

IN BOSTON AND NEW YORK

Union workers fight for justice

Dem. Nat'l Convention

Specter of picket lines

By Stevan Kirschbaum
Readville Chief Steward,
USWA Local 8751, Boston

Over 350 Boston school bus drivers and monitors, plus their supporters, took their struggle for contract justice to the steps of the School Department on June 7. The workers traveled from four bus yards located throughout the city. They came by car, by mass transit and by boarding union-sponsored "caravan for justice" buses.

Leading the caravan was a union sound truck and mobile stage, brightly decorated with placards reading "Contract now! Safety for children! Justice for drivers and monitors," and "Say no to racist anti-busing forces. Unite and fight for quality schools."

The drivers and monitors have joined in a coalition with all the major city unions—including teachers, custodians, public works, clerical and technical workers, water and sewer commission workers and others—called Boston Unions United for Fair Contracts. While the media, parroting the line of the city government, have attempted to falsely portray this as a struggle solely between Mayor Thomas Menino and his police department, nothing could be further from the truth.

The labor struggle's impact goes beyond Boston, because it raises the specter of workers picketing at construction projects for the upcoming Democratic National Convention or at the convention itself. The June 9 Boston Globe reported that Sen. John Kerry's main convention planners

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'Invisible no more'

Home health aides strike

By Mary Owen
New York

An impassioned cry for a living wage echoed through the cavernous streets of midtown Manhattan on June 7 as over 20,000 home health aides began a three-day strike for higher pay, health insurance, sick leave, pensions and other benefits. They are members of Service Employees International Union/Local 1199. Their union has launched an "Invisible No More" campaign to build broad public support for their struggle.

Chanting "We're overworked and underpaid!" and, "They take the money, we do the work!" the surging mass of home health aides—overwhelmingly women of color, many of them from Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia, the Middle East and other parts of the globe—marched past the offices of subcontractors who have refused to increase their pay and benefits.

On the first day of the strike, their strength and determination had already won a contract at five home care agencies.

But when the union leaders at the rally recommended ending the strike, the workers refused, roaring their approval for staying out two more days to support workers whose agencies hadn't settled.

New York's home health aides, many of them single mothers, provide life-sustaining home care for the elderly, disabled and convalescent, allowing patients to avoid costly and isolating nursing home stays. Yet the aides are paid only \$6 or \$7 an hour without benefits. Profit-hungry subcontractors keep the bulk of the \$18 per hour that Medicaid and Medicare pays for this service.

"Many of the government contractors and their subcontractors pay their executives hundreds of thousands of dollars a year," reported the New York Times. (May 3) These same contractors claim they cannot afford to pay home health aides the \$10 per hour with paid vacation, sick time and benefits that the union is demanding by 2006.

Home health aides also face long commutes of up to four hours, multiple com-

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**ANTI-WAR ACTIONS
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RULING-CLASS RIFT

Ashcroft vs. Ridge 3
Rumsfeld vs. Tenet 9



WW PHOTO: LIZA GREEN

Boston: School bus drivers and monitors rally for a decent contract.



WW PHOTO: DEIRDRE GRISWOLD

New York: Home health aides march through midtown Manhattan to back up their job action.

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WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

Haitians speak out in D.C. on June 5

By G. Dunkel
Washington, D.C.

Haitian organizations enthusiastically joined the June 5 demonstrations to "End the Colonial Occupation in Iraq, Palestine, Haiti and Everywhere" called by the ANSWER coalition. These organizations came to express their opposition to the U.S. and French troops that are propping up the government of former Macoute death squads, ex-army officers and well-off U.S.-based businessmen now running their country.

But the groups showed a broader interest when a bus organized by the Brooklyn-based Coalition to Resist the Feb. 29th Coup d'etat in Haiti pulled up to the rally site. The people getting off the bus ran into a small band of right-wingers chanting "Palestine doesn't exist." The Haitian contingent's response was immediate, in English, French and Creole: "Long live Palestine!" "Vive la Palestine!" "Viv Palestin!" When the right-wingers fell silent, the contingent moved into the crowd waiting for the speeches to start.

Yves Alcindor of the New England Human Rights Organization for Haiti, one of the first speakers, pointed out, "Supporting the resistance in Iraq was to support the resistance in Haiti."

Serge Lilavois, representing the Coalition to Resist the Feb. 29th Coup d'etat in Haiti, also spoke. He said that the resistance in Haiti has not been defeated, it is just lying low and gathering strength. Big demonstrations on May 18 in Port-au-Prince had brought out tens of thousands of demonstrators, who stayed in the streets all day, even after the cops, backed up by U.S. Marines, killed at least two protesters. A major slogan, according to Lilavois, was "The only solution is revolution!"

He ended his talk with these words: "Haitians are opposed to the suffering of the Palestinians, Iraqis, and all other oppressed people, as well as the suffering of their

own people."

In a message to the demonstration that Jill Ives of the Haiti Support Network read, Ben Dupuy, secretary general of the National Popular Party (PPN), said that "U.S. military forces are stretched thin by resistance to U.S. occupation in Iraq and Afghanistan. And that resistance is growing in Haiti too."

He continued: "Now the U.S. is trying to pit Third World peoples against each other. It has convinced the governments of Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile ... and others to send so-called 'peace keeping' troops to Haiti. Even the corporate press has had to admit that the people of these countries don't support this mission."

He went on to say that even though a Brazilian has been named commander, the Pentagon would still be in charge of the military forces in Haiti. "But using troops from the Third World better disguises U.S. imperialism's moves."

Why they came

Asked why he came to Washington, Menouch Lambert, who is a backer of Fanmi Lavalas, Aristide's party, in Brooklyn, told Workers World: "I came to support our sisters and brothers in Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan and especially Haiti, suffering under occupation. We want Bush to stop oppressing Haitians."

Pierre-Antoine Lovinsky, who was carrying a sign reading "George Bush fascist—stop killing Haitians" with a Haitian flag taped to the top of his pole, said in Creole he came to "denounce the criminal policies of Bush and to demand the physical return of Aristide to Haiti."

Jean-Claude Monastime, who also comes from Brooklyn, where he is active in the struggles of the Haitian community, said, "My country has been invaded like Iraq and Afghanistan. I am marching with my sisters and brothers to end this madness."

Larry Holmes, a member of the steering committee of the ANSWER coalition, said: "It appears that there has

been a significant turnout from the Haitian community today. It is an important obligation of the anti-war movement to ensure that their contributions and their struggles are recognized." □

WW PHOTO: PAT CHIN



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LOS ANGELES

Fri., June 18
IAC Forum: "Anybody But Bush" fever—will it help or hurt the anti-war movement? Hear LeiLani Dowell, Peace & Freedom Party congressional candidate, and Dustin Langley, Navy vet and co-founder of SNAFU (Support Network for an Armed Forces Union). 7:30 p.m. At 422 S. Western Ave., Rm 114. For info (213) 487-2368.

Thur., June 24
WWP Forum: Equal marriage rights & LGBT liberation. Hear Bob McCubbin, teacher, activist, and author of "The Roots of Lesbian and Gay Oppression—A Marxist View." 7 p.m. At 422 S. Western Ave. For info (213) 487-2195.

NEW YORK

Fri., June 11
Workers World Party meeting. WW contributing editor Fred Goldstein will speak on "Reagan & Bush: Archenemies of the world's workers & oppressed people." 7 pm. Dinner at 6:30. At 55 W. 17 St., 5th Fl. For info (212) 627-2994.

Fri., June 18
Workers World Party meeting. Recent developments in the Korean struggle against U.S. occupation. Yoomi Jeong from the Korea Truth Commission and WW editor Deirdre Griswold will report on their recent trip to South Korea. 7 pm. Dinner at 6:30. At 55 W. 17 St., 5th Fl. For info (212) 627-2994.

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Ashcroft, Ridge and more

The rift comes home

By Deirdre Griswold

Where will the axe fall next?

The Bush administration is riven by deep contradictions—and not only over its failed war to subjugate Iraq, which caused CIA Director George Tenet's head to roll at the beginning of June.

There is growing tension among the government agencies that deal with domestic policy, too—especially the many powerful organs of the capitalist state that employ growing armies of police of various kinds, trained to use force and violence to protect the status quo. The rift that appears to have opened up between Attorney General John Ashcroft and Homeland Security czar Tom Ridge is only a symptom of it.

Both foreign and domestic policy flow from the same source: the class relations of a given society. And those class relations are becoming shakier every day. No one can dispute that the gap is wider than ever in the United States between the fundamental classes—the shrinking group of capitalists who own and control the productive wealth of society, quite a few of whom have graduated from millionaires to billionaires, and the millions of workers whose economic well-being and prospects for the future become bleaker every day.

This sharp intensification of exploitation is bound to break out in a volcanic renewal of the class struggle. The only question is how soon it will start and how rapidly it will grow. There are already signs that many of the most oppressed workers—especially women and people of color—are on the march.

Armed might not enough

The thinking by the Bush administration that it could establish U.S. domination over the whole world with its superiority in military technology has run aground in Iraq because, in the long run, even military strength flows from politics, and not the other way around. And the political situation in Iraq has been fundamentally altered by the ongoing resistance of the Iraqi people—despite cruel repression by the well-armed occupying forces. The people's struggle let the air out of the Bush-Rumsfeld doctrine of world domination.

So when is the same lesson going to be applied here at home?

Ashcroft and Ridge are the two most visible figures representing the domestic structures of state repression: the Justice Department, which controls the courts, many of the prisons and the FBI; and the newly created Department of Homeland Security, which is supposed to bring under its umbrella all the agencies involved in responding to an internal crisis.

A rather bizarre incident recently showed that, despite professions of collaboration and mutual respect, there is deep animosity between these two.

On May 26, Ashcroft, with FBI Director John Mueller at his side, dramatically stepped before the television cameras to declare that “credible intelligence, from multiple sources, indicates that al-Qaeda plans to attempt an attack on the United States in the

There is no reason to think that the repressive machinery in the hands of Ashcroft and Ridge will be any more effective against the resistance of the workers than the Pentagon has been against the resistance of the Iraqi people. Quite the opposite.

next few months.” It was the type of announcement deliberately calculated to bolster George W. Bush's standing in the polls, which had been dropping with the Abu Ghraib torture scandal. The thinking undoubtedly was that a population made to feel they are in imminent danger will be more likely to accept brutality and criminal abuse inflicted by the authorities on presumed “suspects.”

But, almost immediately, Ashcroft's announcement was challenged.

Ridge's Department of Homeland Security didn't elevate the national “threat warning” to red, or even orange. Instead, it remained at yellow, where it had been for months. And Ridge “seemed to downplay the warning in a series of interviews,” said CBS News the next day. “There's not a consensus within the administration that we need to raise the threat level,” Ridge said.

The powerful corporate media—which in many ways functions as an arm of the capitalist state, just as the church did in relation to the feudal state—more or less ridiculed Ashcroft's grandstanding. It pointed out that local law enforcement hadn't been informed of any new threat and were shaking their heads in wonder.

Almost two weeks later, on June 8, Ashcroft testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee, which wanted to know about “a cascade of recently disclosed memorandums in which lawyers from his department as well as those from the Defense Department and other agencies provided legal arguments that inflicting pain in interrogating people detained in the fight against terrorism did not always constitute torture,” wrote the New York Times on June 9.

When Ashcroft refused to hand over several of these memorandums, he was warned by two of the senators that he could be in contempt of Congress. One of them, Sen. Joseph Biden of Delaware, gave a pragmatic rather than moral or principled reason for not using torture. He said prohibitions on torture are intended to “protect my son in the military. That's why we have these treaties. So when Americans are captured, they are not tortured. That's the reason, in case anybody forgets it.” Not a word about the suffering of the Iraqis and other people held in U.S. interrogation camps.

There is always rivalry among government bureaucracies competing for hegemony and funding. Capitalist politics is very largely a fight for spoils among factions competing to be

blessed by the ruling class as its loyal servants. But they are supposed to keep the struggle out of sight, especially in “times of war”—or what the president and others deem to be war. They're not supposed to let the poisoned daggers out of their sheaths when cameras are grinding.

The war at home

Of course, none in the political establishment will ever point to the predatory ruling class as the real threat to the workers and oppressed peoples living in this country. More people die every day from preventable conditions—lack of health care, industrial pollution, accidents on the job, food contamination, and the chaotic and stressful personal and family relations that accompany economic insecurity and the objectification of women as property—than have died in all the so-called terrorist attacks. But no super-agency like the Department of Homeland Security has been created to deal with this very real terrorism of rampaging capitalism. The existing government agencies supposed to deal with these problems are woefully underfunded and virtually toothless.

It is also noteworthy that in this recent period a number of judges around the country have ruled as unconstitutional executive orders that allowed various police and military agencies to hold “suspects” indefinitely, without any due process of law.

The widening rifts in the Bush administration—first over foreign policy, now over domestic repression—are partly political in nature, using the narrow definition of that word. A national election is coming up and the party out of office sees the opportunity to take hold of the huge machinery of government, with its many opportunities for patronage and influence. Schemes and maneuvers to line up votes, like Ashcroft's move, are more likely to be exposed.

But that doesn't explain the struggles among Republican appointees—like Rumsfeld versus Powell, or Ashcroft versus Ridge. These struggles reflect the much deeper angst within the ruling class itself that its long ideological hold over the masses is loosening—both abroad and here at home.

Under it all are the involuntary economic processes by which capitalism generates profit—processes that are undermining the social stability of the system. The globalization of the labor market is bringing back home the wretched conditions of exploitation that a century ago generated a robust labor movement in this country, but were then exported as U.S. capital moved abroad. It is also bringing to these shores workers whose political awareness and militancy was shaped in countries oppressed and super-exploited by imperialism.

Politics, as Marx explained, is concentrated economics. The ruling class that is conducting a war for profit abroad is conducting the same war at home against the workers. There is no reason to think that the repressive machinery in the hands of Ashcroft and Ridge will be any more effective against the resistance of the workers than the Pentagon has been against the resistance of the Iraqi people. Quite the opposite. □

Mumia Abu-Jamal from death row:

What 'war against terrorism'?



[H]e educated the sons of chieftains in the liberal arts and gave higher marks to the talents of the Britons than to the studied skill of the Gauls, with the result that those who recently rejected the Latin language desired eloquence. Then too our manner of dress became stylish and there was widespread use of the toga; and gradually they gave in to the attractions of vices, porticoes and baths and the elegance of banquets. And this was called civilization among those who did not know better, although it was part of slavery.

—Tacitus, “Agricola, Germany and Dialogue On Orators” (Univ. of Okla. Press, 1967/1991)

It is ever so easy for us to talk about the “war against terrorism,” and accept it as a given, an obvious truth.

Yet it is exceedingly difficult to speak on it, if one has but an inkling of the history of the United States in its own regions and neighboring territories for the last century, or even 50 years.

There, we find a history of U.S.-sanctioned-and-supported barbarism against people throughout the length and breadth of Central and South America, who have had to endure (if they survived!) decades under ruthless generals, monsters who wreaked unholy havoc upon their people, or rapine, torture, murder and more in the name of their masters—the *northern americans*.

For millions of people who live in the countries south of the Rio Grande, U.S. claims to wage a “war against terrorism” are dismissed with deep cynicism, if not ill humor. For they know that the United States has always been the motivating force behind the sheer terror that has ravaged their societies since the 1800s.

They know that the United States trained their soldiers not just in the use of weaponry, but in the techniques of torture, not to be used against neighboring threats, but against their own people, on behalf of the landowners, almost all of whom have themselves sold their souls to the United States.

Indeed, they would “love” a “war against terror,” if it meant that the United States would cease interfering in their national affairs, stop supporting coups, or stop buying off sectors of their middle classes.

Several days ago, I was reading a remarkable book: Clara Nieto's “Masters of War: Latin America and U.S. Aggression” (N.Y.: Seven Stories Press, 2003). In her work, the former diplomat and journalist details U.S. intervention into Mexican, Cuban, Guatemalan, Argentine, Nicaraguan, Panamanian, Uruguayan, Brazilian ... you name it—virtually all Central and Latin American internal affairs. From the 1823 era of the Monroe Doctrine to the vicious Reagan years to the Clinton era, the United States wages war against the forces of democracy in the region, fueling the forces that have made the United States the place of immigration for millions. Those people leave their homes not for democracy, not for freedom, but because they understand that the United States will rarely do at home what it does abroad. Here, at least, is a semblance of peace. They understand that no place, outside of imperial territory, is safe from the wrath of the Empire.

As for Cuba, its leader was subjected to at least a dozen U.S. attempts to kill him. The CIA enlisted the help of Mafiosi like Meyer Lansky, John Roselli and Santo Trafficante in its assassination attempts against Fidel Castro. In one year alone—indeed, in eight months—the CIA carried out 5,780 acts of “sabotage and terrorism” against Cuba and its leaders, with Mafia help. (Nieto, pp. 78-9)

In the 1980s, Ronald Reagan unleashed a right-wing wave against the Sandinistas of Nicaragua. As Nieto argues:

“Reagan's ‘secret war’ against Nicaragua became an international grab bag. Criminals, terrorists, mercenaries, paramilitaries, soldiers of fortune, unemployed people of various nationalities, former Green Berets, Cuban veterans of the Bay of Pigs, retired military officers, former CIA agents, Argentine thugs, and Israeli advisers (some 30 in 1983) participated in one way or another.” (p. 341)

These men unleashed an unholy hell on Nicaragua, of bombings, killings, rapes, torture and widespread murder. All because they were “following orders” of the imperial president, Reagan. Reagan would liken these people, the Contras, to “our Founding Fathers.”

Perhaps he had something, at that. □

'Invisible no more'

Home health aides strike for wages, benefits and justice

Continued from page 1

mutes to tend to several patients, and a constant struggle to be assigned full-time hours. Some home health aides live in homeless shelters, unable to locate housing they can afford on their \$12,000 to \$14,000 per year incomes. Moving stories and photos of some of the women appear on the union's web site:

www.invisibleno.more.1199seiu.org.

"I work close to 40 hours if you include travel time, but I only get paid for the 20 hours I spend with my patients. Raising a son on \$140 a week is pretty much impossible," says home health aide Intesar Museitef, 32, a Palestinian immigrant.

"My agency doesn't give me any health benefits or anything, and I can't miss a day of work because the agency will just give my patients to someone else," says home health aide Beatrice Whitehead, who came to the United States from Guyana.

The home health aides' struggle is about economics—but, as in the recent strike to defend health benefits by 70,000 immigrant California grocery workers, it is also about justice. Local 1199 has amassed a

long list of supporters for this struggle, including labor unions, community organizations, religious leaders, entertainers and elected officials.

"There is more at stake here than just the financial issue of low-paid workers," Local 1199 President Dennis Rivera told the Daily News on April 25. "There is also a moral issue: Should we allow those on whom we rely to provide assistance to our loved ones to live in poverty and deprivation?"

In his landmark 1986 book "High Tech, Low Pay," Workers World Party founder Sam Marcy wrote that as capitalism ravages the living standards of an increasingly multinational working class, "it lays the objective basis for the politicization of the workers, for moving in a more leftward direction and for organization on a broad scale."

Pointing to a recent New York hospital workers' strike, he wrote, "That the hospital strikers are more politically conscious and a more militant element of the working class can easily be verified by even a chance acquaintance with them."



WW PHOTOS: ANNE PRUDEN

New York

Today that is certainly true of New York's home health aides, who are courageously striking for economic and social justice. They deserve full support. For information, news coverage, testimony by the workers and ways to support the strike, go to

www.invisibleno.more.1199seiu.org. □



School bus drivers rally for solidarity

Continued from page 1

were intervening with union leaders in a push to settle the conflict. Democratic Party officials told the Globe, "They spoke about making a push to settle the city's contracts with firefighters and the Service Employees International Union."

The bus driver rank and file were making their own intervention June 7. Powered by a megasound system, their caravan filled downtown with historic union songs by the Almanac Singers. City Hall and Government Center reverberated with chants. As each bus arrived, a new flood of workers joined the throng. Their message to the city and to First Student, Inc., their anti-labor management company, was clear—"No union busting!"

Labor solidarity is key to victory

At the conclusion of the drivers and monitors' rally, the workers piled into the buses and the caravan wound through Boston's streets to the Boston Teachers Union for a scheduled meeting of the Greater Boston Labor Council. The city government and the convention planners have been working overtime to drive a wedge into the labor movement. They hoped that the GBLC would sign "Project Labor Agreements" guaranteeing labor peace in return for work retrofitting the Fleet Convention Center.

The caravan brought the entire demonstration into the BTU hall to aid in the effort to solidify solidarity and send the message that the unions will remain united until all have their contracts. Many of the delegates gave the drivers' union a standing ovation. After 15 minutes the workers poured out of the hall, declaring to the assembled media that the vote, by an overwhelming majority, clearly showed that Boston labor would not break ranks. The GBLC will not sign the Project Labor Agreements.



WW PHOTO: LIZA GREEN

Steve Gillis speaking at Boston rally.

According to Steve Gillis, president of USWA Local 8751, Boston school bus union, "This vote sends a message to the city and the corporations that Boston unions stand united. An injury to one is an injury to all."

The steel union local represents over 1,300 school bus drivers and monitors, the overwhelming majority from the Haitian, African American, Cape Verdean and Latino communities. They provide a vital safety service to the city of Boston and are fighting for economic justice from First Student, Inc.

Awarded a multimillion-dollar vendor contract to manage the school bus transportation for the city, First Student has come to the negotiating table demanding cutbacks and concessions from the workers. First Group, the British parent of First Student, reports on its investor website an increased operating profit of \$382.5 million in 2003. Financial studies by the unions have disclosed that Boston currently has the largest reserves in its his-

tory. Clearly, First Student and Boston City Hall can well afford to meet the workers' economic demands.

Rally resonates with community-worker solidarity

Speaking at the June 7 rally at the School Department in solidarity with the drivers and the monitors were leaders of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO, Greater Boston Labor Council, Steelworkers international, and Local 26 Hotel & Restaurant Workers. Nancy Younassi, a teacher for over 30 years, stated that Boston's teachers are prepared to walk the line with drivers and monitors.

Myles Calvey, head of the powerful IBEW Local 2222 of Verizon telephone workers and vice president of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO, pledged his support. He recounted that during the 1989 telephone workers' strike, the first people arrested on the picket lines were from the bus drivers' union.

Jerry Scoppettuolo, a co-founder of Massachusetts AFL-CIO Pride at Work and Stonewall Warriors of ANSWER, recognized the local's historic contributions in the struggle to end discrimination against the gay, lesbian, bi, and trans community.

The history of the Boston school bus drivers over the last 30 years is irrevocably tied to the struggle against racism in education. They have faced rocks, bricks and bigots in carrying out their job of transporting Boston's students. They have marched in countless demonstrations, from Boston to Washington.

The union has stood shoulder to shoulder with the community in its fight for equal quality education. Recently the forces of racism have once again reared their ugly heads, rallying behind the false slogan of a "return to neighborhood schools." This slogan is a thin disguise for a program designed to deny Boston's communities of color the right to equal education.

Local 8751 has joined in the coalition to fight these recent attacks and brought concrete solidarity. Last winter, for example, the union printed and distributed over

25,000 leaflets on the buses for the children to bring home. This mobilized hundreds of parents for a historic meeting last Feb. 10 at the 12th Baptist Church in Roxbury, where they determined that a return to segregation under the slogan of "neighborhood schools" will not be tolerated.

City Councilor Chuck Turner recognized the union's contributions and pledged that the community would stand with the union. Speakers demonstrating the broad array of support included representatives from Act Now to Stop War and End Racism (ANSWER), the Women's Fightback Network, ACORN, Minister Victor Carpenter and others.

Stephanie Nichols, a youth organizer from Workers World Party, delivered solidarity greetings from the John Parker/Teresa Gutierrez presidential campaign. She explained that Democratic front-runner John Kerry's program was anti-labor and pro-war and in no way represents an acceptable alternative to Bush for working people.

Yves Alcindor of the recently formed New England Human Rights Organization for Haiti brought news of the struggle of the Haitian people against the U.S. occupation and pledged his group's 100-percent support. The drivers' union, at its May membership meeting, had voted unanimously to join and provide financial support to help build this organization.

When the protestors noticed that the chief negotiators for the city and First Student were spying on the demo from a fifth-floor window, the crowd declared with one voice that their rally was just a preview of what is to come.

While Boston's poor and oppressed neighborhoods are suffering from neglect, with social services, education and health-care being cut, Mayor Menino and the city are squandering millions of dollars in give-aways to the corporate developers and preparing for an obscene orgy of parties for the rich.

Meanwhile, the workers who make Boston run are without contracts. The unions have declared their intent to bring their protest to the Democratic National Convention. □

How Ronald Reagan changed my life

By Greg Butterfield

When I learned of Ronald Reagan's death June 5, I was on a bus riding home to New York with other activists who had participated in a march in Washington to protest the U.S. occupation of Iraq, Haiti and other countries. Ironically, the far right's "preemptive war" doctrine used against Iraq is one of Reaganism's poisonous fruits.

My first reaction on hearing the news was: It's about damn time. Good riddance.

My second reaction was: What a shame he'll never face real justice at the hands of the people he abused, tormented and murdered.

Justice for Reagan isn't dying peacefully in a comfortable bed. Justice would be a trial before a jury of welfare families, Black Panthers, people with AIDS, anti-war activists, air traffic controllers, Salvadoran peasants, Libyan victims of U.S. bombs and Nicaraguan revolutionaries, to name a few.

President Ronald Reagan figures mightily in my own political development. I was a junior-high and high school student during his regime. My first memory of genuine political consciousness is sitting in front of the television in the early 1980s, listening to Reagan attack welfare mothers. My own family was on welfare, like millions of others, not because of any personal failings, but because of the cruel workings of the capitalist economy Reagan championed. There were no jobs.

As a child in a rural, virtually all-white area of Northern Wisconsin, I couldn't yet understand the racist implications of Reagan's welfare bashing for millions of oppressed families in the ghettos from Los Angeles to New York. But I knew an attack on poor people when I heard it. That night he, and capitalism, made an enemy for life.

I remember the humiliation my parents felt at the time, forced to grovel every few months to keep the meager government assistance coming so my brothers and I could eat. I remember what happened a few years later, when Wisconsin Gov. Tommy Thompson (now a Bush cabinet member) followed Reagan's lead and eliminated assistance for thousands of poor families. I remember how that winter we had to eat raccoon carcasses meant for dog food because there was nothing else.

Spurred by the painful crisis of my family and others I knew, I went on to learn about the Black liberation struggle of the 1960s, about the civil war in Nicaragua, and the enormous Cold War arms buildup designed to run the Soviet Union into the ground. The ever-increasing military budget was the flip side of Reagan's vicious attack on programs to aid the poor and unemployed. Money was being stolen from the poor to build the rich man's war machine.

Now 32, I have spent half my life in the progressive movement. I consider myself pretty hardened to the hypocrisy of the big-business media. What could be worse than post-Sept. 11, after all? Still, their fawning over Reagan and his "legacy of freedom" sickens me.

Just like after Sept. 11, there are millions upon millions of people in the United States who know better—who know that Reagan was no hero, but one of history's worst criminals. But they are made to feel isolated by the full-court press of slavish media coverage.

The truth about Reagan and his legacy must be told.

Ronald Reagan was a scab. His political career began when, as a leader of the Screen Actors Guild in Hollywood, he ratted on fellow union members and others before the McCarthyite House Committee on Un-American Activities.

Ronald Reagan was a racist. As governor of California in the 1960s and 1970s, he joined the FBI in waging war against the rebelling African American community and those heroic advocates of Black liberation, the Black Panther Party. He was responsible for the deaths of many young Black freedom fighters. Only a worldwide movement saved his personal nemesis, Angela Davis, from unjust imprisonment. In the 1980s, his administration was responsible for CIA-sponsored drug running in Black communities to fund the contra war against Nicaragua.

Ronald Reagan hated the poor. He knew that capitalism creates armies of poor and unemployed workers, and that they constitute the greatest threat to the profit system. Over decades, first as governor of California and then as president for eight years, he missed no opportunity to wage war on the poor—their image in society as well as their material well-being. He was a prime mover in the post-civil-rights-era rollback of public perceptions of the poor as less than human. He was an early champion of the "Cadillac welfare mother" myth, and continued to use it throughout his career. Reagan blazed the trail for none other than Democratic President Bill Clinton, who smashed the federal welfare system in 1996.

In Chicago 1982, popular protest targets Reagan programs.

PHOTO: BILL HACKWELL



Ronald Reagan also hated gays, lesbians, bi and trans people—and he promoted a vicious homophobia to characterize AIDS as a "gay disease" and stigmatize people with AIDS, a disproportionate number of them people of color. Reagan blocked funding for AIDS education, prevention, treatment or care, here and in other countries. The AIDS crisis exploded during the Reagan presidency. He let it. The president now being lauded as a swell fellow, a kind, good-hearted, decent guy you just couldn't help but love, was in fact a callous killer. He is directly responsible for the HIV/AIDS deaths of tens of thousands of people then—and millions around the world since.

Ronald Reagan was a union buster. He broke the PATCO air controllers' strike in 1981. This act, at the beginning of a reactionary period in world history, dealt a body blow to the labor movement from which it is still struggling to recover. Workers in the United States pay the price every single day when they face off with the boss on the job, when they collect their paychecks, when they are told they must pay for their health benefits or lose them.

Ronald Reagan was a warmonger. The idea of people being free of U.S. imperialist domination was anathema to him, especially if they were people of color. His war crimes—from the funding, arming and training of some of the very forces today called "terrorists" to wage war on the pro-socialist revolutionary government of Afghanistan, to the invasion of tiny Grenada—are too many to list. But mention should be made of the death squads his regime promoted in El Salvador, and the reactionary contra army and invasion threats that undermined the Nicaraguan Revolution.

Ronald Reagan was a bitter enemy of all poor and working peo-

ple. What is it that the media and political establishment are celebrating as Reagan's "legacy"?

It is his role in helping to destroy the Soviet Union, the great achievement of the workers' and peasants' revolution of 1917, and setting back the world movement for socialism. The unrelenting nuclear arms buildup and aggressive threats that were the hallmark of his presidency laid the groundwork for the USSR's demise.

The USSR's existence for over 70 years had the effect of challenging imperialist aggression in many areas of the world. The existence of a major alternative economic and political system helped countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America to achieve a measure of independence from the former colonial powers. In the Western imperialist countries, it helped the labor and civil-rights movements win and hold onto hard-fought gains, because workers knew there was another system that guaranteed jobs, food, housing and health care for all people.

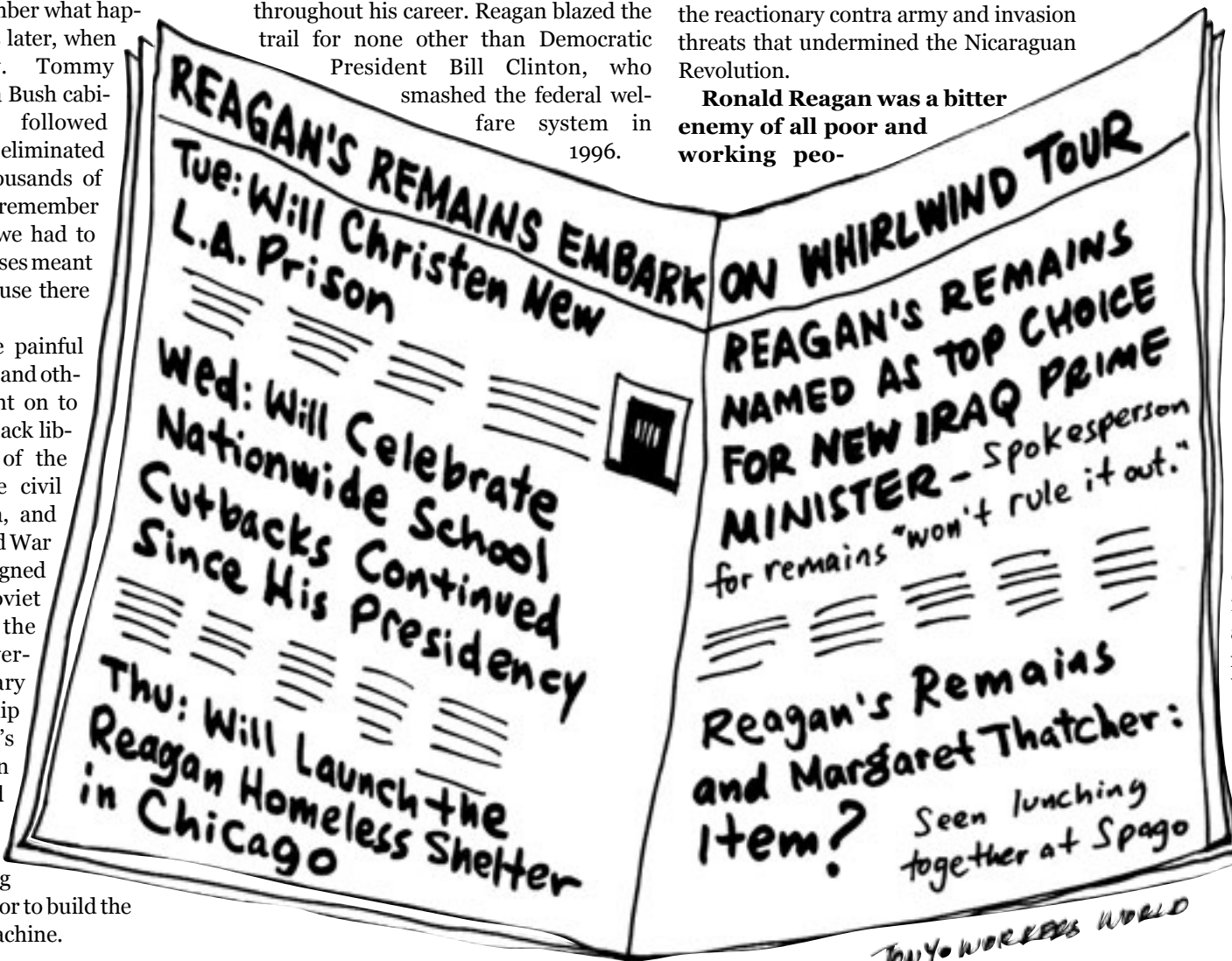
There are many other crimes that bear Reagan's stamp: the continuing rollback of women's right to choose, the war on immigrants, the speech at a Bitburg, Germany, cemetery honoring Nazi SS troops, and so many more.

The history of the last decade-plus is Reagan's real legacy: more war, more occupations, a return to openly colonialist methods and ideology, more racism, more vicious attacks on women and the lesbian/gay/bi/trans communities, fewer rights and falling living standards for workers, more people hungry and homeless with no safety net.

Of course, Ronald Reagan was only an individual. If he had not existed, the reactionary social forces he represented would have thrown up someone else in his place. But it is hard to imagine that they could have found someone more treacherous, hateful and vicious to represent them. Just because he died of a lingering illness that cruelly affects millions of people doesn't give him a "Get Out of Jail Free" card in the hearts and minds of those who lost so much through his cruel actions—actions he clearly relished.

History will judge Ronald Reagan as one of the bitterest enemies of the people. His name will rightly be reviled, and his terrible legacy of racism, war and brutality will be undone by people united in solidarity to build a world that puts people's needs ahead of profit.

And me? I'm sorry that I'll never see the man face justice for his crimes. I have this one consolation: Ronald Reagan helped make me a communist. I know he'd really hate that. □



BUSH, RUMSFELD CONFRONTED IN

The first week of June was not a good time to be George W. Bush or Donald Rumsfeld.

Bush was in Europe, ostensibly for 60th anniversary celebrations of D-Day, but really to continue begging the European imperialist allies he dissed last year to send troops to aid the embattled U.S./British occupation of Iraq.

At least 200,000 people came out in Rome June 4 to call Bush by his right name: War Criminal #1.

The next day, tens of thousands in Paris did the same.

And Rumsfeld? The U.S. defense secretary was in Dhaka, Bangladesh, June 5 as part of a six-day tour to pressure Asian governments to do more for the “war on terror.”

But Rumsfeld, one of the neocon architects of Bush’s preemptive war doctrine, only managed to display his feet of clay. Thousands of protesters filled the streets in the majority Muslim country, reportedly cutting short his visit.

The duo must have wished they could return home to Washington June 5, right? Wrong.

Both the White House and Rumsfeld’s D.C. mansion were besieged by thousands of protesters, responding to a call for emergency demonstrations by the ANSWER—Act Now to Stop War and End Racism—coalition.

The protests were called to press the demand to end the racist occupations of Iraq, Haiti and Afghanistan, at a time when the Bush administration and the U.S. ruling class are wracked with infighting over declining support and the sorry state of the Iraq occupation.

They were all for war on Iraq last year, when none of them believed the people could resist the Pentagon’s power. Now that the Iraqis have proven them wrong, they’re all looking for someone else to blame.

June 5 also marked the 37th anniversary of the Israeli blitzkrieg, backed by the United States, which led to the occupation of the Gaza Strip and Golan Heights. So the Palestinian people’s national liberation struggle took center stage as well.

ANSWER demonstrations were also held in San Francisco, where up to 10,000 marched, and in Los Angeles.

Bush and Rumsfeld wouldn’t have been able to sneak into Kolkata (Calcutta), India, if they’d wanted to. Anti-war forces there answered the call of the West Bengal State Committee of the All India Anti-imperialist Forum to mobilize in solidarity with their ANSWER comrades on the other side of the world.

The AIAF organized a June 5 march to the American Center in Kolkata. “With colorful festoons and posters and raising spirited slogans condemning these unspeakable war crimes, crimes against humanity, justice and peace, the march started from Raja Subodh Mullick Square in the afternoon and ended in a demonstration before the American Center. Effigies of George Bush and Ariel Sharon were burnt at the rally,” the group reported.

—Greg Butterfield



Top left, WWP presidential candidate John Parker at Los Angeles anti-war rally.

Top right, WWP vice presidential candidate Teresa Gutierrez, marches at D.C. protest.

WW PHOTOS: J. LA RIVA
PAT CHIN AND G. DUNKEL

WASHINGTON

Protesters march through three worlds

By Greg Butterfield
Washington, D.C.

The skies opened over Washington on June 5. Torrential downpours greeted protesters coming into the city by car, bus and train from the East Coast and as far west as Chicago. The weather mirrored the stormy mood in official Washington. The U.S. military occupation of Iraq is in crisis, thanks to the growing popular resistance there and wide exposure of Pentagon war crimes.

Thousands of anti-war activists, community activists, students and workers showed they could weather both storms. Harsh skies didn’t deter them from heeding the call of the ANSWER coalition. Neither did the bitter clash within the Bush administration and broader circles of the capitalist political establishment, which resulted in the June 3 resignation of CIA Director George Tenet.

The rally showed that a significant sector of the anti-war movement believes this is the time to be in the streets against the war-makers. They are not diverted by elections, Congressional hearings and political maneuvers.

Demonstrators gathered in Lafayette Park, facing the White House. Wearing plastic ponchos and holding umbrellas, they hefted banners and signs demanding, “Bring the troops home now,” “Stop the torture,” and, “End occupations from

Iraq to Palestine to Haiti.” The flags of those nations were prominently flown, along with Venezuelan, Puerto Rican, Mexican and rainbow lesbian/gay/bi/trans flags.

Even before the rally began, international solidarity was on display. A bus from Brooklyn, N.Y.’s Haitian community arrived just as a group of Palestinian women faced off against a tiny right-wing counter-protest. The counter-protesters held red-baiting signs and a racist banner that read, “There is no Palestine.” The Haitian group, mostly women, immediately joined their Palestinian sisters, chanting, “Free, free Palestine,” and drowning out the racists.

Holmes: Avoid that sucking sound

Larry Holmes, co-director of the International Action Center and an ANSWER steering committee member, pointed to the White House and declared, “We are speaking truth to murderers, terrorists and torturers.”

He demanded that the big-business media covering the rally “devote space to pictures of all the Iraqi people who have died, and Palestinians, and Haitians. We will not settle for less than the truth.”

He warned the crowd: “If you hear a sucking sound, ignore it, because that’s the elections. It’s trying to pull you off the streets into a silly contest that doesn’t

mean anything. The movement is in the streets.”

“Everything we have said has come to pass,” said Husayn Agrama of the Free Palestine Alliance. “They said they would bring liberation and democracy to Iraq. We said they would bring exploitation and humiliation. Haven’t the prisoners of Abu Ghraib paid witness to what we said?”

AFSCME District Council 1707 President Brenda Stokely said of the war-makers: “They discount that where there is oppression, there is uprising and resistance. That’s what they’re overlooking in Haiti, in Iraq, in Palestine, and throughout the world.”

Serge Lilavois of the Coalition to Resist the Feb. 29 Coup in Haiti declared, “The world has to know that U.S. forces were involved in killing peaceful protesters marching against the occupation.”

The crowd chanted, “Aristide, Aristide,” demanding the return of the popularly elected Haitian president who was kidnapped and deported by U.S. Marines in late February.

Gloria La Riva of the National Committee to Free the Cuban 5 warned that the United States is preparing new aggression against the socialist island. “The Cuban people are not about to give up what belongs to them,” she declared.

Omar Sierra of the Bolivarian Circle of New York called for solidarity against U.S. intervention in oil-rich Venezuela.

Several speakers were family members of soldiers stationed or killed in Iraq. One was Norma Castillo, whose nephew is imprisoned resister Staff Sgt. Camilo Mejia.

Ismael Kamal of the Muslim Student Association addressed the plight of thousands of Arab and Muslim men still imprisoned in the United States without legal recourse. “As our predecessors brought an end to Jim Crow, McCarthyism and Cointelpro, we will bring an end to the Patriot Act,” he vowed.

Berg: This is a racist war

The protesters gave rapt attention to Michael Berg, a longtime anti-war activist and supporter of ANSWER. Berg’s son Nick, a small business owner, had traveled to Iraq earlier this year. Nick Berg was detained by U.S. occupation forces. He was finally released after his family took the government to court.

In May Nick Berg was found dead. A mysterious videotape has circulated on the Internet depicting his decapitation by alleged Islamic radicals.

Invoking the memory of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Michael Berg said: “America has been in touch with me, [and] the people of America told me they have a dream of peace. I am here to answer the people who offered to help. Don’t let what

Continued on page 8

U.S., EUROPE, ASIA

SAN FRANCISCO

Thousands rally against occupation

By LeiLani Dowell
and Brenda Sandburg
San Francisco

Some 8,000 to 10,000 people participated in a spirited march and rally in San Francisco June 5 to demand an end to the occupation of Iraq. Contingents of labor groups, veterans, Haitian activists and youths marched from United Nations Plaza in downtown San Francisco to the beginning of the docks at Embarcadero Plaza. The protest was sponsored by the ANSWER coalition.

A brass band played the "International" during the march. A small counter-demonstration in support of the state of Israel was drowned out by chants of "free, free Palestine."

Lara Kiswani of the Free Palestine Alliance captured rally participants' sentiments: "You can put us in prison, murder our children, demolish our homes, but you will never crush the spirit of the Intifada. You will never crush the resistance that is rooted in our history of blood, sweat and tears. Palestine will be free."

Henry Clark of the West County Toxics Coalition compared the torture of prisoners at Abu Ghraib to the torture that goes on in U.S. prisons. He cited the killing of Black Panther Party member George Jackson by prison guards and prison officials' refusal to provide medical treatment to Native activist Leonard Peltier. "The torture of Iraqi prisoners is business as usual," Clark said.

Families of U.S. troops also spoke. Maritza Castillo, whose son Camilo Mejia



San Francisco: WWP congressional candidate LeiLani Dowell speaks at June 5 rally.

WW PHOTO BRENDA SANDBURG

is a war resister, noted the irony of Mejia's prison sentencing. "For refusing to torture and kill people in Iraq, the Bush administration has condemned my son to one year in prison, the same as those accused of torturing the prisoners of Iraq," she said.

Fernando Suarez del Solar, whose son was one of the first U.S. soldiers to die in the war, reiterated that supporting the troops in Iraq means demanding their immediate return.

Pierre Labossiere of the Haiti Action Committee decried the media's silence on the arrest of Lavalas leader and singer Annete Auguste (So' Anne): "U.S. Marines went to her home and blew up the gate to her house with military explosives, arrested her and 12 people in her house, including her grandchildren, handcuffed her and put a hood over her head, and we've not heard about this. Where are the human rights organizations?" He also pointed to the U.S. government's attempt to paint the leaders of the Lavalas movement as drug lords.

LeiLani Dowell, lesbian anti-war activist



WW PHOTOS: BOB MCCUBBIN

and Workers World Party member running for Congress in San Francisco, urged the crowd to continue building an independent, anti-imperialist, revolutionary movement, especially in this election year.

"With so many pressures on us at this period in time, with so many attacks on all fronts by the U.S. government, the most important thing is for us to stay unified, to not let anything divide us, to be strong like a fist," she said to cheers from the crowd.

The Kabataang maka-Bayan (Pro-People Youth) Bay Area Organization Committee issued a statement at the protest: "The situation faced by many people here in the Bay Area, especially poor and people of color, is not far removed from the instability and insecurity faced by the Iraqi people in the face of a U.S. occupation. We also see an unstable future

for our youth, with never-ending school budget cuts, and constant assault of military recruiters in the campus ... exploiting the youth's feeling of uncertainty to feed them into the imperialist war machine. ...

"We call on all youth and students throughout the world to expose, oppose, and resist U.S. imperialist intervention in Iraq, Afghanistan, Haiti, the Philippines and elsewhere."

Others speaking at the rally included Richard Becker and Nazila Bargshady for the ANSWER Coalition and a representative of Fast 4 Education, a group that has successfully fasted for the past 26 days at the Capitol Building in Sacramento, resulting in an almost 500-percent reduction in the interest rate on state bailout loans for suffering school districts in California. □

LOS ANGELES

'No empire in our name'

By Sako Sefiani
Los Angeles

Thousands joined a June 5 march and rally organized by the ANSWER coalition in Los Angeles. They marched through downtown to protest the occupations of Iraq, Palestine, Haiti and other countries.

The protest, one of several throughout the United States, was held at a time when the multimillionaires, billionaires and corporate owners who pushed for the war in Iraq hoping to profit from it are losing patience with the way the occupation has been conducted.

On the day of the demonstration, for example, the Los Angeles Times published a photo showing U.S. troops lying dead near their smoking vehicle. Not long ago a photo like this would not have been published. For a major corporate-media organ to publish photos like this one, as well as pictures of the tortured prisoners in Abu Ghraib, exposes the frustration of part of the ruling class.

"We're here to say there will be no empire in our name," actor/activist Danny Glover told the protesters. He added that they were sending a powerful message to both President George W. Bush and Democratic presidential candidate Sen. John Kerry. Glover denounced Bush for the occupations of Iraq, Palestine, Haiti and elsewhere.

Responding to news of former President Ronald Reagan's death, Glover said, "The groundwork for the move steadily to



Los Angeles, June 5.

WW PHOTOS: J. LA RIVA

the right happened with the Reagan administration."

John Parker of the International Action Center and Workers World Party said the "escalation of U.S. atrocities in Iraq, Palestine, Haiti, Colombia, the Philippines and other countries demands urgent solidarity from working-class and progressive people in the U.S." Parker is WWP's candidate for U.S. president.

Parker also spoke of "the quiet occupation of U.S. youths, especially those of oppressed nationalities, who languish in U.S. jails, often suffering treatment similar to those in the infamous Abu Ghraib prison."

He urged the anti-war movement to

expose the link between imperialist wars of aggression and domestic policies. He gave as an example the bosses' attack on health and retirement benefits in the recent California grocery workers' struggle.

Famous Vietnam veteran turned anti-war activist Ron Kovic spoke. So did a veteran of the 1991 Gulf War and the brother of a soldier killed in Iraq.

Other speakers included Muna Coobtee of the Free Palestine Alliance and representatives of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, Committee on American Islamic Relations, International Socialist Organization, National Lawyers Guild, Coalition for World Peace, Pacifica Radio, Bayan International, Mindullae Korean-American Organization for Peace

and Reunification, Global Women's Strike and others. Preston Wood of ANSWER chaired the rally.

Several speakers pointed out that the U.S. handpicked "transition government" in Iraq is illegitimate. A close CIA ally, Ayad Allawi, has been installed as prime minister to be at the beck and call of his bosses in Washington.

Giving an "Iraqi face" to the occupation will not work with the Iraqi people. They know what this occupation is really about: domination over the Middle East, protecting the apartheid state of Israel that acts as the attack dog for U.S. imperialism, securing oil for the United States and its allies, and making big profits for the transnational corporations. □

Italian workers: No Bush, no war!

By Leslie Feinberg
Rome

When George W. Bush, the emperor of today's imperial empire, visited the capital of the old Roman Empire on June 4, some 200,000 anti-war activists protested in the streets.

The lead banner of the massive march read "No war, no Bush." This was the banner of the umbrella coalition that organized the demonstration: Comitato Fermiamo La Guerra (The Committee to End the War).

U.S. Citizens Against the War was the second contingent in the line of march.

The entire demonstration drew cheers and applause along the long route from Italians and international tourists who lined the sidewalks and filled the crowded plazas.

Activists in the U.S. contingent were especially exhilarated that so many tourists from the United States who were visiting in Italy cheered for them. Some even joined to swell the ranks of the march.

Two such people, who were in Italy on their honeymoon, were standing on the sidewalk as the march passed. They joined the demonstration and helped carry the U.S. contingent's banner.

The demonstration filled the wide avenues of Rome with its numbers and with songs of political resistance. The large numbers that turned out did so in spite of government and media warnings to stay away from the event, which they said would turn "violent."

The rainbow flag of "pace"—peace—was everywhere in the march. It has become the official symbol of the anti-war movement in Italy. And the flag fluttered from balconies and windows, storefronts and newsstand kiosks along the route of march and throughout the capital.

A phony parallel

Bush's visit was timed to coincide with the anniversary of the landing of U.S. troops at the beaches of Normandy, France, in World War II.

The Commander in Chief tried to make a false historical parallel. Bush painted the Pentagon war and occupation of Iraq as "liberation." He likened this to U.S. military support to the Italian struggle against fascism in World War II.

The June 4 anti-war demonstrators spoke out loudly against this offensive comparison.

The organizers planned the route of the demonstration deliberately. They marched in protest past monuments that have been co-opted

as symbols of right-wing nationalism. Police massed in rows three deep in front of the "flame of eternal freedom" at the tomb of the Italian "unknown soldier." They guarded the monument to ensure that no anti-war activist could place the flag of "pace" there.

Across the plaza from this monument used to whip up nationalism by the neo-fascists is the balcony from which Italian fascist Benito Mussolini spoke throughout his reign.

John Gilbert, a U.S. citizen living in Florence, talked to Workers World about Bush's phony claim to be "liberating" Iraq. "The majority of Italians want all the

troops withdrawn immediately," including the 2,700 Italian troops the government of Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi sent.

"Italians feel Bush is a threat to world peace. They feel very strongly about the liberation of Italy from the Nazis and that Bush is not appropriate as a representative of the U.S. part in liberating Italy from fascism."

Gilbert, a trade unionist and anti-war organizer, concluded, "Instead, there's more of a parallel to the Nuremberg trials charge of the war crime of deliberate instigation of a war of aggression."

Bridges of solidarity

The June 4 protest united the Italian movement. Participants included communists and social democrats, anti-imperialists and pacifists, trade unionists and environmental activists.

North African immigrants marched in order to bring the struggle of immigrant workers to the anti-war movement.

The metal workers of the CGIL labor confederation who recently won a successful battle against their bosses at Fiat marched with their union flags.

Another contingent marched with a big sign that read "Defend Cuba! With Fidel and with Cuba; Liberty for the Five!" The Cuban Five are political prisoners held in the U.S. for their role in trying to monitor right-wing terrorism backed by Washington against their island nation.

The flags of Palestine, Iraq and Cuba flew at this march, as well.

The June 4 anti-war march ended at the Piazza di San Paolo, where anti-fascist partisans—with communist leadership—waged one of the fiercest battles against the Nazi German occupation.

Kurdish and Palestinian speakers addressed the final rally. Women in Black, a group opposed to the Israeli occupation of Palestine, performed.

An elderly Italian partisan fighter spoke. So did a U.S. soldier who had fought with the partisans.

U.S. speaker: 'Resistance is growing'

Minnie Bruce Pratt, a U.S. writer and anti-war activist visiting Italy, spoke passionately to those gathered. Pratt is an organizer for the International Action Center, which is one of the 11 organizations on the steering committee of the ANSWER coalition (Act Now to Stop War & End Racism).

Pratt's remarks were cheered. "The U.S. government is trying to close its iron fist on the Middle and Near East ... to make profits for big business," she said. She added, "We in the U.S. stand with you to defend immigrants' rights, to defend workers' rights, the rights of oppressed nationalities—to build unity against the terror of transnational corporations.

"Your opposition to the war—you, the people of Italy—inspires us in the U.S. More and more people in the U.S. understand they have been lied to, and that this war is wrong. Resistance is also growing. More and more soldiers are refusing to serve, aided by groups like SNAFU, the Support Network for an Armed Forces Union. As a lesbian, I'm proud to say the first soldier to resist was Stephen Funk, a gay Filipino Marine reservist."

Pratt concluded, "[T]he people of an occupied and colonized country have the right to resist, and the right to defend themselves. Like the Vietnamese. The Palestinians. The Iraqis. Like the Italian



Rome, June 4.

protested at banks that provide financial services for companies that are exploiting Iraq.

During Bush's visit, numerous smaller demonstrations took place in cities and towns.

In Venice, professors and students from the university lined the banks of the Grand Canal wearing hoods like Iraqi prisoners are forced to wear. They held signs reading: "Out of Iraq! Everybody to Rome against Bush!"

Anti-war organizing in this country is ongoing.

In Florence, anti-war events are held three or four times a week in the form of discussions on tactics and strategy meetings, rallies and educational forums.

John Gilbert emphasized that more than 80 percent of Italians are estimated to oppose the war and occupation of Iraq.

This is born out by the "pace" flags visible in towns and cities across Italy. This demand for an end to war flies even in the countryside from the windows and roofs of farmhouses. □

partisans who battled the Nazis right here in the Plaza of San Paolo.

"We also draw strength to struggle from their resistance."

Across Italy

In Milan on June 2, some 5,000 people demonstrated against militarism and the war on Iraq. Protesters burned the hated U.S. flag. Twelve were arrested.

Roberto Taddeo from Redlink told Workers World that on June 2 in Naples a demonstration against the war drew many union members and unemployed workers. SNAFU's call for troops to resist the war was distributed in Italian. This is especially significant because Naples is the headquarters for the U.S.-Mediterranean military command.

The previous week in Naples, activists

Washington protesters march through three worlds

Continued from page 6

happened to me and my family happen again.

"This is a war and it is racist. Let's act now to stop war and end racism," he urged. "And let's keep acting until we can raise a banner of peace that says, 'Mission accomplished.'"

Besides Holmes, ANSWER steering committee members who spoke were Yoomi Jeong of the Korea Truth Commission, Chuck Kaufman of the Nicaragua Network and Brian Becker.

Other speakers included Mahdi Bray of the Muslim American Society Freedom Foundation, Cheri Honkala of the Kensington Welfare Rights Union, the Rev. Graylan Hagler of Plymouth Congregational Church, Zack Wolf of the National Lawyers Guild-Lesbian/Gay/Bi/Trans Committee, and Ricardo and Noberto Juarez of Mexicans Without Borders.

Messages were read from Ben Dupuy of the National Popular Party of Haiti and ANSWER steering committee member Macrina Cardenas of the Mexico Solidarity Network.

March through three worlds

The demonstration concluded with a vigorous two-and-a-half-mile march to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's gated mansion.

The march took protesters through three distinct worlds of Washington: the official world of government buildings, the super-oppressed neighborhoods of working-class D.C. with their boarded-up storefronts and burned out apartment buildings, and finally the manicured lawns of the rich.

Spirits were highest marching through the communities—African American, Mexican, Salvadoran, Eritrean, Caribbean, white and more. Despite the foul weather, people came out of their homes and stores to watch, chant and take literature. Some even joined the march.

Workers World Party vice presidential candidate Teresa Gutierrez led a strong contingent of WWP and International

Action Center activists. Her campaign distributed a colorful postcard declaring that the "road to getting U.S. troops out of Iraq lies through mass action, not electing a 'lesser' evil."

A group of Latin@ students from La Guardia Community College in Queens, N.Y., helped carry a banner from SNAFU, the Support Network for an Armed Forces Union, that read, "Support the right to refuse to fight." Daisy Nabarret told Workers World she had come because "I want to learn the truth about Iraq."

"We've had the opportunity to talk with several members of the military and military families today," SNAFU's Dustin Langley told Workers World. "The movement against the war inside this community is growing daily. SNAFU is reaching out to provide support to resisters inside the military. We're also circulating a 'no draft' petition as part of our new No Draft, No Way campaign."

On U Street, the march passed Sisterspace & Books, a progressive community institution run by Black women. Staff members came out to greet the cheering marchers. They waved a Black liberation flag and held signs calling for the removal of Mayor Anthony Williams.

Marchers chanted, "End the occupation, join the demonstration!" and, "Money for jobs and reparations, not for war and occupation!"

As rundown apartment buildings gave way to brick townhouses, the chant became "Donald Rumsfeld, you will see, Baghdad will be free!"

Police attempted to split the front of the march as it neared Rumsfeld's mansion on Kalarama Road. Fired-up protesters forced the cops to remove barricades and the line of march merged again.

Richard Kossally, who had been distributing Workers World newspapers to onlookers, was at the scene. He told WW: "When the first part of the march came back to join us, the cops felt the power. I started chanting, 'The people united will never be defeated.' The crowd went crazy.

"It shows that when we stay united, we can make things happen." □



Tenet takes the fall as

Bitter division opens over Iraq quagmire

By Fred Goldstein

On June 3, CIA Director George Tenet became the first high-level member of the Bush administration's group of war conspirators to resign. It was just 14 months since Washington opened up its war of conquest against Iraq.

Whether he was pushed out or jumped, the resignation of Tenet, one of the inner circle who was highly instrumental in justifying the war, is a major setback for Bush—particularly in the midst of an election campaign. It is a confession of failure and bitter division at the summit of the capitalist state.

But it is only the most dramatic expression of the growing pressure on the Bush administration by the ruling class—pressure brought about by discontent and disillusionment over the failure of the Iraq adventure to bring about the anticipated rapid imperialist victory and all the spoils of war that were expected to follow.

On one level, Tenet is a victim of the inner struggle within the Bush administration and can be viewed as a scapegoat for Bush. But on a more basic level, Tenet is a casualty of the heroic Iraqi resistance.

With respect to the Iraq war, the charge against Tenet is that he oversaw the furnishing of unreliable information about the possession of weapons of mass destruction by Saddam Hussein's government—information that turned out to be false. The truth came out in a report by David Kay, whom Bush had assigned to be in charge of searching for the weapons after the war.

But the real failure—not only of Tenet and the CIA, but of Bush, Cheney, Rice, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz and the entire group of war makers—was not to anticipate the predictable Iraqi resistance, which has startled the U.S. ruling class by tying up the world's mightiest military power and to this day denying them and their puppets control over the country.

Niger forgeries and State of the Union

The depth of the failure on the part of the administration, and the way in which Tenet was victimized by it, is indicated by the handling of the so-called Niger uranium issue, in which Saddam Hussein was alleged to be importing enriched uranium from that African country.

In the fall of 2002, Tenet called Condoleezza Rice's chief aide, Stephen Hadley, to warn Bush not to put anything in an upcoming speech about the alleged Iraqi attempt to purchase uranium. That sentence was struck out of the speech. But later, when Bush gave his State of the Union speech in January 2003, two months before the Pentagon's invasion, the line about the uranium reappeared. After the war, a scandal broke: the documents substantiating the charges about Niger uranium had been forged.

Condoleezza Rice tried to get out of it by saying that Tenet had not read the speech and had to take the blame. But Tenet had already told Rice's highest aide that the allegation was false. Yet it had appeared in Bush's annual speech to Congress.

How could such a risk be taken? Only if the Bush administration was absolutely confident that the U.S. would gain immediate, total victory in Iraq and the question of the justification for the war would never be raised. Military triumphalism, patriotic

chauvinism such as followed the Gulf War of 1991, would prevail and the ruling class would not care one bit about how or why Washington got into the war.

Had it not been for the Iraqi resistance, the question of the phony evidence about non-existent weapons of mass destruction would have been a minor footnote in history, brought up only by bourgeois dissidents and the left. The ruling class would never have paid attention to it. They would have been too busy counting their profits from the oil, from the takeover of the Iraqi economy, and from the payola flowing from construction of military bases and so on.

Tenet, who had moved with caution early in the campaign to promote the war, as witnessed by his warning to Bush about the uranium lie, came around to be a crucial and indispensable part of the conspiracy to go to war.

Maneuvers over inspections

The Bush administration hoped to wage the war on the grounds that Saddam Hussein would defy UN resolutions on inspections. To this end, the U.S. manipulated a Draconian resolution that gave the inspectors almost absolute freedom to completely violate Iraq's military security while it was under threat of war. Bush expected a refusal and was geared up for war.

But Saddam Hussein maneuvered to prevent the war. He allowed the most intrusive inspections demanded by the U.S. The Iraqi government even allowed the destruction of newly purchased missiles. It complied with every demand. The regime basically foiled the provocative strategy of the Bush administration. Hans Blix, the chief weapons inspector, could produce no evidence of weapons of mass destruction.

It is unusual, if not unprecedented, for the head of the CIA—an agency cloaked in secrecy, whose function is to carry out espionage, sabotage and subversion undercover—to have its director come publicly and dramatically on the world stage to support a war policy. But the only way to counter Iraq's maneuver and the testimony of Hans Blix and justify the war was to get Tenet and the CIA to swear to the world that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction.

Tenet did his job when he made a forced appearance, sitting behind U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell at a UN Security Council meeting, to demonstrate that he was the underwriter of the speech in which Powell made the final pre-war indictment of the Iraqi government, diagramming the existence of so-called mobile biological weapons factories—another charge that turned out to be false.

When the resistance to the occupation started up in earnest, the entire pack of lies fell apart and the conspirators were all suddenly responsible for their pre-war claims.

Tenet's fate is ironic because much of the false intelligence that has been uncovered comes from Ahmad Chalabi, who is a creature of the Rumsfeld-Wolfowitz-Feith group in the Pentagon—a group at war with the CIA.

It is a measure of the relationship of forces inside the administration and also the caution with which the ruling class is handling the crisis that Tenet has resigned, while Rumsfeld is still standing.

The self-styled Cabal

Seymour Hersh of the New Yorker, who helped in initially exposing the torture scandal and who has authoritative sources in the military, revealed in the magazine's March 12 issue the existence of a little known, but crucial, operation in the Pentagon.

"They call themselves, self-mockingly, the Cabal—a small cluster of policy advisers and analysts now based in the Pentagon's Office of Special Plans. In the past year, according to former and present Bush administration officials, their operation, which was conceived by Paul Wolfowitz, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, has brought about a crucial change of direction in the American intelligence community. These advisers and analysts, who began their work in the days after Sept. 11, 2001, have produced a skein of intelligence reviews that have helped to shape public opinion and American policy toward Iraq. They relied on data gathered by other intelligence agencies [such as Israel—F.G.] and also on information provided by the Iraqi National Congress, or I.N.C., the exile group headed by Ahmad Chalabi. By last fall, the operation rivaled both the CIA and the Pentagon's own Defense Intelligence Agency, the DIA, as President Bush's main source of intelligence regarding Iraq's possible possession of weapons of mass destruction and connection with Al Qaeda."

This group had contempt for Tenet and the CIA as soft. The CIA had torn apart their findings. It is said that Rumsfeld forbade the Pentagon staff from attending CIA briefings. Thus the now-famous "slam dunk" remark attributed to Tenet in Bob Woodward's book, "Plan of Attack"—that when Bush asked "How confident are you, George?" about the intelligence, Tenet replied, "Don't worry, it's a slam dunk"—is only a tiny part of the picture. If he actually made this intemperate remark, and Bush and Rice were the only others in the room, according to the book (!), Woodward's rendition was calculated to set

Tenet up for the blame.

Tenet was the most vulnerable and the weakest personality within the administration. But it was the Bush-Cheney-Rumsfeld group that orchestrated the war and miscalculated the people of Iraq and their long-standing hatred for and struggles against being colonized, from the days of the Turkish empire to the British empire and now the U.S. empire.

The ruling class, which was wildly for the war before the resistance, is now growing disillusioned. The exit of Tenet is only one sign of the pressure.

Ashcroft and torture

John Ashcroft is now under pressure from Congress to reveal a startling 50-page document, prepared for Rumsfeld by Justice Department lawyers, that openly claimed the right of the president, as commander-in-chief, to supersede any laws against torture. These charges, while being pursued modestly right now, are of My Lai and Watergate proportions—should the bourgeoisie decide to escalate the struggle.

There's more. Rumsfeld himself is beginning to feel the heat of the investigations into torture in Iraq, Afghanistan and Guantanamo. Time magazine recently publicized an e-mail showing that Cheney had a direct and traceable hand in awarding no-bid Iraq contracts worth billions to the Halliburton Co. And Bush himself has had to hire an attorney in connection with the leak that led conservative columnist Robert Novak to reveal that Valerie Plame, the wife of Ambassador Joseph C. Wilson IV, was a CIA agent.

The numerous investigations demonstrate the bitter strife within the ruling class and their deep concern about the competency and ability of the present group to retrieve the situation in Iraq. All this comes as the result of the struggle of the Iraqi people and the world-wide anti-war movement that supports them.

The attempts to keep the Bush administration off balance now may also be calculated to inhibit them from trying to save themselves by carrying out a pre-election military adventure based upon some provocation.

John Kerry's program for Iraq is none too appealing to the bosses, either. His program to internationalize the occupation has little promise for them. The European imperialists show no inclination at all to send troops or money into the Iraqi quagmire. Kerry's call for 40,000 more troops is hard to reconcile with the enormous strain upon the rank-and-file soldiers and the growing resentment against "stop-loss" orders.

Bush has tried to gain a respite by carrying through the charade of turning over "sovereignty" to a puppet group, headed by a CIA terrorist who has been revealed to be the architect of bombings, killings and sabotage. The fact that the Bush administration could come up with nothing better than this discredited group is a sign of weakness.

All the maneuvering in the UN Security Council to get a unanimous resolution agreeing to the U.S. occupation has not stopped the resistance and is strictly the result of negotiations among the imperialist powers in typical colonial fashion. It can only evoke the further disgust and hatred of the Iraqi people and will strengthen the resistance in the long run. □

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The myth of D-Day

The Allied invasion of Normandy, France, on June 6, 1944, was certainly not a myth. The soldiers—U.S., British, French, Polish and others—who landed on the beaches believed they were shedding their blood to end the nightmare of Nazism.

But when U.S. presidents like George W. Bush and Bill Clinton and Ronald Reagan travel to the beaches of Normandy to commemorate the Allied invasion, they rewrite history for the purposes of their own ruling class today.

President George W. Bush didn't utter the word "Iraq" during the June 6 ceremonies. But everything he said was geared toward building support for Washington's war drive for imperial empire.

Voice of America reported that the Allied forces fought "for the noblest of causes—human freedom." And that Bush said, "America would do it again for our friends."

Then, as now, the Pentagon is not a liberation army motivated by the noble cause of freedom.

In the early 1930s, the U.S. capitalist class welcomed Hitler's counter-revolutionary rise to power, because it meant stopping the socialist revolution in Germany. U.S. investment in Germany soared 45 percent while Hitler was being bankrolled by segments of German industry and banking to smash the labor unions and unleash anti-Jewish pogroms.

Some magnates were openly sympathetic to the objectives of German fascism. They included Henry Ford, J. Paul Getty, Joseph P. Kennedy, John Foster Dulles and his brother Allen—later head of the CIA.

Big capital in the United States, France and Germany hoped that German imperialism would aim its gun turrets to the east and attack the Soviet Union. The Nazis were also eager to crush the Soviet Union after consolidating their base in Europe.

On June 21, 1941, the German high command launched a devastating attack on the USSR, code-named Barbarossa. The goal of the military campaign, according to Hitler, was "the ultimate annihilation of Bolshevism from the face of the planet."

Washington's position? U.S. Vice President Harry Truman said at the time, "If Russia is winning, we ought to help Germany, and in that way let them kill as many as possible."

In the four years that followed, the Nazis slaughtered 28 million Soviet soldiers and civilians. Tens of thousands of Soviet towns and cities, factories and collective farms were destroyed.

The Pentagon brass were more concerned about fighting Japan for the spoils of exploitation in China, Korea, the Philippines, Vietnam and other Asian countries. To the West, the United States and Britain concentrated their forces against their German-Italian imperialist competitors in North Africa.

The qualitative turning point in the war was not Normandy but Stalingrad. In that battle alone more soldiers were killed than the United States lost in the entire war. In 1943 the battle for Stalingrad turned the tide. With the mobilization of the entire Soviet people behind it, the Red Army broke the Nazi siege of Leningrad.

The same year the Soviet Army defeated Hitler's infamous Panzer divisions in the monumental tank battle at Kursk.

It was the Soviet Army that smashed the German war machine. Its comrade allies were the Communist-led partisan movements battling the Nazis in Yugoslavia, Poland, Italy, Belgium, France, Greece, Albania and elsewhere. The deaths of tens of thousands of Italian soldiers on the Soviet front ignited mass insurrection in Italy against Mussolini's fascist reign.

Washington and London were afraid the Red Army and Communist partisans would liberate Europe, not only from fascism but from capitalism. That's what motivated their sudden imperialist race to "liberate" Europe.

Eleven months later, it was the Red Army that raised the red flag of liberation in Berlin.

While the war was formally ending in Europe, the imperialist war against socialism and the Soviet Union was beginning a new phase: Cold War. The first inhumanly brutal act of that phase of war came when the United States dropped atomic bombs on the civilian populations of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The U.S. ruling class would not allow the Soviet Union to rebuild after the devastation of World War II. Instead, the USSR was forced to spend much of its collectively produced wealth to defend itself against Pentagon atomic and nuclear threats.

While Eastern Europe tried to construct economies on a socialist basis, Washington turned its occupation of Western Europe into a nuclear-armed, anti-communist military machine aimed at the USSR.

The Pentagon and State Department actively recruited Nazi war criminals for anti-Soviet operations against the workers' states in Eastern Europe.

The U.S. ruling class profited handsomely from World War II. These capitalists made money hand over fist from military production. U.S. corporations supplanted their imperialist rivals in Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

Those are the same kind of riches and profits that propel the U.S. war drive today in its "noble cause" to seize the oil-rich and strategically important areas of the Middle East and Central Asia. □

Pride & struggle a century ago

Lesbians on the front lines of fight for rights, liberation

By Leslie Feinberg

A proposed German penal code was drafted in late 1910 that would criminalize sexual acts between women.

Any law that threatened same-sex love between women was also inherently anti-transgender, since the oppressed populations overlapped. In 1721, for example, a German individual who was named Catharina Margaretha Linck at birth was burned at the stake for the crime of being a female-bodied person who lived as a male and married another woman.

Until 1794 a Prussian code executed people of all sexes for what the law characterized as "unnatural acts." That edict was amended in 1837 to a sentence of "imprisonment followed by life-long punishment."

In their book "Lesbians in Germany: 1890s-1920s," authors Lillian Faderman and Brigitte Eriksson wrote, "In 1851 punishment for 'unnatural acts' was restricted by a new code to males only. 'Victorian' mentality had spread to Germany. The law preferred to ignore the possibility that women were capable of sexual expression."

The menace of including same-sex love between women in Paragraph 175 posed a new challenge for the women's movement in Germany, which had been "advancing unimpeded" since the early 1900s.

Women who today might call themselves lesbians were very active in the early German women's rights movement. But they largely did so without "coming out of the closet."

The early Uranian movement had been mostly made up of individuals who today might identify as gay men, male-to-female cross-dressers and transsexual women. However, as the Homosexual Emancipation Movement grew in social strength and weight, it emboldened lesbians to openly emerge as social leaders.

'Reach for the stars!'

Anna Rueling was just such a leader. That name was a pseudonym as well. She was born Anna Theo Sprungli.

Exactly a century ago, Rueling made a famous public address in Berlin, delivered before a meeting of the Scientific Humanitarian Committee.

This 1904 public meeting was an important breakthrough. Faderman and Eriksson note "According to [Uranian leader Magnus] Hirschfeld, the police sometimes even prevented women from attending the Scientific Humanitarian Committee's public forums because the discussion of homosexuality was regarded as unsuitable in the presence of women. A public lesbian organization would not have been tolerated at that time."

Rueling congratulated the committee, wrote Michael Lombardi-Nash, "for its support of women's rights and for including lesbians, along with homosexual men, in its fight for equal rights." (The Gay & Lesbian Review, May-June 2004)

Her speech that night was a landmark. It was titled "What interest does the women's movement have in solving the homosexual question?" In it she stressed the imperative of unity between the women's and homosexual emancipation movements. But the talk was essentially calling for unity against transgender oppression, as well, since Rueling—like many rights activists of that era—considered homosexuals to be a kind of intermediate sex. She called for equal opportunities in education and the job market for women, men and homosexuals.

Unity was key to Rueling's arguments. "If people would just observe, they would soon come to the conclusion that homosexuality and the

Lesbian ♦ gay ♦ bi
and trans
PRIDE

SERIES
PART
3



Anna Rueling

Women's Movement do not stand opposed to each other, but rather they aid each other reciprocally to gain rights and recognition, and to eliminate the injustice which condemns them on this earth."

She stressed that homosexual women "have suffered because of their masculine inclinations and natural characteristics, and because of the many, many injustices and hardships caused by laws, society, and the old morality which concerns women."

Rueling told those gathered, "[F]rom the very beginning of the Women's Movement to the present day, it has been more often than not homogenic women who took over the leadership in numerous battles."

Rueling blasted the mainstream leadership of the movement. "If we weigh all the contributions which homosexual women have made to the Women's Movement, one would be astounded that its large and influential organizations have not lifted a finger to obtain justice in the state and in society for the not so small number of its Uranian members, and that they have done absolutely nothing to this very day to protect so many of its most well-known and most worthy female predecessors in this battle from ridicule and scorn when they explain to the greater public about the true essence of Uranism. ...

"The so-called 'moderate' tendency will not help homosexuals one bit for the simple reason that deeds of this kind have no tendency at all. Victory will come as a sign of radicalism, and we expect that the radicals will change the direction. ...

"The Women's Movement and the movement for homosexual rights have thus far traveled on a dark road which has posted many obstacles in their way. Now it will become brighter and brighter around us and in the hearts of the people. This is not to say that the work of securing the rights of women and of Uranians has come to an end; we are still in the middle of two opposing sides, and many a bloody battle will have to be fought."

Rueling concluded with optimistic historical vision, "And when, at times, as they will, hard times come to either side—that will not be the time for hesitation to stand up in defense against injustice and to march on to victory which will surely be ours. Revelation and truth are like the rising sun in the East—no power can force it out of its orbit. Slowly but surely it rises to its glittering zenith!

"Perhaps not today or tomorrow, but in the not too distant future the Women's Movement and Uranians will raise their banners in victory! Per aspera ad astra! [Reach for the stars!]"

'An injustice doubled'

In his 1905 book "Berlin's Third Sex," Hirschfeld estimated that there were more than 1 million homosexuals—male and female—in Germany; some 56,000 in Berlin alone.

The coffee houses, restaurants and beer halls for the "third sex," however, were mostly frequented by males.

Hirschfeld did refer to a "dating agency" in 1905 for lesbians. And he also described Berlin "masquerade" parties in which "many of the lesbians wear male costumes."

But the looming peril in 1910 of the extension of Paragraph 175 galvanized a broad range of organizations and individuals—including lead-

'Red tide' sweeps away Chavez's enemies, defends Venezuelan Revolution

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

On June 6, the eight-lane Bolivar Avenue in central Caracas was the scene of a colossal red tide of Venezuelans supporting President Hugo Chávez Frías—and affirming their determination to advance the Bolivarian Revolution in the face of the Recall Referendum. This RR is the Venezuelan oligarchy's latest attempt to overthrow Chávez.

Most of the more than 1 million people who converged in the avenue came from poor barrios. They wore the ubiquitous red berets, a symbol of the pro-Chávez forces.

The masses came out in response to the June 3 announcement by the National Electoral Commission (CNE), the body in charge of the voting process, that 2,451,821 of the signatures submitted for holding a presidential recall referendum were valid and that this was enough for the CNE to authorize the referendum.

The CNE had eliminated more than a half-million signatures due to fraudulent actions by the opposition, which submitted signatures that were repeated or were from minors or deceased persons, among other irregularities. The referendum will probably be held in August.

The RR is the latest attempt by the oligarchy and its U.S. backers to oust Chavez. First, in April 2002, they carried out a coup that briefly unseated the popular president. Then they carried out the oil sabotage of December 2002-February 2003 that nearly wrecked the economy. And later the guarimbas, the traffic stoppage meant to paralyze the cities.

Popular mass actions caused all these violent, illegal actions to fail.

This time they have resorted to using an article in the new Bolivarian Constitution of 1999, the same constitution that they ignored and tried to rescind during the brief April 2002 coup. The constitution describes four types of referenda that guarantee people's participation in running the country. Articles 71-74 define these as consultative, recall, approval and repeal referenda. They are aimed at consulting the population about matters of great national concern, recall of any elected official, approval of laws and treaties of national interest, and repeal of any law.

Continued from page 10

ers of the Homosexual Emancipation Movement, and socialist and women's rights organizations—that worked to stop the expansion of the penal code.

Leading activists of the fightback argued that the extension of Paragraph 175 meant, "An inequality would not thereby be eliminated, but rather an injustice doubled."

In 1911 The League for the Protection of Maternity and Sexual Reform, a politically conservative organization within the women's movement, adopted a resolution which may be the first statement by any women's rights group on homosexuality. It denounced the proposal to criminalize lesbianism as "a grave error." [The Homosexual Emancipation Movement in Germany, James D. Steakley]

On Feb. 10, 1911, the League held a meeting, at which Hirschfeld also spoke, to discuss how to link the struggles. The socialist newspaper "Forward" reported that the turnout was so large that a second meeting had to be scheduled.

Next: The 'war to end all wars' derailed the struggle

But the opposition, knowing full well that they are the minority in a country where 80 percent live in poverty, has used every trick imaginable and in some cases inconceivable to impose a recall referendum that is rejected by the masses. Opposition forces started collecting signatures before the time stipulated by law, forced workers to sign at threat of layoff, denied service to sick people in hospitals if they refused to sign, and used many other fraudulent methods.

Fraudulent actions

During the "repair" process, while the signature verification was taking place, many irregularities also occurred. The fraud was clearly exposed when police uncovered and confiscated material and machinery used to forge false ID cards—in the headquarters of Acción Democrática, the main opposition party.

Jorge Martin from the Hands Off Venezuela Campaign wrote in the June 7 edition of the Venezuela's Electronic News: "There were also instances of workers sacked by their bosses for refusing to re-verify their signatures, as was the case at the Coca-Cola plant in Antimano, where 50 workers were threatened with the closure of the plant. The Venezuelan Coca-Cola subsidiary is owned by media magnate and opposition leader Gustavo Cisneros."

But the Venezuelan oligarchy was not alone. U.S. imperialism had its hands deep in the mud through several channels.

A May 17 report by the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, entitled "Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2003-2004," bluntly states U.S. aims regarding the Bolivarian Revolution.

After enumerating a long list of "human rights abuses" reported by none other than all the opposition groups, including the Catholic Church, which has organized students against the legitimate government of Chávez, the report reads: "The [U.S.] Embassy worked to encourage the implementation of Organization of American States Resolution 833, which calls for a constitutional, democratic, peaceful and electoral solution to the country's political crisis, and to strengthen democratic Venezuelan institutions... through a variety of programs.

"The Embassy continued to promote the strengthening of democracy, rule of law and political rights through U.S. non-governmental organizations. U.S. funding to National Democratic Institute activities promoted transparency in the electoral process. ...

"The International Republican Institute complemented these efforts through outreach to political parties across the political spectrum in the execution of electoral campaigns. ... The United States provided additional support to the Carter Center's continuing mediation and electoral process observation efforts ...

"Public statements by the Ambassador and other U.S. officials, including Members of Congress, reiterated strong support for OAS Resolution 833 as the way out of Venezuela's political crisis."

The Carter Center and the OAS played a direct, hands-on counter-revolutionary role. On the one hand, they clearly aligned with representatives of the opposition. Meanwhile they pretended to "neutrally observe" the repair process.

The Venezuelan government accused both groups of interfering in Venezuela's



Sparse anti-Chávez crowd, above, sparks massive response, right.



internal matters. After several discussions, the government allowed them to continue solely in their role of observers.

In spite of all these maneuvers, both Chávez and the masses remain hopeful that the Bolivarian Revolution will gain strength. Chávez holds a weekly dialogue with the people, usually on the radio. In early June he held it during the massive demonstration.

He reminded the people that the number of opposition votes and their percentage of the total electorate have indeed decreased since 1998. With the majority of Venezuelans supporting the revolutionary process, Chávez believes there is no way that the oligarchy can win.

Mobilize the masses to win

To make certain of this victory, however, the masses have organized in the barrios and the "parroquias." They have been following the proceedings very closely, with attentiveness, a no-nonsense poor people's intuition and all the newly acquired skills that are a product of the revolution.

The poor people have criticized some persons in the government and in key positions of the Ayacucho Command, which is made up of leaders of pro-Chávez political parties, for not being more steadfast in carrying out their responsibilities. They hold these leaders responsible for permitting the opposition to get away with fraud.

But these reservations seemed to vanish June 6 when Chávez announced three major organizational initiatives in the next two months. In his speech, he invited the masses to, while not underestimating the enemy, use the recall referendum to ratify and consolidate the revolution.

These initiatives were officially launched: the Santa Inés Campaign to reach out to the masses during the referendum, the Florentino Mission, and the National Command of Maisanta. Chávez himself will lead the last named. He will coordinate the political, social and electoral apparatus.

The Maisanta Command was named in honor of Gen. Pedro Pérez Delgado, Chávez' great-grandfather, who was called Maisanta and was the hero of the Venezuela independence struggle. The Mai-

santa Command will represent a leadership with more authority than the Ayacucho Command.

With the Santa Inés Campaign, Chávez called on the people to challenge the RR, organizing themselves in small groups beginning at the barrio level to visit the population block by neighborhood block, and to be more vigilant than ever in combating the counter-revolution.

The June 6 demonstration was called the "Santa Inés Campaign for National Sovereignty" in honor of the victorious battle against the oligarchy in December 1859. Maisanta Command will launch the Santa Inés Campaign/battle with strategies and actions like the Florentino Mission. In a poem by Venezuelan writer Alberto Arvelo Torrealba, Florentino is a character who triumphantly fought against the devil.

The masses' immense political awareness gained in the last few years is essential for confronting the difficulties that the oligarchy's maneuvers pose. Chávez's opponents have tried to destabilize the Bolivarian process and diminish support for the president. This opposition, which still dominates business, media and other key sectors in Venezuelan society, has tried to increase unemployment and artificially create scarcity of basic products like food.

This imposes undue daily suffering, particularly in the poorest layers of the population. The oligarchs thought that this misery and their own relentless anti-Chávez media campaign, which is thoroughly racist and anti-poor, would swing the pendulum of popular support their way. But they were wrong.

The red tide that descended June 6 from the poverty-stricken hills surrounding Caracas and from the many barrios around the nation is rising, by revolutionary ardor that has elevated the human condition through literacy campaigns, health care and employment opportunities. The masses are being organized into armies in defense of the revolution.

This tide, now more prepared and politically aware, has taken up the challenge. They have something that the oligarchy and their masters have never and will never understand: dignity and international solidarity. □

Sindicatos colombianos responden a los ataques:

Caravana internacional intenta desafiar a la represión

Por Berta Joubert-Ceci

SINALTRAINAL, el sindicato colombiano de los trabajadores de la Coca-Cola y otras organizaciones iniciarán la CARAVANA INTERNACIONAL POR LA VIDA DE LOS TRABAJADORES Y TRABAJADORAS COLOMBIANAS del 21 al 25 de junio. Varias delegaciones internacionales ya han dado su apoyo para este evento, incluyendo una de los Estados Unidos.

El propósito de la caravana es de mostrar al mundo el peligro que corren mujeres y hombres valientes que arriesgan sus vidas al defender sus empleos, su diario vivir y sus sindicatos. En ese proceso, ell@s también defienden los derechos humanos y trabajan para construir otra Colombia donde la justicia social, la paz y la solidaridad prevalezcan.

L@s trabajador@s han sido amenazad@s, secuestrad@s, desaparecid@s, apresad@s, torturad@s y hasta asesinad@s por los escuadrones de la muerte de paramilitares que hacen su trabajo para el gobierno colombiano y sus asociados de Wall Street y Washington. Las amenazas y violencia se extienden a sus familiares. Ningún líder sindical o activista está inmune.

Colombia se ha convertido en el país más mortal para los organizadores sindicales. Nueve de 10 líderes sindicales asesinados en todo el mundo mueren en Colombia.

Un reporte recién publicado por la Organización Internacional del Trabajo declaró: “Los trabajadores en Colombia están entre los menos protegidos en el mundo en cuanto a derechos sindicales se refiere.”

Aún así las amenazas no han mermado la lucha de los trabajadores.

Un ejemplo es la huelga del 22 de abril de los trabajadores del petróleo asociados a la Unión Sindical Obrera (USO) contra el intento de privatización de ECOPEPETROL. Esta compañía petrolera fue nacionalizada en 1948 por una huelga de sus trabajadores que puso fin al control de los monopolios internacionales.

El Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez, gran partidario de la política neoliberal de los Estados Unidos, quería rehacer los contratos dándole mayor control a las compañías estadounidenses Chevron-Texaco y Exxon-Mobil y prohibió la huelga.

Los sindicalistas y sus partidarios tuvieron que soportar un clima violento de hostigamiento por más de un mes. Más de 100 miembros de la USO fueron amenazados o destituidos de sus empleos por su participación en la huelga. También hubo persistentes rumores de asesinatos proyectados contra todos los líderes activos en la huelga. En Colombia, esos rumores tienden a materializarse.

Los “rumores” de asesinato estaban dirigidos a los miembros de la directiva nacional de la USO, a SINALTRAINAL, a la organización de los derechos humanos CREDHOS y a la Organización Femenina Popular.

Una nota con amenaza de muerte fue enviada a la casa del líder César Martínez el 26 de mayo, seis horas después de firmado el acuerdo para finalizar la huelga.

Los indígenas son atacados

La violencia se extiende a cualquier persona o grupo que interfiere con la políticas neoliberales del gobierno, ya sea organizando o por solo residir en cualquier parte codiciada por las corporaciones transnacionales para sus “megaproyectos”.

Más de 400 personas indígenas Wayúu fueron removidas recientemente de La Guajira, un departamento en el norte de Colombia rico en petróleo y carbón, junto a la frontera con Venezuela.

En el testimonio de Alberto, un indígena Wayúu, al periódico venezolano, Últimas Noticias del 23 de mayo, se revelan los horribles métodos usados por los paramilitares. “Ay hermano, siento que el corazón se me sale por la boca. Usted no sabe lo que es tener que salir corriendo para que no lo maten y, después escuchar los gritos de los peladitos, de mis dos hijitos a quienes me los quemaron vivos sin que yo pudiera hacer nada”

“Me los mataron, hermano. Los quemaron vivos dentro de mi camioncito. También le cortaron la cabeza a mi mamá y a mis sobrinas las picaron en pedacitos. No les dispararon, sino que las torturaron para que escucháramos sus gritos y mientras tanto con una motosierra las cortaron vivas, hermano.”

Treinta personas Wayúu fueron masacradas para atemorizar al resto de la población y dejarlos incapaces de seguir resistiendo los intentos de las corporaciones y el gobierno de robarles su tierra. Según Prensa Asociada, los Wayúu cruzaron a Venezuela, estableciéndose en un barrio pobre de Maracaibo.

Esto es el procedimiento normal de los paramilitares. Ahora hay una gran preocupación en Colombia de que el plan para la supuesta desmovilización de los paramilitares va a conducir a una ola de violencia de los “paras” más extensa, los cuales pueden ser reclutados por el



Washington, D.C.

El 5 de junio un grupo de venezolan@s partidari@s de la revolución bolivariana en apoyo al presidente Hugo Chávez participó en la marcha en contra de la guerra en Irak. Ell@s marcharon tan militantemente como en Venezuela.

WW FOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

estado como “soldados campesinos” para vigilar a la población.

Las FARC en la mirilla militar de los EE.UU.

Las Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC) es una coalición de paramilitares. Actualmente están en unas falsas “negociaciones de paz” con el presidente Uribe en un intento de callar las denuncias de grupos de derechos humanos internacionales y para facilitar el apoyo de los EE.UU. a la guerra en contra de la lucha sindical, de las comunidades indígenas y de los movimientos insurgentes revolucionarios.

El General James T. Hill, comandante en jefe del Comando Sur del Ejército de los EE.UU., testificó sobre la situación en América Latina ante el Comité de las Fuerzas Armadas del Congreso de los Estados Unidos el pasado 24 de marzo. Dijo: “Los narcoterroristas en Colombia son aún la amenaza más grande y conocida en nuestra región”.

Hill siguió: “Los tres grupos narcoterroristas están en la lista del Departamento de Estado de organizaciones extranjeras terroristas: las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, FARC; el Ejército de Liberación Nacional, ELN; y las Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia, AUC. Las FARC todavía representan la amenaza mayor, compuesta de unos 13.000-15.000 efectivos aproximadamente. Muchos de las AUC, aunque siguen siendo una amenaza y están profundamente involucradas en el narcotráfico, está en negociaciones de paz con el gobierno de Colombia”.

“Narcoterrorista” es un término infame utilizado para implicar falsamente a los grupos Marxistas, las FARC y el ELN en el tráfico de drogas ilegal.

Hill siguió, recordándole al Congreso la importancia de la región andina a los intereses corporativos estadounidenses y como el Pentágono ha estado ayudando a los militares colombianos como parte del Plan Colombia.

La falsa acusación más común en contra de líderes sindicales y otros activistas progresistas, incluyendo campesin@s, afrocolombian@s e indígenas, es que prestan ayuda a los guerrilleros. Tal acusación ha resultado en detenciones masivas en varias regiones del país.

También ha resultado en la penalización de las protestas, las cuales están ocurriendo con más y más frecuencia y con más y más participantes, particularmente las protestas opuestas al Área de Libre Comercio de las Américas, ALCA. El 18 de mayo, durante discusiones sobre el ALCA, varias manifestaciones fueron organizadas en distintas ciudades por una gama de organizaciones y sindicatos.

Unas 60.000 personas marcharon en Bogotá y 20.000 vinieron de otras ciudades desde el sur para concentrarse en Cartagena, la ciudad noroeste sede de las reuniones. La marcha pacífica en Cartagena fue atacada por la policía con balas de goma y gases lacrimógenas.

El pueblo colombiano está bajo un ataque incesante de parte de militares, paramilitares y policía colombiana ayudados por los Estados Unidos. Sin embargo ese pueblo demuestra una continua determinación a luchar a pesar de enfrentar una represión inimaginable impuesta por la “Seguridad Democrática”, el plan de Uribe para eliminar la oposición.

Su valor merece el apoyo internacional. Este es un caso donde la solidaridad puede verdaderamente ser efectiva y salvar vidas. Mientras las noticias de la violencia en contra de líderes sindicales, activistas y comunidades permanezcan dentro de las fronteras colombianas, enfrentarán el exterminio. Sus voces deben ser escuchadas y contestadas por la comunidad internacional.

Para más información sobre la Caravana Internacional por las Vidas de los Trabajadores y Trabajadoras Colombianas, llame al Centro de Acción Internacional a (212) 633-6646, o envíe ímeil al iac-cai@action-mail.org, o haga una visita a www.iacenter.org.

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