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Sit-down victory

Canadian auto workers take over plant, win demands

By Martha Grevatt

After a two-day occupation of a plant near Toronto, Canada, a small local of the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) has won a victory against one of the largest U.S. auto parts suppliers.

When Collins & Aikman declared bankruptcy in May 2005, the company, based in Southfield, Mich., had over 23,000 employees. After closings, layoffs and spinoffs, there are now only 14,000 workers in 45 facilities, producing carpeting and acoustics for the worldwide automotive industry. Among additional plants slated to be shuttered is a factory in Scarborough, Ont.

When it appeared the closing there was a done deal, the CAW negotiated severance packages to help the workers through hard times. When the company appeared to be shutting down early without compensation, workers swung into action. On March 31 about 100 union members stopped production and occupied the plant, while a few hundred more picketed and congregated outside.

The strike shut down the Brampton, Ont., Chrysler plant, which produces the high-end 300 series vehicles.

The sit-down, a first in a U.S. or Canadian plant in a long time, was a page out of labor history. Exactly 70 years after Flint auto workers ignited a wave of workplace occupations, the bosses' fear of seizures reasserted itself.

Mustaq Mohammed, chairperson of Local 303 of the Canadian Auto Workers union, said the union had "inside information" that the company planned to remove equipment from the plant on April 1, meaning the factory would close three months before the

July date the company had given the workers in negotiations.

That's when the workers and union officials took over the plant in a 4:30 a.m. action, welding doors closed and barricading windows. Hundreds of other union members held a solidarity picket outside. (Scarborough Mirror, April 3)

When word spread of the sit-down, auto workers at the Guelph, Ont., Collins & Aikman plant went on a wildcat strike in support. When the Guelph workers walked out, management

1937 fight for 30-hour week

Why we need one now



barricaded the turnstile entrances with chains and steel bars so they couldn't re-enter and sit-in at that plant.

Auto workers at Ingersoll and Oshawa plants, also in Ontario, said that they'd shut down production on Monday, April 2, in a show of solidarity.

By the end of the day on April 1, with the threat of spreading solidarity actions, Collins & Aikman—with a pledge to help from Chrysler—agreed to make the severance payments.

Up until a few days before the 2005 bankruptcy was declared, Collins & Aikman was headed up by David Stockman, architect of the supply side theory behind Reaganomics. But as Marxists know, profits don't trickle down. Workers have to fight for everything and fight again to keep it. If this sit-down and the sit-down of Delphi workers in Spain become a trend, the tide might begin to turn against concessions and demoralization. □



Eyewitness Palestine

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The Apartheid Wall has become a symbol of Israel's brutal land grabs.

WW PHOTO: LESLIE FEINBERG

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Fidel Castro on ethanol & Bush

This week ...



Cuban President Fidel Castro has written an article on ethanol and U.S. President George W. Bush, published in *Granma* newspaper on March 28. The following are excerpts; the full article can be found at www.granma.cu/ingles/.



Fidel Castro

More than three billion people in the world [are] condemned to premature death from hunger and thirst.

That is not an exaggerated figure, but rather a cautious one. I have meditated a lot on that in the wake of President Bush's meeting with U.S. automobile manufacturers.

The sinister idea of converting food to fuel was definitively established as an economic line in U.S. foreign policy last March 26.

The AP states: "President Bush touted the benefits of 'flexible fuel' vehicles running on ethanol and biodiesel on Monday, meeting with automakers to boost support for his energy plans.

"Bush said a commitment by the leaders of the domestic auto industry to double their production of flex-fuel vehicles could help motorists shift away from gasoline and reduce the nation's reliance on imported oil.

"That's a major technological breakthrough for the country," Bush said after inspecting three alternative vehicles. If the nation wants to reduce gasoline use, he said, 'the consumer has got to be in a position to make a rational choice.'

"They discussed support for flex-fuel vehicles, attempts to develop ethanol from alternative sources like switch-grass and wood chips and the administration's proposal to reduce gas consumption by 20 percent in 10 years."

I believe that reducing and moreover recycling all motors that run on electricity and fuel is an elemental and urgent need for all humanity. The tragedy does not lie in reducing those energy costs but in the idea of converting food into fuel.

It is known very precisely today that one ton of corn can only produce 413 liters of ethanol on average, according to densities. That is equivalent to 109 gallons.

The average price of corn in U.S. ports has risen to \$167 per ton. Thus, 320 million tons of corn would be required to produce 35 billion gallons of ethanol.

According to FAO figures, the U.S. corn harvest rose to 280.2 million tons in the year 2005.

Although the president is talking of producing fuel

derived from grass or wood shavings, anyone can understand that these are phrases totally lacking in realism. Let's be clear: 35 billion gallons translates into 35 followed by nine zeros!

Afterwards will come beautiful examples of what experienced and well-organized U.S. farmers can achieve in terms of human productivity by hectare: corn converted into ethanol; the chaff from that corn converted into animal feed containing 26 percent protein; cattle dung used as raw material for gas production.

Of course, this is after voluminous investments only within the reach

of the most powerful enterprises, in which everything has to be moved on the basis of electricity and fuel consumption. Apply that recipe to the countries of the Third World and you will see that people among the hungry masses of the Earth will no longer eat corn. Or something worse: lend funding to poor countries to produce corn ethanol based on corn or any other food and not a single tree will be left to defend humanity from climate change.

Other countries in the rich world are planning to use not only corn but also wheat, sunflower seeds, rapeseed and other foods for fuel production. For the Europeans, for example, it would become a business to import all of the world's soybeans with the aim of reducing the fuel costs for their automobiles and feeding their animals with the chaff from that legume, particularly rich in all types of essential amino acids.

In Cuba, alcohol used to be produced as a byproduct of the sugar industry after having made three extractions of sugar from cane juice. Climate change is already affecting our sugar production. Lengthy periods of drought alternating with record rainfall, that barely make it possible to produce sugar with an adequate yield during the 100 days of our very moderate winter; hence, there is less sugar per ton of cane or less cane per hectare due to prolonged drought in the months of planting and cultivation.

I understand that in Venezuela they would be using alcohol to improve the environmental quality of their own fuel. In Cuba the use of such a technology for the direct production of alcohol from sugar cane juice is no more than a dream. In our country, land handed over to the direct production of alcohol could be much useful for food production for the people and for environmental protection.

All the countries of the world, rich and poor, without any exception, could save millions and millions of dollars in investment and fuel simply by changing all the incandescent light bulbs for fluorescent ones, an exercise that Cuba has carried out in all homes throughout the country. That would provide a breathing space to resist climate change without killing the poor masses through hunger.

Today, we are seeing for the first time a really globalized economy and a dominant power in the economic, political and military terrain.

There are other issues that could be addressed, but with these lines I am just trying to comment on President Bush's meeting with the principal executives of U.S. automakers.

Translated by Granma International

April 24, Mumia's birthday Be in Philly! Save the date!

Be at the Clef Club, 738 S. Broad St., Philadelphia, PA.

If you can't be in Philly, organize where you are!



- Join:
- Ron Hampton, of the National Association of Black Police Officers;
 - Danny Glover, acclaimed actor and activist;
 - Sonia Sanchez, renowned poet and revolutionary;
 - Linn Washington, award-winning journalist and professor;
 - Harold Wilson, recently exonerated 18 year death row resident;
 - Ramona Africa, MOVE member and May 13, 1985 survivor!

View "Framing an Execution: The Media & Mumia Abu-Jamal" Learn where Mumia's case is at and what we can all do to bring him home!

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Vol. 49, No. 14 • April 12, 2007
Closing date: April 4, 2007
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Workers World (ISSN-1070-4205) is published weekly except the first week of January by WW Publishers, 55 W. 17 St., N.Y., N.Y. 10011. Phone: (212) 627-2994. Subscriptions: One year: \$25; foreign and institutions: \$35. Letters to the editor may be condensed and edited. Articles can be freely reprinted, with credit to Workers World, 55 W. 17 St., New York, NY 10011. Back issues and individual articles are available on microfilm and/or photocopy from University Microfilms International, 300 Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48106. A searchable archive is available on the Web at www.workers.org.

A headline digest is available via e-mail subscription. Send an e-mail message to WWnews-subscribe@workersworld.net. Periodicals postage paid at New York, N.Y. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Workers World, 55 W. 17 St., 5th Floor, New York, N.Y. 10011.

Dems claim vote for war budget is anti-war

By Larry Hales

The Senate on March 29, by a vote of 51-47, passed a bill giving the Pentagon additional funds for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. A week earlier, the House, by a vote of 218-212, had passed a similar emergency supplemental appropriations bill for the fiscal year ending Sept. 30.

The Senate bill approves an additional \$97.5 billion, above the regular Pentagon budget, for the two wars and colonial occupations. It also includes smaller funds for hurricane relief, agricultural aid and other domestic emergencies, adding up to a total of \$123 billion.

Along with the billions for the war, the Senate bill sets a deadline for beginning the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq—120 days after the bill's passage—and a nonbinding deadline for the cessation of combat operations by March 31, 2008. The House bill supposedly calls for combat operations to cease before September 2008.

The votes were overwhelmingly along partisan lines, with Democrats in both houses voting aye and Republicans no. Bush is threatening to veto any final version of the bill that sets a deadline for withdrawal.

It is important for those in the anti-war struggle to understand what both versions

of the bill mean and where this split in the capitalist camp emanates from.

While the capitalist media portray the bill as a line in the sand and Congress as embroiled in an epic struggle, Sen. Barack Obama of Illinois, a Democratic contender in the coming presidential race, said after Bush vowed to veto the bill, "I don't think that we will see a majority of the Senate vote to cut off funding at this stage."

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md., said, "This is not any precipitous withdrawal."

He says that the war funding would go ahead even if the withdrawal timeline were removed.

The Senate bill would also allow U.S. troops to stay in Iraq indefinitely to 1) protect U.S. and "coalition" personnel and infrastructure; 2) train and equip Iraqi forces, and 3) conduct targeted "counter-terrorism" operations.

Obviously, for the war to be stopped immediately, funding would have to be stopped cold. That's not happening at all. The Democratic Party is just trying to position itself in a favorable light with the people for next year's presidential elections.

It doesn't want to anger the bosses, nor the masses that are calling for the troops to be brought home now, so it is continuing its anti-war charade. Any attempt to cor-

ral the masses behind the Democrats in the coming election is sheer opportunism and would be the death knell for any organization that is truly anti-war.

The bill also seeks "benchmarks" that would have to be met by the puppet Iraqi regime; progress toward withdrawal would be contingent on the regime meeting those benchmarks. The benchmarks will be part of a classified campaign meant to shore up the regime for U.S. interests. This campaign, says the bill, "shall be implemented as part of a comprehensive diplomatic, political, and economic strategy that includes sustained engagement with Iraq's neighbors and the international community for the purpose of working collectively to bring stability to Iraq."

After supporting the first Gulf War, having supported years of brutal sanctions responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi children, and after sanctioning the Bush administration's drive to war by voting for each and every Pentagon budget and war funding bill, the Democratic Party wants to appear to be changing course now.

Last November it gained control of the Senate and House of Representatives because of the failing U.S. military adventures in Iraq and Afghanistan, where the resistance has grown stronger. But it is still Republican-lite. It is a capitalist par-

ty, and has been throughout its history.

What November and the current debates in Congress reveal is a rift in the capitalist class. The rift has developed because the Iraqi people have refused to go along with the designs of U.S. imperialism. Also, the rise of the people of the Arab world, Latin America, Africa and Asia, emboldened by the heroic Iraqi resistance, challenges U.S. corporate interests around the world.

The U.S. imperialist colossus, with the greatest military in history, is reeling. But it is as dangerous as ever, perhaps even more so, because it knows it cannot win and is looking to save face.

In addition, the approval ratings of this current administration are at their lowest and more and more people are awakening each day.

Talking about the meaning of elections in a capitalist democracy, Frederick Engels said long ago: "Universal suffrage is thus the gauge of the maturity of the working class. It cannot and never will be anything more in the modern state." ("Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State")

The duty of anti-imperialists and revolutionaries then is to expose this rift, widen it and break it open by actively resisting and charging forward together with the most oppressed in this society. □

Injustice Department

Flap over firings distracts from bigger crimes

By Brenda Ryan

What's the ruling class's latest, biggest crime? From the furious sputtering of Democratic politicians you'd think it was the Bush administration's firing of seven federal prosecutors. They've denounced the dismissals in congressional hearings and called for Attorney General Alberto Gonzales to resign.

But all the outrage on Capital Hill distracts from the bigger crime that's just been committed: the votes in Congress to provide an extra \$124 billion to fund the war on Iraq. The Democrats are calling this a victory because they included a provision to withdraw troops by Aug. 31, 2008. But that's a deception. The vote continues the war, and one minute more of the occupation is a crime.

By focusing on the firings the Democrats are trying to show they are going after corrupt Republicans. It's really just internal squabbling between the two parties. You won't see a picket line with people demanding the ousted prosecutors be brought back. While they may not be "loyal Bushies," as Gonzales' former chief of staff D. Kyle Sampson puts it, these prosecutors do the bidding of the state.

The federal prosecutors were dismissed in December without being given any reason. When Congress began a probe of the purge, Gonzales deputy Paul McNulty testified at a March hearing that the firings were "performance-related." Another Justice Department official elaborated, saying that Carol Lam, the fired U.S. attorney from San Diego, hadn't handled enough immigration prosecutions. Lam testified that the number of immigration cases had fallen because she was following Justice Department orders to try to get longer sentences, and thus was taking fewer cases to trial.

USA Today reported on March 21 that Lam actually ranked seventh among the nation's 93 U.S. attorneys in successful prosecutions last year, and that she handled more immigration prosecutions than any other type of case.

So why was this zealous persecutor of immigrants fired?

The real reason she was targeted for removal was because she successfully prosecuted former Republican Rep. Randy "Duke" Cunningham for taking \$2.4 million in bribes from defense contractors. Lam had also begun investigating the CIA's No. 3 official, Dusty Foggo.

David Iglesias, a former New Mexico U.S. attorney, testified that two Republican members of Congress—Sen. Pete Domenici and Rep. Heather Wilson—had leaned on him to unseal indictments in a probe involving a Democratic state legislator before the November elections. And another prosecutor—this one in Little Rock, Ark.—was removed to make way for Tim Griffin, a former aide of White House adviser Karl Rove.

Gonzales is under attack for backing the firings. He initially said he wasn't involved in deciding whom to dismiss, but at a March 29 congressional hearing Sampson, his former chief of staff, said Gonzales's claims of ignorance were "not accurate."

Democrats may now sound concerned about justice, but they shrugged off Gonzales's real crimes. As White House counsel, he advocated torturing prisoners from Iraq and Afghanistan. In a January 2005 memo to President George W. Bush he said the Geneva Convention on the treatment of prisoners of war did not apply to members of al-Qaeda and the Taliban. He said restricting the methods of interrogation was "obsolete"

and some of the convention's provisions "quaint." None of that stood in the way of the Senate confirming his appointment to attorney general.

Gonzales would also do away with parts of the Constitution. At a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing in January he was asked about the Supreme Court's ruling that prisoners held at Guantanamo Bay have a right to habeas corpus—the ability to challenge unlawful imprisonment—in U.S. courts. Gonzales declared that there is no express right of habeas corpus in the United States, even though the Constitution states that the privilege of habeas corpus "shall not be suspended" except in cases of rebellion or invasion of public safety.

Gonzales isn't the first to dismiss habeas corpus. Death row prisoners lost their

right to habeas corpus under the 1996 anti-terrorism law passed during the Clinton administration.

The firing of the federal prosecutors has little impact on workers, but the war funding allows the killing of Iraqi people and the diversion of money desperately needed to meet the needs of the people at home.

Millions have been laid off and forced into low-paying jobs. Health-care coverage and pensions have been cut or eliminated. Rents and mortgages have skyrocketed. Education is out of reach for millions. And undocumented workers are facing raids, deportation and abuse.

It will take more than a Democratic Congress to stop the war on Iraq and the attacks on the workers and oppressed at home. □

Tribute to Safiya Bukhari

A tribute to Safiya Bukhari was held March 30 at St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Harlem. Bukhari, a Black Panther, member of the Black Liberation Army and citizen of the Republic of New Afrika, died four years ago. After a delicious meal, speakers told of experiences they had working with her. They spoke of her love, courage and dedication to the struggle. She was a tireless worker who always did what was needed or marshaled others. So great was her moral authority that when she suggested to a group of students in 1995 that New York be plastered with the face of Mumia Abu-Jamal in response to the death warrant just signed to silence him, students she had recently met worked tirelessly for weeks and carried it out.

Two young women, Sala and Desiree, sang beautiful and soulful songs; then



video clips of Bukhari were shown. She was co-founder and leader of both the Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Coalition in New York and the Jericho Movement. Sister/warrior Safiya Bukhari presente!

—Richard Kosali

70 years after Flint sit-down

Workers need 30-hour week more than ever

By Martha Grevatt

The Flint sit-down strike of 1937 was organized around eight key demands. It was settled with the granting of one: union recognition. The others, such as seniority rights and a set hourly wage, are taken for granted by today's autoworkers.

Yet there is one demand that, 70 years later, no union in the U.S. has won: a six-hour day!

The concept of a 30-hour workweek was raised at least as early as 1922 during a national strike of coal miners. In 1932, in the midst of the Great Depression, the Black-Connery bill was introduced in the U.S. Senate as a means to put the millions of unemployed back to work. The bill would have required employers to pay time and a half after 30 hours; it also established a minimum wage and set limits on child labor.

Even the conservative head of the American Federation of Labor, William Green, was pushing hard for the bill. The unemployed had become so desperate that President Franklin D. Roosevelt's predecessor, Herbert Hoover, had seen the shorter workweek as unavoidable.

Black-Connery passed the Senate with the backing of Roosevelt, but he later caved in to business pressure and withdrew support. The bill failed the House by the slimmest of margins.

The idea had caught workers' imaginations, though, and couldn't be legislated away so easily. In 1934 both the San Francisco longshore workers' strike and the national textile strike kept the 30-hour week demand alive. Other workers during the 1930s struck for a 35-hour week. Rubber workers in Akron, due to the pace and the heavy nature of their jobs, worked only six-hour shifts. When they launched the sit-down movement in early 1936, it was in protest over having to work eight hours.

By 1937, most autoworkers were still out of work at least part of the year. When they worked, the increasing pace of the assembly line made even eight hours of work physically and mentally unbearable. So, as fantastic as it seems now, it was perfectly natural under those conditions for GM's wage slaves to demand a 30-hour week.

For over a century a shorter work week had been the crucial demand of the labor movement, a matter of life and death for which many brave workers gave their lives. As early as 1825, carpenters in Boston struck

for a 10-hour day; 10 years later children struck the silk mills in Paterson, N.J., for an 11-hour day. In 1877 the five Haymarket martyrs were hung in Chicago, framed up on murder charges stemming from the struggle a year earlier for the eight-hour day. May Day commemorates this historic battle.

In 1938 the Fair Labor Standards Act was finally passed, establishing not the 30 but the 40-hour work week, after which employers would have to pay time and a half. The 1938 version of Black-Connery was so watered down that the brother of the now deceased William Connery suggested the senator's name be removed from the bill.

How were the masses of unemployed, whom Black-Connery was ostensibly designed to help, supposed to find work? What happened to those 10 hours needed for rest and leisure?

The workers on the line hungered

a willingness to work longer hours to attain them. Charles Kettering of GM remarked that "[t]he key to economic prosperity is the organized creation of dissatisfaction."

In the eight decades since Cowdrick proclaimed his "gospel," the high-tech revolution has accelerated the speed of the productive forces to unimaginable levels. The hours of labor needed to produce an automobile have been reduced to a fraction of what they were at the time of the sit-down strikes. Automation and robotics have reduced the workforce to less than half its peak strength of 1.5 million in the 1970s.

The false promise of automation was more leisure time. Even a Senate subcommittee in 1965 projected a 22-hour workweek in 20 years and a 14-hour workweek by the 21st century.

The opposite has happened. The average U.S. worker in 2000 worked 199 hours—five weeks—more per year than in 1973. Statistics from the International Labor Organization show U.S. workers put in nine weeks more than their West European counterparts.

Vulnerable oppressed workers—especially immigrant workers—must work long hours yet can barely make ends meet. Employers use the fear of deportation as a form of intimidation, and often do not pay time and a half for overtime.

The negative effects of overwork are many. The most obvious is the direct correlation between rising productivity and a shrinking workforce.

The health consequences are drawing the attention of an alarmed medical community. A study covering the years 1987 to 2000 showed that half of all occupation injuries involved working over 40 hours. The risk of automobile injury while driving home likewise goes up.

Overwork has been found to increase the risk of hypertension by up to 29 percent for a 51-hour week.

Besides damaging the health of the workers, it even causes potential harm to the environment: studies show a tendency to consume fast food, with its excessive packaging, and to not take time to recycle.

Just as well documented as the detrimental effects of overwork are the economic benefits of shorter hours. When the 35-hour week was implemented in France in the 1990s, an estimated 400,000 jobs were created. In 1988 a UAW study concluded that if the Big Three auto companies simply cut overtime and held hourly workers to 40 hours per week, it would create 88,000 jobs.

Since 1938 not one piece of legislation has attempted to regulate hours of labor. We need a shorter workweek! What could be a more fitting tribute to the heroic Flint sit-downers and the Haymarket martyrs than to raise a slogan: "Thirty-hour day! No cut in pay!" □

LABOR HISTORY



for rest, the unemployed hungered for work, but the bosses hungered for profits. They could live with a 40-hour week—they knew that some leisure time would encourage spending—but the 30-hour week was something they wanted no part of and lobbied heavily against.

'Gospel of consumption'

Business leaders had a plan to get workers to forget about that hugely popular notion. In 1927 economist Edward Cowdrick advocated for a "new economic gospel of consumption." The idea gained steam in the 1930s as a counterweight to the 30-hour week. The plan was to flood the market with consumer goods, creating an artificial "need" for things and

ON THE PICKET LINE

By Sue Davis

CSU faculty votes to strike

When 8,000 faculty members at California State University voted on March 21, a huge majority—95 percent—voted to strike. The California Faculty Association, which represents a total of 24,000 instructors and professors at the biggest four-year university system in the country, called for the strike vote because the administration had failed to negotiate a decent contract after nearly two years of deliberations. The last contract expired in July 2005. The main issue: pay.

The union noted that SCU faculty make 18 percent less than colleagues at comparable universities. That gap could easily be eliminated, say union leaders, given that Moody's just reported Cal State has cash reserves of \$1.2 billion. (New York Times, March 22)

The CFA announced on March 28 that if an acceptable contract wasn't reached by April 6 it would strike at six of SCU's 23 campuses and then initiate a "rolling strike" at the remaining campuses. (presstelegram.com, March 29) A walkout at SCU would be the biggest in the history of U.S. higher education.

In an unrelated campus struggle, custodians represented by AFSCME Local 3299 on four campuses in the University of California system are fighting for a living wage. For example, a custodian who has been at UC Berkeley for five years makes only \$12 per hour, while a custodian who has worked the same amount of time, doing almost the exact same duties, at nearby Peralta Community College makes \$18 per hour. The custodians' struggle is supported by UC faculty, students and community leaders.

Milwaukee janitors struggle

On March 22, Milwaukee's Common Council voted unanimously for a resolution supporting janitors' right to organize. The resolution puts the spotlight on the struggle waged by the Service Employees union's Justice for Janitors campaign in both Milwaukee and Madison to unionize janitors who currently have no health insurance and are paid very low wages. On the same day, members of SEIU Local 1 led a march from City Hall to two buildings serviced by Clean Power, the biggest unorganized janitorial contractor in Wisconsin, to expose the company's bad labor practices.

Miss. strikers lose medical coverage

Health insurance for more than 7,000 workers at the Ingalls shipyard in Pascagoula, Miss., ran out March 31 when their contract expired. Now if workers need insurance, shipyard owner Northrop Grumman is offering them plans that cost more than \$800 a month.

One of the top reasons the workers have been on strike since March 9 is because they don't want to pay a \$50-a-month increase in their health insurance premiums, and they want new vision and dental coverage. Hurting since prices of everything from rent to milk were jacked up after Hurricane Katrina, the workers are holding out against Grumman, a major military contractor that reported revenues of \$30.7 billion in 2005. For Grumman \$50 a month—or a total of \$35,000 for 7,000 workers—doesn't even amount to petty cash. But it sure makes a difference in the health and well-being of workers who have to pay \$4.19 for a gallon of milk.

Writers for Mumia celebrating upcoming Birthday for Mumia

The New York Chapter of the National Writers Union has issued a call, **WRITERS FOR MUMIA**, in preparing to host a birthday celebration for renowned journalist and political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal.

The event is scheduled to take place on **Saturday, May 12** Community Church of New York, 40 E. 35th St., New York, NY (near Park Ave.) 1 pm to 5 pm

All poets, fiction and non-fiction writers interested in participating contact Susan E. Davis (sednyc@earthlink.net) There'll be a ten-minute restriction on speakers.



Continued on page 5

Retailer cuts wages with mass layoff

By Larry Hales

On March 28, Circuit City Stores Inc., the second largest electronics retail store in the U.S., announced that it would lay off 3,400 workers—8 percent of its workforce. The company employs a total of 46,000 people in the U.S. and Canada. (Bloomberg News Service, March 28)

The announcement didn't come with the usual explanation of store closings or reduced store hours, but with a bare-knuckled axiom of the profit system. The stores are staying open, but, according to company spokesperson Bill Cimino, the workers are being fired because they were being paid "well above" market rates (Bloomberg, March 29); after 10 weeks, workers can reapply for their old jobs at less pay. (San Diego Union Tribune, March 29)

Though Circuit City had slated 70 stores for closing in February, with a loss of some 400 jobs, this current round of layoffs is not related to those store closings.

The 3,400 workers being laid off will purportedly lower Circuit City's expenses by \$110 million for 2008. This fact, along

with an 8 percent growth of sales that is forecast to grow to 10 percent, and a 20 percent drop in the price of its shares over the past 12 months, is the reason given for the layoffs. The company's stock rose 1.9 percent after the announcement.

However, Circuit City boss Phillip Schoonover will not be required to reapply for his job for lower pay. He will continue to reap \$8.52 million—including a \$975,000 salary—a year.

The average pay for the fired workers was not released, but the starting pay of a Circuit City employee is around \$8 an hour and the average pay, according to Circuit City, is \$10 to \$11 an hour. How low does the company want wages to go?

What the layoffs mean for workers

Rachelle Gouled, a worker who earns \$7.75 an hour on the sale floor of a Roseville, Minn., Circuit City said of 10 coworkers who were fired, "For some of them, I could see them being OK without this job. For others, it was their only job." (Associated Press, March 29)

More than 32,000 people live in

Roseville, a suburb north of St. Paul and east of Minneapolis. Before taxes, a full-time worker on the job 40 hours a week and making \$10 an hour would earn \$19,200 a year. The per capita income for Roseville in 1999 was \$27,755 and the median household income was \$51,056.

The per capita income for the state of Minnesota is \$23,198 and the median household income for the state is \$47,111.

The cost of living in Roseville is greater than the national average. The cost of living index there is 115.8 compared to a national average of 100. The cost of health-care is 32 percent higher in Roseville than the U.S. average.

The cost of living index measures purchasing power and takes into account the earnings needed to sustain a standard of living. It is used to compare different areas or different periods of time.

So a wage of \$10 an hour in Roseville buys less than in most other parts of the country.

Capitalism the cause

Circuit City's losses in the stock mar-

ket are a sign of the vagaries of capitalist society. Wages are decreasing and can buy less and less while profits continue to soar and the price of goods and services remains the same or greatly increases. As more workers get laid off or have their wages cut, Circuit City's sales will likely fall off because the workers can't buy their goods; thus, the crisis will deepen. Because of the unplanned character of the capitalist system, the capitalist class has no answer.

This example of Circuit City is merely a small instance, though looming large for those affected, of what is happening around the country and what is in store.

The drive for profit means misery for workers and double misery for oppressed nationalities, since the racism that is inherent to the system means that the most vulnerable will bear the brunt.

The labor movement and all those opposed to capitalist exploitation need to show solidarity to the Circuit City workers and demand a freeze on all layoffs and the hiring back of all those fired at their old wages. □

ON THE PICKET LINE

Continued from page 4

Women say Miller's discriminates

On March 8, International Working Women's Day, members of Office and Professional Employees Local 35 filed discrimination charges against Miller Brewing Co. with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Equal Rights Division of the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development.

Miller, which is owned by the South African Brewery, is attempting to impose a pension freeze on the 122 mostly women workers, whose average age is 53 with over 20 years of service with the company. Local 35 is charging discrimination because Miller already negotiated contracts without freezes—but with higher pension provisions, no less!—for six other predominantly male unions.

The gutsy union has staged a series of demonstrations exposing Miller's discriminatory practices, including one Feb. 12 when SAB officials visited Miller's Milwaukee headquarters. The latest informational picket line was held March 23 outside a Tavern League of Wisconsin convention in Milwaukee while Miller CEO Norman Adami spoke inside.

Court upholds NWA strike injunction

On March 29, the U.S. Second Circuit Court of Appeals denied flight attendants' appeal of an anti-strike injunction granted to Northwest Airlines in August 2006. While the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA is reviewing the ruling and examining its legal options, it noted in a March 29 news release: "With the denial of this appeal the injunction remains in place and Northwest flight attendants are prohibited from engaging in any form of strike activity. Our right to strike will be restored if or when the courts lift the injunction, or the [National Mediation Board] releases us from mediation and we complete a 30-day cooling-off period without reaching a new agreement." Stay tuned. □

Farm workers target McDonald's next

By Bryan G. Pfeifer

Building on its historic victory against Taco Bell, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) is now demanding that McDonald's honor the precedents won in that successful fight for worker justice.

After a four-year boycott and thousands of actions against Taco Bell, the CIW-Yum! Brands agreement was ratified. It implements a penny-more-per-pound for tomato pickers who harvest for Taco Bell, a first-ever code of conduct for agricultural suppliers that names the CIW as a monitoring body, and complete transparency for Taco Bell's tomato purchases from Florida. Yum! Brands is the parent company of Taco Bell.

The CIW wants McDonald's and other fast-food corporations, such as Burger King and Chipotle Mexican Grill, to follow Taco Bell's lead. It says McDonald's refuses to honor the agreement by ignoring the organization's demands and refusing to respect farm workers' decisions and grievances.

The majority of agricultural workers in Florida and nationwide are immigrants from the Caribbean and Central and Latin America. They are super-exploited in the fields while multi-million-dollar food corporations profit off their sweat and back-breaking labor.

Lucas Benítez of CIW says of the latest protest actions against McDonald's: "Today we are tired, in the words of Martin Luther King Jr., of 'relying on the goodwill and understanding of those who profit by exploiting us.'"

As they did during the Taco Bell struggle, the workers are engaging in many tactics to win their demands. They will march on the corporation's world headquarters in Oak Brook, Ill., a suburb of Chicago, on April 13. The all-day presence will begin at 8 a.m. A 4 p.m. rally will feature Tom Morello and Zack de la Rocha, formerly of Rage Against the Machine, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney, Dolores Huerta of the United Farm Workers, Rev. Michael Livingston of the National Council of Churches and Eliseo Medina of the Service Employees International Union.

The headquarters rally is a kickoff to a weekend of activities in the Chicago area

including a Carnival and Parade for Fair Food, Real Rights and Dignity on April 14 at Chicago's Federal Plaza. This festive and colorful event—taking the place of a traditional protest march—will loop around the Rock 'n Roll McDonald's and return to Federal Plaza for a celebratory rally featuring CIW members, allies and a dynamic lineup of well-known artists, musicians and speakers. The Parade and Carnival will be composed of blocks, contingents, music groups and theater organized by the CIW and allies.

A McDonald's Truth Tour will begin April 7 in Immokalee, Fla., a region

where many of the major food corporations purchase their tomatoes and other crops. The tour with CIW members and allies will travel through the South and Midwest, arriving in Chicago on April 10 and returning to Florida on April 17.

All these events are "to raise the consciousness of the public," Benítez said. "It's also to shed light on the greed of this corporation that doesn't want to respect even the most basic human rights."

Hundreds of individuals and organizations have endorsed the CIW actions against McDonald's, including many youth and students—a population that played a pivotal role in bringing Taco Bell to the table with CIW—as this corporation does business at hundreds of college campuses or near them.

On March 28 a letter was sent to McDonald's CEO Jim Skinner advising him to "not underestimate our tenacity or the proven strength of our alliance with Florida's farm workers." The letter was signed by the Student/Farmworker Alliance, United Students Against Sweatshops, United States Student Association, Student Labor Action Project, National Latino/a Law Student Association, United Students for Fair Trade, Student Action with Farmworkers, Student Environmental Action Coalition and the Living Wage Action Coalition.

The student letter came only a week after 185 religious leaders sent their own letter to McDonald's.

For more information, including logistics, transportation and "truth tour" dates, go to www.ciw-online.org. □

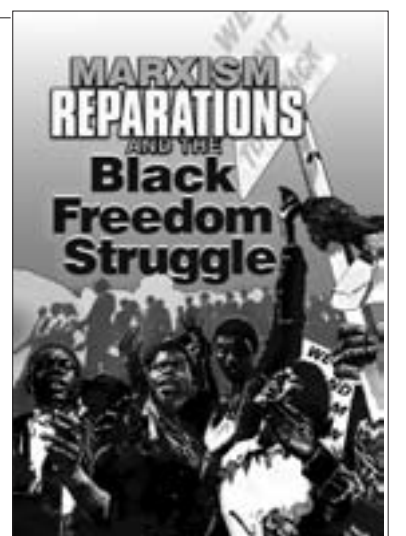


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Longshore workers say:

All out on May Day! Support immigrant rights

By Judy Greenspan
San Francisco

Longshore workers on the West Coast have passed a resolution supporting national May Day actions for immigrant and workers' rights. The International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) took solidarity a step further by announcing a work stoppage in major West Coast ports on May 1 to support and participate in the "Great American Boycott II."

This year, longshore workers will stop all work in the California ports of Oakland, San Francisco, Richmond, Benicia and Redwood City, as well as in Seattle, Wash. Locally, the ILWU Local 10 Drill Team will perform at the May Day protest.

According to Clarence Thomas, past secretary-treasurer of Local 10 and coordinator of its Saving Lives Campaign, who spoke with this reporter, "Last year, we not only supported all of the demands of the immigrant workers' movement but we fought for the defense of longshore jobs against a similar right-wing attack."

Last year, with the passage and implementation of the Maritime Transportation Security Act of 2002, under the guise of "national security" veteran longshore workers found themselves being questioned about past felony convictions, medical and mental health conditions and political affiliations.

The union was able to remove some of the worst elements of the government witchhunt from the Maritime Act. However, longshore workers still have to face scrutiny from Homeland Security before being issued a Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC), which is needed now to work on the docks.

"We strongly oppose the criminalization of immigrant workers and see the similarity with government attempts to criminalize our union members," Thomas added.

The resolution passed by ILWU Local 10 in San Francisco and ILWU Local 19 in Seattle reads:



WHEREAS, Local 10 adopted a resolution for our April 2005 Longshore Caucus reclaiming May Day (May 1st) which commemorates the struggle for the 8 (eight) hour work day in the United States;

WHEREAS, Local 10 endorsed May 1st, 2006, and participated in the Great American Boycott to protest the criminalization of immigrant workers by legislation such as HR4437 and the Marine Transportation Security Acts criminal background checks on dock workers;

WHEREAS, On May 1st, 2006, 90 percent of the container cargo at the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach was halted as the result of immigrant truckers not going to work;

WHEREAS, Agribusinesses such as Tyson Foods and Cargill closed down several of their plants in anticipation of immigrant workers not going to work on May 1, 2006, in support of immigrant rights;

WHEREAS, Our own Harry Bridges, an Australian immigrant worker, faced four prosecutions by the U.S. government, was wrongfully convicted, illegally imprisoned, fraudulently stripped of his citizenship, and his attorneys sent to jail for defending him;

WHEREAS, ILWU in 2008, will start very difficult contract negotiations with the employer which requires we start to mobilize our members and build coalitions; and

WHEREAS, Hornblower Cruises has yet to hire skilled and experienced ILWU and other union ferry workers as well as to negotiate a fair contract;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the membership instruct Local 10's president to convey our intentions of having our stop work meeting on Tuesday, May 1st, 2007, at 9 a.m. to Pacific Maritime Association;

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Local 10 partici-

pates in the Great American Boycott II, in support of workers and immigrant rights, including the workers of Hornblower Cruises, on May Day, 2007, and that the ILWU Local 10 Drill Team perform; and

THEREFORE BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be sent to all ILWU locals, the International, and affiliated central labor councils.

The longshore workers have a long history of support and involvement in working class and progressive struggles.

"Our seven decades of ILWU militant unionism shows that we understand the significance of international labor solidarity," Thomas said. He pointed out that the ILWU emerged out of the 1934 San Francisco General Strike.

It was the first union to oppose U.S. intervention in Vietnam in 1964. The longshore workers took a strong stand against apartheid and refused to handle South African cargo in the 1970s and 1980s. It also refused to load bomb parts or military cargo destined for Chile and El Salvador during that time.

"The ILWU was founded by Harry Bridges, an immigrant worker from Australia, who was hounded by the U.S. government because of his militant trade unionism and political beliefs," Thomas explained. "We will always continue to embrace the aspirations of all workers, organized or unorganized," the union leader said. "We have the same mandate as the immigrant workers' movement and we will march side by side on May Day," Thomas added.

Besides being a leader of the ILWU, Thomas is also national co-chair of the Million Worker Movement. As coordinator of the ILWU's Saving Lives Campaign, Thomas leads union efforts to reduce diesel fuel emissions at 29 ports on the West Coast. □

Women's struggles honored in Boston

The struggles of women from New Orleans to Iraq to New Bedford, Mass., were honored on March 31 at an indoor International Women's Day rally sponsored by the Boston Women's Fightback Network.

Celenia Toledo (pictured here) spoke about the deadly impact that racism and the oppression facing immigrants have on women's health.

Many women's struggles were represented on the program, which was chaired by Mia Campbell and Mahtowin Munro and attended by more than 100 people. Speakers included Nan Genger (WFN), Jessica Tang (INCITE—Women of Color Against Violence), Sonja Chery (Boston Workers Alliance), Dorotea Manuela (Boston May Day Coalition), Khitam Edelbi (Palestinian educator, actress and student), Kaveri Rajaraman (Alliance for a Democratic and Secular South Asia; Global Women's Strike), Susan Mortimer (Statewide Harm Reduction Coalition), and Sara Mokuria (student activist, Committee for Justice for Hector Rivas).

Liza Green gave a moving tribute to Rachel Nasca, a WFN founder and lifelong activist who recently died. An exciting highlight of the program was a performance by artist/poet/rapper Natural Bliss. □



PHOTO: LIZ GREEN

'Stop raids and deportations'

By Bryan G. Pfeifer
Milwaukee

A March 24 rally at Milwaukee's Mitchell Park demanded: "Stop the raids and deportations" and "Legalization for all." It was sponsored by Voces de la Frontera, a progressive community-based organization that educates and organizes low-wage workers and also operates the Centro de Trabajadores Workers' Center on Milwaukee's south side, where the majority of

the county's 100,000 Latin@s live.

A kickoff for many spring actions, the rally drew hundreds from across Milwaukee and beyond. The main banner, which read, "To work hard and overtime is not a crime," was bolstered by handmade signs reading: "Stop the war on the poor; Stop the war on Iraq," "No raids," "No deportations" and "Immigrant rights: Human rights."

"Please wake up. It's time to do something. We want to stop the raids. We

need to fight for our rights," declared a Latina worker from the main stage. She described how she was rounded up in an August 2006 ICE raid at the Star Packaging manufacturing plant in Whitewater, Wis., about an hour southwest of Milwaukee, by local Whitewater police and other local and federal agencies. She described being jailed for days, unable to earn sorely needed wages while her children and many others suffered severe trauma and terror.

One child's sign read, "Please bring my mommy and daddy back." In an emotional moment, many dozens of children came forward to light candles at the speakers' stage in honor and remembrance of those deported, raided and terrorized.

Another Latina worker who spent nine days in jail after the raid at the Whitewater plant said: "We were treated worse than an animal. We need support."

The owner of Star Packaging also spoke about the raids at his and other small businesses in Whitewater. He said: "This was all racial profiling. They [the U.S. government] are destroying families." The owner said that about 100 workers toiled at his plant at the time of the raid; now about nine are working there.

Between the main talks chants of "Si se puede!" electrified the crowd.

The immigrants' call for unity and solidarity had been heeded by a broad cross-section of unions and other progressive organizations from Milwaukee whose representatives attended, spoke and supported the mostly Latin@ immigrants under siege by the U.S. government.

Organized labor—including representatives of the Federation of Teachers local at the Milwaukee Area Technical College, Service Employees Local 150 and United Electrical Local 1103—pledged support. So did Peace Action Wisconsin, the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement, the International Action Center-Milwaukee and the Milwaukee Bolivarian Circle. Many youths, students and whole families participated in the rally.

The rally was the beginning of spring actions. This month families facing deportation are touring the state to gain support for immigrant rights. On May Day a statewide immigrant rights march in Milwaukee will start at 12 noon from the Voces office.

Other actions this spring are picket lines for workers' rights at various businesses, a Voces fundraiser and more. Tens of thousands of leaflets are being distributed and much other outreach is under way. For more information, contact Voces at 414-643-1620. □

How U.S. bankers underdeveloped Mexico

Below is an excerpt from Sam Marcy's book "High Tech, Low Pay," published by Workers World Party in 1986.

The U.S. bankers not long ago showed great eagerness to extend loans to Mexico in connection with the extraction and production for sale of its oil. Oil seemed the answer to all the burning questions of economic development and the means to make a real leap forward from underdevelopment to becoming a developed industrial country. This has not happened.

The collapse of oil on a worldwide scale has only emphasized the monocultural aspect of oil production. It does not create in and of itself the necessary scientific and technological infrastructure to build a modern industrialized country.

Of course it is helpful for any country to find oil or any other natural resource. But as in the case of Nigeria, Venezuela, Indonesia and other countries (with the exception of Saudi Arabia and some of the Gulf states), the development of its oil resources did not make any substantial difference once the capitalist crisis overtook Mexico.

On the contrary, the introduction of capitalist technology has not decreased poverty but has disrupted existing social relations, accelerating the so-called illegal immigration of Mexicans into the U.S. The so-called immigration problem does not lend itself to solutions merely on the basis of the development of the oil industry, in which the imperialist countries, particularly the U.S., were most eager to participate. It should be remembered that the border itself is the product of a war of conquest by the U.S. against Mexico, and that millions of Mexican people inhabited the Southwest before it was annexed to the United States.

Oil is an extractive industry where the banks realize lucrative super-profits by making abundant loans readily available. The same does not apply when it comes to capital for the broad scientific and technological infrastructure needed to really develop the country given the contemporary stage of the scientific-technological revolution. The incubus of private ownership in the means of production, of subordination and control by imperialist monopolies, makes it prohibitive from the vantage point of imperialist interests.

Last year alone [1986--ed.], the U.S. government forcibly deported a million workers to Mexico. The immigration problem cannot be solved on the basis of the contemporary imperialist relationship between the U.S. and Mexico. It requires a reorientation of the productive forces. But this is impossible when all of the great advances in science and technology are kept under lock and key in the citadels of imperialist power, which only occasionally let some of them trickle through and then only on the basis of continuing dependence.

What is said in respect to Mexico applies equally to the Caribbean countries.

The hodgepodge of aid, of grants, even of the "generous" kind, so-called, in the long run is of no avail in the face of the widening gulf between the dependent countries and the metropolitan imperialist centers. Only a thoroughgoing socialist revolution can overcome the effects of imperialist bondage and get rid of the incubus of monopoly-capitalist private property. This is the only way to unearth the secrets which science and invention are daily yielding up but which are misused by the vested, predatory, monopoly capitalist interests. □

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4:00 pm Union Square Park

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Marching to Federal Plaza/ Foley Square
(Site of the African Burial Ground)



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Interview with Cepeda Castro

Colombians accuse gov't of ties to death squads

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

Several Colombians who had traveled to Washington, D.C., primarily to expose their government's crimes against its people, testified in early March at a hearing of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States.

One of those testifying was Iván Cepeda Castro. His father, Manuel Cepeda Vargas, had been assassinated on the morning of Aug. 9, 1994, while riding in a car on his way to Congress in the Colombian capital, Santa Fe de Bogotá.

Cepeda Vargas was a senator elected by popular vote and representing the party Unión Patriótica (Patriotic Union). The UP was an electoral formation, initiated by the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) in 1984, that brought together progressive opposition organizations and individuals hoping to build a democratic country where social and economic justice and peace would prevail.

In spite of written agreements with the government of then President Belisario Betancourt to guarantee the free exercise of electoral campaigns, more than 3,000 UP members were assassinated, tortured, disappeared, displaced and arbitrarily detained. These crimes and their perpetrators remain unpunished.

In 1999, a Special Circuit Court in Bogotá found two former Colombian Army lower-ranking officers guilty in the killing of Cepeda Vargas. Infamous narco-trafficker Carlos Castaño was found to be the intellectual author of the murder. Now, for the first time, the Colombian government, represented by Interior Minister María Isabel Nieto and Ambassador to the OAS Camilo Ospina, acknowledged its responsibility in the death of Cepeda Vargas at the Washington hearing.

Workers World spoke with Cepeda Castro about his father's case and the current situation of "para-politics" in Colombia. He is director of the Manuel Cepeda Vargas Foundation, part of a larger national network called the Movement of the Victims of Crimes by the State (MVCS).

Asked his opinion on the Colombian government's statement about his father's murder, Cepeda Castro replied, "In Colombia, the genocide against the political movement UP has meant the assassination and disappearance of at



PHOTO: LATIN AMERICA WORKING GROUP
Ivan Cepeda in front of display about his father's assassination.

least 5,000 people. There are only 10 cases in which there has been a conviction. The case of Manuel Cepeda is the only one in which the Colombian state had to recognize its responsibility in action and omission, i.e., that state agents killed him and that the state did not protect him.

"Our struggle now is to take the case to the Inter-American Court so that the connection between the state and the paramilitaries is recognized and all guilty parts are convicted."

He added that, "We very rapidly realized that the state's authorities were not going to bring justice in this case, so we made the investigations ourselves, working with the Jose Alvear Restrepo Lawyers' Collective."

Cepeda Castro talks about these topics slowly and patiently, explaining every detail, responding to the questions with the confidence of a person who is familiar with the suffering of thousands of Colombians of all ethnic backgrounds, from all parts of the country. They are all bound together by the extreme cruelty and horror of these crimes but also have a fierce determination to finally obtain truth, justice and reparation from the state and are risking their very lives in the process.

This writer has read extensively about the current "para-political" situation in Colombia, where paramilitaries are increasingly associated with politicians close to President Álvaro Uribe. Eight of them are already in prison because of their ties to paramilitaries. But Cepeda Castro's

personal accounts make these horrors so much more vivid.

Explaining how the MVCS has helped uncover this para-political scandal, he said: "The MVCS has helped develop processes of public knowledge, exposing the ties between agents of the state and paramilitary groups, especially in strategic regions like Sucre. This province in the north has the double characteristic of being a cattle-raising rural area and also a coastal zone. This made it a military target as a corridor for narcotraffickers and also as a place to steal the wealth for the benefit of strengthening the paramilitaries' structure.

"In this region, the politicians' criminal boss was Senator Álvaro García. He did not hide his ties to the paramilitary. It was public knowledge that the paramilitary boss Rodrigo Mercado Peluffo, alias 'Cadenas,' was the senator's neighbor. Politicians used to gather at his ranch, which was a center of operations and extermination. It was also a place used as a torture center and a clandestine cemetery, because the bodies of the victims that disappeared from San Onofre were buried there. There, the paramilitary boss invited the chief of police and also the province's governor, Salvador Arana, who is accused of being the intellectual author of several crimes and today is a fugitive evading justice."

Senator García is currently in La Picota prison in Bogotá for his association with paramilitaries. Some interesting information appeared in an article published in *El Tiempo* on March 24 under the headline "From Jail, Senator Álvaro García still manages politics in Sucre."

According to a source in the article: "García is the boss there. He has his own freezer where he keeps ducks that he himself prepares." He holds meetings with visitors from his political circle in Sucre in order to plan candidacies for the upcoming elections. The article adds, "The political group of the senator comprises 13 mayoralties, the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare, the Invias, Carsucre and Corpomojana."

Cepeda Castro mentioned how this criminal group tries to divert attention by celebrating beauty pageants and many social events that "were presented as a tourist attraction for the people who traveled through the area on their way to vacationing at the shore."

With Uribe, paras gained national influence

Why have these crimes come to public light now? Cepeda Castro said that the signing of a secret agreement between paramilitaries and politicians in Ralito in the year 2001, for the purpose of elevating these connections to a national level, helped push forward a "political force clearly identified with paramilitarism and its project. The coming to power of Uribe and his sector of politicians in great part is a result of that political pact between paramilitaries and people of different groups that were part of the pro-paramilitary coalition," he said.

Equipo Nizkor, a human rights organization, says that, "After signing the (Ralito) document, the congressmen eliminated the political status as a requirement to negotiate, offered seats in Congress for the Self Defense Units [paramilitaries] and voted the Justice and Peace Law." The Justice and Peace Law has been used to provide reduced sentences, in fact, impunity, to the paramilitaries as long as they confess to their crimes.

But Cepeda Castro said that the mistake they made was to make impunity a principal part of the project, thinking there would be no significant reaction from the public. "Today, we are beginning to see the real face of the situation caused by this alliance: 4,000 common graves, 14,000 people disappeared by force, millions more displaced. This situation generates horror and shame among many sectors of the country," he added.

He also mentioned some sectors of the Colombian elite who "see this with a certain concern. But let's say that the reality does not make them uncomfortable, what makes them uncomfortable is to be associated with the narco-traffickers when there is a U.S. policy of extradition."

He added, "There are sectors that historically developed a highly hypocritical double relation with all this. They would condemn the paramilitaries with words but on the other hand would openly support them. There is now a conjuncture of facts that is allowing us in Colombia to move forward. It is still a situation with great risks and great instability, but it is toward the correct path, in the correct direction, which is truth, justice and reparations for the victims."

Next: Role of the United States in Colombian paramilitarism.

On anniversary of Malvinas War, whose islands?

By John Catalinotto

The Malvinas Islands should belong to Argentina. If you call them the Falkland Islands, as British imperialism does, they should still belong to Argentina.

No matter what its name, the archipelago in the South Atlantic with about the same surface area as the state of Connecticut, which has been an outpost of the British Empire since the British Navy seized it by military force in 1833 and British imperialism re-seized it in 1982, is part of Latin America in general and Argentina in particular.

The Malvinas are in the news again this April 2, the 25th anniversary of the beginning of the 1982 Malvinas War. They are in the news also because British imperialism is using this island outpost to plunder more natural wealth from Argentina, first through the fishing rights in Argentine waters and second through demands for

rights to search for oil on Argentina's continental shelf.

The corporate media—along with British politicians and officials and their U.S. allies—are rewriting and distorting the history of the Malvinas and of the 1982 war as they retell the story of that battle. While this struggle is well understood in Latin America, it is important that it be told straight here in the United States.

The story of the Malvinas War contains lessons important for today's anti-imperialist movement in judging whose side to be on. These lessons are all the more valuable because they involve an apparently complicated situation regarding the relationship between Argentina, the U.S. and Britain in 1982 and today.

Relationship of forces in 1982

In April 1982, the U.S., with the right-

ist Ronald Reagan as its president, was the dominant imperialist power—and still is. Britain was Washington's most reliable junior partner—as is even more so today. Both were and are oppressor countries, using their capital and, when necessary, their military to pillage the people of the world.

Argentina in 1982, as today, was an oppressed country in relationship to world imperialism. It was ruled by a brutal military junta that had come to power six years earlier with the planning aid of the CIA and the complete backing of Washington. It had by 1982 executed 30,000 revolutionaries, progressives and trade unionists and jailed many others, all illegally, secretly, without even a phony trial.

The Argentine generals were favorites of Jeanne Kirkpatrick, Reagan's ambassador to the United Nations. Two of the

three top military junta generals were graduates of the School of the Americas, which under a new name still turns out hundreds of killers and torturers each year to serve U.S. and local capitalist interests in Latin America. Kirkpatrick's friendliness apparently fostered the illusion among these generals that they were somehow equal allies of the imperialist U.S., at least as much as Britain was.

Despite Kirkpatrick's enthusiasm for the murderous way the generals treated progressive Argentines, the U.S. double crossed their clients in Buenos Aires and cooperated with Britain during the war, providing intelligence and logistic support. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was only too happy to direct a military attack. The British even gratuitously sunk an Argentine troop ship, the General Belgrano, after it was headed back to its

Continued on page 11

**WW
Commentary**

With the Resistance

Conference gives platform to Middle East groups

A unique conference gathering many voices of Middle East resistance took place March 24-25 in Chianciano, Italy. It took place without fanfare or incident despite lots of baiting from reactionaries but almost no publicity in the corporate media. Nevertheless, it was significant that for the first time representative voices of 18 different resistance organizations met in the imperialist West and spoke with their own voices to the movement and the people.

Representing the anti-imperialist sector of the U.S. anti-war movement was Larry Holmes, a co-director of the International Action Center and a leading spokesperson for the Troops Out Now Coalition. TONC had just held a week-long encampment outside Congress and joined the March 17 march on the Pentagon.

Workers World managing editor John Catalinotto spoke with Holmes about the significance of the Chianciano conference, which was called "With the Resistance—for a Just Peace in the Middle East."

WW: What did the conference accomplish? What was its significance?

Larry Holmes: It was remarkable to be able to participate with and sit among legitimate voices of the resistance, not only in Iraq but also Afghanistan, Palestine and Lebanon. Hezbollah was represented there as well as a student resistance group in Afghanistan. Several different communist groups in Iraq, which have a thoroughly anti-occupation, pro-resistance orientation, participated and even agreed at the meeting to merge their activity. These groups are different from the official Iraqi Communist Party, which supported the U.S. overthrow of Saddam Hussein and has been collaborating with the puppet Iraqi government.

It was fascinating to hear the representatives of these resistance organizations—with different experiences and often different ideologies—including Ba'athist, Arab Nationalist, Islamic and Communist, but all fighting against U.S. and Israeli domination of the region—interact both with each other and the

audience. There's no question this was an extremely significant global event of great interest to the anti-war movement.

WW: Who was there at the conference?

LH: Besides the 18 speakers from the Middle East resistance movements, over 300 people attended the conference. The conference was the dominant presence in Chianciano Terme, a resort area near Siena. People came from 20 countries, mainly anti-imperialists from all over Europe—Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Britain, France, Greece and Spain—and some from the rest of the world.

The fact that we were all there in Chianciano is a big accomplishment in and of itself. Resistance members were there from Jordan, Lebanon, all over Europe where they are in exile because they would be killed if they went to Iraq, and also people from inside Iraq. Somebody spoke by conference call from Najaf, Iraq. They couldn't make it to the meeting but spoke by conference call.

You know that both the Italian government under former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi—a media magnate and right winger who toadied to Bush at every opportunity—as well as the U.S. government and many members of the U.S. Congress fought hard to suppress the event. They stopped the speakers from getting visas in the fall of 2005. The organizers had been trying to bring together the event for the better part of two years and they finally succeeded—with flying colors.

When I spoke I mentioned that it was great to come to Italy, but it shows we can't get the voice of resistance to come to the U.S. because the government won't let them in. Not only is it criminal but it deprives the people of the U.S. from hearing the other side. How come the resistance can't come and tell the U.S. population: "We're just defending our country. Just get out and we can all be friends."

I'd like to compliment the organizers of the conference from the Free Iraq Committee and all the other groups that worked together in Italy for pulling off

such a smooth conference. They had to get a new meeting hall at the last minute because of right-wing pressure. Yet they took care of all the guests and the meeting was translated into Italian, English and Arabic.

WW: Is there much support for the resistance movements in Europe?

LH: One of the goals of the conference was to break through to the official peace movement with the need to solidarize with the resistance. The Italian philosopher and activist Aldo Bernardini mentioned that much of the movement in Europe says, "No to aggression, no to terrorism," thus equating the oppressor and the oppressed.

Abdul Jabbar al-Kubaisi, representing the Iraq Patriotic Front, called on the European left to solidarize with the resistance. He said you can't expect a "germ-free packed gift package of a resistance" that gives a nice answer to all civil and social questions. If you had demanded that during the war against Vietnam, he said, "there never would have been a solidarity movement with the Vietnamese people against U.S. aggression."

Al-Kubaisi said right out that "the Iraqi resistance has enough fighters, material and money, but what we really need and are missing urgently is political support."

The organizers of the conference called for the formation of an anti-imperialist network that functions in political solidarity with the resistance and takes actions in its support. When I spoke, I seconded that call. In addition to demanding the end to all colonial and imperialist wars of occupation, it would support the resistance in Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, Lebanon and anywhere else in the world where people are fighting imperialism. And, very important, that we join to stop the imperialists from launching a new war against Iran.

I should add here that while all the speakers spoke out against any U.S. or British or Israeli attack on Iran, there was criticism of Iran's policy in Iraq from the Iraqi speakers, who saw Iran as being too close to the puppet government and thus

supporting the occupation.

The European leftists were critical also of the big parties in Europe that speak peace in words but help U.S. aggression, by, for example, sending troops to Afghanistan or to serve as so-called peacekeepers in Lebanon.

I said that we have the same problems in the U.S. The Democrats talk and talk and talk but they're not really interested in stopping the war, they don't want to be blamed for losing the Middle East, and they want to strengthen imperialism. They have the same objectives as Bush, with different tactics. They cover their support for war funding by putting out a timetable for withdrawal, but Bush will veto them or ignore them. Moreover, what right have the imperialists to occupy Iraq for even one more minute? Every minute is a crime. So why should we be happy?

WW: What other message did you bring from the U.S. movement?

LH: I said there is a lot of potential for the anti-imperialist movement in the U.S. and people are against the war, but they need to be pushed. Those in Europe or anywhere should push us, challenge us to do better. Ask us: How is the work going among the soldiers? How is it going among the students? How can we help?

There are many reasons for the growing anti-war sentiment. The main reason it is growing is the strength of the resistance in Iraq. Had the occupation gone smoothly, there might have been another development. But precisely because the war and occupation has been a disaster it has awakened the people and is responsible for the results of last November's election, which was a mandate to end the war.

I agreed that there can be no question the resistance is the decisive factor in defeating the U.S. But we can't just let the resistance carry the struggle, we have to take the struggle to the imperialists right at home in the United States.

For more information about the Chianciano conference and for the final declaration, see www.iraqiresistance.info.

Palestinians mark Land Day with protests

By Leslie Feinberg
Sakhnin, Occupied Palestine

March 30—The main demonstration of the 31st annual protest known as Yaum Al Ard (Land Day) took place here today in Sakhnin, a northern Palestinian town of about 20,000 within the 1948 borders of the garrison state of Israel. The march of at least 5,000 Palestinians, joined by some Jewish supporters, filled the main street of the town.

Thirty-one years ago, on March 30, 1976, Palestinian residents of Sakhnin and Arrabeh organized a general strike and poured into the streets in protest against the Israeli confiscation of 5,500 acres of land from Arab villages here in the Galilee to create "closed military zones." The Israeli army and police opened fire on the women, men and children who marched here. Six Palestinians were killed, at least 96 wounded and more than 300 were whisked away into detention.

Today, Palestinians of all ages marched through the streets of Sakhnin singing in Arabic: "My land, I love you, you are my life."

A colorful sea of flags, held aloft by contingents of demonstrators, gave visual representation to the united front

that today's demonstration represented. The large contingent of the Communist Party of Israel—which is more than 90 percent Palestinian—held many red flags and many of its members wore T-shirts emblazoned with the image of Cuban revolutionary Che Guevara.

The Arab nationalist party Balad—the Arabic acronym for National Democratic Assembly—also had a very large contingent carrying orange flags.

The Islamic Movement was identified by its green flags. The Arab Movement for Change carried yellow flags. The Arab Democratic Party and the United Arab List also marched with their own flags.

Marchers chanted, clapped and sang in protest of the decades of theft of their land until they reached the cemetery where the six 1976 martyrs are buried. There, after a moment of silence, a political rally was held in Arabic. Sakhnin Mayor Mohamed Basheer, a central committee member of the Communist Party of Israel, welcomed demonstrators and thanked Jewish democratic forces for their participation.

In recent weeks Israeli occupation forces—using equipment supplied by the United States—demolished the homes of 200 Bedouin families in the Negev, just 300 kilometers from Sakhnin.



Young people demand return of Palestinian lands.

WW PHOTO: LESLIE FEINBERG

Other protests today targeted the construction of the Apartheid Wall, which has imprisoned whole Palestinian towns and villages. Its serpentine shape also constitutes a grab of Palestinian lands. People protested at the Wall in Jenin,

Tulkarem and Jerusalem.

Demonstrations also took place in Qalqiliya, Salfit, Ramallah and Hebron. Students organized protests in Qalqiliya, Tulkarem, Jericho, Bethlehem and Birzeit. □



Marx on the income gap

The growing polarization between rich and poor, between the capitalist class and the working class, was eloquently described by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels in the Communist Manifesto some 160 years ago. Perhaps no part of the Manifesto has received more ridicule and scorn from capitalist apologists and ruling class economists than the so-called “theory of increasing misery of the working class.”

And yet today, in the richest imperialist power on the planet, when the number of billionaires is greater than ever and corporate profits are at record highs, poverty is skyrocketing. On virtually every international social index—nutrition, infant mortality, health care, education, homelessness—the U.S. ranks at the bottom of the industrial world.

A new report on income inequality confirms the trend. Looking at recently released IRS data on incomes, the New York Times (March 29) reports that the gap between rich and poor grew significantly last year, with the top 1 percent—those making more than \$348,000 a year—receiving their largest share of the national income since 1928. The top 10 percent, those making more than \$100,000, also reached a level of income share not seen since before the Depression.

While total reported income in the United States increased almost 9 percent in 2005, the most recent year for which such data was available, the overall increase hides the fact that this is all attributable to the rich getting richer. For the bottom 90 percent, incomes dropped 0.6 percent.

Incredibly, the new data show that the richest 300,000 Americans—one-tenth of 1 percent of the population—devoured as much of the national pie as the bottom 150 million, or half the country! “Per person,” writes the Times, “the top group received 440 times as much as the average person in the bottom half earned, nearly doubling the gap from 1980.”

And these tax-based figures are no doubt understated, since the Internal Revenue Service estimates that it is able to accurately tax 99 percent of wage income but can capture only about 70 percent of business and investment income, most of which flows to upper-income individuals. Nor does this data

take into account decades of cutbacks in benefits and government services that the rich just don’t have to worry about. No millionaire need complain when health care, child care, welfare or education spending gets cut.

And there is no end in sight to these trends, with the Bush administration promising tax cuts to millionaires that average over \$150,000 a year.

In summary, the analysis cited by the Times shows that the richest 1 percent received 21.8 percent of all reported income in 2005, up from 19.8 percent in 2004, and more than double their share of income in 1980.

These trends all confirm the economic prognosis given by Marx and Engels almost two centuries ago, writing at a time when the capitalist system was young and developing, unlike today when it is senile and decrepit.

Yet news reports about the income gap, while exposing the injustice and hypocrisy of the system, do not focus attention on the real source of the problem. It is not the distribution of income per se. And the well-meaning efforts of liberals and social reformers to trim the excesses of the income gap, to tweak the tax policies of the capitalist government so that the rich get a little less and the poor get a little more, will not solve the crisis.

Marx showed that the real problem is the private ownership of the means of production. As long as the lifeblood of the economy, its vital resources, factories and technology are owned by a tiny group of individuals, as long as production is governed by the law of capital accumulation and not the needs of society as a whole, poverty, injustice and capitalist crisis will remain and ultimately grow.

Today, with the myriad problems of war, poverty and the environment, it is patently clear that the needs of society for peace and security are at odds with the private ownership of the means of production. Workers produce everything; the ruling class produces nothing. The only way society can move forward is to transfer the means of production from private ownership to the collective hands of all the workers and oppressed. It will take a revolution to do that, but that’s much more likely to happen than passing a camel through the eye of a needle. □



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PARIS

Immigrant’s arrest sparks angry resistance

By G. Dunkel

The Paris police on March 27 seized a Congolese man who, they claimed, tried to get on a train to the northern suburbs of Paris without a ticket. He claims he had a ticket but it didn’t work.

The station where this happened—the Gare du Nord—is the largest in Europe, with many layers and an open central space. Passengers could see the Black man arguing and then many cops forcing him flat on the floor, handcuffing him and dragging him away.

A crowd supporting him quickly gathered. An elderly woman with her fist in the air began chanting “Free him! Free him!”

The struggle was on. It lasted for eight hours, with police assaults, tear gas and fast-moving confrontations with a few hundred demonstrators. According to the French alternative media, young women stood out in resisting the cops.

In 2005 the working-class and poor suburbs of Paris, where large numbers of immigrants and their French-born children live, were the scene of six weeks of furious protests over the sharp and rising discrimination they face. These protests spread to other major French cities.

In France, people with higher incomes usually live in the center cities, while the poor, nationally oppressed minorities, commonly from North and West African backgrounds, live in large housing projects in the suburbs.

France has what may be the strongest left movement in Europe, when it pulls together, but it definitely also has the strongest right, anchored by the National Front (FN) of Jean-Marie Le Pen. Le Pen boasts of being an intelligence officer in the Algerian War, which means he has blood on his hands from torturing Algerian independence fighters. Many progressives in France, and almost all members of the oppressed communities, consider the FN to be a fascist party.

The French presidential campaign is in full swing and this confrontation immediately became a major issue. What made it sharper is that the suburbs have had a phenomenal rise in voter registration, increasing as much as 400 percent since the last presidential election in 2002. The right-wing parties have also made immigration

and “lawlessness” into a major issue.

Nicolas Sarkozy, the presidential candidate of the Union for a Popular Movement (UMP), just resigned as interior minister of the present government. He led the government’s effort to crush the protests in 2005, calling the protesters “scum” who had to be “steam-cleaned out of French society.” He was the first candidate to visit the Gare du Nord after the protest. Facing down hecklers, who called him a “fascist provocateur,” he used the opportunity to attack his main electoral opponent, Ségolène Royal of the Socialist Party.

Sarkozy claimed that Royal would permit poor, Black people free use of the trains and that she condoned destruction. Her response, unfortunately, was not to call for free transportation for all or criticize the police but to say that Sarkozy’s statements at the Gare du Nord and his earlier statements as interior minister in 2005 had provoked and incited violence.

Royal’s Socialist Party, trying to split some votes from Le Pen’s FN, is pushing for every student to learn the French national anthem in order to graduate and for every family to own a French flag to wave on national holidays.

France has two rounds of voting for its president. In the first round, any party that can gain the sponsorship of 500 or more elected officials runs; the two parties with the most votes in the first round then compete in the second. Currently, 12 parties are running.

This lets progressives vote their heart in the first round, even if they pick the lesser of two evils in the second. But since the left couldn’t agree on a single candidate, its electoral strength and impact on the French working class, which is combative and conscious but also politically disunited, has been diffuse.

The immigrant workers, however, are not waiting for elections and are taking their struggles to the streets.

While the French capitalists would like to see Sarkozy run the country, the protest at the Gare du Nord shows that the anger and resistance in the oppressed communities can break out at any time. If this anger generates significant solidarity from the broader French working class, the ruling class will have a major problem. □

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'The Host'

A monster movie from Korea that rocks

By Eric Struch

Drop whatever you're doing and go see "The Host." This is the first monster movie ever from Korea and it is in the great tradition of the original "Godzilla." It mixes the jolts of a good horror movie with serious political commentary against U.S. imperialism, militarism, environmental destruction and the neo-colonial arrogance of the U.S.

Not only is the film unapologetically anti-imperialist and pro-worker, it's also arguably the most entertaining movie of the year.

The film was directed by Bong Joon Ho and stars Song Kang Ho, Byeon Hee Bong and Park Hae Il. It takes a strong position against the U.S. military occupation of southern Korea. It portrays participants in the movement against the military dictatorships of Chun Doo Hwan and Roh Tae Woo as heroes. It makes cops and government officials look like bumbling fools, liars or self-important egotists on a power trip.

Ten years ago, Bong would have been jailed for making this film. Today, "The Host" is riding a wave of popular reunification, anti-U.S. occupation sentiment among the youth in south Korea.

Korea's real history

To put the movie in its proper historical context, it's important to know that the people of the southern part of Korea, the so-called Republic of Korea (RoK), have suffered through a string of U.S.-installed or supported military dictatorships of the anti-communist far right since the end of World War II. These dictatorships, which received their orders, weapons and funding from Washington, were completely

shot through with collaborators with the earlier Japanese occupation.

The U.S. was only able to impose the RoK government on the people after World War II through a bloody "dirty war" against the guerrilla fighters and civilian supporters of the Chosun Inmin Konghwaguk (Korean People's Republic-KPR). The KPR was formed by representatives of the mass anti-Japanese People's Committees on Sept. 6, 1945. Supporters of the KPR dreamed of a united Korea with no foreign troops on its soil, where collaborators with Japanese militarism would be brought to justice.

The RoK army—under the operational control of the U.S.—and fascist death squads like the Northwest Youth spent the late 1940s drowning the Inmin-gun (KPR People's Army) in blood. All the tactics the U.S. later used in Vietnam were in place: strategic hamlets, passbooks for civilians and their forced recruitment into so-called "defense corps" and the use of Nazi-style collective punishment.

The U.S. puppet dictator Syngman Rhee—who spent the wartime period of Japanese occupation chilling out in California—and his ultra-rightist collaborationist allies dealt the Inmin-gun a defeat through the use of these inhuman tactics.

The liberation forces in the north, led by Marshal Kim Il Sung, achieved victory. They set up the government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) on Sept. 9, 1948. The people of the DPRK through the guidance of their great leader Kim Il Sung and the Workers Party of Korea were attempting to build socialism under extremely difficult conditions.

Border towns in the north were subject to constant harassment, mortar attacks and deadly raids by the RoK army and fascist death squads. Through this constant harassment, the RoK succeeded in provoking the DPRK into a war that Rhee thought would fulfill his expansionist ambitions. For the U.S., the goal was to roll back the socialist revolution in the north and use Korea as a base to launch aggression against the newly victorious Chinese revolution.

WW movie review

Millions died in war

The war had a horrible human cost. Almost 2 million lost their lives in the U.S./RoK drive north. Most of those casualties came from the DPRK. Half a million Chinese Red Army soldiers gave their lives to defend the Korean revolution, paying Korea back for the thousands and thousands of young Koreans who fought in the Red Army against the Japanese in China.

The U.S. seriously considered the use of biological, chemical and atomic weapons against the Korean people. Fascist-minded U.S. General Douglas MacArthur bragged, "I would've dropped between 30 and 50 atomic bombs ... strung across the neck of Manchuria... My plan was a cinch."

Even though President Harry Truman removed MacArthur before he could implement his insane "Dr. Strangelove" plan, the Pentagon still unleashed a holocaust against the Korean people.

In the words of General Curtis LeMay, the architect of the U.S. air war, "Look, let us go up there ... and burn down five of the biggest towns in north Korea—and they're not very big—and that ought to

stop it. ... [O]ver a period of three years or so... we burned down every (sic) town in north Korea and south Korea too." The U.S. used a new weapon, napalm, to burn thousands of cities, villages and small towns.

The heroic soldiers of the Korean People's Army and the partisans in the south with the help of Chinese Red Army volunteers beat back the reactionary assault and fought U.S. imperialism and its puppets to a standstill. Unfortunately, the U.S. was able to maintain the division of the Korean nation with its 35,000-plus troop occupation of the south.

The sentiment among the youth in Korea today is that reunification is inevitable. The new generation rejects the crude anti-communism of the ultra-right Grand National Party. They see no "threat" of invasion by their sisters and brothers in the DPRK. Overwhelmingly, the youth want the U.S. military out.

"The Host" reflects this sentiment. In the movie, the monster is created when the U.S. military dumps toxic chemicals into the Han River. This is based on an actual incident that took place in 2000. The U.S. military, it was discovered, had dumped a large amount of formaldehyde into the river as if it belonged to them.

The monster terrorizes the riverfront area of Seoul, then slips back into the Han River, having swallowed up several people including Park Hyun Seo, the young daughter of a working class family. Her father, Park Gang Du, previously regarded by the family as a lazy slacker, is determined to do everything in his power to get Hyun Seo back. The monster emerges in Seoul's sewer system and regurgitates Hyun Seo and others into a pit containing human remains, to be eaten later. The Park family puts aside its differences to fight the monster the U.S. created and get Gang Du's daughter back.

In the movie, the U.S. military and the RoK government try to deflect the blame for creating the monster by whipping up media hysteria over a virus allegedly carried by the monster. When this is exposed as a hoax, the U.S.'s real agenda is revealed. They want to fumigate the waterfront with a toxic poison gas called "Agent Yellow"—an obvious reference to Agent Orange—which they attempt to reassure the Korean people is "completely harmless."

Most people in the U.S. think that the Pentagon only used Agent Orange in Vietnam, but it was in fact used in Korea in the early 1970s to defoliate the demilitarized zone between the north and south.

Near the end of the movie, the masses mobilize huge demonstrations, of the type seen in the 1980s, to stop the U.S. from releasing any more toxic chemicals.

"The Host" is the first south Korean movie to receive favorable reviews from the DPRK press. Upon the film's release last year, the November issue of Pyongyang's Tongil Sinbo said, "The movie portrays realistically ... that the American troops occupying south Korea are the real monster that steals people's lives and destroys their happiness.... The movie 'The Host' reflected south Korea's reality and people's psychology there. In the south, environmental crimes by the U.S. troops are very serious and is a life and death matter directly related to the people."

I can't tell you how the movie ends, but it's worth every penny of the admission. Screw "300"! Go see "The Host" instead! □

On anniversary of Malvinas War, whose islands?

Continued from page 8

Buenos Aires port, killing 323 Argentine troops.

The battle was not completely one-sided, as the Argentines fought bravely and had their own advanced arms, but in the end 655 Argentines died, along with 255 British troops. The junta, ill-equipped to lead a war of liberation, conceded to British imperialism. Within a year the generals were driven out of power, although most of them have not yet received the punishment they deserve for their crimes against the Argentine people.

Workers World, which had considered the Argentine generals criminals and killers, nevertheless defended Argentina against the attack from the two major imperialist powers. This defense was in the same tradition as the 1930s anti-imperialist defense of the absolute monarchy of Haile Selassie when Ethiopia was attacked by imperialist Italy.

WW members participated in and helped organize demonstrations protesting the British attempt to re-seize Argentine territory—the Malvinas.

Self-determination for whom?

A false argument that was raised over and over at the time to excuse British intervention was the claim that the 1,800 inhabitants of the Malvinas, who were settlers or descendants of settlers from the British Isles, wanted to remain British "subjects." (In 1982 they were not British citizens.) Thus, it was argued, applying "self-determination" would mean supporting the choice of these settlers and



thus supporting Britain.

But the Malvinas/Falkland Islands were a special outpost of the British Empire, just as Hong Kong, Diego Garcia, Aden and the Suez Canal were in other periods of its history. Or as New Caledonia (Kanaky) is for French imperialism. Or as the Panama Canal Zone is for U.S. imperialism. They are military or commercial bases with some civilian population.

It is possible to colonize an area with people from the metropolis, in some cases killing or driving out the Indigenous population. The result can be a majority that prefers to be an extension of the imperialist metropolis. This only shows that the "self-determination" argument is not absolute. You have to evaluate what strengthens world imperialism and what weakens it.

The British presence in the Malvinas—which now includes 1,200 soldiers, sailors and air force personnel—puts imperialist pressure on all of South America. Indeed, the vast majority of Latin Americans side with Argentina's continued desire to take back the Malvinas. □

A strategic alliance

It should have been no surprise when the two imperialist allies stuck together to slap down an upstart regime ruling an oppressed country. And these two powers have done so since. They have joined

in an effort to reconquer the colonial territories that were freed by liberation struggles during the period when the Soviet Union existed as a counterweight to imperialism.

They joined with other NATO powers to reconquer the Balkans in the 1999 war against Yugoslavia. They are together trying to reconquer Afghanistan and Iraq today, although their efforts to occupy these territories are running into the determined resistance of the local populations. They threaten to intervene in Iran, in Sudan, in Somalia, in Zimbabwe and elsewhere in a similar attempt to impose a new form of colonial rule. All these are reactionary and often brutal interventions.

Anyone who supports national liberation, who supports the oppressed nations against imperialism, has to be for the defeat of this alliance of two predator nations against the people of the world. This means supporting the resistance movements in the Middle East. And it means supporting the Argentine effort to take back the Malvinas. □

EDITORIAL

Desde Yugoslavia hasta Irak y Sudán

Hace ocho años, el 24 de marzo de 1999, EEUU comenzó a bombardear la ciudad de Pristina en Kosovo; fue el inicio de la guerra de 79 días en Yugoslavia.

La brutalidad de los bombardeos de los EEUU es olvidada deliberadamente por los grandes medios de comunicación de los EEUU. Las bombas y proyectiles de los EEUU apuntaron a civiles, estallando en trenes de pasajeros, destruyendo la industria química, y envenenando el Río Danubio. Fueron bombardeadas escuelas al igual que hospitales y centros de televisión en medio de transmisiones en vivo. Como se ha documentado desde entonces, los generales estadounidenses les dijeron a los líderes yugoslavos que si no se entregaban, la capital de Belgrado sería bombardeada tan fuertemente que ningún edificio quedaría en pie.

Ahora, ocho años después, no se describe esta guerra como el crimen que realmente fue.

Igual que la guerra contra Irak, la guerra contra Yugoslavia estuvo basada en mentiras. Las mentiras fueron pronunciadas por el Presidente Bill Clinton, sus ministros y sus generales.

La gran mentira fue que la guerra era necesaria para “poner fin al genocidio” a pesar de que no había ningún genocidio que parar.

El genocidio tiene una definición legal bajo la ley internacional, y los imperialistas afirman que esto les proporcionó justificación por su guerra contra Yugoslavia. Genocidio en ese caso significa la matanza masiva y sistemática de un “grupo étnico, racial o religioso” por un poder estatal.

Las sanciones contra Irak antes de la guerra, que mataron a más de un millón de iraquíes, probablemente cualifican bajo esta definición como genocidio. La invasión y la ocupación de Irak ha implicado la matanza masiva de iraquíes.

Pero en una decisión judicial que también ocurre ocho años después de la guerra, la Corte Internacional de Justicia — aunque está repleta de jueces simpatizantes a los EEUU— no pudo encontrar una base legal para acusar al gobierno de Yugoslavia o al gobierno de Serbia de genocidio. Los titulares, impresos en las últimas páginas de los periódicos y mayormente ignorados por los noticieros televisados, dicen: “Serbia no es culpable de genocidio”.

El veredicto no dijo que no hubo muertos, o que no hubo brutalidad. Dice que no hubo genocidio perpetrado por el gobierno de Yugoslavia, lo cual era la excusa para que Clinton y el Pentágono lanzaran la guerra del 1999.

La importancia de esto no debe perderse. Al igual que no habían “armas de destrucción masiva” en Irak, no hubo genocidio en Yugoslavia. Pero la administración de Clinton amenazaba con una guerra si Yugoslavia no se rendía al poder de los EEUU. Los reportajes sobre un genocidio fueron confeccionados para crear una justificación para la guerra. Esta fue la misma fórmula que la administración de Bush utilizó para su guerra contra Irak.

Fórmulas similares han sido empleadas para justificar otras guerras imperialistas. Y se seguirán empleando a menos que se detengan a los imperialistas.

Ya se están utilizando acusaciones de genocidio en Darfur para fomentar demandas para una intervención militar imperialista en Sudán. La bien financiada campaña “Coalición pro rescate de Darfur” está avanzando esta agenda. ¿Pero para quién?

Para saber lo que está pasando en Darfur es necesario revisar la historia del imperialismo británico y la intervención de los EEUU en la región así como las riquezas petroleras del Sudán. No es accidental que los llamados a una intervención militar imperialista pondrían a los EEUU en control de la región petrolera del Sudán.

Cada vez que los imperialistas comienzan a señalar algún lugar gritando “genocidio”, es cuando se sabe que tienen una agenda secreta. Y esto no tiene nada que ver con propósitos humanitarios. □

Mientras culpan a Teherán

Los ejercicios masivos de los Estados Unidos amenazan a Irán

Por Deirdre Griswold

El 27 de marzo la agencia de noticias Associated Press reportó que Estados Unidos había lanzado los ejercicios navales más extensos en el Golfo Pérsico desde la invasión de Irak.

Dos inmensos portaaviones, el USS Eisenhower y el USS Stennis, llegaron frente a las costas de Irán, cada uno acompañado por grupos de naves y aviones de ataque. En total, más de 100 aviones se vieron envueltos en este obvio intento de intimidar al pueblo iraní con una demostración de superioridad militar.

La magnitud de la operación fue relatada por la AP: “Cada nave lleva consigo aviones de bombardeo F/A-18 Hornet y Superhornet, aviones electrónicos de guerra EA-6B Prowler, antisubmarinos S-3 Viking, aviones E-2C Hawkeye de comando y control aéreo. También participaron los destructores con misiles guiados USS Anzio, USS Ramaje, USS O’Kane, USS Mason, USS Preble y USS Nitze; al igual que los limpia minas USS Scout, USS Gladiador y USS Ardent.”

La nave Eisenhower se movilizó al Golfo desde la costa de Somalia, donde en diciembre proveyó cobertura para una invasión a ese país por miles de tropas etíopes, coordinadas por las fuerzas especiales de los Estados Unidos. El objetivo de Washington fue el de romper el poder político de la Unión de Cortes Islámicas y asegurar un “gobierno de transición” de “señores de guerra” desacreditados que habían perdido el control del país. Como siempre, las respuestas de los representantes de relaciones públicas en Washington explicaron esta agresión con una fra-

se: la “guerra contra el terrorismo.”

Los marineros e infantes de marina británicos quedan detenidos

Irán tuvo que haber sabido que los ejercicios ocurrirían pronto cuando el 23 de marzo, su guardia naval detuvo una nave en la vía acuática Shatt al-Arab entre Irak e Irán y detuvo a 15 marineros e infantes de marina británicos.

Hay dos versiones del porqué sucedió esto. El lado estadounidense-británico dice que los marineros británicos estaban en aguas iraquíes inspeccionando barcos con sospecha de contrabando y que los iraníes no tenían derecho a detenerlos.

El lado iraní dice que los británicos habían entrado en aguas iraníes y que los 15 detenidos no han sido maltratados pero que sí están siendo interrogados para determinar si la violación a la frontera de las aguas iraníes fue “intencional o no”.

Mientras tanto, la prensa en Bretaña y en los Estados Unidos está creando una crisis internacional sobre la captura de los 15 miembros británicos. Si acaso reportan algo sobre las maniobras de guerra que están llevando a cabo, es para dar la impresión de que Estados Unidos solo está respondiendo al “malévolo” Irán.

¿Cuán bajo puede llegar la prensa corporativa monopolizada—especialmente los programas de “noticias” dirigidos a las masas? Pues más bajo que el vientre de una serpiente.

No hacen las preguntas más elementales sobre este ridículo cuento, aún cuando todo el mundo sabe que los residentes de la Casa Blanca y de la calle Downing son una pandilla de mentirosos.

Sin embargo, la gente con pensamiento propio en el Occidente podría darse cuenta de todo esto por sí misma. Hay muchos precedentes históricos para entender lo que está pasando.

Primero, no tiene sentido alguno que Irán haya entrado intencionalmente a las aguas iraquíes para detener al personal británico justo cuando las naves estadounidenses se dirigían a sus costas para llevar a cabo maniobras de guerra. Los iraníes saben muy bien que Estados Unidos es la potencia más grande del mundo en cuanto al poderío militar y no les ayudaría en nada crear un pretexto para una agresión.

Segundo, Estados Unidos y Bretaña por

mucho tiempo han estado asociados para dominar el Medio Oriente, rico en petróleo. Hay que recordar que la compañía Anglo-Iranian Oil Co., una vez controló la mayoría del petróleo iraní. Sí tiene sentido que ellos crearan una provocación justo antes del comienzo de las maniobras de los Estados Unidos.

Tercero, ¿no es sospechoso que los cargos contra Irán llegaran de Londres y Washington y no de Bagdad? ¿Acaso no pasó esto en aguas iraquíes?

Cuarto, aunque varios reportajes han aparecido en la prensa occidental—incluyendo la serie sobre las amenazas militares de los Estados Unidos contra Irán por Seymour Hersh en la revista New Yorker—sobre las fuerzas especiales estadounidenses operando clandestinamente en Irán, promoviendo grupos disidentes y recaudando información secreta, el gobierno iraní hasta ahora no ha tomado ninguna acción que pudiera empeorar la ya tensa relación con Washington.

Y finalmente, la penetración en aguas territoriales de un país por naves de guerra de los Estados Unidos o naves de espionaje ya ha sucedido anteriormente.

Golfo de Tonkin, USS Pueblo

En agosto de 1964, el Congreso promulgó una resolución utilizada después por el entonces Presidente Lyndon Johnson como la autorización para intensificar la guerra en Vietnam. La llamada Resolución del Golfo de Tonkin estaba basada en un supuesto “ataque” por lanchas de patrullaje de Vietnam del Norte contra buques de guerra de los EEUU en aguas internacionales. Años después, con la publicación de los Papeles del Pentágono, este pretexto para la guerra se comprobó que había sido totalmente falso.

En enero del 1968 el buque de guerra USS Pueblo con su tripulación de 83 hombres fue capturado por la República Democrática Popular de Corea después de entrar en aguas territoriales de la RDPC. EEUU mantuvo que el buque estaba cumpliendo con una misión inocente—hasta que su capitán pidió disculpas a los coreanos y confesó públicamente que habían estado interceptando las comunicaciones electrónicas coreanas.

Nadie fuera de los altos mandos militares de los EEUU y Bretaña sabe hacia dónde va a llegar la crisis actual. No debe permitirse que se vuelva en un pretexto para la intensificación de la intervención militar imperialista en el Medio Oriente, la cual ya ha llevado tanta miseria y destrucción a la región y a los soldados coaccionados y engañados para que vayan allá. □

