women. Said

Gonzales, quoting FMC founder Vilma Espín, "We have not conquered all, but we must defend what we have conquered."

They both stressed that the U.S. would like to do to Cuba what it is currently doing to Haiti, where there was only one doctor per 7,180 people—until Cuban doctors came to help.

Deirdre Sinnott, co-director of the IAC, motivated why it is important for women to come out for the March 20th international demonstrations against war, occupation, racism and cutbacks, from Iraq to Palestine to Haiti.

A majority of women met in two consecutive workshops that focused on domestic and international issues. The wide-ranging, open and personal nature of the discussions responded to the challenge by another plenary speaker, Brenda Stokely, president of District Council 1707, AFSCME, who urged the gathering to reclaim the "true revolutionary history of working-class women—the stories that have never been told," that we learn from each other only in the struggle. Workshop participants spoke movingly about a recent loss of job or school opportunities, the U.S. war drive, and its impact on women here and worldwide.

Others talked of the heavy toll on their lives of lack of health care—or the fact that they were from communities so oppressed, such as First Nation peoples or undocumented domestic workers, that health care was not even on their agenda. There was frank discussion of issues, such as racism and class divisions, that keep women from struggling in common.

'Women unite to globalize the struggle!'

After the workshops, attendees came back to the main auditorium for a final plenary that began with a traditional Indian dance by Vandana Nagaraj. Chairperson Monica Moorehead affirmed that "Every issue is a women's issue" and urged that "Women unite to globalize the struggle—We have nothing to lose but our chains!" Conference co-organizer Emelyn Tapaoan reported on how the discussion groups had "interpreted cold statistics into bitter truth."

Other talks were presented by Yoomi Jeong, Deputy Secretary General, Korea Truth Commission; Pam Africa, International Concerned family & Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal and Move; Algerian writer Rachida Mohemmedi; and novelist Nadja Tesich, whose description of what women in her country, the former

Yugoslavia, had gained under socialism—and have lost since U.S. intervention and war—evoked mighty applause.

Maricela Ortiz Rivera, of Bring Our Daughters Home, gave a devastating account of the murders during the last 11 years of over 300 indigent young girls in Juarez, Mexico, and the disappearance of 4,000 more, most of them workers at maquiladoras in the border town. Her remarks highlighted the interconnection of women's economic issues and sexual and physical assault.

Latina lesbian activist and author Rebeca Toledo spoke of the struggle of lesbians, as well as gay, bisexual and transgender people, to create sustainable family units. Lesbian families, and especially women of color, are feeling intense economic pressures because of women's lower pay. She described the surging civil disobedience movement in the U.S. for the right to same-sex marriage. Marriage would give them access to over 1,000 civil rights with economic implications, such as housing, medical benefits, hospital rights, wills and Social Security benefits.

Dorotea Mendoza, Secretary General of GABRIELA Network of the Philippines, asked, "How are reproductive rights connected to imperialism? And how is racism connected to sex trafficking?"

Julie Fry, from the Rutgers University chapter of the National Lawyers Guild, made an appeal for participation in the April 25th March on Washington for Reproductive Rights.

Euline Williams and Sheila Ireland of Community Voices Heard, an East Harlem group that organizes low-income women for welfare rights and job creation, ended the conference. Ireland said, "They tried to take my dignity, but they couldn't take my soul. The people have the power!"

Groups represented at this conference also included All People's Congress of Baltimore, International ANSWER, American Indian Community House, Boston's Women's Fightback Network, Canadian Voices of Women for Peace, Central New Jersey Coalition for Peace and Justice, Damayan Migrant Workers Association, NY Free Mumia Coalition, Harlem Tenants Council, International Mothers of Liberia, Monmouth County Residents for Immigrant Rights, Network in Solidarity with the People of the Philippines, Northeast Bronx Cultural Association, Wakening Indigenous Nations Defense & Support (WINDS) and Workers World Party. □



Women from many countries shared strategies of resistance to exploitation and oppression.

Casino capitalism drives economy

Jobs disappear in election year

By Milt Neidenberg

Once again, wishful thinking won't make it so. Economists at top Wall Street corporations and Federal Reserve head Alan Greenspan had predicted a growth of at least 125,000 jobs in February. Instead, corporate bosses hired a miserly 21,000. Most were part-time, temporary, low-wage, non-union workers who can be used and discarded.

Some 3,000 factory jobs and 24,000 jobs in construction were lost. That is on top of what are now 43 consecutive months of job loss.

Meanwhile, nearly 400,000 workers exhausted their benefits in February. Many more gave up looking for work.

African-American workers between the ages of 16 and 64 and recent college graduates are bearing the brunt of the "jobless recovery."

More than 9 million are unemployed in this country. The average time spent looking for work is over 20 weeks, the highest in over 20 years.

Corporate strategy is to squeeze more productivity out of a lean work force and to move jobs abroad.

"What we are looking at now is a more extreme version of the early 1990s, when we also experienced a jobless recovery but not as severe as this one," said Edward McKelvey, a senior economist at Goldman Sachs. "We have no way of knowing when hiring will pick up; we don't have models for what is happening now." (New York Times, March 6)

Confusion and uncertainty have become the norm on Wall Street. They are reflected in the daily ups and downs of the stock, commodity and currency markets. Once again the dollar has begun to slide downward against the euro and the yen, raising fears that foreign investors will withdraw their funds, which have been propping up U.S. debt.

The danger of too many cheap printing-press dollars chasing too few commodities will sooner or later create an inflationary trend, bringing the "recovery" to a screeching halt. Prices at the gas pumps are already skyrocketing. So are prices of other raw materials that corporate America needs to feed its factories, mills and high-tech machinery.

"Creditors abroad financed about a third of the year's borrowing. ... There's a time-bomb issue," said Allen Sinai of Decisions Economics, a consulting firm. "There are potential adverse consequences, but we don't know when." (New York Times, March 5)

Economy driven by debt and hyper-speculation

In 2002 and 2003, according to the Federal Reserve, total debt in the United States grew by some \$1.7 trillion to \$22.4 trillion. The federal government accounted for about 18 percent of the total; local governments, roughly 7 percent; households, 42 percent; and businesses, 33 percent. The Fed report added that this debt excludes the obligations of banks and other financial institutions.

Wall Street has become a major player in risk-type loans to speculators who bet on whether the capitalist economic fundamentals go up or down on any given day. Hundreds of trillions of dollars are gambled casino-style in these derivatives, in which fortunes are tied up in

hyper-speculation.

According to calculations from the Standard & Poor's 500, "one-half of General Electric's income comes from finance earnings from the GE Capital Unit. Ford Motor gets 15 percent of earnings from financing and General Motors, a third. Many industrial corporations have their own financial arms and few investors know what portions of profits are at risk." (Wall Street Journal, Feb. 9)

These giant monopoly corporations have shifted their priorities into making money through financing, rather than through investing in the expansion of commodity production—which would create jobs. Karl Marx, who made an exhaustive analysis of capital a century and a half ago, defined wealth invested in this way as "fictitious capital." This is because in a crisis it can evaporate.

The corporations are focused on using their profits to raise stock prices so they can recover the ground they lost in the 2000 stock market plunge—and also to feed their obscene jet-set, scandal-filled way of life with huge salaries, bonuses and stock options, all at the expense of the work force.

Sharp drop in consumer confidence

On Feb. 18, the ABC News weekly consumer confidence index reported the biggest decline in 18 years. The report stated that "the sharp declines appear to be tied to negative perceptions about the job market." Deepening the pessimism is the huge consumer/worker debt load driven by a credit card craze.

The debt crisis driven by the frenzied speculation has spread among many sectors of capitalist industries. On Feb. 24, Greenspan warned that Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, nicknames for the biggest government-sponsored mortgage institutions, posed a "systematic risk" that could cost taxpayers dearly. Testifying at a Senate Banking Committee hearing, he said that "both companies, which hold about \$2 trillion worth of obligations tied to home mortgages ... have accumulated so much debt that they cannot adequately hedge against the risks of financial crises."

Much of this bad debt comes from underpaid and unemployed workers defaulting on mortgage payments and losing their homes.

This could be a rerun of the savings and loan debacle during the boom years of the 1980s. Speculation in real estate and mortgage loans, fueled by banks large and small, was out of control. When the real estate bubble burst, savings and loan banks collapsed like falling dominoes.

The government stepped in to bail them out while the taxpayers/workers lost

their savings. Personal and corporate bankruptcies piled up.

For the workers, the 1987 stock market crash was an Enron on an unprecedented scale.

The world economy is now infected with this disease. It has become saturated with dollar-based speculation and huge debt. Some financial pundits fear that the only way out of this dilemma would be a U.S. financial market-driven crash. The process would begin with the dollar taking a sharp and unpredictable plunge. The stock and bond markets would follow as borrowers default and creditors, both here and abroad, pull out of the U.S. credit markets in a panic.

Currently, foreign lenders already own \$2.3 trillion in U.S. assets, according to Lester Thurow in his book "Fortune Favors the Bold." He concludes that "the day of reckoning is inevitable, even though the timing is unknown."

Meanwhile, the deficits are rising, exacerbated by endless war and the occupation of Iraq, Afghanistan and now Haiti. The "war on terrorism" and tax cuts for the rich are costing big bucks. There is a growing feeling among the analysts that the economy is out of control.

Is a capitalist crisis a possibility in an election year? George W. Bush may yet become the first president since Herbert Hoover (1929-1933) to preside over not only a net loss of jobs during a four-year term but a capitalist catastrophe.

The crisis is not just, as Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry claims, Republican-made. The liberals and progressives who with the AFL-CIO leaders have joined the growing chorus for "anybody but Bush" overlook the possibility that a crash endemic to the capitalist system may be in the making.

Will it come during this presidential campaign? Or will Bush, the Fed and Wall Street move mountains to postpone it in order to get him re-elected?

On the other hand, suppose Kerry is elected. Won't he be forced to take harsh measures, too, as any capitalist politician must, to remedy the ongoing crisis and keep the system of capitalist exploitation going?

In either scenario, it will be at the expense of the workers, the poor and the oppressed nationalities. The issue is not Republican versus Democrat but labor versus capital.

The class struggle will determine the direction of the events now unfolding. For all workers and especially people of color, job creation and a social network that protects health care, education and housing, plus stopping U.S. occupations and endless imperialist wars, will be won on the streets, not in the ballot box. □

ON THE

Merger leads to UNITE HERE

Two strong unions will become even stronger with the merger of the leading clothing, textile and laundry union—UNITE—and the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees union—HERE. The amalgam, to be known as UNITE HERE, will represent nearly half a million active workers and 400,000 retirees throughout North America.

Both unions have been active in organizing unorganized workers, especially immigrants. A vital labor chain is being formed; UNITE and HERE most recently worked together to organize the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride, the successful strike of workers at Yale University, and in the current struggles to unionize H&M retail and distribution workers.

UNITE President Bruce Raynor will be UNITE HERE's general president. HERE President John Wilhelm, who spearheaded the successful drive to unionize 22,000 hotel and casino workers in Las Vegas, will be president/hospitality industries.

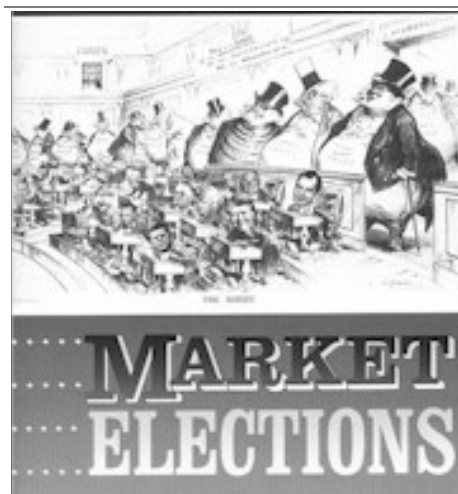
Raynor said, "We both have aggressive organizing campaigns underway and the merger will allow us to intensify and expand these efforts."

Wilhelm said, "This is a non-traditional merger of two non-traditional unions. ... Both unions are regarded for their work on behalf of progressive causes. The HERE Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride brought together activists of every stripe, and UNITE is largely responsible for developing the anti-sweatshop movement in the U.S. and Canada."

Richard Bensinger, former organizing director of the AFL-CIO, noted: "Virtually every union merger in the last 20 years has led to less organizing, not more. This one is clearly designed to be forward looking and to produce more organizing."

Immigrant workers win court victory

Day laborers, their families and allies in Freehold, N.J., have won a court victory after a tense five-month struggle. After the mayor decreed they could no longer meet contractors in a "muster zone" each morning, the workers organized into the Freehold Day Laborers Committee for Progress and Social Welfare and began demonstrating and publicizing their cause. They won support from the Monmouth County Residents for Immigrants' Rights and



MARKET ELECTIONS:

How democracy serves the rich

BY VINCE COPELAND

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SUE DAVIS

several national immigrant rights groups. They also took their case to court.

Now Federal Judge Anne Thompson in Newark has order the borough of Freehold to publicize in the newspapers and radio a rescinding of the Jan. 1 notice that closed the muster zone. This reopens the public part of the area again.

The struggle is not over, however. The town is now attempting to have the county cede to it the road that runs along the muster zone. This could enable the town to pass new laws restricting contractors from the zone.

The organizations involved say they'll keep fighting if this happens.

Domestic workers demand rights

Nannies who care for young children and domestic workers—most often immigrant women—who cook, clean and care for the elderly rallied in the Bronx, N.Y., on March 7 to demand recognition of their rights. It is estimated that 200,000 such workers labor in New York City alone.

Domestic Workers United organized the demonstration. The lobbying group has petitioned members of the New York state legislature to pass a Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights providing for paid holidays and vacations, standard overtime guidelines and a \$14-per-hour wage. "There's a lot of abuse," Erlene Browne of DWU told the New York Times (March 8).

Take the case of Carla Vincent, a nanny who works here to support a 10-year-old daughter in Trinidad. She says "parents really take advantage" of women like her. Her first job in New York paid \$225 per week in 1998 for live-in child care, housekeeping and cooking. "I would have to wait until they were finished eating and then eat. Then she wanted me to meet her in the Hamptons, and I would be responsible for my own traveling expenses." (Village Voice, March 13-19, 2003)

Public Citizen workers join union

Researchers, writers and activists at Public Citizen, the consumer rights organization founded by Ralph Nader in 1971, won their own voice at work in late February when the National Labor Relations Board certified Service Employees Local 500 to represent them. (Union City, March 1)

NYS Assembly boosts minimum wage

The New York State Assembly voted March 1 to raise New York's minimum wage to \$7.10 an hour by 2006. The current minimum wage of \$5.15—the same as the federal minimum—will rise to \$6 an hour on Oct. 1 and to \$6.75 on July 1, 2005, before hitting \$7.10 on Jan. 1, 2006. The minimum wage has not been increased in the state since 2000 and has not kept pace with the rising cost of living. Twelve states, mostly in the Northeast, have passed a minimum wage that is higher than the federal standard. □

Campaign for Cuban Five reaches millions

By Minnie Bruce Pratt
New York

A united worldwide effort by progressive forces broke one U.S. blockade last week—the corporate media blockade on information about the case of five Cuban political prisoners currently held in U.S. federal prisons.

A full-page ad appeared in the March 3 New York Times headlined: "Q: Can you be imprisoned in the United States for opposing terrorism? A: Yes, if you oppose terrorism in Miami. Free the Cuban Five!" The ad was sponsored by the National Committee to Free the Five, and paid for by donations from people in 42 U.S. states and 210 countries.

The Cuban Five are Fernando González, René González, Antonio Guerrero, Gerardo Hernández and Ramón Labañino. They were convicted in U.S. courts in 2001 for their efforts to counter violence against Cuban and U.S. citizens waged by anti-Cuba right-wing organizations based in Miami, such as the Cuban American National Foundation.

Violent attacks by these reactionary groups over the last 45 years have included the bombings of U.S. airports, travel offices, cultural centers, union halls and civic organizations; the assassination of Cuban diplomats and civic leaders in the U.S.; and the bombings of Cuban businesses and private citizens, including of a Cubana civilian flight

in 1976 that killed all 73 passengers.

Orlando Requeijo Gual, Cuba's ambassador to the United Nations, has pointed out that 3,478 people have died and 2,099 been injured by the kind of right-wing terror that the Five were assigned to investigate. U.S. authorities let right-wing terrorists walk free, knowing all details of their activities, while imprisoning the Five who fought against them. At a recent meeting in New York, he questioned the U.S. double standard, saying, "There cannot be a good terrorism and a bad terrorism."

The Five gathered information in the U.S. to stop the illegal activities of these right-wing groups. They were arrested by the FBI in 1998 and defamed as "spies." However, senior U.S. military officials testified at their trial that the data they gathered was neither secret nor classified. (Fox News, Feb. 21) They are serving sentences from 15 years to life in prison.

A hearing on their sentences is scheduled to begin March 10 at the federal court of appeals in Miami. Washington continues to interfere with the preparation of their case, limiting their visits from the Cuban Consulate to every three months, rather than monthly. (www.antiterroristas.cu) Reached in Miami where she is assisting the legal team, National Committee to Free the

Five coordinator Gloria La Riva expressed "appreciation and solidarity to the five heroes for the mission they carried out in Miami and for the work they are continuing today defending their country. They will never give up and neither will we."

The Cuban Five have seen their case blanked out in the U.S. media. The New York Times ad, placed in the U.S. "newspaper of record," broke through that blockade. The official website of the National Committee to Free the Five, www.freethefive.org, received 32,000 hits on the day of the advertisement and 62,000 hits the following day.

President Ricardo Alarcón of Cuba's National Assembly said that the ad is one of the most important new developments in the struggle to free the Five since their conviction.

Solidarity meeting in New York

A forum on the case was held in New York on March 5 at the office of 1199—the hospital workers' union, which itself was bombed in 1972 for supporting Cuba.

Continued on
page 7



Members of Committee to Free the Cuban Five present UN ambassador Orlando Requeijo Gual with ad that appeared in New York Times.

Colombian union leader in Cleveland:

'Together we can bring Coca-Cola down'

By Martha Grevatt
Cleveland

Recently workers and students in Cleveland, Ohio, had the opportunity to learn about the life-threatening conditions trade unionists face daily in Colombia. Colombia is the most dangerous country in the world for workers seeking union representation. Three out of every five assassinations of labor activists take place there.

Luis Cardona, the former Coca-Cola worker who presented eyewitness testimony here, narrowly escaped becoming a statistic. On Dec. 5, 1996, Cardona went to work at the Coca-Cola plant in Carepa as he had for 12 years. A right-wing paramilitary death squad stormed the plant that day. Isidro Gil, secretary of SINALTRAINAL, the food and beverage workers' union, was assassinated. The workers were lined up and given until 4 p.m. to

resign from the union. Workers were forced to sign resignation letters written by management, which were then turned over to the paramilitaries. Then they were fired anyway.

The paramilitaries kidnapped Cardona. Fearing for his life, he escaped.

Cardona described the open collusion between the death squads and Coca-Cola. The plant manager in Carepa socializes with the paramilitaries, he reported, and supplies them with free soda for their parties.

Cardona now lives in Chicago and works full-time on the Boycott Coke campaign. He spoke at three Ohio colleges to students committed to getting Coke off campus.

Cardona was the keynote speaker at a Feb. 28 teach-in called by the Inter-Religious Task Force on Central America. Several hundred people turned out. On

March 1 he also spoke to a group of United Auto Workers activists, who now want to spread the word about the boycott and prevent Coke from being served at future membership meetings.

Anti-union terror is ongoing. Ten SINALTRAINAL leaders at Coke have been assassinated and two have been "disappeared," while 65 union families have been forced from their homes. Many union workers have been fired.

In 2002 tribunals were held in Brussels and Colombia, as well as Atlanta, to investigate Coca-Cola's role in death-squad terror. In July 2003 SINALTRAINAL and supportive unionists around the world launched an international boycott of all Coca-Cola products.

Despite his difficult personal struggle, Cardona remains optimistic. "Together," he told the Auto Workers, "we can bring Coca-Cola down." □

WW PHOTOS: DEIRDRE GRISWOLD AND G. DUNKEL

U-MASS AMHERST

Teach-in hits wars, occupations

By Bryan G. Pfeifer and Mike Shaw
Amherst, Mass.

In preparation for widespread demonstrations later in the month, over 200 people turned out for a March 6 teach-in on war and occupation at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Over four months in the planning, the teach-in included plenaries and workshops with speakers from across the Northeast.

An Arab Cultural Festival the day before, held in conjunction with the teach-in, informed the campus community about Arab culture and politics. At evening festivities, the Brooklyn-based artists' collective Movement in Motion performed, along with various African American, Arab and Muslim poets and dancers.

"This is not our war and we stand against it," declared Peta Lindsay, International ANSWER youth and student organizer, in opening the morning "War and Resistance" plenary.

"It is our perspective that throughout



Peta Lindsay, ANSWER.

history, the only significant progressive change has been because of the mass movement of people at the schools, in the factories and in the streets. The war is the byproduct of a system that we call modern imperialism.

"It is based on highly advanced U.S.

capitalism, whose interest in the world has little to do with humanitarian values or democracy and everything to do with control of territory, markets and natural resources," said Lindsay.

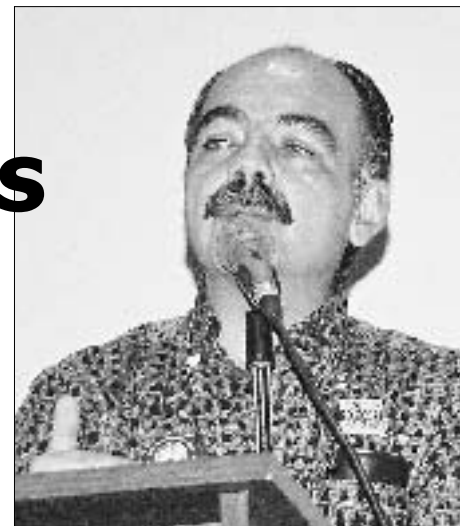
Lindsay called on those present to protest the Bush administration's wars and regime overthrows in Iraq, Afghanistan and Haiti by taking part in the March 20 global actions. Bill Fletcher of TransAfrica Forum and United for Peace & Justice and Fernando Suarez del Solar of Military Families Speak Out shared the opening plenary.

Suarez's son Jesus, a U.S. soldier, died on March 27, 2003. Suarez recently returned from a fact-finding mission to Iraq, where he was told by U.S. officials that his son had died from Iraqi resistance gunfire. But fellow soldiers told him that his son had stepped on a U.S. cluster bomb.

"Why does Bush lie to me?" he asked. "Bush is not the owner of our children, not the owner of America. We are the owners. It is amazing for them to take money from universities to sustain an illegal occupation in Iraq."

Speakers at the afternoon plenary on "Internal and External Occupations: U.S., Iraq and Palestine" included Sut Jhally of the Media Education Foundation and a communications professor at U-Mass. A canceled flight prevented Rania Masri of UFPJ from speaking at this plenary.

In the "Racism at Home" workshop, presenter Ric Urrutia, a U-Mass Amherst Labor Center graduate student, had a



WW PHOTOS: MIKE SHAW

Fernando Suarez del Solar, Military Families Speak Out

message for progressive whites who ignore, marginalize or patronize the struggles of the oppressed.

"Now don't you think it would be a good idea to support our efforts to try and fight police brutality, environmental racism, poor housing, gentrification and white supremacy disguised as public policy? The issues are all interrelated. They're all products of capitalist exploitation," said Urrutia, whose homeland is El Salvador. "An injury to one is an injury to all. What capitalism wants to eventually do with you, they're testing out on us first."

Organizers of the teach-in included the Arab Student Club, the American Friends Service Committee, the Graduate Student Senate, the Office of ALANA Affairs, Palestine Action Coalition, the Political Economy Research Institute, Radical Student Union, Solidarity, U.S. Labor Against the War-Western Mass., Veterans for Peace-Western Mass., and Western Mass. ANSWER. □

SANTA CLARA, CALIF.

Bush dodges protesters



WW PHOTO: BILL HACKWELL

By Bill Hackwell
Santa Clara, Calif.

Over 500 people came out to the Santa Clara Convention Center on short notice March 4 to protest President George W. Bush's in-and-out lunch visit to the heart of the economically devastated Silicon Valley.

The purpose of the president's touch-and-go appearance here was not to talk about the two middle schools that had just announced they were closing. He didn't use the opportunity to acknowledge a new report by research economists at the University of California-Berkeley that one in every six jobs in Silicon Valley will be lost to offshoring in the next period, although this is the highest rate in the country.

Bush focused on his agenda of endless war against the nations of the world. He spoke to an audience made up primarily of venture capitalists.

In his hour-long stay, Bush managed to rake in \$700,000 for his election war chest. His three stops in California raised \$5 million for the Republican Party.

With no shortage of issues to protest about, people came from all over the Bay Area to demonstrate against Bush. They

were against the U.S.-engineered coup in Haiti. Many union workers protested the loss of 2 million jobs under Bush. Many couples who had recently married in San Francisco came to protest Bush's push for a constitutional amendment against same-sex marriages.

Anti-war activists organizing for the March 20 international day of protest came in large numbers to call for the end of U.S. military occupations, from Iraq to Haiti to Palestine and everywhere.

The boisterous demonstration was organized by the South Bay Mobilization and the ANSWER Coalition. It took place directly across the street from the main entrance to the convention center where the Bush event was being held. To avoid the protesters, Bush came and left through a back door.

Richard Becker of the National Board of the ANSWER Coalition commented: "People in the Bay Area have a deep hatred of Bush's policies. That's why he only stays long enough to collect the loot from his rich backers. Bush would never dare come to a city in the Bay area like San Francisco." □

Los Angeles to Bush:

'Get out of Haiti!'



WW PHOTO: JULIA LA RIVA

Even though Republican Party officials kept the plans for President George W. Bush's March 3 visit to Los Angeles quiet until just a few days before his arrival, they couldn't avoid a militant protest. An ANSWER Coalition call to demonstrate spread quickly, especially at the University of Southern California campus adjoining Shrine Auditorium, where Bush appeared. The hundreds of

students and people from the community who marched, chanted and protested expressed the greatest anger over Washington's role in the kidnapping and forced exile of Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. ANSWER organizers urged demonstrators to help mobilize for the March 20 Global Day of Resistance, and to use the opportunity to demand again that the Bush administration get out of Haiti as well as Iraq, Palestine and everywhere.

—Scott Scheffer

DON'T FORGET TO SUBSCRIBE!

Venezuelan tells U.S.:

'Don't try on us what you did in Haiti'

By Berta Joubert

In the days after the U.S.-backed coup in Haiti, Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez let Washington know he would continue to resist the Washington-fomented destabilization campaign in his country.

"On behalf of the truth, I have to demand the government in Washington get their hands off Venezuela," he said. "We tell Mr. Bush: don't dare try to do in Venezuela what you did in Haiti."

And again: "We will resist with all our might; at this stage, the Bolivarian Revolution has enough allies in this continent to initiate a 100 Years War, not only in the Bolivarian territory."

Washington and Wall Street have been plotting non-stop to oust Chávez since his election by popular vote in 1999, when he began his agenda to advance the poor majority through what he calls the Bolivarian Revolution. An April 2002 U.S.-backed military coup briefly unseated Chávez. But the masses returned him to power with huge demonstrations that surrounded the coup makers in the Presidential Palace.

The workers and the people's national army also defended their national heritage—oil. When the state oil industry was sabotaged by the CIA, aligned with the Venezuelan oligarchy, in a lockout that almost ruined the country's economy, they were able to restore production.

Now the strategy is a "recall referendum" to unseat Chávez. A flood of U.S. dollars has gone to forces opposed to Chávez in organizations like "Súmate," born in 2002. Súmate was the recipient last September of \$53,400 from the National Endowment for Democracy for an anti-Chávez advertising campaign calling for a referendum. That was spent openly. Of course, there is no accounting for the secret funds the U.S. government spends on counter-revolutionary activity.

The Washington-based NED, which has among its directors Gen. Wesley K. Clark, was formed under President Ronald Reagan in 1983 to openly give money to what it calls "pro-democracy" forces abroad.

After the failed oil coup, this organization revved up its counter-revolutionary

agenda, trying to claim its actions were based on the 1999 Venezuelan Constitution. That's the same progressive constitution that the Venezuelan upper class abhors. The first action taken by the coup leaders in April 2002 was to attempt to revoke it.

Struggle over referendum

According to the constitution, a person in any elected government office may be subject to a recall referendum after the completion of half their term if they do not perform their duties well. In order for a referendum to be called, 20 percent of the electorate—2.4 million voters—must sign a petition.

On its website, Súmate lists as its accomplishment the designing, planning and coordination of "El Firmazo" (the Big Signing) of Feb. 2, 2003. This was a failed attempt to call a referendum on Chávez. Signatures were unconstitutionally gathered before the completion of the first half of Chávez's term, among many other illegalities.

The National Electoral Council (CNE) regulates Venezuela's electoral process. In a second attempt the opposition, seeming to abide by the constitution, delivered 3.08 million signatures to the CNE in December.

But the CNE, after a careful review, accepted only 1.8 million of the signatures. Close to 1 million have been rejected because of gross irregularities and almost 1 million more have been set apart for verification because they appear to correspond to minors or people who are dead. In some instances, the same handwriting appears on several signatures, which could signal widespread fraud and would make the total number less than what is required to hold a referendum.

Even though Chávez says he will abide by whatever the CNE rules, the opposition refuses to do the same and threatens violent actions.

In fact, the "Democratic Coordination," an umbrella grouping representing the oligarchy, has staged small, violent protests that have already resulted in two deaths. In order to set the stage for foreign intervention, particularly from the U.S., the group has mounted a campaign charging the government with human rights

violations.

The media is still controlled by the opposition, predominantly the Cisneros Group—Venevision, Globovision and Univision, among others—and is linked to international outlets. Recently, the world saw the same closeup, over and over again, of one demonstrator's face covered with blood. The aim of this attempt to sway international public opinion was to force the referendum and overthrow Chávez.

On March 1, a day after the CNE announced its findings, people took to

the streets in Venezuela and in many cities around the world in defense of the Bolivarian process and opposing any interference by the United States.

Those same media outlets did not cover the massive support for Chávez. While the opposition's demonstrations have been violent and small, requiring closeups to make them appear bigger, the pro-Chávez events needed a wide lens and panoramic views to capture the sea of supporters of the revolution. □



Venezuelan masses support President Chávez in March 1 demonstration.

Campaign for Cuban Five reaches millions

Continued from page 5

Continuing its tradition of tenacious support for Cuba, 1199 executive director Rhadames Rivera welcomed the meeting, saying, "More than ever we need solidarity with Cuba."

Jennifer Wager of the New York City Committee to Free the Five and Nellie Hester Bailey of the Harlem Tenants Council and Cuba Solidarity New York co-chaired. They linked the struggle to free the Five and defend Cuba to the need to oppose U.S. military aggression in the Caribbean and Latin America, and U.S. economic aggression through the so-called Free Trade Area of the Americas. They led the standing-room-only audience in a militant chant of "Hands off Cuba, Venezuela and Haiti!"

Luis Miranda, president of Casa de las Americas, pointed out that the assault on Cuba by U.S.-backed right-wing forces was similar to campaigns of terror in Colombia, Guatemala and other countries by soldiers and militias trained at the U.S. Army School of the Americas at Ft.

Benning, Ga.

Teresa Gutierrez emphasized that, in contrast, "Cuba sends doctors and teachers, not bombs, around the world." She spoke eloquently of the Times ad as a "blow to the sinister information blockade" imposed on the case of the Five. Gutierrez is co-chair of the New York City Committee to Free the Five and national co-director of the International Action Center.

In addition to a moving letter of thanks from Fernando González, expressions of solidarity with the Five were read by the Dominican Friends of Cuba, the Pro-Libertad Campaign for the Freedom Of Puerto Rican Political Prisoners, the Bolivarian Circles representing Venezuela, and the Venceremos Brigade, which has sent more than 8,000 people from the U.S. to work and study in Cuba since 1969.

U.S. Rep. Maurice Hinchey of upstate New York sent a statement saying that justice has been denied the Cuban Five, and demanded a new trial. A historical parallel between the charges against the Five

and the struggle against slavery was made by author Rosemary Mealy, who explained that the U.S. legal charge of "conspiracy" was first created when enslaved Africans in New York worked to liberate themselves.

In a special connection between Cuba and the celebration of International Women's Day, Alicia González, a representative of the Federation of Cuban Women, praised the Five as heroes who had defended their country, and said, "Cuban women have had much advancement under the revolution. We are ready to defend the world we have built, each school, each hospital, each house."

The Rev. Lucius Walker of IFCO/Pastors for Peace warned, "What the U.S. is doing to Haiti today is what the U.S. wants to do to Cuba." Walker added that among the reasons the U.S. will find that impossible is the courage of the Five who "represent thousands willing to defend the principles of justice and sovereignty."

Special guest Orlando Requeijo Gual, Cuban ambassador to the UN, said the

growing movement to free the Five had "little by little shattered the wall of silence" around the case.

To tumultuous applause and a standing ovation he concluded, "Cuba has the right to live peacefully and to defend its ideas and independence. If there is one thing we are certain of, it is in this, as in so many other obstacles, we shall overcome!" □



ANC denounces U.S. and France

By Monica Moorehead

Righteous anger in response to the forced ouster of the democratically elected president of Haiti, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, will not go away, even though the U.S. and French governments wish it would.

The president of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, attended the bicentennial celebration of Haiti's independence from slavery earlier in January. South Africa reportedly sent a shipment of military equipment to help the Haitian government defend itself from counter-revolutionary forces, but the

coup occurred before its arrival.

Mavivi Myakayaka-Manzini, African National Congress head of international affairs, issued a statement on March 5 regarding the crisis in Haiti entitled "We cannot support the violent removal of democratically elected leaders." The ANC official wrote, "On Sunday, Feb. 29, a United States plane flew President Jean-Bertrand Aristide out of Haiti to the Central African Republic. He had neither requested to be moved out of Haiti nor asked that he should be transported to the Central African Republic.

"Rather, for some days before the ban-

ishment of the elected president of Haiti, leaders of the U.S. government had joined the French government and the Haitian opposition parties in demanding that President Aristide should resign. In this regard, whether intentionally or not, these governments which had differed sharply over the question of Iraq, sided with groups that had treasonably taken up arms to overthrow the democratically elected government of Haiti and subvert the constitutional order.

"When it flew President Aristide out of Haiti, having closely cooperated with the French government on planning and exe-

cuting this banishment, the U.S. government was giving expression to its resolve to effect regime change in Haiti, regardless of the wishes of the government and people of Haiti."

Manzini stated further, "All Africans throughout the world continue to draw inspiration from the great victory of African slaves in Haiti in 1804, which led to the establishment of the first Black Republic. Equally, they are deeply concerned that this historic home of African liberation has not seen sustained stability, democracy and development since its emancipation." □

Caribbean women support Aristide

Following are excerpts from a letter being circulated on the internet:

We, the undersigned women of the Caribbean and of Caribbean descent, denounce the U.S.-backed coup, which culminated in President Aristide's removal from Haitian soil by U.S. forces.

While we recognize that there are likely to be legitimate criticisms of the Aristide government, that is not the issue. The issue is that there was a democratically elected government which had not com-

pleted its term, and an opposition which included armed gangs, purported drug dealers and mercenaries led by former leaders of the FRAPH death squad and Duvalierists.

The Haitian people achieved the first successful slave revolution in history. ... But they have never been allowed the conditions in which they could build their future without premeditated outside interference. The imperial powers, especially France and the U.S. ... have made the Haitian people pay. Backed by

the United States, France ordered Haiti to pay 150 million francs in gold as "reparations" to former plantation and slave owners as well as for the costs of the war, in return for international recognition. It has been estimated that French bankers and big business alone owe Haiti at least \$21 billion in reparations for the forced debt that took Haiti 120 years to pay off.

For 60 years following the revolution, the U.S. government refused to recognize the Haitian Republic. The U.S. threatened Haiti 26 times by anchoring warships in

its harbors to protect U.S. business interests. It invaded Haiti in 1915 and stayed until 1934, nineteen years of occupation. U.S. Marines robbed \$500,000 from its National Bank in 1915 and deposited it in the National City Bank—now part of the Citibank octopus. In the 200 years since Haiti's independence, it endured 13 coups before the coup of Feb. 29, 2004. The bloody Duvalier dictatorships ... were backed by both the U.S. and France. Cedras, appointed by Aristide during his first term to head the army, later led a coup against Aristide, which was the joint work of the Haitian business elite and the CIA.

Under the Bush administration the U.S. stepped up its campaign to force "regime change" in Haiti. It

pressured the Inter-American Development Bank and other agencies to cancel hundreds of millions of dollars in development assistance to Haiti, earmarked for safe drinking water, literacy programs and health services. It instructed the IMF and the World Bank to place Haiti under a financial embargo. This is the administration which now asks us to believe that it is acting in the interests of "peace" and "democracy" in Haiti, as in Iraq.

All Caribbean people have a long experience of U.S. economic, political and military domination and subversion in this region. ... It was CLR James, a Caribbean man born and bred in Trinidad and Tobago, who wrote in "Black Jacobins," the great history of the Haitian revolution, "The transformation of slaves, trembling in hundreds before a single white man, into a people able to organize themselves and defeat the most powerful European nations of their day, is one of the great epics of revolutionary struggle and achievement." We have always felt deeply that we must defend Haiti because Haiti is ours. Now we must act.

The following are contacts for this Caribbean women's statement:

In the Caribbean: Andaiye, andaiye@solutions2000.net; Jacqueline Burgess, jacquie.cafr@wow.net.

In the United States: Margaret Prescod, margaretprescod@cross-roadswomen.net. □



WW PHOTO: BETH SEMMER

Lionel Jean-Baptiste of Ad-Hoc Committee to Protect Constitutional Democracy in Haiti speaks to Chicago crowd on March 6. Jesse Jackson is to his right.

In the Central African Republic

Aristide tells U.S. delegation, 'It was a coup'

Continued from page 1

group discussions were held in English and French. Kim Ives was also able to speak at length with Aristide in Creole about his kidnapping.

After our first meeting, Aristide was finally allowed to hold a news conference at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs—his first public appearance since the coup. Our delegation scrambled to find a working cell phone for him, and he has now given several detailed phone interviews to the international media, including Pacifica Radio's Democracy Now! program. This program had first broken the news of his kidnapping during an interview by Amy Goodman with U.S. Rep. Maxine Waters of the Congressional Black Caucus.

In our conversations and at the news conference, President Aristide was very forceful about the fact that he had been kidnapped, and that his government is being replaced by a U.S.-sponsored regime of occupation. He also said that only his return to Haiti can bring peace,

and characterized the people who carried out the campaign against his government as "internationally recognized criminals."

Aristide said he had been lied to by the U.S. ambassador to Haiti, James Foley, who assured him that he was being taken to a press conference to talk with international and Haitian media. Aristide agreed to leave his home on condition that he could speak to the media and that his home would be protected from any attack or looting.

The press conference never took place. He was instead forced onto a plane and taken out of the country. His home was looted almost as soon as he had left.

'Armed Americans and diplomats' kidnapped him

The State Department has given the impression that around 4 or 5 a.m. on Feb. 29, Aristide called U.S. officials and asked for their assistance in leaving the country. But Aristide told Kim Ives that, in fact, "armed Americans and diplomats" came

to his residence 12 hours earlier and told the 19 security guards that have functioned as a presidential security detail that they should abandon their posts. These security guards were on assignment from the Steele Foundation and are mostly former members of the U.S. Special Forces. They were told by U.S. officials that they wouldn't be protected.

President Aristide asserted that these Steele Foundation security guards basically obeyed the orders from their former employers—the U.S. military. On Saturday night, they were flown by helicopter away from the Presidential Palace, leaving Aristide with no armed protection.

Aristide told Kim Ives that when he was taken to a U.S. plane early in the morning on Feb. 29, his 19 security guards were already there. They were all taken—including the one-year-old child of one of the guards—to the Central African Republic. After spending 20 hours on a plane flying to a destination unknown to any of them, the security guards were then

flown back to the United States. The trip prevented them from revealing the details of the coup until long after Aristide was out of Haiti.

U.S. moved before aid could reach Aristide

Ives reports that "In the course of the discussions with President Aristide, it became clear that the timing of the coup coincided with several international developments that could have shifted the relationship of forces in the Haitian government's favor. While the U.S. government escalated pressure on Aristide to resign in that last week, the government of South Africa had sent a planeload of weapons that was set to arrive on Sunday, Feb. 29. Venezuela was in discussions about sending troops to support Aristide.

"There was also gathering international support and solidarity for the maintenance of constitutional democracy in Haiti. African American leaders were receiving increasing media attention as

Marines kill two Haitians as struggle grows

By G. Dunkel

March 10—Ten days after the U.S. coup d'état against the government of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and his kidnapping to the Central African Republic, both repression and resistance are growing in Haiti.

The Pentagon now admits that U.S. Marines have shot and killed at least two people in Port-au-Prince, one of them supposedly an Aristide supporter.

The Pan American Health Organization says that University Hospital in Port-au-Prince, which mainly treats poor people, has 200 bodies in its morgue. The Associated Press on March 9 reported at least 300 people killed since former military and death-squad units entered the country on Feb. 5, followed within three weeks by U.S., French and Canadian troops—not to disarm these terrorists, but to force Aristide out.

On March 6, a large crowd estimated by Reuters at more than 10,000 people demonstrated at the Presidential Palace in Port-au-Prince demanding Aristide's return. According to Reuters, one demonstrator shouted, "The bourgeoisie joined with the international community to occupy Haiti and get rid of President Aristide. The bourgeoisie never did anything for us, the masses. Now they took away our president."

The following day, an anti-Aristide, pro-rebel demonstration in the same place led to an exchange of gunfire that left seven people dead, including a Spanish camera operator, and more than 30 wounded. One of those killed was an Aristide supporter shot by U.S. Marines, who were positioned around the building.

U.S. and French troops in armored personnel carriers flooded the area after the shooting broke out and Haitian cops on foot kept on firing bursts from their automatic weapons. U.S. Marines had accompanied the march from its starting point in Petionville, a rich suburb of Port-au-Prince.

The next night Marines shot and killed the driver of a car they said was about to



WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

Brooklyn protest against U.S. kidnapping of Aristide.

run a checkpoint. According to the AP, "a body remained near the checkpoint area on Port-au-Prince's main road Tuesday morning, and a man who said his cousin had been shot and killed by Marines identified it as that of Mutial Telusma." (March 9)

The cousin had spoken to a passenger in the car who survived, and told the news service, "The road was blocked and he [Telusma] didn't know, just kept going and he was shot."

Since it is no longer possible to blame Aristide for the violence, the reports of killings and violence are being reported in the pro-imperialist media as part of a wave of vengeance sweeping the country. The U.S. State Department continues to denounce Aristide but doesn't issue stern calls for Guy Philippe and Louis-Jodel Chamblain, the U.S.-trained leaders of the armed wing of the rebellion against Aristide, to stop their murderous attacks.

The Palm Beach Post reported March 2 that five bodies of Aristide supporters had been left smoldering in a fire near the gate of the headquarters of Fanmi Lavalas, his political party. This was in St. Marc, a port

city about 60 miles north of the capital.

Four bodies of Aristide supporters were found in the Carrefour district of Port-au-Prince, three of them with hands bound behind their backs and bullet holes in their heads.

In the middle of February, while the armed gangs were taking over parts of the north, workers in a factory doing contract work for the garment company Levi Strauss started organizing a union in the Ouanaminthe free trade zone on the Dominican border.

On March 2, 34 members of the trade union were brutalized and illegally fired by the company's management. The next day, they organized an effective strike. But members of the "rebel" military came to the factory, dragged some workers away in handcuffs and forced the others back to work. This story reached concerned union activists around the world after the labor organization Batay Ouvrier got it out through the Internet.

Haiti is desperately poor in the best of times. Ever since Aristide's second elec-

tion, the United States and the European Union have made it poorer by denying aid, delaying loans and boycotting Haitian products. This campaign went hand-in-hand with their political campaign to discredit and vilify Aristide.

Most of Haiti's infrastructure, which was poor to begin with, has been severely damaged in the fighting. There is little drinking water—or money to buy it in jugs. A majority of the people are always hungry; as the fighting grew intense some began to actually starve. Cooking fuel is scarce and the price of food has jumped by 25 percent in the last month.

Under Haiti's current constitution, there is no legal government. Guy Philippe and his rebel army are attempting to reestablish the Haitian Army, which was disbanded by President Aristide at the end of his first term in office. The U.S. and French occupiers are trying to put a "democratic" face on their regime change—something that is becoming more discredited with each new day. □

they denounced the efforts towards a coup. Two prominent U.S. delegations, one led by members of the Congressional Black Caucus and another by former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, in conjunction with the International Action Center and Haiti Support Network, were set to arrive within days.

"We can see that there were various converging influences of aid about to come. This accounts in large part for the timing of the coup. It explains why the U.S. had to rush in and remove Aristide," Ives concludes.

Aristide's situation in the Central African Republic is tenuous. His aim is to return to Haiti to serve out his elected term. He is being treated graciously by members of the government here, but has limited freedom. He has not asked for political asylum and does not accept being in exile.

The timber and diamonds of the CAR enriched the French ruling class during a century of colonial rule, but today life expectancy is only 42 and the vast majority of people enjoy not one benefit of modern life. On the Oubangui River, which flows through the capital, people still travel by dugout canoe. The infant mortality rate is 93 deaths per 1,000 live births. French troops still remain in the area.

Clearly, if any people have the right to demand reparations for a history of exploitation and oppression, it is the people of the Central African Republic—and of Haiti. One of Aristide's crimes, in the eyes of the imperialist West, is that he demanded just that.

It is at least two days' travel by commercial plane from the CAR to Haiti, the first Black republic in the world. There is one flight a week between Bangui and Paris. The best hotel in Bangui has no Internet connection, and landline phones often don't work.

Nevertheless, Aristide has found ways to get the news from his country. He pointed out to us that U.S. Marines and other foreign soldiers are now being housed in what was Haiti's main medical school, effectively closing it down. "Haiti has only 1.5 doctors for every 11,000 people," he emphasized, and now it will have even fewer.

Our meetings with Jean-Bertrand and Mildred Aristide were held on March 8, International Women's Day. Johnnie Stevens informed them of a women's conference being held in New York that would discuss Haiti's long struggle and what it means to women. The presidential couple sent their warmest greetings to the women of the world. □



WW PHOTO: PRESTON WOOD

Just hours after news reached Los Angeles on March 2 that U.S. forces had kidnapped Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the ANSWER Coalition mobilized a demonstration in front of the Westwood Federal Building.

About 50 people gathered in the pouring rain and then marched to the French Embassy.

Idor Laurent, a Haitian who fled his homeland after the last coup in 1991 and recently helped found the L.A. Coalition in Solidarity with Haiti, said, "Since Aristide has been in office we have seen something we have never seen before. Children started going to school. Hospitals have

opened up to give care to the elderly, the sick and the weak. We have seen road construction. We have seen a brotherhood."

On March 6 ANSWER returned to the streets, this time at Liemert Park at a demonstration organized by the Coalition in Solidarity with Haiti, International Black Coalition for Peace and Justice and Organization US.

Erebka Henry of Human Rights Advocacy emphasized the need to connect this latest crisis in Haiti to its history. "Haiti has always been and remains a symbol to African people everywhere of the necessity and victory of our struggle."

—Page Getz



All out for March 20

One year after the war hawks in Washington and London defied the will of millions around the globe, disregarding their demand to halt the invasion of Iraq, the anti-war movement is gearing up for an international day of protest.

These demonstrations in cities, towns and campuses, here and in countries around the world, will demand an end to imperialist occupations—from Iraq to Afghanistan, Palestine and now Haiti.

Those who march and rally will do so knowing in their bones that this “endless” war for conquest is directly opposed to their interests. And their very presence in the streets is a tacit acknowledgment that they cannot wait until the presidential elections to vocalize their demand to end the Pentagon occupations.

Both parties of big business have voted for war, rubber stamped the endless war budget and unleashed repressive “regime change”—from Iraq to Haiti—while also attempting to carry out a coup in Venezuela. And both parties are beholden to big business, which seeks to clench the world in its grip of finance capital.

The clear voice of an independent political movement will have to dictate its demand to end imperial occupations to whoever is the commander in chief after the election—John Kerry or George W. Bush. No capitalist politicians will initiate change. It is the class that does the work of the world everyday, but is never asked how it should be run, that can stop business as usual and change the course of history. (See internationalanswer.org for details of the March 20 protests.) □

Bring the troops home

Kudos to New York City Council members Charles Barron and Kendall Stewart. On March 10 they held a news conference to announce that Barron is introducing a resolution calling for the immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq. Stewart is supporting the resolution. Both serve largely Black communities whose youth face unemployment and poverty, often driving them into the military.

This resolution coincides with upcoming March 20 protests on the first anniversary of the war. Participating in the announcement at City Hall were rep-

resentatives of groups organizing the demonstration in New York on that day: Brian Becker for the ANSWER Coalition, Leslie Cagan for United for Peace & Justice, Brenda Stokely for New York Labor Against the War and Nellie Bailey for the Harlem Tenants Council.

The struggle against imperialist militarism and to bring the troops home speaks to all the pressing issues facing oppressed communities in the U.S. as the military budget eats up social services and Washington undermines self-determination all over the world. □

Mercenaries & oil

As the days go by, more details may emerge about the planeload of mercenaries detained in Zimbabwe, especially if the government there is able to put those captured on trial. But the political implications are clear.

According to a former British special forces officer who talked to the Zimbabwean government, the 64 men on the plane were headed toward Equatorial Guinea. Their bosses had allegedly bought off top officials of the police and army there who would do nothing to stop them from ousting the president.

Zimbabwe government sources say British, U.S. and Spanish secret services are involved. Corporations in all three countries have material interests in the area, as does French imperialism.

Equatorial Guinea is a former Spanish colony with a population of only half a million people. It is about the size of Maryland and sits on the West Coast of Africa, just north of the Equator and south of Cameroon.

Its main natural resource? Oil.

Lots of oil, especially off its coast in the Bight of Biafra. Some of this offshore oil is contested.

Whether there is documentary proof linking the “privatized” soldiers to Western secret services, whether specific oil monopolies are named, there is no doubt that Washington’s unending use of military force to build its empire is at the root of this new attempted crime.

The imperialists think the 19th century is back. As in Hawaii back then, they think now that a planeload of adventurers from the “military service” industry can carry out “regime change.”

Washington uses military power to take over resources, just as the imperialists all did before the Russian Revolution. Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq and Haiti bear this out. Washington has announced further military targets in Iran, Syria, North Korea and Cuba, and it has tried to subvert Venezuela.

U.S. and British imperialism have also targeted Zimbabwe for “regime change.”

You might think these adventures would be discouraged by the hard lessons the Iraqi resistance is teaching the Pentagon. But if enough profit is involved, capitalists will take the risk. □

Iraqi ‘constitution’ made in USA

New puppet regime already in trouble

By John Catalinotto

When the foundation is laid wrong, anything you build falls down. That’s what U.S. imperialism and the Bush administration are finding out regarding their strategy of invading and occupying Iraq. Everything starts to fall apart, and neither more guns nor cleverer public relations can put it together again.

On March 8 Washington finally succeeded in pushing all the members of the puppet Iraqi Governing Council to sign an interim constitution. President George W. Bush termed the event “an historic milestone.” But within hours this great triumph of the imperialist occupation was already starting to crumble.

Shiite religious leader Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Husseini al-Sistani immediately issued an edict objecting to the new constitution. It said: “Any law prepared for the transitional period will not have legitimacy until it is approved by the elected national assembly.”

Even the Western news media have to admit that al-Sistani has more popular backing than any of the Shiite “representatives” on the council. He has been pressing for direct elections to an Iraqi government. Washington has insisted on indirect selections, showing its fear that a government opposed to the U.S. occupation would result from a popular vote.

Following al-Sistani’s objections, almost all 25 members of the Iraqi Governing Council had something negative to say about the U.S.-imposed constitution. If even these people, whom the U.S. hand-picked to rule Iraq, are attacking the constitution, who will support it?

Reports on this U.S.-imposed constitution say it is a mix of British common law, Islamic law and the U.S. Bill of Rights. Like the U.S. Constitution, it omits many of the rights that Iraqis enjoyed during the period of Baathist rule—like the right to education and health care, for men and women, and control over their own resources.

But Washington and its overseer in Iraq, Paul Bremer, rejoiced when the council finally signed the interim constitution after a weekend of arm-twisting. Everything had been set for the signing to take place earlier, on March 5, but five of the Shiite members of the council refused to sign. They had even arranged for children in clothing representing the different ethnic groups of Iraq to dance in celebration that day.

Washington had perfected its public relations. Its problem was that so many Iraqis have shown they refuse to have their country turned into a colony that even the hand-picked puppet regime balked.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld’s plan to “shock and awe” Iraqis into submission is turning out to be one of the major misjudgments of the 21st century.

Bill of Rights? Concentration camps

The U.S. occupiers boast that the new draft Iraqi constitution has a Bill of Rights. This is supposed to protect individual Iraqis from abuses of state power. Given the current reality in Iraq, this claim took even more than the usual Yankee arrogance.

The U.S. military has been making murderous sweeps throughout Iraq, especially in the so-called Sunni triangle to the northwest of Baghdad. At the present

time, according to the New York Times of March 7, more than 10,000 Iraqi men and boys—other reports say 13,000—are behind barbed wire. The youngest prisoner is 11 years old. The same article reports that in a batch of 1,166 cases reviewed by military judges, they recommended that 963 of these detainees be released.

If the sample is typical, it means that even according to the U.S. military, about 10,000 of those 13,000 Iraqi prisoners are in makeshift concentration camps simply for being in the wrong place at the wrong time. The U.S. holds them on suspicion of connection to the resistance.

On the one hand, it is hard to imagine a more indiscriminate example of state repression. On the other, it would not be surprising if, after they finally leave imprisonment, they do get in touch with the resistance.

The Times article points out that relatives of those in the camps often have no word of what happened to them. There is a list on the Internet, but most Iraqis have no access to it. “It took the Americans five minutes to take my son,” Fadil Abdulhamid told the Times reporter. “It has taken me more than three weeks to find him.”

The article describes the Abu Gharib prison, west of Baghdad, that holds thousands of Iraqis, as a “nucleus of despair. Every day, crowds of women in black shrouds jam the front gates, squinting up at the guard towers, clutching worn pieces of paper, pleading with guards to see their missing men. ‘Move! Move! Move!’ an American sergeant shouted at them on a recent day.”

Many of the prisoners say they have been tortured. Now that the constitution has been signed, one might ask, shouldn’t these prisoners be protected by the new Bill of Rights? That would be a worthy question to put to Bremer and Bush.

Hospitals: from despair to revulsion

During the sanctions period against Iraq, which lasted from 1990 to 2003, foreign delegations challenged the cruel sanctions and visited Iraqi hospitals. They reported that shortages condemned many ill Iraqis to die for lack of medicines that had formerly been available.

It would be hard to imagine how the hospitals could deteriorate further after nearly a year of U.S. occupation, with all sorts of government money flowing into the so-called reconstruction of Iraq. But apparently hospitals don’t get the same priority as prisons, oil wells and military facilities.

A story in the March 5 Washington Post showed that there have been no improvements since the U.S. took over and the sanctions were lifted. “Babies die of simple infections because they can’t get the proper antibiotics. Surgeries are delayed because there is no oxygen. And patients in critical condition are turned away because there isn’t enough equipment,” it reports.

“There are shortages in basic items like cough syrup and also in critical items such as diabetes medications, anti-cancer drugs, intravenous lines, tuberculosis test kits and ventilators, say doctors and nurses at Iskan, the Medical City Center, Yarmouk Hospital and other facilities.” In other words, it is as bad as it was under the sanctions, plus there is still plenty of dam-

Anti-Semitic to the core

The Gospel according to Gibson

By Gene Clancy

Despite repeated protestations to the contrary, there is no question that Mel Gibson's movie "The Passion of the Christ" is anti-Semitic.

Ruling classes continually utilize religious bigotry to divide and weaken the solidarity of workers and oppressed people. It certainly goes along with racism, sexism and bigotry against lesbian, gay, bi and trans people.

During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, Passion Plays containing almost exactly the same content as Mel Gibson's film, demonizing Jewish people for the crucifixion of Jesus, were regularly performed in Europe. They were often followed by vicious pogroms—violent attacks on Jewish communities—carried out with the blessings of both church and state.

In 1492, Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain persecuted and expelled both Jews and Muslims from their kingdom. Both were considered to be Infidels against whom the Crusades were launched throughout the Middle Ages.

Iraq 'constitution'

Continued from page 10

age from the war itself.

In some areas, conditions have gotten even worse. "Sewage leaks onto the floors of the rooms where doctors perform surgery. Flies hover around beds that smell of wet bandages. And it is not uncommon for blood and other spillage to remain on the floors for hours." Apparently the Occupation Authority is paying no one to keep things clean and running.

Just as in other areas of life, the miserable conditions in the hospitals have angered many in the Iraqi medical community at the U.S. occupiers. As one doctor told the Post reporter, "The most important thing for Americans is their interest: the Ministry of Oil."

Who bombed Karbala?

On March 2, bombs went off in Baghdad and Karbala, killing hundreds of people and wounding hundreds more. The bombs targeted gatherings of Shiite Muslims, who were in Karbala on a pilgrimage for a holy day.

While 15 people were arrested the next day on suspicion of having connections with the bombings, no group has taken responsibility for them. The U.S. blamed al-Qaeda, saying that an operative in Jordan was trying to foment a civil war between Sunni and Shiite. In turn, al-Qaeda blamed the U.S.

According to most media reports, the Iraqi population gave more credence to the al-Qaeda accusation. Some blamed the U.S. or even Israeli forces for carrying out the bombings in order to divide the Sunni and Shiite population of Iraq. Others blamed the U.S. occupation for failing to protect the crowds.

It would not be the first time that an imperialist power used the tactic of "divide and conquer" in an attempt to weaken resistance in a colony.

The population blames the U.S. occupiers for everything that goes wrong in Iraq. There's a good reason. Washington invaded and is trying to take over the running of the country, and 90 percent of the population want them out.

This glaring fact can't be papered over, even with a constitution. □

Legalized discrimination against Jews continued in the United States until well after World War II. It was particularly aimed at those thought to be connected with the international socialist movement.

More recently, however, Muslims have borne the brunt of religious intolerance, seen especially in the form of racist profiling in the so-called war on terror.

The attack dogs of this intolerance have been the same Christian religious right wing that endorses and supports Gibson's movie.

Gibson and a host of right-wing supporters have adamantly denied that "The Passion" is anti-Semitic. Most objective reviewers disagree.

A week before the U.S. release of the controversial movie, in a telephone interview with New York WSNR radio talk host Steven Feuerstein, Gibson's father ranted about Jewish conspiracies to take over the world and denied that the Holocaust ever happened. "It's all—maybe not all fiction—but most of it is," Hutton Gibson said.

In an interview with Reader's Digest, Mel Gibson said he would not hear any criticism of his father's controversial comments. "My dad taught me my faith and I believe what he taught me. The man never lied to me in his life." (ananova.com)

Both father and son describe themselves as "traditionalist" Catholics who disagree with the decisions made by the Vatican II Council of the 1960s that tried to eliminate some of the more anti-Semitic aspects of Church doctrine at the time by "absolving" Jewish people of the death of Jesus.

John Dominic Crossan, professor emeritus of Religious Studies at DePaul University and author of "Who Killed Jesus? Exposing the Roots of Anti-Semitism in the Gospel Story of the Death of Jesus," wrote that Gibson was so sensitive to negative criticism of his film that those admitted to screenings before its opening were required to sign "confidentiality agreements" which only allowed "supportive" statements about the film to be released to media.

When is a movie not just a movie? When it is marketed virtually around the clock by the media for a solid two weeks before its opening. When it becomes the topic of seemingly endless reviews, editorials, talk show interviews and front-page headlines. When it reaches down into discussions in practically every workplace, school and public institution. When it is strongly backed by individuals and groups who want to push their clear political and social agendas into the public arena.

"The Passion," purporting to depict Christ's last 12 hours, has all of these elements, and more.

A primary goal of the film, as with most Hollywood output, is to make money. It has succeeded—\$117.5 million during the first five days alone. Even before the film's release, a myriad of promotional items were for sale: bobble-head Jesus dolls, a Jesus action figure, and even plated nails to be worn as pendants.

The film was marketed heavily to fundamentalist Christian churches and organizations. Whole theaters were rented by various church groups. Over \$8 million in advance sales were recorded. One Midwestern church took an entire middle school, aged 12-14, to see the film, even though it was rated R.

But the desire to make a quick profit is apparently not the only motive of Gibson and his right-wing supporters. Gibson has said he created the film to advance his own personal religious beliefs. Many evangelical pastors have openly expressed the belief that the film will lead to a "religious reawakening" in the U.S.

Religion, art and history

Mel Gibson stated that his film followed the Gospels of the Christian New Testament very closely and that it was a "realistic" portrayal of the trial and execution of Jesus. (O'Reilly Factor, Feb. 24)

Fundamentalist Christians often assert that they follow the Bible "literally." A closer examination reveals that this is not true.

Some of the characters included in the film are real historical figures, including

Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Palestine at the time the action is supposed to take place, and the Jewish High Priest, Caiaphas, Jesus's nemesis in the film.

In the film though, and some of the Gospels, Jesus is arrested and taken to a midnight trial in front of Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin, or high council of priests. After being condemned there, he is taken before Pilate, who, under pressure from the priests and a screaming, chanting Jewish mob, "reluctantly" agrees to have him crucified.

The events portrayed violate every known practice of both Jewish and Roman law at the time. Gibson's film portrays Pontius Pilate as a humane, conflicted bureaucrat struggling to do his job while the Jesus-hating Jewish crowd outside continues to chant in Aramaic, "Crucify him! His blood be upon us and our children." Faced with outrage from those who saw early versions of the film, Gibson claimed he had removed that last line. But when the film was released, he had only removed the English subtitle.

The film is being especially criticized for its sadistic, bloody and unrelenting focus on Jesus's suffering under extreme violence and torture, which heightens rage against the role of the Jewish priests.

In fact, the Romans appointed and deposed the Jewish high priests with a regularity designed to ensure their collaboration. Pilate was a cruel tyrannical despot who was twice recalled to Rome and censured for arbitrary cruelty and slaughter by the Emperor Tiberias, himself not known for leniency.

Somewhat incredibly, Mel Gibson admits that he knew about Pilate's true character when he made the movie. (O'Reilly Factor, Feb. 24)

Today, progressive criticism of the U.S.-backed Israeli settler state, or support for the Palestinian struggle, is labeled as "anti-Semitism" by most of the U.S. ruling class establishment. Yet "The Passion," a vehicle for virulent anti-Semitism and religious bigotry, is being heavily and widely promoted. □

Kautsky on Christianity

By Shelley Ettinger

The German Marxist Karl Kautsky, in his 1908 book "Foundations of Christianity," made a scholarly examination of the class relations and material conditions of life in the time and place in which Jesus was supposed to have lived.

The vast majority of Jews were desperately poor. The Roman military occupiers ruthlessly exploited and suppressed them. Because of all this, it was a period of great social turmoil. Movements arose to organize rebellion.

Rome, with its vast military might, struck back. Each attempt at insurrection was met by horrific violence.

According to Kautsky, a shepherd named Athronges led a mass uprising just before Jesus was born. Roman legions, with great difficulty, crushed the insurrection. "There began an unspeakable slaughtering and plundering; 2,000 of those captured were crucified, many others sold into slavery."

Of Jesus of Nazareth, Kautsky wrote: "Tradition declared that the Romans had crucified Jesus as a Jewish Messiah, a

champion of Jewish independence, a traitor to Roman rule."

Kautsky emphasized that the Jewish masses had just welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem. "It therefore follows ... that the Jews sympathized with Jesus" and would have had no reason to call for his death.

In light of Mel Gibson's claim that he "stuck to the Gospels" in his cinematic version that blames Jewish people for Jesus's execution, Kautsky's observations are pertinent. He pointed out, as have many scholars since, that the four Gospels were written long after everyone who might have been present at Jesus's execution had died.

By this time, "Christianity was now in open opposition to the Jews, and wished

to be on good terms with the Roman authorities. It was now important to distort the tradition in such a manner as to shift the blame for the crucifixion of Christ from the shoulders of the Romans to those of the Jews, and to cleanse Christ not only from every appearance of the use of force, but also from every expression of pro-Jewish, anti-Roman ideas."

Many commentators have taken Mel Gibson to task for exonerating the Roman oppressors and blaming the Jewish oppressed for the suffering and death of Jesus, which, Kautsky said, "was for many centuries one of the best means of arousing hatred and contempt for the Jews."

Kautsky classified the crucifixion as "an incident in the history of the sufferings of the Jewish people." □

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Dos perfiles de la opresión de la mujer

Por Sara Flounders

¿Cómo es posible que las mujeres de Irak—quienes habían alcanzado más logros en sus derechos, beneficios y participación en la sociedad que otras mujeres en el mundo árabe—puedan repentinamente enfrentar la pérdida de sus derechos económicos, sociales y políticos garantizados por ley por casi 50 años?

La guerra y la ocupación de los Estados Unidos, cuyos líderes prometieron llevar la libertad y un nuevo día, han revertido décadas de leyes progresistas y logros sociales que eran los más impresionantes en toda la región.

Al mismo tiempo, las mujeres en el ejército de los Estados Unidos enfrentan grandes amenazas y peligros no por combatir contra el “enemigo”, sino por los mismos hombres de su ejército. Las cifras de violaciones, asaltos y hostigamientos sexuales contra las mujeres soldados han alcanzado proporciones epidémicas.

Dos terceras partes de las mujeres soldado han experimentado comportamientos sexuales no deseados o provocados según Terri Spahr Nelson, autora del libro titulado “Por el Amor a la Patria: Enfrentando las Violaciones y Hostigamientos Sexuales en el Ejército de EE.UU.”

Desmantelando los derechos garantizados

En Irak, el estado de las mujeres está siendo revertido al nivel de las mujeres de otros países de la región del Golfo donde el ejército estadounidense respalda y mantiene dictaduras feudales corruptas.

En estas otras sociedades las mujeres son literalmente esclavas, aprisionadas en la casa y cautivas dentro de un sistema patriarcal represivo. No tienen el derecho a trabajar ni a controlar sus propios recursos; ni siquiera a manejar un automóvil. Ellas ni siquiera pueden viajar solas si no es con un miembro masculino de la familia. No tienen el derecho al voto ni de participar en cualquier forma de vida política.

En Kuwait, Arabia Saudita y en todos los estados del Golfo petrolero, las mujeres no tienen ningún derecho que cualquier hombre tenga que respetar. No tienen el derecho a decidir con quién casarse, ni tampoco el derecho a divorciarse, aunque sea de un esposo abusador. La educación es separada—y por lo tanto no es igual, haciendo que la mayoría de las mujeres en Arabia Saudita sean todavía analfabetas.

Al contrario de ellas, las mujeres iraquíes han gozado de derechos completos por casi 50 años. Pero esto no ocurrió en un vacío. Fue parte de un levantamiento revolucionario que comenzó en 1958. Siglos de privilegios y posiciones reaccionarias feudales fueron aplastados.

La nacionalización del petróleo significó que hubiera recursos para llevar a cabo programas masivos de alfabetización, para proveer cuidados de la salud gratis y de mejor calidad, y para subsidios de centros infantiles y viviendas. El gobierno proveía al estudiante una pequeña recompensa monetaria que servía como incentivo para que las familias mantuvieran tanto a las niñas como a los niños en la escuela.

La rápidamente creciente economía aseguró empleos para miles de mujeres jóvenes. Las mujeres iraquíes recibieron garantías por ley que si no encontraban empleos en el sector privado, el gobierno les proveería uno en su campo o en su nivel educacional. El gobierno era el mayor empleador de mujeres.

El 38 por ciento de doctores en Irak son mujeres. Las mujeres eran la mayoría del estudiantado universitario.

La destrucción de la guerra EEUU contra Irak en 1991 y los doce años de estrangulamiento por sanciones que siguieron, destruyeron la economía que había estado sosteniendo esos cambios sociales.

Y en menos de los seis meses de ocupación por los Estados Unidos, el servicio de salud gratuito, tan perjudicado por años de sanciones, ha sido totalmente destruido. El servicio de electricidad es esporádico y ya no se suplen medicinas ni equipos médicos.

Los cuidados pre y pos natales, antes gratuitos, ya son parte del pasado. El noventa y cinco por ciento de las mujeres embarazadas están anémicas. Sus bebés nacen bajo pesos, prematuros y enfermos.

Los seis meses de pos parto con paga garantizada se acabaron, junto a los empleos garantizados. El subsidio de los centros infantiles, alimentos y viviendas se acabó. Los bombardeos masivos destruyeron las escuelas, hospitales y las clínicas. Las agencias sociales y los ministerios fueron totalmente saqueados mientras las tropas de ocupación observaban. La falta de seguridad o de dinero para la compra de libros mantiene a gran parte de niños, en especial de niñas, fuera de la escuela.

Las fuerzas de ocupación británico-estadounidenses han cultivado los colaboradores más reaccionarios y corruptos. El procónsul de la ocupación Paul Bremen

nombró para el Consejo Gobernante de Irak a representantes de la antigua clase de terratenientes y clérigos religiosos más conservadores, todos opuestos a los cambios sociales de las décadas recientes. Estas fuerzas quieren restablecer las leyes más regresivas —leyes y códigos antiguos que regían fuertemente a pueblos rurales y aislados. Ahora serían reimpuestos a una población mayormente urbana.

El Consejo Gobernante, nombrado por los Estados Unidos pasó la Resolución 137 que deroga el código progresista secular que estaba en vigor. Las leyes islámicas Sharia eliminarían los derechos de la mujer en el matrimonio, divorcio, herencia y representación legal, y legalizaría la lapidación a muerte por adulterio.

Las mujeres iraquíes reaccionaron llenando las calles en manifestaciones masivas demandando que Paul Bremen —la “autoridad” última de los Estados Unidos que firma toda legislación—no firmara esta ley.

Mujeres en el ejército de los EE.UU.

En febrero, el Denver Post publicó una serie de artículos sobre las mujeres en las Fuerzas Armadas de los EE.UU. y el número creciente de asaltos sexuales contra ellas por los soldados masculinos. Mujeres que han sido asaltadas o violadas reportan que recibieron atención médica inadecuada, falta de terapia, falta de investigaciones minuciosas y hasta amenazas de castigos por denunciar los asaltos.

El nivel de violencia en contra de las mujeres soldados de las FF.AA. de los EE.UU. confirma el carácter reaccionario de la máquina militar del Pentágono. Al aumentar el número de mujeres en las Fuerzas Armadas, se expone más claramente la violencia del Pentágono.

Muchas mujeres jóvenes se están uniendo a las Fuerzas Armadas en búsqueda de empleos, destrezas y posibilidades de alimentar a sus hijos. Más de 59.000 tropas femeninas han sido desplegadas en el extranjero como parte de las guerras contra Afganistán e Irak.

La violencia organizada, la brutalidad y el racismo de un ejército de ocupación se reflejan en la vida personal de los mismos soldados.

El Pentágono funciona como un instrumento de violencia contra pueblos oprimidos. Cultiva una cultura de violencia contra mujeres, gente de color, lesbianas, homosexuales, bisexuales y gente transgénera.

El entrenamiento militar en un ejército imperialista condiciona a los soldados a la violencia y a la deshumanización. El entrenamiento involucra la humillación y la destrucción de la auto estima y de la solidaridad humana.

Este entrenamiento afecta las relaciones personales. En 2001 ocurrieron más de 18.000 casos reportados de abuso matrimonial en las Fuerzas Armadas. La mayoría de los casos de violencia doméstica no son reportados. A pesar de la falta de reportes, la tasa de abusos es de tres a cinco veces mayor que entre civiles.

En una sociedad patriarcal con clases sociales, existe una conexión entre la degradación y violación de la mujer y el poder y la conquista, no con el deseo erótico. Esto es violencia, no sexo.

El papel completamente reaccionario del Pentágono en Irak envenena hasta los soldados de los rangos bajos. Esto es alentado por la capa de altos oficiales. En las operaciones militares —ya sea en Corea, Vietnam, las Filipinas, Europa Oriental, o América Latina— las bases EEUU están rodeadas por burdeles y clubes nocturnos. Es una entera industria del sexo. Las condiciones desesperadas y la destrucción de la guerra fuerzan a miles de mujeres y niñas a la prostitución y a la esclavitud sexual.

Christen Hansen de la Fundación Miles, quien ha ayudado a mujeres que han sido asaltadas sexualmente dice, “Tenemos muchas preocupaciones sobre la respuesta de las FF.AA. sobre el asalto sexual en la zona de combate”. Según la Fundación Miles, un 30 por ciento de veteranas reportaron una violación o un intento de violación durante el servicio activo.

Los asaltos, la humillación y las coberturas no son nada nuevo o desconocido para los oficiales militares. Casi un 30 por ciento de las veteranas militares de EEUU en Vietnam entrevistadas para una encuesta en 1990 dijeron que experimentaron avances sexuales “acompañados por la fuerza o la amenaza de violencia”. Una encuesta por el Departamento de Asuntos Veteranos de mujeres en la Guerra del Golfo de 1991 reportó que un 33 por ciento sufrieron acoso sexual.

La violencia contra la mujer forma parte de la maquinaria militar del Pentágono—no es una coincidencia o un accidente. Esto es otro crimen más contra la humanidad que tiene que ser expresado en la manifestación en contra de la guerra y la ocupación militar del 20 de marzo y continuadamente. □



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